UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE

Eastern Cape Education Department

Distance Education Project

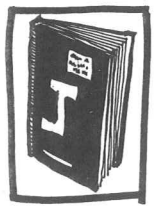
Core Learning Areas Course

Language, Literacy & Communication

6th Umthamo

Making Meaning in an Additional Language

Pilot Edition – April 2001

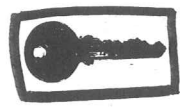


Journal

Thinking and Reflecting

Written Report

Classroom or School



Key Activity

Making materials

Reading and Thinking

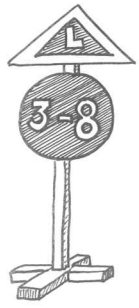
Discussion

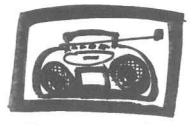
Face-to-face umkhwezeli

Concertina File for Portfolio

Time

Very Important – take careful note





Tape-recorder

CESC

CLAC

Multigrade

Communication is a two-way process. A letter is written to someone, who reads it. A remark is made to someone and is (usually) understood. A gesture is made and elicits a response which may be a grin or a remark. In any such communication two features are present:

Firstly, the person who is making the communication chooses the words (or gesture). That is to say, the originator of the communication has a choice in what he or she says or does and how he or she expresses it. **Choice** is therefore one essential feature of communication.

Secondly, the receiver of the communication has to pay attention, because he or she does not know what the other person is going to say. So the receiving person is in a state of uncertainty or ignorance, and that is why he or she pays attention and notices. The key point here is that we pay attention in order to be able to find something out. If we knew it already we would not bother. **Unpredictability** is therefore the second feature of communication.

This may seem obvious, but it is something which we often forget or ignore in the language classroom, when activities intended to be communicative can fail to contain these elements. (Sidwell, D. 1993. *Network 1: Teaching Languages to Adults*)

"Not speaking the same language" .... to a psycholinguist is a superficial difference. Knowing about the ubiquity of complex language across individuals and cultures and the single mental design underlying them all, no speech seems foreign to me, even when I cannot understand a word. The banter among New Guinean highlanders in the film of their first contact with the rest of the world, the motions of a sign language interpreter, the prattle of little girls in a Tokyo playground - I imagine seeing through the rhythms to the structures underneath, and sense that we all have the same minds. (Pinker, S. 1994. The Language Instinct.)

In the classroom, in the context of foreign language learning, we scaffold the child's understanding of the flow of foreign language - we try to make things easier for the learner so that we might engage in and sustain communication with the learner in the classroom. As well as creating contexts which will provide strong clues as to the meaning of the words within them, we may adopt certain characteristics of what has been described as 'motherese' or 'foreigner-talk'.

These scaffolding techniques we believe will support the child's foreign language acquisition in the classroom context. However, when a child interprets what we say, their interpretation is influenced by at least three things and the ways in which these interact with each other - their knowledge of the language; their assessment of what we intend (as indicated by our non-linguistic behaviour); and the manner in which they would represent the physical situation to themselves if we were not there at all.

As a young learner of the foreign language the child's foreign language (FL) resource will always be less than that of the teacher and they will give more weight to non-linguistic cues - for example, in teaching terms, to flash cards, visual props, other actions, etc. In addition, they will bring their knowledge of the world and how it works to their active listening and hypothesis-testing. When these are in harmony, a holistic understanding is achieved. (Hurrell, A. 1999. The four language skills: The whole works!)

Printed by: L. Harry & Sons, 18 Kimberley Road, East London 5201. Telephone 7220604.

Contents

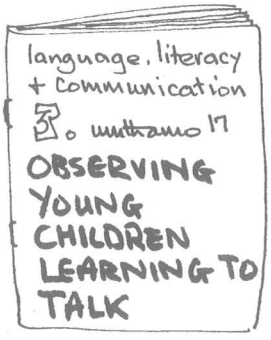
Introduction

This is the sixth umthamo in the Language, Literacy and Communication strand of the Core Learning Areas Course. In the previous imithamo in this strand, we have suggested generic language activities and approaches which apply equally to all language work (first, second, and even third language learning and teaching) in primary classrooms.

The focus of this umthamo is on helping learners to communicate in and use an *additional* language, in particular, English. In this umthamo we ask you to re-visit ideas discussed in previous imithamo in this strand in order to help you understand better what your learners are doing as they learn another language. We believe that many of the ideas we have explored before can enable you to help your learners communicate and *make meanings* more fluently in another language. And we will refer to the Readings which accompanied Umthamo 17. We will also suggest ways in which you can use some of the materials and activities from earlier imithamo to help your learners develop and use an additional language.

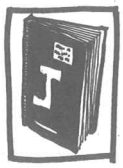
What you will find in this umthamo

In Unit 1 we ask you to think back to the research and reading you did for Umthamo 17, as you reflect on how we learn our first (or primary) language. You will need to look back at the notes you made of your observations of three young children.



Unit 2 focuses on learning an additional language. We consider how, as teachers, we can use the strategies which caregivers use as they induct young children into their primary language(s). And we emphasise the importance of providing opportunities for learners to learn and use additional languages for **real communication** purposes. Then we introduce the idea of **information-gaps** in real communication.

The **Key Activity** is in Unit 3. It is in two parts. For the first part, we have written detailed guidelines for you to carry out an information-gap activity with your learners. You will need to write in your Journal about your own experiences, as well as the experiences of your learners, when you carry out this activity. We have included three double-page spreads of additional ideas for information-gap activities on pages 28 to 33. You will need to choose one or two of these activities, and try them out with your learners for the second part of the **Key Activity.** Again, make careful notes of what happens when your learners carry out the activities, and reflect on these experiences in your Journal.



At the end-of-year Portfolio Presentation, we will expect you to share how using information-gap activities has affected your learners' acquisition and use of an additional language. You will also be expected to provide evidence from your Journal of how the ideas in this umthamo have affected your approach to the teaching and learning of English as additional language.

Your Journal is very important. We cannot emphasise this enough. It is the place where you can write whatever you want to say. You are expected to **record** your thinking, and **reflect on** (ukuhlalutya) your pratice as a primary specialist in your Journal. You can then go back to look for **evidence** of how you have changed your attitude, ideas and approach over the years. We would urge you to take your Journal work seriously. In Year 4 of this course, you will be expected to use your Journal continually to **justify** your claims that you have grown and developed professionally.

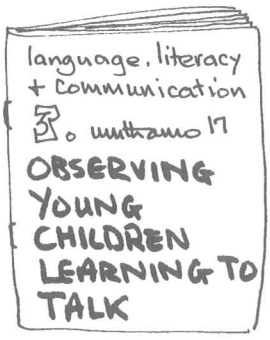
We have included a Reading in Unit 4, which comes from the *English Language Teaching Journal.* This journal focuses specifically on what happens in classrooms when English is taught. The Reading comes from an article published in October 2000 in which the author, Andrea Machado de Almeida Mattos, looks at *authentic assessment.* She documents how teachers can use *'real'* activities as a context for assessment. And this makes the assessment *'real',* too.

Intended Outcomes

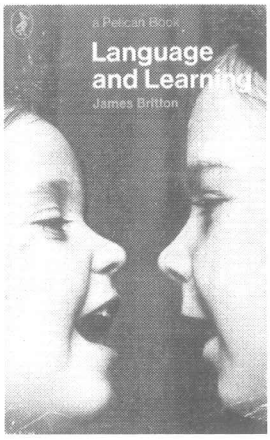
When you have worked through this umthamo you will have

- revisited and reflected on what you learned in previous imithamo in this strand
- thought about your own role in helping learners learn additional languages
- explored two or three information-gap activities with learners, and reflected on that process
- thought about how teachers can use a Vygotskian approach to assessment as they help their learners learn an additional language
- reflected on how this umthamo is influencing the way you help learners learn English as an additional language.

Unit 1 - Making meaning through language



When we learn our first (or primary) language, we don't just learn the words. As you know from the research that you carried out for Umthamo 17, we also learn a great deal more. Think back to your research into how young children learn to communicate in the language of their home. Look through the observation notes you made as you observed those three young children. Go back to the Journal you were keeping at that time. Re-read some of the thoughts you recorded there as you carried out your research. Were those children learning just the *words* which the people in their homes use to communicate with one another? What else were those young children learning?



Go back to the Readings. Spend some time re-reading the chapter "Learning to Speak" from *Language and Learning* by James Britton. It is clear that as young children learn the words which they hear around them, that they also learn **what to say, when, to whom,** and **in the appropriate manner.** In 1971, Dell Hymes wrote:

> a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences, not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where in what manner. In short, a child becomes able to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events, and to evaluate their accomplishment by others. This competence, moreover, is integral with attitudes, values, and motivations concerning language, its features and uses, and integral with competence for and attitudes toward, the interrelation of language with the other code of communicative conduct.
>
> (Hymes, 1971: 15)

By participating in real communicative situations, or taking part in *'speech events',* children learn what is culturally acceptable and appropriate in their community. As they learn the language of their culture, they also learn their culture. And each language community has different ways of doing and saying things. When young children go to school for the first time (whether it's a pre-school, or a Grade 1 class) they bring with them this knowledge of the language of their community, its culture, and what is regarded as culturally acceptable and appropriate.

A very important aspect of each 'speech event' is the non-verbal communication which accompanies each verbal exchange. The non-verbal communication is part of what is culturally acceptable and appropriate. Think about the ways your learners address you and interact with you. What is it

that they *do* that makes their communication acceptable? Where did they learn to behave in that way?

Remember the very first umthamo? Many teacher-learners told us that they found that umthamo made a great deal of difference to the *ways* they interacted with their learners. They became much more *conscious* of their gestures, facial expressions, and their tone of voice.

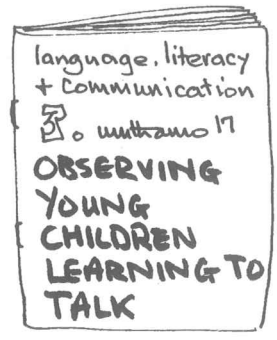
As you re-read the research you conducted to find out how young children learn to communicate in their home (primary language), look out for anything you wrote about whatever was going on. In particular, make a note of any recordings you made which refer to either *your,* or the young child's **gestures, actions, facial expressions,** or **tone of voice.** In what ways did the actions or non-verbal communication support what was going on? How did you use gestures, actions, facial expressions and tone of voice to support the words you spoke?

Scaffolding

When caregivers talk with young children they instinctively use non-verbal communication to support and **scaffold** the words they use. In other imithamo we have used the term *'scaffolding'* when we have spoken about the ways in which teachers can support their learners as they try to make sense of whatever they are investigating or learning about. Caregivers do this quite naturally as they support and extend a young child's early language learning.

Look back at Umthamo 35, page 16 and Umthamo 31, page 27.

What sorts of things do caregivers (both adult and child) do to give support, and to scaffold a young child's communication? Some of these things might be *verbal.* Others might be *non-verbal.* Look carefully at the notes you made of the youngest of the three children you observed. When that child uttered something which sounded like a word, how did you respond? How did this support the child's communication? How did you or the caregiver interpret what the child was trying to communicate? How do you know you understood, or *misunderstood,* the child?



Next, look at your notes about the other children. How did you support or scaffold what those children were trying to communicate? Re-read what they said, and what you said. Look for evidence where you scaffolded their communication.

You may find it useful to spend some time **now** with a young child you know. As you do this, try to be observant and conscious of the non-verbal support you provide as the child tries to communicate. Be aware of your **actions, gestures,**

tone of voice, and **facial expressions.** Try to take note of *what* you say, and *how* you say it, as you try to make sense of what the young child is communicating.

Eve Gregory has spent many years working with teachers who have learners for whom English is an additional language. In her book, *Making Sense of a New World: Learning to read in a second language,* she considers carefully just how caregivers scaffold their young children's language acquisition and development.

1. Caregivers collaborate with children in determining the nature of the activities and their responsibility, i.e. they *create bridges* and *structure children's participation.*
2. They work together and, in the process, the children learn to manage new situations under the collaborative structuring of problem-solving attempts.
3. *'Guided participation'* includes both tacit communication and explicit instruction.
4. Children learn about the activities of their community with the support of a system of social partners including peers and a number of caregivers. (Gregory, 1996:20)

Eve Gregory includes several examples of adults scaffolding the language learning of young children. In one example, she describes a very young child travelling on a bus with his parents. His language is at the *holophrase* (or one word) stage of learning. He is holding a picture book, and looking at a picture of a bus. The child tries to get the attention of other people on the bus, and utters something which could be "bus". One of the other passengers comments, "Yes, it's a *big* bus." Another says, "What a *lovely* bus." And a third remarks, "You *have* got a nice bus." (1996:21)

Gordon Wells is another researcher who has studied the language development of young children. In his book, *The Meaning Makers: Children Learning Language and Using Language to Learn,* one of the examples he includes is of a child at the 2-word stage.

Mark: *Look-at-that. Birds, Mummy.*
Mother: *Mm.*
Mark: *Jubs [birds].*
Mother: *What are they doing*
Mark: *Jubs bread [Birds eating bread(?)].*
Mother: *Oh, look. They're eating the berries, aren't they?*
Mark: *Yeh.*
Mother: *That's their food. They have berries for dinner.*
Mark: *Oh.* (Wells, 1987:22)

The next example comes from Eve Gregory's research. The child in this example is at the stage of speaking in *telegraphic speech.*

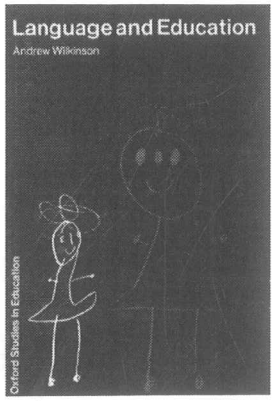
K (child): *Mummy sock dirty.*
Mummy: *Yes. They're all dirty.*
K: *Mummy sock.*
Mummy: *There.*
K: *Mummy sock.*
Mummy: *That's not mummy's sock. That's your sock. There.*
K: *Kathryn sock.* (Gregory, 1996:21)

Characteristics of caregiver speech

In the Appendix of Umthamo 17, on page 31 we included three characteristics of the way caregivers speak with young children:

(i) The sentence structure is simple and there is more redundancy and repetition.
(ii) They talk about whatever is going on at the time (the "here and now").
(iii) Their talk is real communication.

Now we would like you to re-visit another Reading you received with Umthamo 17. Turn to the excerpt from *Language and Education* by Andrew Wilkinson. In chapter 20, on pages 119 and 120, there is an extended example of a mother scaffolding her young child's communication. As you re-read this transcript, write an **'S'** in the margin next to where you identify scaffolding. You will also see evidence of the three essential characteristics of caregiver speech in the way the mother responds to, and converses with, her child.



Modelling

Another thing that families and caregivers do as they interact with young children is what Eve Gregory (1996) calls *modelling.* As caregivers and others in the home speak with a young child, they are likely to talk about what is going on at the time, almost like the running commentary a sports commentator provides when a sports event is being broadcast. The caregivers *model* possible thoughts and ideas through talk. Gregory uses an example taken from a chapter written by Allan Luke (1993). In this example, an Australian middle-class mother is talking to her two-year old while they queue in a restaurant.

> We're in a long line, Jason. Aren't we? There are lots of people lined up here waiting for a drink. Look [pointing] they're carrying a Christmas tree with lots of things on it.

> They're moving it. Do we have a Christmas tree like that? (Luke, 1993:24)

Allan Luke comments,

> Here the parent is providing a running commentary on the world for the child, framing up an imaginary or 'possible world' as if it is a story. Notice that the collective pronoun 'we' is used to position the child in solidarity with the mother's narration. The child did not answer during the 20-30 second monologue by his mother. The mother here is positioning the child through talk - anticipating, modelling hypothetical answers and what he (Jason) might (is supposed to) be thinking. In effect, she is constituting an identity for him. The naming of salient objects ('Christmas tree'), the highlighting of reasons, norms and ethics for actions (e.g. why 'we' line up; how to move things; what 'we' have) come into play here. The child is being situated within a world-view, to 'read' the world from a particular epistemological vantage point. His 'identity papers' are being assembled and put in order through talk. Within this world-view criteria for 'rational' thought, action and analysis are being assembled through talk (Luke 1992; Hasan 1991). (Luke, 1993: 24)

This brings us back to the idea that when we learn our first, or home, language(s) we also learn about what is culturally acceptable and appropriate in the community in which we are growing. As we are inducted into that speaking community, we learn much more than words; we also learn the ways our families think, and the ways they regard events around them. We learn what is socially acceptable, and what is not. We are apprenticed into the community's *view of the world.*

When we learn **additional** languages, we also need to learn to say what is considered *culturally acceptable* and *appropriate* by the community for whom that language is the primary language. If we don't learn this important aspect, we struggle to *make meaning* in that language. This can result in a breakdown in communication and cause misunderstandings.

As teachers we have a responsibility to help our learners learn what is culturally acceptable and appropriate as we help them acquire additional languages. But how can we do this in a meaningful way? How can we make sure that our learners have opportunities to acquire and use additional languages for *real communication* purposes. We will explore this in the next Unit.

Language Learning Interaction

Example of a brother (age 6 years) and his younger sister (age nearly 2 years). Caleb + Cloud 1983.

Scene/Context Arriving home one afternoon the children notice a tok-tokkie beetle (gonggothwane) on a path near their home. The sister initiates (starts) the talk sequence by pointing to the insect and saying.....

Sister: "Goggo."
Brother: "Beetle."
Sister: "Beetle."
Brother: "Black beetle."
Sister: "Black beetle."
Brother: "Big black beetle."
Sister: "Big black beetle."
Brother: "Big black beetle crossing the path."
Sister: "Goggo."
(and she moves away)

Courtesy of Daily Dispatch Library

Unit 2 - Learning an additional language

In this Unit we want you to think about your own experiences of learning additional languages. We also want you to think about how your learners are acquiring and using additional languages, particularly, **English.** And we want to think about how we can help learners learn to communicate in an additional language in **meaningful** ways. How can we provide activities which give learners opportunities to use additional languages for **real purposes** and for **real communication?**

This is particularly important as English gradually becomes the language of formal learning and teaching for the majority of South Africans. Remember too, that for many in South Africa, Afrikaans can become the language of work in some places.

We will begin by asking you to think back on your own experiences of learning additional languages.

You will carry out this activity at the face-to-face session where this umthamo is introduced. If for some reason you are unable to carry out this activity at that face-to-face session, you will need to do the activity with a friend or a colleague at school.

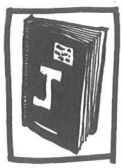
Activity 1 - Remembering and reflecting

Open your Journal and make a list of all the languages you can use. Then think back and try to remember your experiences of learning additional languages. Was the experience of learning an additional language the same for all languages? Or did you find that you enjoyed learning one (or some) language(s) more than others? Why was that so? What do you think motivated you? What hindered (or got in the way and slowed things down)? How does somebody's attitude to a language affect their learning of that language? What about additional languages learned *outside* school? Write down your thoughts in your Journal.

When you have finished writing, turn to one of the other teacher-learners in your group and share your Journal Writes. Compare what you have both written.

Get together with two other teacher-learners and tell them about your partner's experience. Then your partner can share with the others what you shared with her/him.

When all four have shared experiences, spend a short time discussing the ways different teachers taught you other languages. Did the **way** they taught affect your attitude to the language? Do you think the *way* they taught affected your success in the language? Why? What opportunities outside school did you have to use the language? Why were some learners more successful than others?

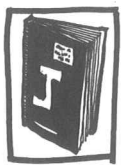


Then go back to your Journal and write down your thoughts about the teachers who taught you additional languages, and the **ways** they taught. Finally, write down how you think this affected your success in learning the language.

One of the questions we asked you to think about in that activity was, *Why were some learners more successful than others?* This is an important question. Many researchers believe that if you want to help learners who struggle, it's a good idea to look at what **successful** learners do. What strategies do they use? What is it about them that helps or enables them to be successful?

In 1975, Joan Rubin wrote an article called, "What the 'good language learner' can teach us". She identified 7 strategies which 'good language learners' use:

1. They are willing and accurate guessers.
2. They have a strong drive (reason) to communicate.
3. Often they aren't inhibited.
4. They are conscious of the *way* things are said.
5. They practise.
6. They monitor what they say themselves, as well as the speech of others.
7. They listen carefully for meaning.

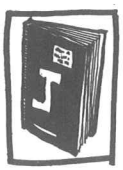


Spend some time thinking about either somebody you were at school with, or one of the learners in your school who is a 'good language learner'. Then re-read the seven strategies which Joan Rubin identified. Does the person you have thought of use most (or even all) of these strategies?

Now we want you to spend some time thinking about your own learners. And we want you to focus specifically on learning **English** as an *additional language.*

Activity 2 - What I think my learners know and can do in English

Spend a short while thinking quietly about your *own* learners. When do they hear English being used? When do they see English words? When do they need to use English **outside** school? When do they need to use English **in** school? In what ways does the English they learn and use **in school** fit with the English they meet **outside school?** How could you use the English knowledge they **bring** to school in your work with them?



Open your Journal, and write down your thoughts and responses to these questions. When you have finished writing, get together with three or four other teacher-learners and share what you have thought about and written down.

After you have had a brief discussion, write down in your Journal what English you think your learners know and can use. You will come back to this later.

You have spent some time thinking about your experiences of learning additional languages, and what your learners can do. But you will need to carry out some *research* to find out what your learners can actually do.

Activity 3 - Finding out what English my learners see, hear and use

Working with Grade 3s and older learners

You need to find out from your learners **4** sets of information. We suggest that each group focuses on just one set of information. This will mean that each group has something valuable to share with their peers, as well as gathering worthwhile information from the other learners. You will be the best judge as to how to arrange your groups.

Hand out a piece of paper to each group. Ask one (or two) group(s) to make a mind-map of when they **see** English outside school. The next group(s) can make a mind-map of when they **hear** English used outside school. The next group(s) should make a mind-map of when they **need to use** English outside school. The last group(s) should make a mind-map of when they **need to use** English **in** school.

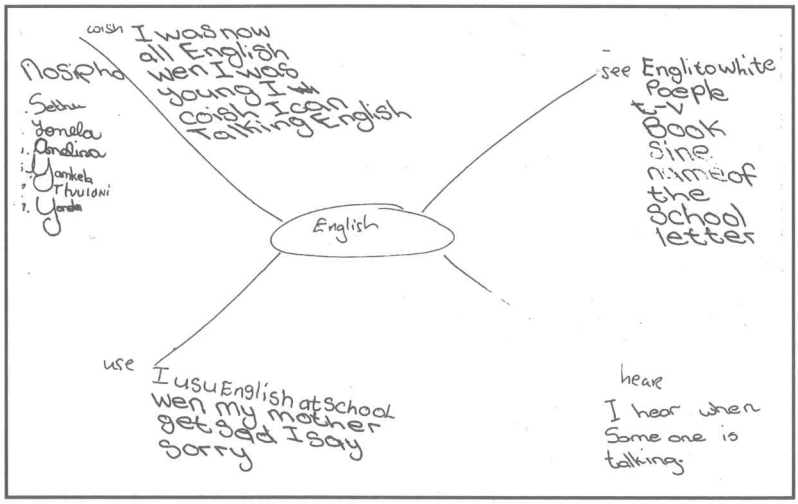
When we trialled this activity with Grade 4 learners at RH Godlo, we asked all the groups to think about each of these four aspects. This worked fairly well, but some groups concentrated on just the English they see and hear. As we left the school, we reflected on the experience, and Mike Chartres from the University of South Australia suggested that it might work better if each group focused on just **one** aspect, and then there would be even more reason for each group to share what they had discussed and recorded.

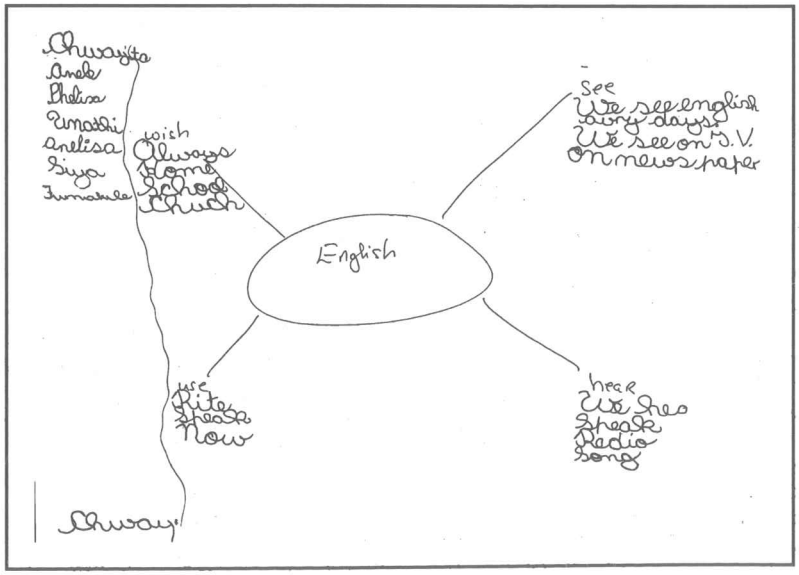
As your learners work, move around to listen to the discussions and to see what they are recording. This will

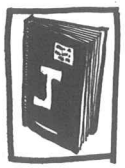
also provide you with a chance to help any groups who have misunderstood the instructions, or who need reassurance that what they are doing *is* what you have asked them to do. You will also be able to see when they are nearly finished.

When most groups have finished their task, give each group a chance to share what they have recorded on their mind-map with the rest of the class. If you have more than one group focusing on each set of information, make sure that each group gets a chance to contribute some ideas. Don't let the first group who reports back give all the ideas.

Then you have a choice. If you are working with a class of many pupils, and you have more than one group reporting, you could record their ideas on a large sheet of paper - one sheet for each set of information. Or you could get your learners to put all their mind-maps up, in sets around an appropriate label.







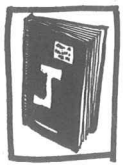
Later on the same day, spend some time going through what your learners recorded and reported. Compare this with what you thought they could do. What surprised you? Why? What were you right about? Be prepared to share this at the next face-to-face session.

Pre-school to Grade 2 learners

You will need to make a choice about whether you work with the whole class or whether you choose to work with a group. We suggest that if you have a large number of learners in your class, that you work with a group.

Another consideration is that sometimes when you have a large number, not all the learners are very interested in what is being discussed. And sometimes when you work with just a few learners the children are reluctant to speak. You will know what is most appropriate in your particular teaching situation.

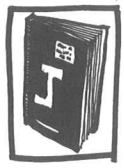
Make sure that you have some large sheets of paper, and either some kokis or fat crayons to record your learners' ideas. You can either make one mind-map and arrange your learners' ideas in four parts of the paper, or you can draw a mind-map for each set of information. What you decide to do will depend to some extent on the amount of English that your learners are exposed to. But be prepared to be surprised. Young children are very observant. They often notice and see things which we, as adults, miss! We also know that the amount of English to which young learners are exposed varies a great deal from one community to another, and also from one school to another. This will be partly influenced by the language policy of each school.



Later on the same day, spend some time going through what your learners recorded and reported. Compare this with what you thought the learners could do. What surprised you? Why? What were you right about? Be prepared to share this at the next face-to-face session.

In Unit 1 we thought about how we learn and acquire our primary language(s), and the role that care-givers play in that process. We looked at examples of care-givers **scaffolding** young children's communications. We thought about the **3 characteristics of care-giver speech.** And we looked at an example of a mother **modelling** language use, and the way the world is viewed by the community in which that young child was being reared.

Now we need to think about our role as teachers in helping our learners **in school** learn and acquire an additional language, in particular, English. When and how do you use English in your classroom? Why? When could your learners use the English vocabulary which they use in the classroom, **outside** school? In what ways is your approach to the teaching and learning of English as an additional language the **same** as they way you learnt English? In what ways is it **different?** In what ways is your approach to teaching English as an additional language like that of a care-giver communicating with a young child learning her/his primary language? Spend some time thinking carefully about these questions. Then open your Journal and write your responses. Leave a space after this entry so that you can add more thoughts as they occur to you.



Scaffolding

Let's start by thinking about how we can *scaffold* our learners' language when they are communicating in an additional language. Margaret Donaldson includes a very useful example in her book, *Children's Minds* (1978). Read it through carefully, and look especially for the way everybody in this anecdote *scaffolds meaning making* through the use of non-verbal communication.

> Imagine, for instance, the following scene. An English woman is in the company of an Arab woman and her two children, a boy of seven and a little girl of thirteen months who is just beginning to walk but is afraid to take more than a few steps without help. The English woman speaks no Arabic, the Arab woman and her son speak no English.
>
> The little girl walks to the English woman and back to her mother. Then she turns as if to start off in the direction of the English woman once again. But the latter now smiles, points to the boy and says: 'Walk to your brother this time.' At once the boy, understanding the situation though he understands not a word of the language, holds out his arms. The baby smiles, changes direction and walks to her brother. Like the older child, she appears to have understood the situation perfectly.
>
> These events occurred as I have described them. The thing to notice is that the words 'Walk to your brother this time' were such as to fit with complete appropriateness the patterns of interaction. All the participants understood the situation in the sense that they understood one another's intentions. The language

Context – the 'Here and Now'

Facial Expression and Gesture

Simple Words

Gesture

Facial Expression

> was unnecessary but it was uttered - and its meaning was highly predictable in the human context of its occurrence. What the people meant was clear. What the words meant could in principle be derived from that. (Donaldson, 1978:37)

In this passage you will see that the words which were spoken were related to what was happening at the time, and the sentence was simple. The words were related to the 'here and now' of the event. The toddler was about to walk towards the stranger again. But the stranger suggested she should walk to her brother instead.

The words were supported by gesture. The stranger pointed to the toddler's brother as she spoke, and the brother *guessing* what had been said, opened his arms to welcome his sister. Real communication took place.

This is a wonderful example of **real communication.** The words that were used were those that fitted the situation. There were no foolish questions. And instinctively everybody participated using non-verbal as well as verbal communication to ensure that the toddler could make meaning (or sense) of what was being said.

So how can we make sure that language learning is **real communication** in our classrooms? How can we provide opportunities for our learners to use language for **real communication** purposes?

Real communication

One of the most important aspects of care-giver speech is that it is **real communication.** What do we mean by *real communication?* When a teacher says to a child in a class, *"Walk to the door, Kholeka. What are you doing, Kholeka?"* and the child replies, *"I am walking to the door?"* is that **real communication?** Why is the teacher asking Kholeka what she is doing? Can't she see that Kholeka is walking to the door? Didn't she tell Kholeka to walk to the door? When would we really need to ask somebody what they are doing? Usually we would only ask a question like this if we couldn't **see** the person. So a 'speech event' like this is certainly **not** *real communication.*

*These questions are an example of **ukuhlalutya.** We are analysing a 'speech event' and looking at it carefully. We are asking critical questions about what is going on.*

Then the question is, what *is* 'real communication'? When we started to draft this umthamo, Jenny Barnett, from the University of South Australia, pointed out that when communication takes place there is usually a **gap** in information, and there is a desire to *close* that gap. Think of when you meet a colleague after a holiday. You would

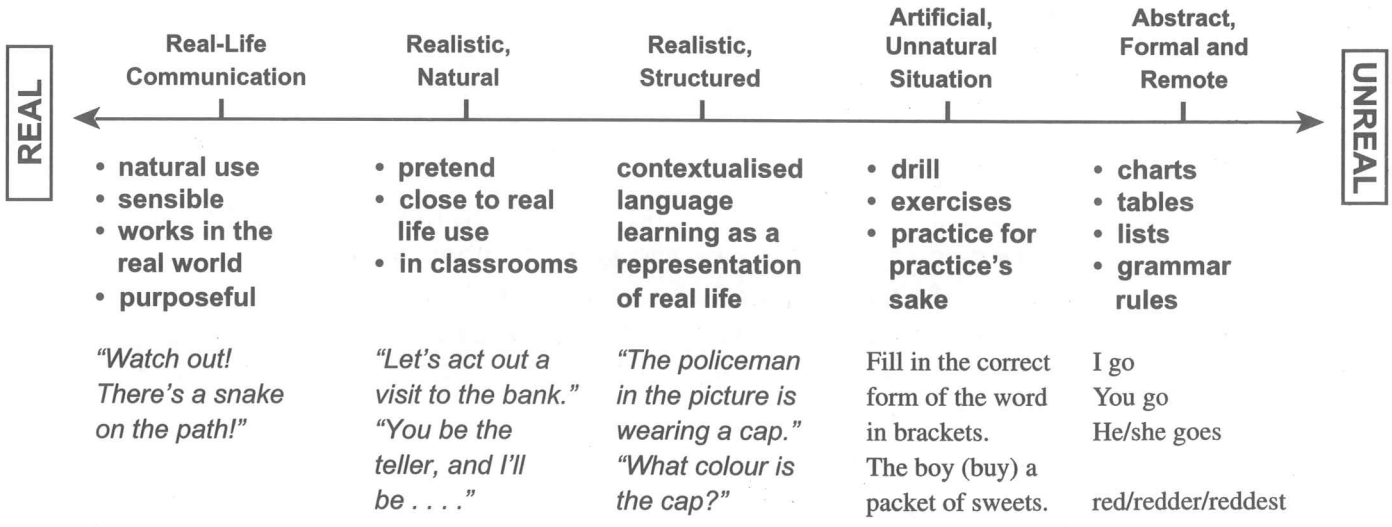
probably ask your colleague how her/his holiday was. You probably don't know how her/his holiday went. So there is a *gap* in the information you have. In order to close that gap, your colleague needs to share her/his experiences of the holiday.

So what *information-gaps* are there in the classroom? What do you know about your learners, and what *don't* you know? What gaps can you use as a context or basis for meaningful additional language learning activities to enable your learners as they learn to communicate in English in the world outside school?

In the Appendix we have included some important true stories of teachers using a **real** *information-gap* to get their learners to talk in additional languages. The interesting thing is that when there is a real reason to communicate, it's very difficult to stop the communication. Read the story of Nikki Clarke's experience in a township school in Gugulethu.

How can we make sure that real communication in English does take place in our classrooms. One way is to use **information-gap activities.** In the next Unit we will look at these activities in more detail.

Continuum of situations for language use and language learning



The idea of a continuum is useful when it is unrealistic to think of something as just one thing or its opposite. A classroom is never totally learner-centred or totally teacher-centred. In reality, there are many different variations between the two extremes. A continuum can help a teacher gradually change her practice by working towards becoming more learner-centred, so that more and more of what she does is towards the learner-centred ideal. We need to monitor what we do as teachers, so that more of what happens in our classrooms is to the left of the continuum of language use in school.

Unit 3 - Information-gap activities

In this Unit we are going to explore information-gap activities. You will carry out at least two activities with your learners and reflect in your Journal on what happens when you do so. Then you will share these experiences with other teacher-learners at your Centre.

For the first part of the **Key Activity,** we are including very detailed instructions for two options. One option is more appropriate for older learners, or learners who are more fluent in English. The other option is more appropriate for younger learners, or learners who are less fluent. You will need to decide which activity is most appropriate for your learners. We think you would find it interesting to try both options with different groups of learners at your school.

We are also including three double-page spreads of some additional information-gap activities. One or two of these ideas suggest ways in which you could use materials which you have used before for activities in previous imithamo. For example, you will see that we have described how you can use the *"Phata-phata bhokisi".* We expect you to choose one or two activities from these additional ideas to carry out with your learners, and to reflect carefully in your Journal on your experiences.

What are *information-gap activities?* Information-gap activities are tasks in which the participants need to share information so that they can *bridge,* or close, a gap. In other words, one person has information which another person (or other persons) needs, or wants to know. Sometimes one person has all the information, and the other(s) needs that information to complete a specific task. In other activities everybody has some information, and through sharing all the information, they are able to complete a particular task, or to solve a problem. The result of this is that there is a *real reason* to use language, and to communicate.

In Option A of the **Key Activity**, learners work in pairs. Each person has information which their partner needs to find out. They ask one another questions in order to elicit that information, and then report on what they have found. In Option B, learners work together to help one another share their information with the teacher.

Activity 4 - Key Activity Part 1

Option A - What's in your picture?

(For learners who are more fluent in English)

Before you carry out this activity with your learners, you will need to look for, cut out, mount, and cover lots and lots of ***different*** pictures. (We found that the pictures which work best are pictures of people, clothes, food, animals, transport, and things we use in the house. But you know your learners best, and will know what they are interested in.)

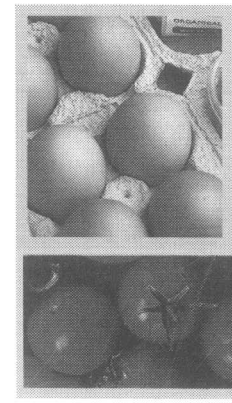
First of all look for the pictures. Then cut them out carefully, and mount them. If you cover them, or have them laminated, they will last a very long time, and you will be able to use them again and again for many different activities.

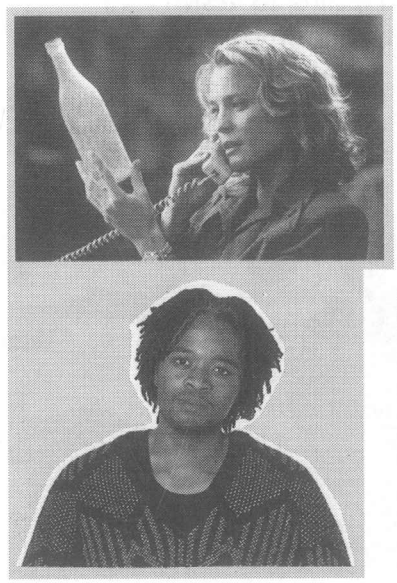
You will need at least enough pictures so that you have one for each child. You also need to make sure that you have an even number of each *kind* or *type* of picture. This is very important for the first part of the task. Here learners must pair up and find a partner with a card of the same type.

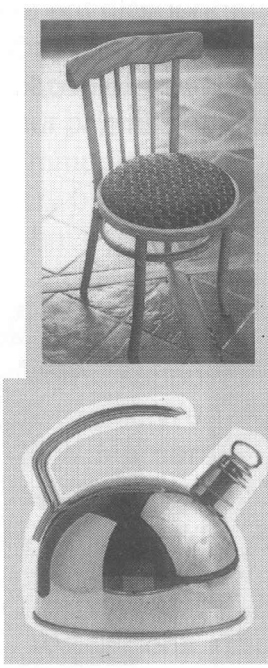
Finally, we suggest that you work with groups of no more than 8 members. Make sure that you carry out the activity with one group at a time. When we trialled this activity, the class we worked with was not a big class, so we worked with the whole group. But we needed to provide quite a lot of support for less confident learners.

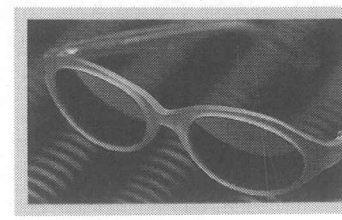
Viv found that this process took her a whole day!

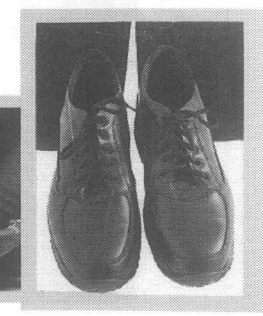
*The cost of a large sheet of coloured card **A1** was about R4. Viv used two A1 sheets, and made 84 cards, 12 x 10 cm, altogether. The cost of laminating was R35, and we paid an additional R10 for the pictures to be cut into cards.*

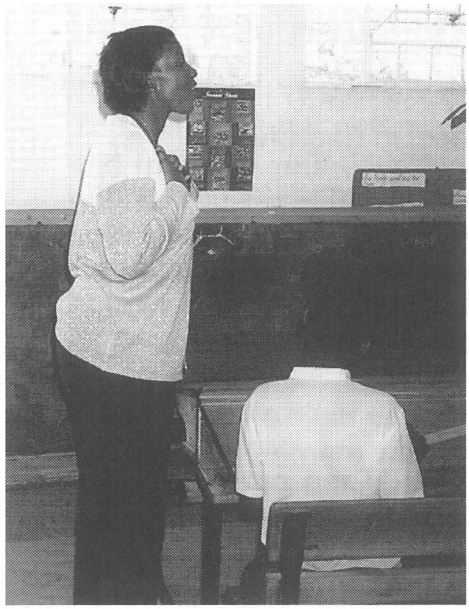




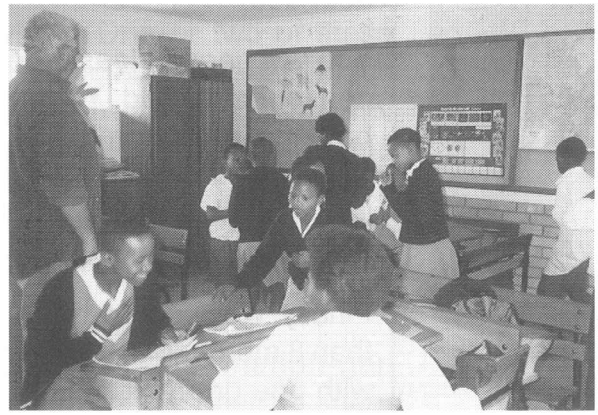






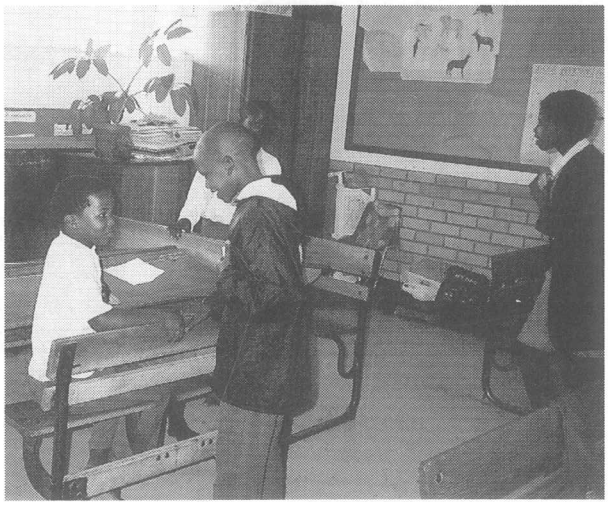


When you are with your learners, set the task. When we trialled this activity with Grades 5 and 6 at Mpongo Primary School, Nomhlophe gave the children very clear instructions in isiXhosa first. She explained that we were going to hand out pictures, and that each person would get one, but she emphasised that when each child got her/his card, s/he should keep her/his card a **secret.** The children should not show their cards to anybody!

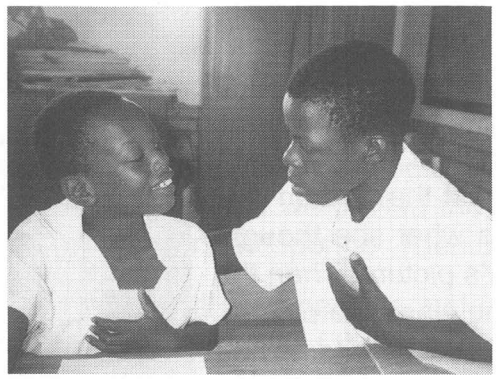


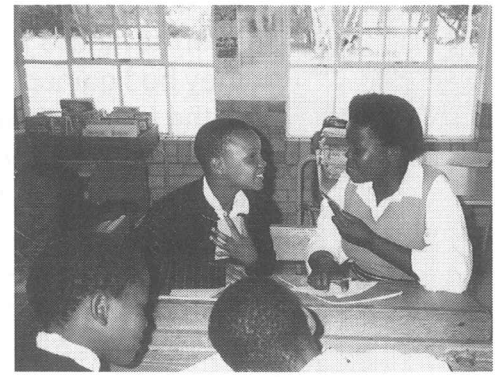
We asked the learners to find a partner who had a card of the same kind or type by asking a question about the picture on the other learners' cards. For example, they could ask, *"Have you got a picture of a person?"* We found that some of the newer learners in the class were not very brave about asking questions in English. They needed some support from us. But it was interesting to see how after just a short time the learners began to support and help (scaffold) one another.

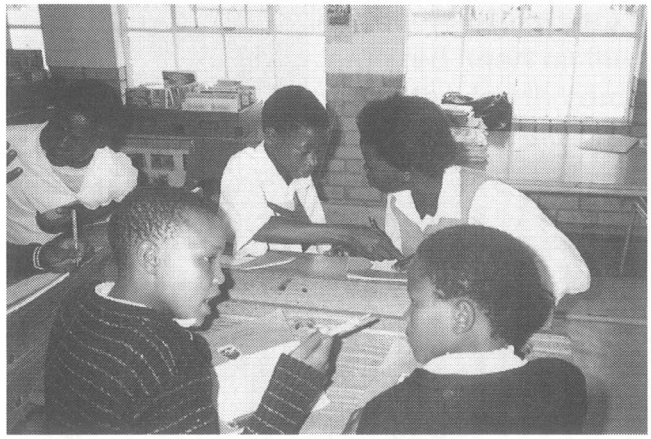
When they have found a partner with the same kind of card (for example, both pictures are of food, or both pictures are of transport), the learners need to work in pairs to ask questions about each other's picture.



Nomhlophe gave out some pieces of paper for her learners to write on. First of all they wrote a heading at the top (eg *Food*). Then they wrote down the answers which their partner gave to the questions that they asked.







Handiswa

~~It is a bird~~
It is small animal
It is ~~fly~~ sit in the ~~[redacted]~~ tree
It is a bird
~~It~~ the colour is black and white

Bongani ~~[redacted]~~ ~~Bongani~~

Aswers

① It is a person
② It is a man
③ The colour of clothes is Black and White.
④ The colour of man is Light Brown.
⑤ The man ~~in~~ the chin is a hair.

All the time, the learners kept their pictures a secret from their partner. However, there were some learners who were not so confident, and they found it difficult to keep their picture hidden.

Akhona

It
① ~~[redacted]~~ is car
② ~~it's~~ Blue
③ it is small
④ it is ~~[redacted]~~
⑤
⑥

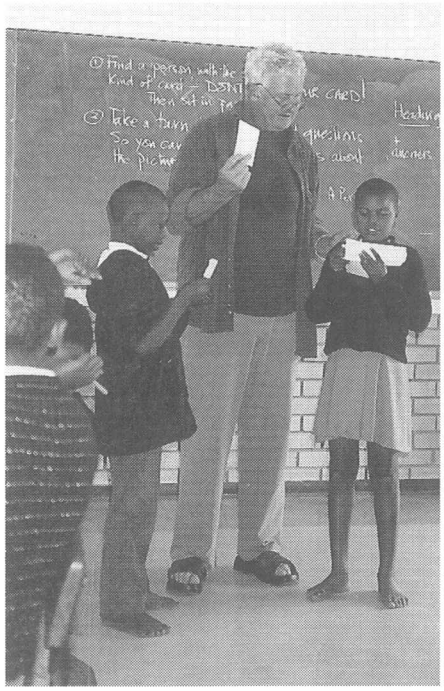
Although Nomhlophe's learners wrote sentences, it would have been fine if they had written just one word answers. In fact, that is how we speak when we are having a conversation with somebody in our *primary* language. It is perfectly normal and acceptable communication. For example, Q: Is it a big animal? A: Yes, very big. Q: How many legs does it have? A: Four. Q: Does it have a big nose? A: Yes. Q: Does it have big ears? A: Yes. Q: Is it an elephant? A: Yes.

My Name Sinethemba

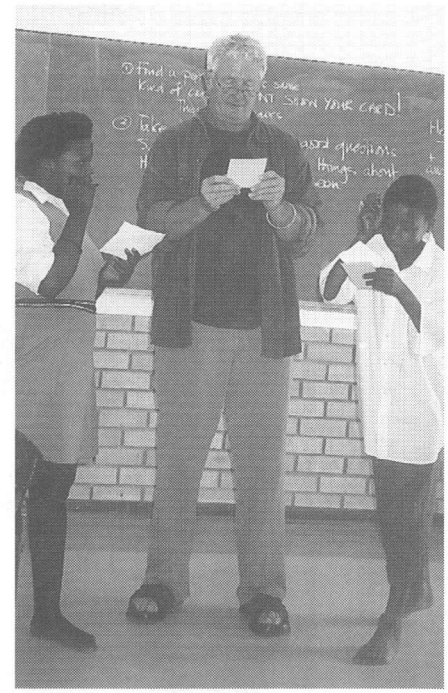
It is a big animal
big ears (eyes)
it is long nose
It is grey

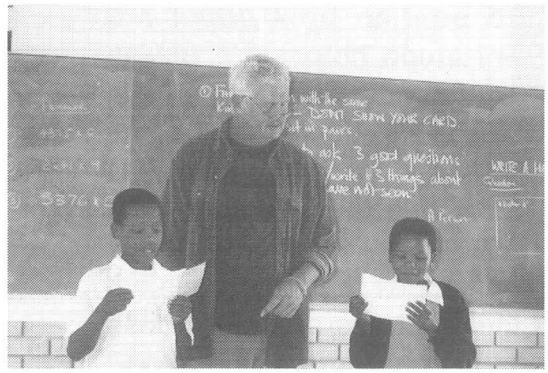
As the learners asked each other questions, we moved from pair to pair, helping and supporting learners who were not sure what questions to ask. We consciously scaffolded their language use. Some learners needed us to model the questions. We discovered that by finding out what a learner wanted to say, we could then whisper in their ear how to say that in English. Then they could repeat this. After doing this a few times, even the children who lacked confidence were able to initiate some questions.

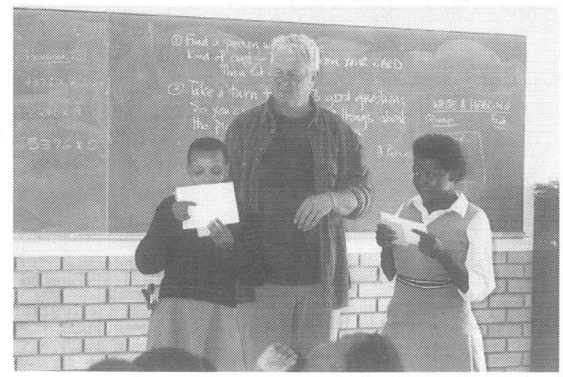
While we were developing this umthamo, Mthunzi told us about a language learning experience he had as a student at university, when a visiting lecturer used this method. It is known as the 'Silent Way'.



When everybody had asked at least three questions, and written down at least three things about their partner's picture, we asked the learners to share what they had found out. They were keen to share the information which they had gained. They stood with Alan at the front of the class, and took turns to share what they had written. Each pair took a turn. First the one on one side told the class what she thought was in her partner's picture. Then the partner showed the class the picture. Then the learner on the other side had a chance to describe the hidden picture, before it was revealed.

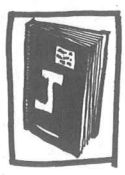






Because we had a lot of pictures, we were able to collect the first set of pictures, and then hand out another set. This time the learners knew what they had to do, and there was less uncertainty. We were able to help the less confident learners, and quite quickly all the pairs were sitting down, asking one another questions, and giving answers, in English.

Nomhlophe teaches a combined class, and it was clear that the Grade 6s who have already been with her for a year, willingly helped the newer learners (the Grade 5s) and supported them as they carried out this activity. That is a real advantage of working with more than one Grade.



Later on the same day, open your Journal and reflect **thoughtfully** and **critically** on what happened when you carried out this activity with learners. What surprised you? Why? How did you feel about the instructions you gave? In what ways could you have made the instructions clearer? What went well? What disappointed you? Why? What would you do differently next time? Then write down your responses to these questions.

Activity 4 - Key Activity Part 1

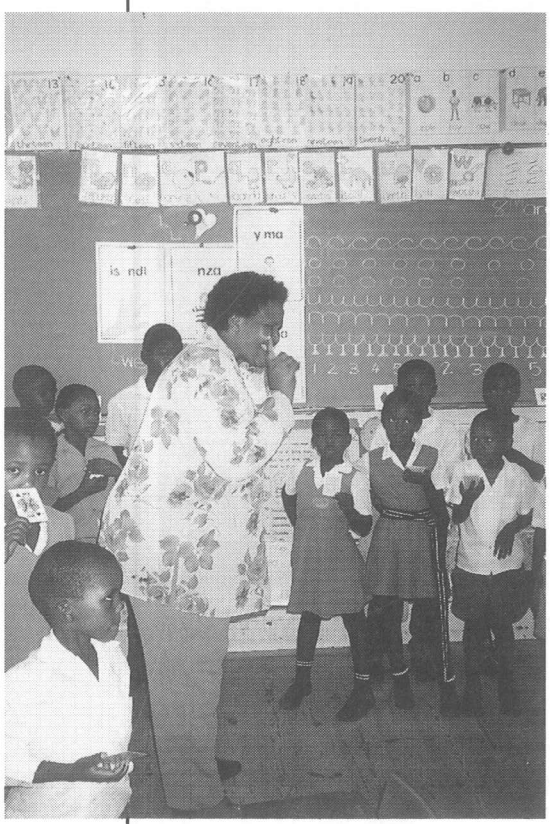
Option B - Hearts, Diamonds, Spades and Clubs

(For learners who are less fluent in English)

You will need a pack of playing cards for this activity. First of all, decide if you will take out, or keep aside, the picture cards (that is the King, Queen and Jack of each suit), as well as the Jokers. We chose to remove these cards when we trialled the activity with Grade 1 and 2 learners at Mpongo. Then shuffle the cards well.

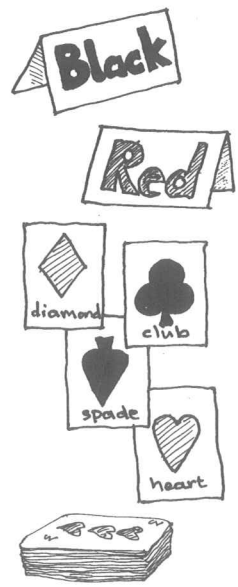
You will also need to make 6 other flash cards of your own. On one of these cards print, in large clear letters, with a **red** koki the word, **Red.** On a second card print in large clear letters with a **black** koki the word, **Black.** Then draw a large **red heart** on the third card, and a large **red diamond** on the fourth card. On the fifth card draw a large **black spade.** And on the last card draw a large **black club.**

You have a choice about how you carry out this activity. It will depend on the number of learners you have in your class. We suggest that you work with at least 20 learners so that they can have a rich learning experience. But if you try to work with more than 40 learners, you will need more than one set of playing cards.

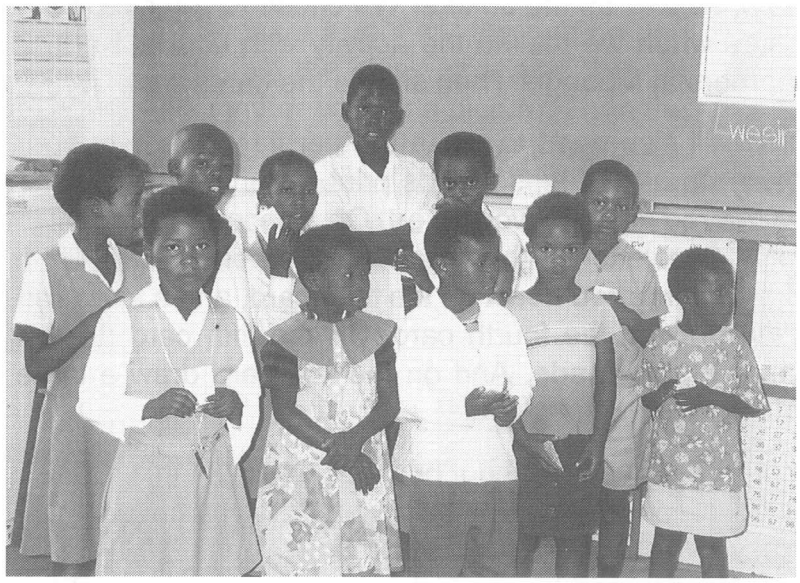


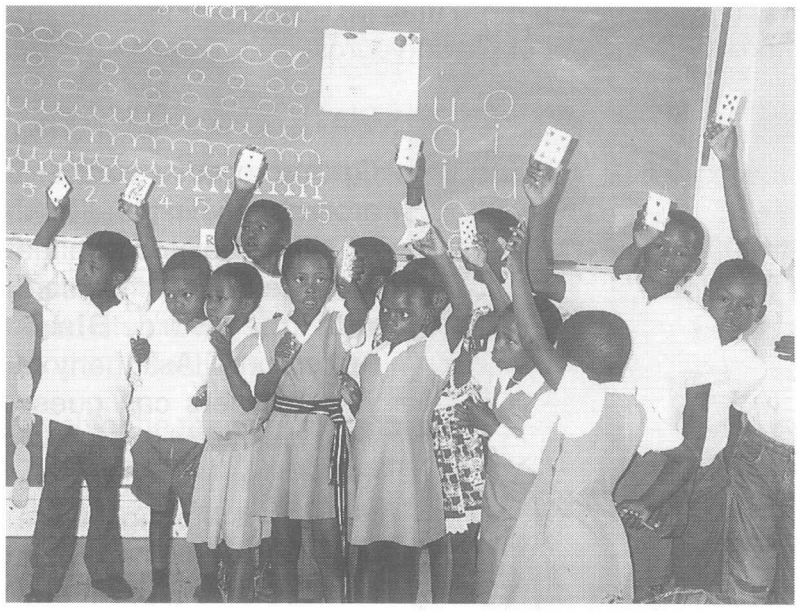
Step 1

Gather your learners around you. First of all hold up either the card with the word **Red** on it, or the card with the word **Black** written on it. Ask if any of your learners can guess what the word says. We found that the Grade 1s and 2s at Mpongo were quick to guess. Then place the card on a table in one part of the classroom. Next, take the other card, and do the same thing. When your learners have guessed what the word says, place the card on a table in a different part of the classroom.



Then deal a card to each child, and ask the children with **red** cards to stand around the card with the word **Red** on it, and the children with **black** cards to go and stand near the card with the word **Black.** We found that the children helped one another and very quickly we had two sets of learners. To do this they talked about red and black cards, and supported their talk with gestures and by pointing.

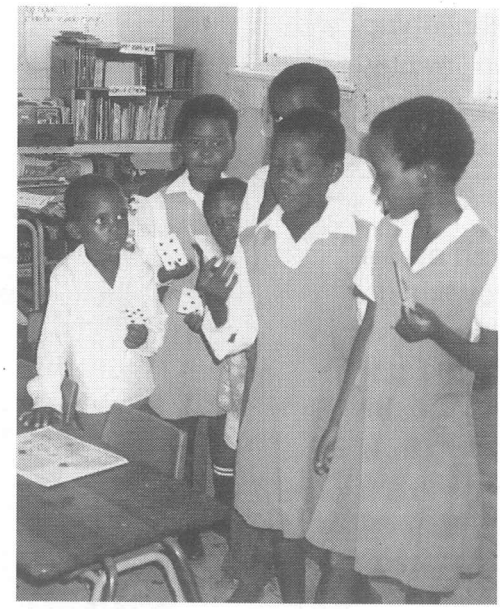




Step 2

Now hold up one of the four cards on which you have drawn a **heart,** a **diamond,** a **spade** and a **club,** and written the word. Ask your learners to identify each one. If they give you a word in their primary language, praise them and say the English term. In this way you are feeding in English vocabulary.

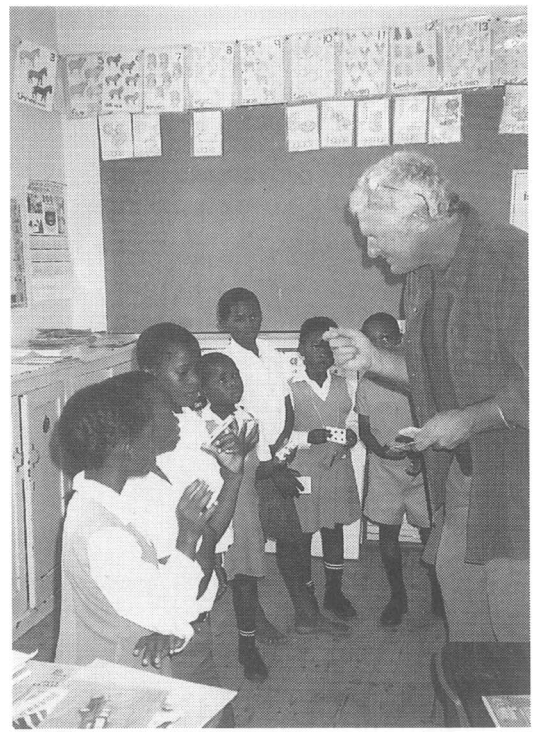
When you have shown all the cards, put each one on a different table. Then ask your learners to look carefully at their cards, and to go and stand by the table with the shape that matches their card. When we asked the children at Mpongo to do this, we found that they automatically helped each other.



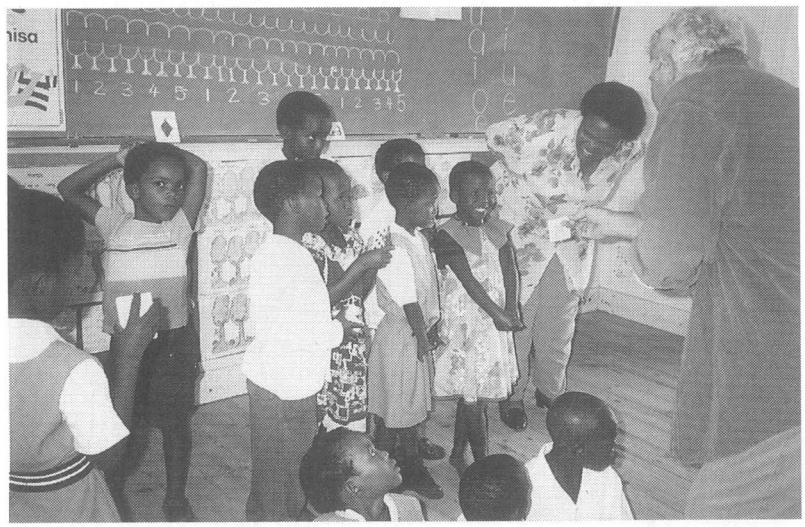
Step 3

Now ask your learners in each set to place themselves in order from the smallest number to the largest number. We are sure that you will find that your learners will help each other in this step, too.

To conclude this activity, Alan collected the cards. As he did this, he asked each child what card s/he was holding. When he had collected all the cards into a pack, he sat down and held up the pack of cards so that they were facing the children. He did **not** look to see what the top (or front) card was.



Then he asked the children to tell him which card they could see. They responded quickly. He removed the card, and showed them another card, and again, they had no difficulty telling him what the card was. We were impressed at the way the learners picked up the English vocabulary so quickly, and how readily they used it.



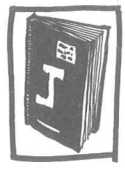
Later on the same day, open your Journal and reflect thoughtfully and critically on what happened when you carried out this activity with learners. What surprised you? Why? How did you feel about the instructions you gave? In what ways could you have made the instructions clearer? What went well? What disappointed you? Why? What would you do differently next time? Then write down your responses to these questions.

Now you have carried out an information-gap activity with your learners. We have given you detailed guidelines to follow. For the second part of the **Key Activity** you will need to select at least one or two of the activities on pages 28 to 33 and try them with your learners.

Activity 5 - Key Activity Part 2

First of all, read through all the additional ideas we have suggested. Then choose one which you feel you and your learners would enjoy. If you need to make some materials, or find particular items, do so before carrying out the activity. Then plan exactly what you will do, the instructions you will give your learners (make sure that you use simple English, and think about the gestures you can use to support the words), and make sure that you have your Journal handy so that you can make notes in it if you want to. Then carry out the activity with your learners.

If you want or are able to, make notes of what you observe and notice in your Journal. This will help you when you reflect on this experience later in the day.



Later, on the same day, open your Journal and reflect thoughtfully and critically on what happened when you carried out this activity with learners. What surprised you? Why? How did you feel about the instructions you gave? In what ways could you have made the instructions clearer? What went well? What disappointed you? Why? What would you do differently next time? Then write down your responses to these questions.

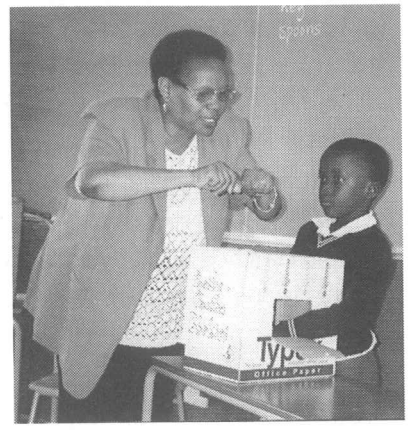
Then think about the other ideas. Which one will you try next? Why? Make a note of this in your Journal as well. After you have carried out that information-gap activity with your learners, you will need to reflect on the experience and record your thoughts in your Journal.

In the Introduction to this umthamo, we pointed out that we expect you to continue to use information-gap activities for additional language learning throughout the year. You will need to reflect carefully and regularly in your Journal on what you observe. What effects are these activities having on your learners' attitudes to, and learning of, English as an additional language? How have these activities affected your approach to the teaching of additional languages? How has your teaching of English as an additional language developed? You need to be prepared to share your experiences, and provide evidence of using information-gap activities at the Portfolio Presentation at the end of the year.

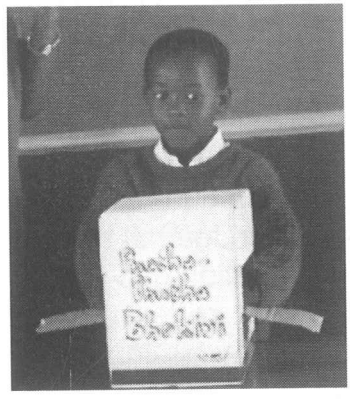
Additional Ideas

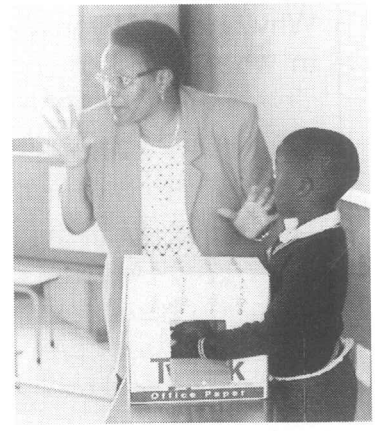
Idea 1 - The Feely Box

You will need your *Phatha-Phatha Bhokisi* (or Feely Box) which you made for Umthamo 11. As we pointed out on page 4 of that umthamo, the Feely Box makes a wonderful tool for language work. It can be used to develop, extend and sharpen learners' communication, and use of their primary *and* additional languages.



You will need to put inside some items which your learners are familiar with, and use regularly. Make sure that there are enough items so that all the children can find something. Then you can adapt the activity to suit the level of fluency of your learners.





Less fluent learners can whisper to you in their primary language what they are holding. Then, you can give the rest of the group a clue in English, supporting your words with gestures. This could be something to do with the ***use*** of the item, or to do with its shape, or what it looks like. When somebody guesses the correct answer, the child with her/ his hand in the Feely Box can take it out, and show the rest of the group what s/he is holding.

If your learners are more fluent in English, get them to ask quite specific questions, and describe more exactly what they are holding. Make sure that **all** the learners in the group get a chance to find something in the box.

Idea 2 - What did you have for breakfast?

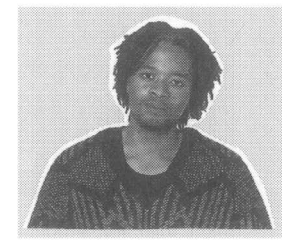
For this activity, you need to make enough small question cards so that each learner gets one. Think of the English which your learners can use, and the things that they do. Then write one question on each card, for example, *What did you have for breakfast?* Try to think of *real* questions, so that your learners are not asking somebody a question to which they know the answer. Other questions could be, *What are you doing on Saturday?* or *What did you see on the way to school?* Think of questions your learners can answer.

Alan tried this activity some years ago, somebody visiting his class was amazed at the way everybody in the class was talking at the same time. Alan just walked around and listened to the talk, providing support when it was requested.

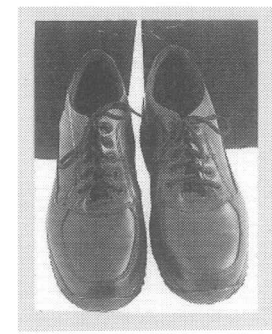
When a learner has read the question on her/his card to her/his partner, and heard the answer, s/he passes on the card to the next person, and gets another question card and another partner. Then the questions and answers start again.

Idea 3 - Drawing

For this activity you can use the pictures you used for Umthamo 1, or the pictures from this umthamo. In Umthamo 1, you found pictures of people communicating. You will remember that you asked your learners what was happening in those pictures, and what the people were saying.

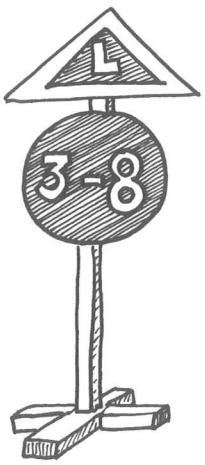


This time get your learners to work in pairs. Give one child in each pair a picture. Tell the children who have the pictures not to show their pictures to anybody else. And the children who are drawing must hide their drawings until they are complete. The other children will need paper, pencils and crayons. The task is for the children with the pictures to tell their partners what they see in their picture. For example, *Draw 2 women. They're sitting. One is wearing a blue dress.* When the child who is drawing has finished, the two children can compare the drawing with the picture. The success of the drawing will depend on the instructions given by the child with the picture and the listening skills of the drawer!



If your learners are more fluent, they will be able to give quite specific instructions to their partners. If they are less fluent in English, they will give less detailed instructions.

You can adapt this activity by giving your learners cards with shapes (circles, triangles, and rectangles), simple drawings of everyday things (the sun, moon, stars), or words or phrases written on them. Again, they will need to work in pairs to tell one another what to draw. The level of difficulty will depend on how fluent your learners are in English.



Idea 4 - Where's the ball?

Start off by handing each learner a sheet of newspaper. Then tell your learners to put the hand that they usually write with behind their backs. Tell them to take their sheet of newspaper with the other hand and to scrunch it up into a ball. As you tell them this, do the same thing yourself. In this way, you will be supporting your instructions with actions.

When you are doing this, you are using an approach known as TPR, which stands for Total Physical Response. This is because you are giving instructions, and you aren't expecting your learners to say anything. They are simply responding physically by carrying out your instructions.

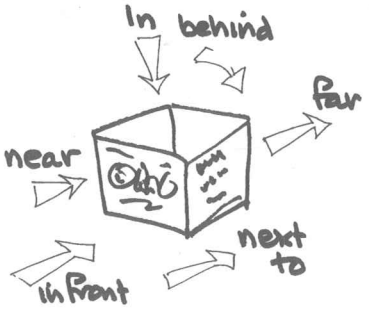
Next, take a few plastic bags, and collect the newspaper 'balls' in the plastic bags. When each bag is full, tie the handles together firmly. Make sure that none of the newspaper balls can escape. Now you have several safe 'balls'. You can use these in your classroom, without running the risk of breaking windows!

Throw one of the 'balls' to a learner, and tell the learner to catch the ball. Then tell the learner to throw the ball to somebody else, and to tell that person to catch the ball. Don't spend too long on this part.

Next, you will need an empty carton or cardboard box. If your learners are fairly fluent in English you can move onto the information-gap part of the activity. But if your learners do not know very much English, it's a good idea to spend a few minutes putting the 'ball' **in, next to, in front of, behind,** and even **under** the box.

Then turn your back on your learners, and throw the 'ball' over your shoulder/head. Ask your learners, *Is the ball in the box?* This is a real question because you can't see where the 'ball' is. If your learners respond *No,* then you can ask them, *Where is the ball?* If your learners are beginners, you will need to help and scaffold their responses. But we found that even beginners picked up the idea very quickly.

Once you have played this game with your learners a few times, you will find that they can play it themselves. You can encourage them to adapt this activity by incorporating other items.



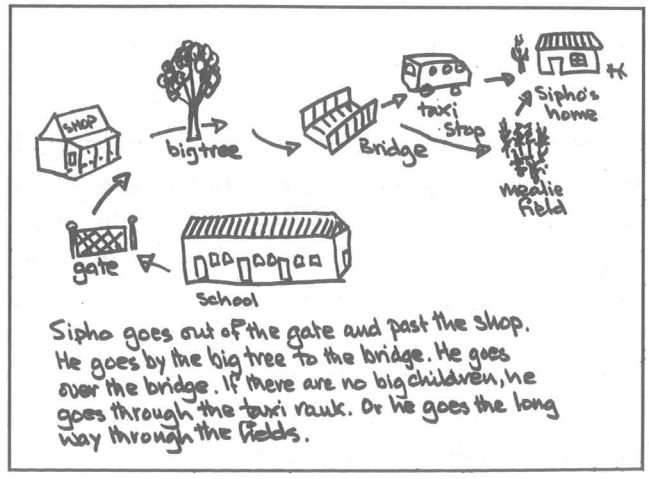
Idea 5 - Which way do you come to school?

We suggest that you work with a group the first time you try this activity. Spend some time with the group talking about where they live, and the route which they take to get to school. Don't be afraid to code switch, and to use both English and isiXhosa. But try to avoid translating into isiXhosa everything you say in English. Try to use simple, uncomplicated English, and support your words with gestures. If your learners are not very fluent, you may need to use isiXhosa for this part of the activity. But, just like a parent, you can feed in new vocabulary, which in this case will be English.

Start by putting up (or in the centre of the table) a large piece of paper. In the middle, draw a simple drawing of the school. Then ask one of the learners to tell you where s/he lives. Try to find out how close or far away her/his home is. Next, ask her/him to draw her/his home on the large sheet of paper. Then ask her/him to tell you what buildings s/he passes as s/he comes to school each day. Does s/he pass a shop? Does s/he pass a church? Let her/him draw these buildings on the large sheet of paper between her/his home and the school. Then ask her/him to draw the path s/he usually takes. Then ask another learner to do the same.

Now you have a choice. Either you can ask the other learners in the group to draw their routes to school on the same map. Or you can tell your learners to work alone, or in pairs or threes to make maps of their routes. If your learners first work alone, afterwards they can share what they have drawn with one or two other learners. Then they can try to fit their maps together. This will entail discussion, and the need to communicate. If they work in pairs or small groups, they will need to discuss and communicate as they create their maps.

Encourage them to try to use as much English as they can. Praise them for their efforts. This work will involve vocabulary like *left* and *right,* as well as other direction words.

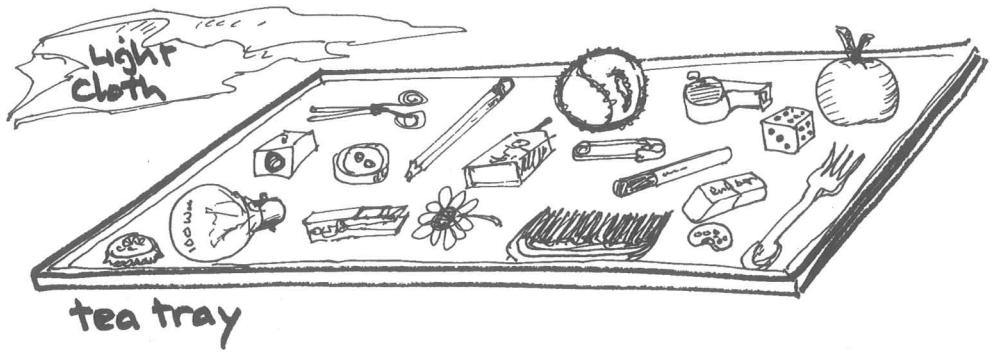


Idea 6 - Kim's Game

We are not sure of the origins of **Kim's Game,** but we know that it is a memory game that used to be quite popular in the Boy Scouts and Cubs, and Girl Guides and Brownies. The game works like this.

Before the start of the game, set out about 20 common items in a pattern on a tea-tray. Then cover the items with a cloth so that they are hidden from those who will play the game. At a given moment, remove the cloth and give the players a short time to carefully observe the items on the tray. The challenge is three-fold. The players must try to remember

- what they saw (name items)
- what the items looked like (describe items)
- where they were placed (describe positions).



Then repalce the cloth to hide the items and get your learners to try and see how much, or what they can remember. This game is usually played as an individual challenge for each player.

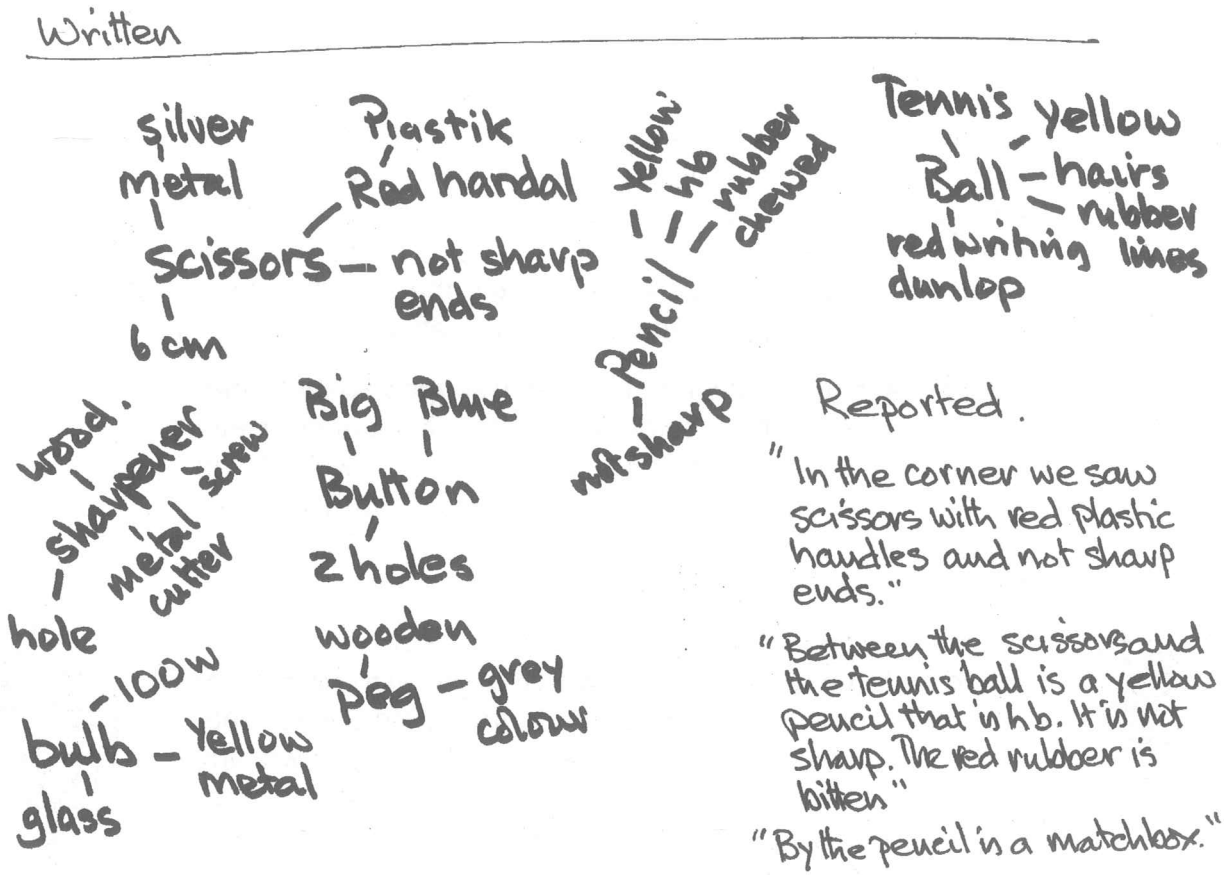
We think that this game has potential as a good activity for meaningful communication and learning in an additional language, if children work in groups of 3 or more to share what they remember. The extra challenge will be for them to try to play the game in English. We feel that playing the game as a group will give learners real reasons to go for English as they name, recall and describe what they remember.

They will need to share and co-operate to help each other get the best result. Because different learners will remember different items, they will have a real need to fill in the gaps as they share and compare what they remember. They will have to think of names for items. They will also have to think of words to describe colours, features, size and position. It would be an ideal chance for the teacher to observe and assess how her learners cope with these real communication problems in the additional language.

Remember we haven't tried this ourselves, but if we were to, we would plan to give each group a blank sheet of paper to represent the tray. Then, depending on their age, the groups could draw or record all the details of what was remembered. As they do this, there will be lots of reasons to talk, to ask questions, to find words to describe, and to ask for translations to help each other find ways to say things.

You might observe how learners 'scaffold' language learning for each other. One may know the word 'metal' in English and help the one who only knows *'intsimbi.* Over time, you could return to the game and keep it interesting by changing the items. You could also assess progress in the additional language. What can learners do that they couldn't do before? Do you have evidence of how they have helped each other learn more about using the additional language. How are their communication skills growing. What developments do you see evidence of?

Planning and trying this activity will be quite a challenge for you and we would really like to hear how it goes.



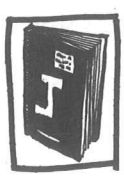
Unit 4 - Appraising additional language learning

In Umthamo 27 you thought about assessment, and carried out several assessment activities with your learners. In that umthamo we discussed *diagnostic assessment, formative assessment,* and *summative assessment.* The assessment activities in that umthamo which you and your learners completed were *'real'* activities. By *'real'* we mean that the activities were meaningful. They were not just meaningless tasks, requiring your learners to simply **recall** and **repeat** what they had been told and memorised. The purpose of those assessment tasks was to find out what your learners ***knew,*** not what they ***did not know.***

In this Unit, we have included a Reading which comes from a recent Journal article. The article focuses on assessing the English which Spanish-speaking learners have learned. This article shows how a teacher who is concerned about providing opportunities for her learners to work in their ***ZPDs*** (zones of proximal development), tries to create meaningful tasks in which they can *scaffold* each other's learning. Then she can assess how much of this language learning they have *internalised.* We were very interested to find evidence that the learners could *scaffold* one another's language learning.

When we were writing this Unit, there were some people from the Open University in England visiting the DEP. We talked about the ways in which we have tried to help you read, think about and reflect on academic texts. We showed our visitors Umthamo 33 where we took a passage from Trevor Cairney's book, *Pathways to Literacy,* and then wrote comments in the margin. We explained that we did this to *model* what we think when we read and reflect on a text.

Jenny Leach from the Open University suggested that when we introduce a text into another umthamo it might be useful to write in the kinds of questions we think of as we read an academic text. So you will see that in the margin of this Reading we have included some questions we had as we read, re-read, and reflected on the text.



As you read this Reading, take careful note of the questions which we have written. We suggest that you also write down your ***own*** questions. Open your Journal before you read, and write the date. Then, as you read, write down any questions which come to mind as you think and reflect on the text. We found it valuable to read, and re-read this article and suggest you do the same.

A Vygotskian approach to evaluation in foreign language learning contexts

Andréa Machado de Almeida Mattos

This study is based on the Vygotskian concepts of the zone of proximal development, scaffolding, private speech, and task and activity, as presented by Lantolf and Appel (1994). The research design draws on work by Donato (1994) and Coughlan and Duff (1994), and applies their ideas to suggest a sociocultural approach to the evaluation of EFL learners, which provides a better setting for language learning and teaching.

What do I know about Vygotsky? What have I read about him and his ideas? How has he influenced our ideas about learning and teaching?

Introduction

This paper reports on the results of a small-scale research project applying Vygotskian concepts to the evaluation of English as a Foreign Language, and suggesting that language assessment should be adapted to meet more 'real-life' learning situations. The study was initially based on an article by Richard Donato (1994), which used the concepts of zone of proximal development (ZPD) and scaffolding to demonstrate L2 acquisition through interaction in a social context. Schinke-Llano (1993: 123), describes the ZPDs as being 'the area in which learning takes place', while according to Lantolf and Appel (1994: 10), Vygotsky described it as:

What do I understand by the 'zone of proximal development'?

> the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.

Thus, for Vygotsky, the mental development of a child is distributed along stages: the child progresses to a more advanced stage when s/he is able to carry out alone certain tasks for which, in the previous stage, s/he would have needed the help of an adult (or 'more capable peer') to perform succesfully. The term 'scaffolding' exactly describes the sort of help the child gets from the adult when s/he is not able to perform the task. Donato (1994: 40) explains the concept by saying that:

> in social interaction a knowledgeable participant can create, by means of speech, supportive conditions in which the novice can participate in, and extend, current skills and knowledge to higher levels of competence.

Donato demonstrates in his article that scaffolded help can be obtained through collaborative work among peers of the same level of competence in L2 acquisition settings, and not only through the

Can children at the same level really scaffold and support one another as they use an additional language?

unidirectional help of a more capable peer or expert, as the majority of research on scaffolding has shown.

Still following Donato, the present research also makes use of the concept of internalization, which is explained in the following way:

What does internalization mean?

> During problem solving, the experienced individual is often observed to guide, support, and shape actions of the novice who, in turn, *internalizes* the expert's strategic processes (*ibid.* 1994: 37).[1]

This research also used the notions of task and activity, as defined by Coughlan and Duff (1994: 175), to show how different subjects interpret the proposed objective of the same task. These authors suggest that:

> a task is a kind of *behavioural blueprint* provided to subjects in order to elicit linguistic data. On the other hand an activity comprises the behaviour that is actually produced when an individual (or a group) performs a task. It is the process, as well as the outcome, of a task.

When I set my learners tasks, are they all interested in what I ask them to do? What might they be interested in? Why?

In other words, the task is what subjects are supposed to do, following previously defined objectives, in order to provide data for research in language acquisition. A task has its own objectives, which may have been proposed by the researcher or by a language teacher. However, different language learners may have their own interpretation of the objective proposed for a task. The activity, though, has no previously defined objectives, so in order to complete the task at hand, participants set their own objectives, which may be different from those intended by the researcher/teacher. Participants therefore act according to the activity they set for themselves, that is, according to their own objectives. Different participants may also act in different ways, precisely because they may have formed different interpretations of a task, and thus set different objectives for themselves, and engage in different activities. This point will be further clarified and illustrated through the data presented in this study.

When have I noticed one or more of my learners trying to find out something different from what I have asked them to look for? Why did they do this?

A final issue examined in the present research is the presence of private speech in the data collected. Private speech is 'a means of self-guidance in carrying out an activity beyond one's current level of competence' (Donato 1994: 48). According to Schinke-Llano (1993: 123), 'private speech represents an effort on the part of the individual to regain control of the task situation'.

Study design and procedures

As already stated, in the first instance this study is based on Donato's research on scaffolding. which demonstrated that when learners of a second language are working in co-operative tasks, they 'create a context of shared understanding in which the negotiation of language form and meaning co-occurs' (1994: 43). The two purposes of the study, therefore, are (1) to find examples of scaffolding between subjects during the performance of a proposed co-operative task, and (2) to find evidence of language learning resulting from scaffolded interaction.

I wonder what the author means by "co-operative tasks"? What does she mean by "language form"?

The present study employs a two-phase research design, in which each phase makes use of the same instrument: a picture-story by Mark Fletcher, specially designed to be photocopied and used as classroom resource material, and originally published in *English Teaching Professional* (see Appendix). During the first *preparation* phase, the researcher was not present, and subjects were asked to discuss the pictures together co-operatively in order to make up a coherent story. Subjects were given 15–20 minutes to finish the task, and were instructed not to memorize the story. They were also asked to speak in English as much as possible, and to avoid the use of their mother tongue. The purpose of this phase was to give them time to negotiate L2 form and meaning in free interaction, so that scaffolding could be observed. In the second, 'presentation' phase, which immediately followed the first one, each subject was asked to tell the story they had created to the researcher. The purpose of this second phase was to observe whether internalization due to scaffolding during the preparation phase was evident. Both phases were recorded on an audio-tape, and subsequently transcribed. The protocols from these two phases constituted the data for this study.

When do I give my learners a chance to discuss pictures and make their own interpretations? Why?

So teachers give their learners time to prepare for an evaluation or assessment of the additional language which they have been teaching their learners!

The subjects were four volunteers whose English level of competence was around FCE[2] level. They worked in pairs during the preparation phase but were interviewed separately during the presentation phase. Subjects in each pair were well used to working collaboratively in previous learning situations, but neither pair knew the other. The names of the subjects have been changed.

I wonder what she means by "FCE[2] level"? Maybe if I look at the end of the article I will find an explanation?

Findings

The data were analysed for different types of evidence. In the case of protocols from the preparation phase, the analysis was aimed at finding examples of scaffolded interaction between subjects, while protocols from the presentation phase were analysed for examples of internalization of the scaffolded passages present during the preparation phase. It was assumed, once again following Donato, that if a subject who had received help during the preparation phase was able to appropriately reproduce the scaffolded passage (word or phrase) during the presentation phase, this would constitute sufficient evidence to support the hypothesis that language development was taking place as a result of scaffolding.

In which umthamo did we read about "protocols"? I'm sure that it was a maths umthamo. Maybe it was Umthamo 5? Does protocol in this article mean the same thing?

Protocols from the preparation phase were also analysed for examples of private speech and for evidence of the development of different activities during the collaborative accomplishment of the same task.

Scaffolding

There are several passages in the data where scaffolding can be observed, and to illustrate the process some of them are presented and discussed below.

The first pair—Paulo and Sofia—engage in scaffolded interaction from the very beginning of their discussion, trying to help each other make sense of the pictures in order to create the story:

S: Here they are . . .[3] ahm . . . *Eu não sei* . . . [I don't know][4]

P: *Making*[5] . . .

S: Yeah. *Making* vases. Ah . . . they are . . .

P: And the . . . the woman here is . . . carrying the vase, and the guys and the men are . . . uh making some wine.

These are the first protocols from Paulo and Sofia's preparation phase where they discuss pictures 1 and 2. It is possible to notice that Sofia is about to give up the task when she says '*I don't know*', but Paulo immediately pushes her on by helping her to figure out what the men in picture 1 are doing: 'making vases'.

When they discuss pictures 6 and 7, they exchange roles: it is now time for Sofia to help Paulo with words that he wouldn't have been able to provide alone:

P: Yeah. What's . . .

S: And the vase was taken in this ah . . .

P: Sheep [ship]

S: . . . *sailboat*. Yeap.

P: To some place . . .

S: No . . . yep. And the boat . . .

P: And . . . there was . . . there were ahm . . .

S: *Storm*, there was a *storm* . . .

P: *Storm*, there was a *storm* and then . . . every . . .

S: . . . the boat . . .

P: . . . sunk.

In picture 9, it is again time for Sofia to ask for help. Once more she is not able to understand what is going on in the picture and Paulo readily provides the answer:

S: Yeah. He brought the vase home and gave it to his wife.

P: No, no, not his wife. [laugh]

S: *Who's that?*

P: This is a *technician* that ahm . . .

S: That . . . yes.

P: . . . was prepared to reconstr . . . reconstruct the . . . rebuild the . . .

S: The vase.

P: . . . old stuffs. OK?

S: OK.

From these passages it is possible to conclude that Paulo and Sofia play different roles when collaborating to find the solution to the task. Sofia seems to be more advanced in terms of language knowledge, and therefore helps Paulo mainly by providing English words. Paulo, on the other hand, seems to be better prepared than Sofia in terms of problem-solving strategies. It is him that guides her through the pictures, and helps her make sense of the drawings.

The second pair—Mariane and Gladys—also engage in scaffolded interaction from the very beginning of their discussion:

M: Three hundred . . .

G: Three hundred B . . . *before Christ.*

M: What?

G: *Before Christ.*

M: *Before Christ.*

G: Well, three men . . .

M: Three . . . men . . .

G: . . . making vases.

M: . . . were making vases. Were making and drawing pictures on the vases.

G: Yes.

This pair seem to be at the same language level, so they really help each other wherever needed. Mariane calls Gladys's attention to her wrong use of the plural in the following passage (picture 8):

G: Many, many time later . . . the shipwreck . . . the . . . divers . . .

M: *A diver.*

G: . . . the divers . . .

M: *The diver.* It's only one.

Although scaffolded interaction proves to be, as will be demonstrated in the next section, an important tool for learning a foreign language, it may not always be successful. Sometimes it may also result in one learner providing the other with a wrong word or phrase. The following passage is a clear example of this so-called 'negative learning':[6]

Does it matter if learners learn something which is incorrect? Will that create a problem later on when they have to unlearn that? What happens when we learn our first language? What happens when young children make mistakes?

M: What is it?

G: I think that is a . . . kind of car . . .

M: Ah!

G: and the men are . . .

M: The material to do the vase: *barro*. *Pronto!* [that's it!] You do the vase with *barro*, but I don't know how to speak *barro* in English.

G: *Mu . . . mug.*

M: *Mug?*

G: *M-u-g*. [spelling]

M: *M-u-g*: mug. OK.[7]

Internalization

Following the analysis of scaffolding, protocols from the presentation phase were analysed in a search for examples of internalization of the scaffolded passages observed during the preparation phase. All four subjects demonstrated some internalization of the scaffolding they received. In Paulo's presentation, for instance, he appropriately uses the words he learnt with Sofia. The following is an example of an excerpt where he used a word he had learnt during his interaction with her:

> And then, ahm . . . the missing picture is this guy selling the vase to people that eeh . . . go to another places by, by *sailboats* and, maybe to sell some other things and then the vase was in this *sailboat* and the . . . the boat sunk and stayed under the sea for a long, long time (talking about pictures 5, 6, and 7).

Sofia, although more advanced than Paulo in her command of English, also internalized his strategic help. In the following excerpt from her presentation phase, she also uses words provided by him during their interaction:

> This picture shows a man painting the vase and the one *making vases*, and the two ones, that was worn by this woman ahm . . . (talking about picture 1).
>
> And last year it was found by this . . . skindiver who took it to . . . *an expert*, probably, who . . . evaluated the vase and found out that it was very . . . valuable (talking about pictures 8 and 9).

Gladys received less help from Mariane during the preparation phase, and therefore internalized less, but she proved to be attentive when she talked about picture 8 in her presentation:

> So, last year, now recently, eh . . . there is a man, *a diver*, and he was found . . . was looking for something and then he found many . . . Well, many things in the ocean, like for example, the vase.

On the other hand, Mariane demonstrated more internalization, precisely because she received more help. Here is an example:

> . . . the three men, this three men eh . . . took this material to the mens. And the others in the picture number one, made the vase and after . . . draw . . . they . . . draw them, and the time is three hundred *before Christ*, in Athens.

Unfortunately, Mariane also demonstrated that she had internalized the negative learning passage:

> This workers eh ... ca ... cought *mug* and some kind of grass, suppose, to ... make the vase. The *mug* to make the vase and the ... som ... and ... the kinds of grass to draw the vase (talking about picture 3).

Conclusion

From the reported findings, it is possible to derive some conclusions which are consistent with Vygotsky's view of language development. When applied to foreign language learning contexts, these conclusions may help to build a new approach to evaluation, based on Vygotskian principles, which will in turn provide a better setting for language learning and teaching.

First of all, the data collected and the subsequent analysis are consistent with Coughlan and Duff's distinction of task and activity mentioned at the beginning of this paper. In their analysis, these researchers illustrate that 'second language data cannot be neatly removed from the sociocultural context in which it was created or collected' (Coughlan and Duff 1994: 190) and suggest that SLA[9] researchers should 'look more closely at the activity that surrounds the data they have collected, and use this information to shed light on otherwise anomalous results' (*ibid.* 191). Placing their suggestions in the field of second/foreign language teaching, rather than SL Research, it is possible to make a correlation between research tasks and learner evaluation tasks. Teachers all over the world have used tasks to evaluate language learners. Generally speaking, learners are evaluated on the basis of fixed or expected answers, and those who depart from this expectation usually receive low marks. Hopefully, the data analysis reported here will be a reminder to those teachers who adopt this kind of evaluation system: in performing the same proposed task learners might have different interpretations of the proposed objective, according to their own sociocultural contexts, and might decide to perform the task in a different way. It follows that teachers should try to evaluate their students on the basis of the activities they set for themselves, and not on the basis of previously set objectives, which might be external to their students.

How can I make sure that when I set them an assessment task that it is a "real" task?

There is another possible conclusion related to learner evaluation. Students have always been worried about tests, and many language learners are especially worried about taking oral tests. The procedure for data collection described here could well be used in such tests, since students are usually afraid of taking risks in front of the examiner, and feel frustrated with their inability to produce the language they are learning. Scaffolded interaction should, therefore, be used as preparation for oral tests in order to overcome learners' frustration, and to provide a safe ground for risk-taking. Donato (1994: 45) provided

How can I adapt this researcher's ideas and findings to my teaching and learning situation?

support to this view when he observed that 'frustration and risk were minimized by relying on the collective resources of the group'. Furthermore, such an approach to evaluation helps to destroy the idea that it is not possible to learn a foreign language from one's peers. As has been demonstrated, it is perfectly possible for an L2 learner to internalize, that is, to learn, what s/he has heard from another learner in a mutually collaborative situation.

Underhill (1987: 33) also suggests some techniques for oral tests which the learner is able to prepare in advance, on the following grounds:

> The learner has sufficient time before the test to prepare for the task and therefore brings to the test a good idea of what he will say. (. . .) A prepared oral test gives all the learners something to say without putting words into their mouths; it tests the ability to compose and present statements with care and deliberation rather than the spontaneous self-expression of an interview-type test.

How can I make sure that when I give my learners activities to do as they learn English as an additional language, that the activities are "real" activities?

A final reason why teachers should adopt scaffolded interaction as preparation for oral tests is that students are used to spending at least a few minutes preparing their presentations during their daily lessons. If this is so, why not let them do the same for their tests? As a fellow teacher has recently pointed out at a local meeting, 'tests should be part of students' daily life, and not their tragedy' (Barata 1996).

Received November 1999

Notes

1 Emphasis added.
2 First Certificate in English (Cambridge University Examinations Syndicate).
3 . . . → This symbol means there was a pause in speech.
4 [ ] → This symbol means comments were added by the researcher. The original words have been translated into English.
5 Italics were used to call attention to the specific words commented on.
6 Although there is always a risk of negative learning, scaffolded interaction's advantages compensate for its drawbacks. Such advantages will be discussed in the Conclusion.
7 The correct word for 'barro' should be 'mud'.
8 It is possible to see (p. 6) that Paulo still used the participle, instead of the past form of the verb, in his presentation phase.
9 Second Language Acquisition.

References

Barata, M. C. C. M. 1996. 'Como variar na hora de avaliar'. Paper presented at XIII *Semana de Estudos Germanicos*. UFMG: Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

Coughlan, P. and **P. A. Duff.** 1994. 'Same task, different activities: analysis of a second language acquisition task from an activity theory perspective' in J. P. Lantolf and G. Appel (eds.).

Donato, R. 1994. 'Collective scaffolding in second language learning' in J. P. Lantolf and G. Appel (eds.).

Fletcher, M. 1997. *Treasure!* (adapted from *Picture Stories Please*). *English Teaching Professional* 3/23.

Lantolf, J. P. and **G. Appel.** 1994. 'Theoretical framework: an introduction to Vygotskian approaches to second language research' in J. P. Lantolf and G. Appel (eds.).

Lantolf, J. P. and **G. Appel** (eds.). 1994. *Vygotskian Approaches to Second Language Research.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing.

Schinke-Llano, L. 1993. 'On the value of a Vygotskian framework for SLA theory and research.' *Language Learning* 43/1: 121–9.

Underhill, N. 1987. *Testing Spoken Language.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

The author

Andréa Machado de Almeida Mattos holds a BA in TEFL, and has been teaching EFL since 1983. At present she is a graduate student in Applied Linguistics at the Federal University of Minas Gerais, Brazil. and her main area of interest is teacher development. She has been published in Brazil and abroad.
Email: amam@horizontes.net

Treasure!

The Metropolitan Museum in New York has a superb addition to its priceless collection of Greek vases. At an auction in London yesterday it bought a vase with a very interesting history ...

Photocopiable Teacher resource Materials - Adapted from 'Picture Stories Please'
Published By ENGLISH EXPERIENCE, 26 Julian Road Folkestone Kent CT19 5HW England

Conclusion

This umthamo has focused on a particular approach to facilitating the learning of additional languages. We believe that when teachers provide opportunities for their learners to try to *bridge* information-gaps, then learners have a *real* reason to communicate. In our experience, this has resulted in learners needing, and wanting, to use the additional language they are learning. And we have found that learners have worried less about **accuracy** as they have tried to *make meanings* in the additional language. Consequently there has been evidence of greater **fluency.**

In this umthamo we have focused on a technique which provides opportunities for learners to communicate in an additional language for **real purposes** - *information-gap activities.* We believe that if you make the activities part of your regular classroom practice, your learners will have something **real** to talk about. Their communication in the additional language will be purposeful (full of purpose). We would be really interested in how these activities work with your learners, and would like to get direct feedback from you.

Send your feedback to the Language, Literacy & Communication Academic Co-ordinator at Private Bag X7488, King William's Town, 5600.

As you will have seen from the Reading in Unit 4, it is important that the activities and tasks we set our learners are *real.* It is also important that the activities create opportunities for learners to communicate purposefully. Even when we want to **appraise** our learners we need to make sure that we are not just asking them to complete meaningless (and often mindless) exercises. We also need to create and provide opportunities for our learners to collaborate and work together to scaffold each other's language use. **Continuous assessment** of **real work** gives a more accurate picture of (reveals) actual development and helps inform productive planning.

We hope that you and your learners have enjoyed the information-gap activities we have suggested in this umthamo. And we hope that your learners have gained in terms of their confidence and ability to use English as an additional language. We look forward to hearing about your experiences and how the activities have affected your approach to language teaching.

Remember, every teacher is a language teacher. Every teacher who teaches **in** English is a teacher **of** English. So even if you regard yourself as a subject specialist of maths or science, you need to think carefully about how you can help develop your learners' communicative abilities in the additional language. The ideas in this umthamo are important for you, too.

Appendix

Making an additional language come to life

By the early 1990's, the B Prim Ed students at the University of Cape Town had got used to the idea that for part of their teaching practice, they would be expected to work in a school setting that was essentially a cross-cultural experience. This was seen as a sensible preparation for life in a new South Africa. So it happened that Judith Cooper spent a number of weeks teaching at a school in Crossroads, Cape Town.

The Principal assigned Judith to a teacher responsible for Maths and Afrikaans for Grades 6 and 7. This teacher wasn't very confident and, as a result, he left her on her own most of the time with the topic and the text-book.

The Maths went fine. The learners were motivated and excited by the new methods and practical ways Judith brought to her lessons. But the Afrikaans was a disaster. The only thing that seemed to work was to give them lists of *'verkleinwoorde'* or *'trappe van vergelyking'* to memorise. When she tried a whole language approach, it didn't work. The learners were resistant to Afrikaans and didn't have the language resources to participate. Teaching Afrikaans by using Afrikaans wasn't working. Poor Judith was at her wits' end and felt like giving up.

With support from peers and her supervisor, Judith decided to break the rules. She planned to get the learners to talk in their primary language (isiXhosa) to develop **writing** in the additional language (English) as a bridge to both **talking** and **writing** in the target language (Afrikaans) using drama. This is what she did.

Near Cape Town there is a private zoo called Tygerberg Zoo, on the way to Paarl. There had been some articles in the local press about the zoo. Judith took these articles, and carefully selected pictures of zoo animals in cages to use in her Afrikaans classes.

Each group got a different picture. Their first task was to talk about the picture in isiXhosa, with the aim of writing in English a summary of what they could see in the picture, and of what the picture made them think of. Then the group had to prepare to act out a short scene in Afrikaans, in which a group of learners are standing in front of the cage looking at the animal in their picture. But they also had to write the 'script' for the scene in Afrikaans.

Suddenly working in Afrikaans was a different challenge. The Grade 7's didn't want to stop at the end of the double period and start with Maths. The Grade 6's didn't leave at the end of the day. They consulted across groups. They asked permission to visit other learners in other classes who knew Afrikaans. They used dictionaries. They pleaded for more time. One group requested an extension for their presentation until Monday because then they would be able to consult with the elder brother of a group member over the weekend. This person worked on

a wine farm near Tygerberg Zoo, and knew the zoo and Afrikaans, because Afrikaans was the language of work on that farm.

The quality and quantity of Afrikaans produced was way beyond expectation. Judith Cooper had given the learners a glimpse of the liberating possibilities that there were other ways to develop and learn additional languages that didn't have to be boring and unproductive. She had shifted them closer to the **real use** of language on the left of the continuum illustrated in the diagram on page 17.

What is it like to be black?

Another B Prim Ed student teacher, Nikki Clarke, had a similar problem. The primary school learners she was working with in Gugulethu didn't seem able to produce spontaneous English themselves. They remained passive and only felt comfortable reading back ready-made English sentences which the teacher generated on the board. They seemed so dull and lifeless. Yet in the playground, Nikki could see that they were anything but dull and lifeless.

Nikki consulted the writer of this umthamo, who was at that time working at Good Hope College in Khayelitsha. Viv explained about the value of information-gap activities, and Nikki decided to have a go.

She went back to school a few days later and explained that she wanted the learners to tell her something that she couldn't possibly know. She bravely asked them to tell her, *"What is it like to be black in Cape Town?".*

The response was really startling. Suddenly these learners, who appeared so passive and dull, had something *real* and *important* to talk about. And they had the resources to do it eloquently and powerfully. Nikki was absolutely amazed. She couldn't stop them. They had so much to say, and they said it in English and even in Afrikaans. Powerful stories of the racism people had experienced came out. This was because when a parent comes home from work, stung by an unpleasant racist experience, she or he relates it at home. And when she or he does so, it is done dramatically, and it is done in the language of the oppressor. So there were lots of swear-words and cruel words. But there was also lots of English. Passionate, expressive English!

Nikki was able to say to the learners, *"See, you have been hiding the English you know. You cannot be passive in English language classes again!"* She had also learned a lot from the learners. In fact, it was quite a humiliating lesson, but one that would feed her sympathy and caring as a teacher, and her humanity as a person.

Ndiyakumsha!

About ten years ago there was a Primary Science Programme workshop on the topic Air, for Standard 3 (Grade 5) teachers held at Luzuko Primary School in Gugulethu. At this workshop there was some serious discussion about language and the teaching of Science. At that time of

Apartheid education, learners in African schools only met Science in Standard 3, unlike learners in other schools who started in Standard 2.

The teachers at the workshop admitted that they used mostly isiXhosa to teach Science although the medium of instruction (language of learning and teaching) was supposed to be English. We shared research results from Canada which showed that children learning a subject through a second language did not necessarily suffer if the teacher always, and only, used the target language (French). This was true providing the teacher understood English (the primary language of the learners), and allowed the learners to communicate in English or French, or to code-switch until they were fluent in both languages. In fact, the research also showed that there were cognitive advantages for learners who could access content knowledge in more than one language. Such learners benefited.

At the workshop we carefully planned an introductory lesson on Air in such a way that the teacher would explain to the learners that she would contract to use only English, but that the learners were free to use any language to communicate their ideas. One nervous teacher agreed to try the lesson which we had planned and prepared together, and we went to class.

The lesson started when a learner was handed a bucket and asked to go out and fetch 1/2 a bucket of water. Then another learner was given a clear plastic bag, and asked to go out and fetch 1/2 a bag of air. There was no communication problem - the learner knew what to do. But the request was unusual. He was confused. The teacher repeated the instruction in English, and the chap went sheepishly to the door and scooped some air into the plastic bag. "Wonderful," said the teacher. "Here we have some air, and here we have some water! We get water from a tap. But where do we get air?" and she wrote this Key question for the lesson on the board.

The lesson went on with learners investigating to find out where there was air. "Take bags and see if you can get air under the desk, in the corner, by the window." Again, no communication or language problem. Was there air in an empty bottle? Is there air in a sponge/a dry cloth/ sand/a brick? Learners gave their findings in a mix of English and isiXhosa.

At the end of the lesson, the teacher asked what had been learned, and a learner answered in English,

> "Air is . . . . up, down, in, out, and all about."

Then the teacher turned to her colleagues, and uttered her first Xhosa, "Ndiyakumsha!"

Bibliography

Britton, J. 1970. *Language and Learning.* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin)

Donaldson, M. 1978. *Children's Minds.* (London: Fontana Press)

Driscoll, P & Frost, D (eds). 1999. *The Teaching of Modern Foreign Languages in the Primary School.* (London: Routledge)

Freeman, YS & Freeman, DE. 1998. *ESL/EFL Teaching: Principles for Success.* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann)

Gregory, E. 1996. *Making Sense of a New World: Learning to read in a second language.* (London: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd)

Hurrell, A. 1999. "The four language skills: The whole works!" in Driscoll, P and Frost, D.

Hymes, D. 1971. "On communicative competence" in Brumfit, C and Johnson, K (eds). 1979. *The Communicative Approach to Language Teaching.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

Johnson, K and Morrow, K (eds). 1981. *Communication in the Classroom.* (Harlow, Essex: Longman)

Littlewood, W. 1981. *Communicative Language Teaching: An introduction.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

Luke, A. 1993. "The Social Construction of Literacy in the Primary School" in Unsworth, L (ed). 1993. *Literacy learning and teaching: language as social practice in the primary school.* (Melbourne, Australia: Macmillan Education)

Machado de Almeida Mattos, A. 2000. "A Vygotskian approach to evaluation in foreign language learning contexts" in *English Language Teaching Journal* vol. 54, No 4: 335-345. Oct 2000. (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

Pinker, S. 1994. *The Language Instinct.* (London: Penguin)

Rubin, J. 1975. "What the 'good language learner' can teach us" in *Tesol Quarterly* Vol. 9, No. 1: 41-51.

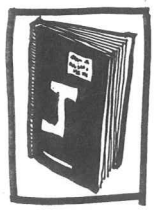
Sidwell, D. 1993. *Netword 1: Teaching Languages to Adults.* (London: CILT)

Stevick, EW. 1980. *Teaching Languages: A Way and Ways.* (Rowley, Mass: Newbury House Publishers Inc)

Wells, G. 1987. *The Meaning Makers: Children Learning Language and Using Language to Learn.* (London: Hodder & Stoughton Educational)

Widdowson, H. 1978. *Teaching Language as Communication.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

Wilkinson, A. 1975. *Language and Education.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

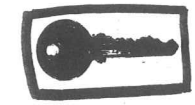


Journal

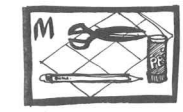
Thinking and Reflecting

Written Report

Classroom or School



Key Activity



Making materials

Reading and Thinking

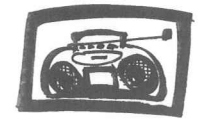
Discussion

Face-to-face umkhwezeli

Concertina File for Portfolio

Time

Very Important – take careful note



Tape-recorder

CESC

CLAC

Multigrade

Communication is a two-way process. A letter is written to someone, who reads it. A remark is made to someone and is (usually) understood. A gesture is made and elicits a response which may be a grin or a remark. In any such communication two features are present:

Firstly, the person who is making the communication chooses the words (or gesture). That is to say, the originator of the communication has a choice in what he or she says or does and how he or she expresses it. **Choice** is therefore one essential feature of communication.

Secondly, the receiver of the communication has to pay attention, because he or she does not know what the other person is going to say. So the receiving person is in a state of uncertainty or ignorance, and that is why he or she pays attention and notices. The key point here is that we pay attention in order to be able to find something out. If we knew it already we would not bother. **Unpredictability** is therefore the second feature of communication.

This may seem obvious, but it is something which we often forget or ignore in the language classroom, when activities intended to be communicative can fail to contain these elements. (Sidwell, D. 1993. *Network 1: Teaching Languages to Adults*)

"Not speaking the same language" .... to a psycholinguist is a superficial difference. Knowing about the ubiquity of complex language across individuals and cultures and the single mental design underlying them all, no speech seems foreign to me, even when I cannot understand a word. The banter among New Guinean highlanders in the film of their first contact with the rest of the world, the motions of a sign language interpreter, the prattle of little girls in a Tokyo playground - I imagine seeing through the rhythms to the structures underneath, and sense that we all have the same minds. (Pinker, S. 1994. The Language Instinct.)

In the classroom, in the context of foreign language learning, we scaffold the child's understanding of the flow of foreign language - we try to make things easier for the learner so that we might engage in and sustain communication with the learner in the classroom. As well as creating contexts which will provide strong clues as to the meaning of the words within them, we may adopt certain characteristics of what has been described as 'motherese' or 'foreigner-talk'.

These scaffolding techniques we believe will support the child's foreign language acquisition in the classroom context. However, when a child interprets what we say, their interpretation is influenced by at least three things and the ways in which these interact with each other - their knowledge of the language; their assessment of what we intend (as indicated by our non-linguistic behaviour); and the manner in which they would represent the physical situation to themselves if we were not there at all.

As a young learner of the foreign language the child's foreign language (FL) resource will always be less than that of the teacher and they will give more weight to non-linguistic cues - for example, in teaching terms, to flash cards, visual props, other actions, etc. In addition, they will bring their knowledge of the world and how it works to their active listening and hypothesis-testing. When these are in harmony, a holistic understanding is achieved. (Hurrell, A. 1999. The four language skills: The whole works!)

Printed by: L. Harry & Sons, 18 Kimberley Road, East London 5201. Telephone 7220604.

UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE
DISTANCE EDUCATION PROJECT

CORE LEARNING AREAS COURSE
Language, Literacy & Communication

6th Umthamo
Making Meaning in an Additional Language
First Pilot Edition - 2000

Conceptualised, developed and written by Viv Kenyon, Alan Kenyon, Jenny Barnett, and Namhla Sotuku.

Co-ordinated, illustrated and edited by
Alan and Viv Kenyon

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Nomhlophe Ntsunguzi and her Grade 5 and 6 learners from Mpongo Primary School, Zinthathu Lujiza and her Grade 4 learners from RH Godlo, and Nontando Tata and her Grade 1 and 2 learners from Mpongo Primary School for helping us trial the activities in this umthamo.

We are also grateful to the WK Kellogg Foundation for generously sponsoring the development of this material, and Thokozile Chitepo-Mawere, who has taken a keen interest in our work.

Without the patience, expertise and help of Ron Kahn and Ricardo Stevens of L. Harry and Son, we could not have completed this book. Thank you.