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LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING IN ZIMBABWE: ENGLISH AS THE SOLE LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION IN SCHOOLS

A study of students' use of English in Zimbabwe,
their indigenous languages (Shona and Ndebele),
and the schools' methods of instruction
in secondary school classrooms

By

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the degree of philosophy.

Canada

This study is dedicated to my grandparents
Vasekuru Benjamin Chidamba Tinhidzike Masawi
Ambuya Miriam Siraye Nherera Rusike Masawi
and their children:

Amaiguru Ederina Masawi Kachidza
Amai Firida Masawi Goneke (my mother)
Sekuru Ronnie Chidamba Masawi
Sekuru Marcus Damian Masawi

The study further recognizes and commemorates my grandparents' high sense of human virtues, and gives a grateful tribute to their many acts of kindness to their children, grandchildren, neighbours and friends.

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the use of English as the sole medium of instruction in Zimbabwean schools and the effect of such a policy on the educational achievement of students, particularly in secondary schools. The role of Shona and Ndebele, two other Zimbabwean official languages, in schooling is also examined.

Some of the findings reveal a learning and teaching environment that prevents strategies from addressing linguistic, social and cultural development with a coherent workable vision in the English classroom.

Because English is the working language of government, business, and industry in Zimbabwe, an English-only policy seems to be a practical means to prepare students for higher education and the workforce. The growing status of English as an international lingua franca provides additional support for such a policy.

This study reveals the need to rethink the imposition of an English-only policy. The findings indicate that current teaching approaches/methods and materials do not entirely support language development in English, largely because they do not take into account the economic, social, and linguistic situations of the students.

The study supports and calls for a multifaceted approach to the way language is currently taught in Zimbabwe, and sees this as one way secondary schools can produce, through the medium of English instruction, students and teachers who can adapt to rapid change, and relate to people from diverse socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

The study emphasizes the integration and expectations of people's views on language and education, as heard and expressed by many respondents. This is considered central to any meaningful effort towards linguistic competence, a challenging but stimulating learning environment, and better communication among students and teachers.

RESUME

Cette étude examine l'utilisation de l'anglais comme seul médium d'instruction dans les écoles au Zimbabwe et l'effet de cette politique sur l'accomplissement éducatif des étudiants, particulièrement à l'école secondaire. Le rôle des deux autres langues officielles, Shona et Ndebele, est aussi examiné. Certains résultats de cette recherche révèlent un environnement d'enseignment et d'apprentissage qui rend inefficace les stratégies qui s'adressent au développement linguistique, social et culturel d'une vision cohérente et réalisable dans les classes d'anglais.

A cause du fait que l'anglais est la langue de travail du gouvernement, des affaires et de l'industrie, une politique de l'anglais-seulement semble être un moyen pratique de préparer les étudiants aux études supérieures et à la main d'oeuvre. La croissance du statut de l'anglais comme langue internationale (lingua franca) procure un appui supplémentaire à cette politique.

Cette étude révèle la nécessité de repenser l'imposition de cette politique de l'anglais-seulement. Les résultats ont démontré que les approches, les méthodes et les matériaux d'enseignement actuels n'appuient pas entièrement le développement de la langue anglaise, en grande partie à cause du fait qu'ils ne tiennent pas compte des situations économiques, sociales et linguistiques des étudiants.

Cette étude maintient et fait appel à une approche multi-facette en ce qui concerne les processus de développement clefs de l'apprentissage de la langue, et voit ceci comme étant une façon de produire à l'école secondaire, par le médium de l'enseignement de l'anglais-seulement, des professeurs et des étudiants qui peuvent s'adapter au changement rapide et qui peuvent établir des rapports avec des gens de diverses milieux socio-culturels et linguistiques.

Cette étude met en relief la nécessité d'intégration de la perception des gens et de leurs attentes en ce qui concerne la langue et l'éducation telles qu'exprimées par les répondants. Ceci est considéré le point central de tout effort significatif vers une compétence linguistique, ce qui est un défi, mais qui offre un environnement stimulant et une meilleure communication entre professeurs et étudiants.

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In the Faculty of Education at McGill University, the Department of Curriculum and Instruction staff, and the Department Chair David Dillon, came to my assistance in many ways in the initial stages of my program. This was at a particularly difficult time, and their understanding and patience is appreciated. My gratitude also goes to Mrs. Louise Murphy, the then Administrative Secretary in the McGill Centre for the Study and Teaching of Writing, for helping me get ready vital informa-

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INTRODUCTION

English is the sole language of instruction in Zimbabwean schools, colleges and universities. It is also an official language, in conjunction with Shona and Ndebele, the other languages spoken by the majority of the Zimbabwean population. The policy on English as the only medium of instruction exists because English is the one language that all Zimbabweans, regardless of ethnic group, language, or culture, can use to communicate with each other. In this sense, English instruction draws strength from the traditional linguistic diversity and grassroots multilingualism of Zimbabwe. While this position is understood and accepted by most Zimbabweans, this research study is concerned with both the status and use of English and the way it is learnt and taught in Zimbabwean secondary schools.

Nigel T. Crawhall (1992) says the following on Zimbabwe's linguistic situation:

> Zimbabwe can be said to be unique in that it is the only constitutionally trilingual state in southern Africa. Shona, Ndebele, and English are constitutionally equal. This means that two African (national) languages have been elevated to the status of official languages without, as in the case of Tanzania, attempting to supplant the colonial language. However, the 'de facto' situation makes Zimbabwe just like other southern African states where the language of the colonial power has remained the language of government structures, commerce, industry, and education. (p. 9)

As one of the three aforementioned official languages, and as the only medium of instruction in schools from Grade 4 on, English dominates not only classroom instruction but society at large. Zimbabwe appears to accept this situation for two reasons: English is an international language, that is, a language in use the world over; and English plays a significant role in making it possible for an individual Zimbabwean to participate in the national system. Some people see this fact as creating problems between those who cannot participate in the national system because they lack a sufficient knowledge of English, and those who can, because they do have this knowledge. Crawhall (1992) refers here to:

> ...thousands of young people who drop out of the school system every year to join the already large numbers of unemployed in the urban areas, as well as those

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mostly rural masses who have been left out or marginally involved in the system throughout the years. (p. 19)

In Zimbabwe English as the only language of instruction, and as a policy, is an attempt to provide equality of educational opportunity as well as administrative efficiency in a highly centralized system of education that operates in English. However, past and present socioeconomic differences are essentially ignored, and the status of indigenous languages (mainly Shona and Ndebele) in the classroom is never examined. Although these indigenous languages are taught in the first four years of schooling as the language of instruction, from then on, only English is used as the language of communication in schools.

That any language plays a major role in children's learning is undisputed, according to Bernstein (1973) and other education theorists and linguists (e.g., Britton, 1970; Martin, 1973). They see language as a tool by which students make sense of their learning, reinterpret knowledge, and examine existing assumptions while developing a representation of the world.

Historically, it has been the norm for parents to send their children to school. Education has always been deemed important, and people trace this practice to British colonial policies. English teaching and its development in Zimbabwean schools was a direct response to a political imperative: it was seen to be a key component of the infrastructure required for the spread of British control and, as such, most material and teachers came from Britain and Ireland.

A conference held in 1961 at Makerere University in Uganda articulated this relationship of dominance and dependence between the developed and developing countries through the ways in which the English language was then organized and taught. The following statement emerged from this conference, according to Phillipson (1992):

> English is best taught monolingually. The ideal teacher of English is a native speaker. The earlier English is taught, the better the results. The more English is taught, the better the results. If other languages are used too much, standard English will drop. (p.185)

Although these conclusions have since been challenged by many scholars worldwide (e.g. Dittmar, 1976; Ellis, 1986; Polonie, 1982), in Zimbabwe they continue to be seen as natural and common-sensical, therefore meaningful and practical.

In order to understand education and language regulations in Zimbabwe today, it is vital to situate them within the context of the country's colonial past and the current cultural and socio-economic system. Parents, students and society at large have relied, since 1980, on the Zimbabwe African National Union, Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) government that wants to provide students and society not only with education, but also with language that makes education possible. In this case, these languages include all three official languages—English, Shona and Ndebele.

As a means to understanding the consequences of the policy of English-only instruction in schools, I began a study of the processes by which English is taught and learned in classrooms in Zimbabwe, as well as the role of Shona and Ndebele. The study involved fieldwork among selected students, teachers and parents.

I was primarily interested in how teachers used English and how students responded to them. I believed then and now, that what students do with language is very important. Equally important is understanding the way they employ it for real purposes in learning what is relevant to them, completing tasks that are intrinsically motivating and intellectually engaging. In the learners' minds, the main focus of classroom activities is not just language itself, but rather the tasks to be carried out in that language.

These concerns directed the questions asked during the fieldwork:

What teaching or other strategies help to create contexts for an English-learning environment?

What is the general attitude toward English as the only medium of instruction?

What is the role of Zimbabwean culture in the English classroom?
What do parents think and know about English?

How is the language of instruction—English—taught and learned?

Working and operating within predominantly sociolinguistic perspectives (e.g., Cook-Gumpertz, 1986; and Mehan, 1981), I focused on, obtained and selected information about the conventions of classroom organization, prevailing teaching strategies, student and parent roles, the government and its institutions, and cultural norms governing teacher-student interaction.

Following and using mostly the works and theories of Barnes (1971); Stratta, Dixon and Wilkinson (1973); Mills (1974); Torbe (1974); Grugeon and Walden (1978); Moffett (1968) and Rosenblatt (1938), I also carried out work and studies with secondary, college and university students in Zimbabwe. I used all three Zimbabwean official languages, seeing them as situated socially, culturally and politically, and appropriately mediating between and among peoples.

Many people have also argued (e.g. Auerback, 1993; Pierce, 1989; Pennycook, 1989; Phillipson, 1992; Tollefson, 1991) that English language teaching cannot be isolated from the cultural and political contexts in which it is embedded. These people say that critical pedagogy does not imply a particular approach to or method of research but rather is concerned with the extent to which research is answerable to larger moral and political questions. In Zimbabwe, where use of indigenous languages in the classroom is minimal, as observed during research fieldwork, problems emerge that can only remind people of "colonial Rhodesia", making the concerns of the researchers and scholars mentioned above relevant and applicable to these learning contexts.

As understood by many people in Zimbabwe, one of the main objectives is to produce students who can think independently and criticize constructively, and who have the necessary tools to develop and communicate ideas and skills which are essential to implementing a better form of democracy. This type of focus leads back to 1980, when, in a newly-independent Zimbabwe, the education system underwent a major reform to offer Zimbabweans control over their future and a chance to improve their lives by becoming "better educated." It was not clear at that time if such an objective was meant to happen within an English-only education environment. One of

the goals of this research study is to see how this objective is being met within such an environment.

Like other African countries, Zimbabwe is experiencing tremendous linguistic, social and economic change. In the eyes of many people, by making English the only language of instruction, the government "enshrined" English in the school system, making the indigenous languages less relevant and important.

The Zimbabwean school system since independence in 1980 has changed, and continues to change. Because English is not spoken at home by the majority in Zimbabwe, it is not the chief instrument of communication. Andrew McLelland (1984) writes:

> In both Dewey and Paolo Freire, the student is one who requires knowledge to operate in his environment, to live, and the educator is one who provides knowledge consonant to this task. The all-importance of experience means that the student is the final expert on 'truth', his experience; knowledge is characterized by ways and means of dealing with experience rather than by 'hard facts'.... (p. 44)

One would understand this to mean that the medium (language) of instruction in which a student deals with experience is important. However, whether or not English is a national or international language, success in English cannot be the sole measure of the student's success in the learning environment.

Hirsch (1987), describes one of the qualities of a national language this way:

> Effective use of the standard literate language involves most of the nation. (p.3)

In Zimbabwe English does not have that status. Because this study views language learning and teaching as communication and expression (i.e., thinking, viewing, listening, speaking, reading and writing), English as used in Zimbabwe needs to be adapted to the many different social and cultural rhetorical situations in the Zimbabwean context. This study raises questions about English. Though seen and understood by some respondents (see Appendices I and II) as an "administrative language", whose ideas and visions were borrowed mainly from European or Western traditions, and were predominantly British, there is a clear sense emerging in my more

recent explorations, that English is becoming just as acceptable and local as indigenous languages. How then does such a change in its status affect how it is taught and learned in Zimbabwean schools?

What is also at issue is how relevant the English syllabus and other current English programs are to the learner's social, political and economic environment. Do these English programs reflect the cultural ideologies and philosophies of the learner's community? These are important questions given Zimbabwe's current situation of difficult social adjustment. Research in language learning has for a long time been concerned with the study of the appropriate use of language in context, or 'communicative competence', as it is called by Goswami and Stillman (1986), among others. However, the Zimbabwean system, as this study will argue, is not changing enough to meet the needs of students in the way it is using English as the sole language of instruction in schools.

In the past, educated British English was the model. Very little has changed in this respect. During interviews and classroom observations for this study, I saw that while students and teachers spoke both their indigenous languages and English in different dialects, the nativization through English textbooks, materials or tools appeared discouraged by teachers and parents, even when this occurs naturally, in both spoken and written English. The reason was mainly for fear of failure in the local and "overseas" examinations.

One could easily conclude from such local linguistic experiences that the decision in Zimbabwe not to use an African language for instructional purposes often echoes the colonial past, with its privileged 'educated minority' that succeeded economically and socially through English. It appears to put a low priority on indigenous languages as well as on the culture of the majority of students. But, as this study will show further, the issue is not so simple. The diversity of Zimbabwe's multilingual and multicultural society, and its own growing identity are both elements of a new context that is distancing itself from a colonial past.

English also continues to be a language of upward mobility in all former British colonies. As such, English language learning and teaching have become such a vast

concern, making it imperative for people in Zimbabwe to respond to these challenges by reexamining some of our most basic beliefs about the nature of language, how language is used and taught, and how such questions might be investigated.

It seems evident from this study that while there certainly are trends and shifts in language learning and teaching in Zimbabwe, these tend to be a reordering of the same basic options of the colonial past, and in many ways continue to reflect mostly the social, cultural, political and philosophical environment of the Ministry of Education in Harare, rather than the whole socio-economic and linguistic spectrum of the student environment, in and outside school. Alastair Pennycook (1989) advises that it is critical that we see the social and political roles we play and the social and political implications of the theoretical paradigms that inform our work, and suggests that:

> Rather than trying to understand our practice according to some form of totalizing or universal discourse, we need to recognize the complexities of language teaching and its contexts, and strive to validate other local forms of knowledge about language and teaching. (p.613)

In view of some of these ideas and their implications for language generally, and in particular as experienced in Zimbabwe, I suggest in this study that in order to meet the needs of this new context, it is time to do the following:

(a) examine once again both the policy of using English as the sole language of instruction, and,

(b) examine the ways in which English is being taught and learnt. It is the intention and purpose of this study to do both A and B.

CHAPTER ONE

English as the Sole Language of Instruction in Zimbabwe:
Background History and Policy

In most Zimbabwean schools the indigenous languages of Shona and Ndebele are taught in the first four years of schooling as the languages of instruction, and from then on English is used as the language of communication and instruction in the classroom. Before Zimbabwe became independent from Britain in 1980, the schools were predominantly mission or church schools, and the African people had little say about their education. In fact, these schools were not theirs. In one of his working papers presented at the University of Zimbabwe (1982), Dr. Chirenje commented:

> Mission or church schools belonged to the churches and government which, after all, had literally built the building and designed the program, and now continued to import the school staff, who spoke "English only", from Europe.

In this sense, English enjoyed an imposed higher status. When independence in 1980 brought majority rule to Zimbabwe, as had already happened in many African countries, there was no indigenous language which could be used as the sole national tongue. Unlike Tanzania, where Kiswahili became the language of government and education, Zimbabwe found English difficult to replace for a variety of reasons. One main reason was a political one: in one sense, English was the only acceptable neutral language capable of uniting the country (Allen, 1990).

The following table illustrates the functions of the main languages in Zimbabwe, emphasizing the importance of English.

Summary of the Functions of Languages in Zimbabwe, as of 1980

Functions	English	Shona	Ndebele
Public administration	X	–	–
Education	X	–	–
Law courts	X	–	–
Official documents	X	–	–
Parliament	X	–	–
Lingua franca	X	–	–
International communication	X	–	–
Scientific technical communication	X	–	–
Radio	X	–	–
Religious worship	X	X	X
School subjects	X	X	X
Home language	X	X	X

Source: Adapted from Ngara (1982)

Observation of daily life of the community in urban and rural areas reveals that, as indicated above, English is widely used in formal situations and communicative activities related to education and other public spheres, while the indigenous languages are restricted to only three areas of study and communication.

The Report on Minority Languages (1990) makes some international comparisons:

....Similarly, many countries formerly colonized by European powers neglect mother tongues and the reality of their multilingualism when attempting to achieve literacy and universal primary education. (p. 31)

What is the reason for these biases? According to the author of this report:

It is not an information problem. Its roots lie in the production of the unequal access to power and resources in the world. Traditional skills and ways of

knowing are trivialized by formal education. The informal teaching role of the community is exploited and thrown into "cultural activities".

The table shows the near insignificance of the indigenous languages in education or society at large. However, according to such documents as the Republic of Zimbabwe's First Five-Year National Department Plan (1986-1990) and the Annual Economic Review of Zimbabwe (1986), Zimbabwe assumes that it is in its interest to acknowledge the dominant position of English internationally. The place and role of the English language and culture in Zimbabwe seem to be clearly understood by the society at large (see Appendices I and II).

So where do indigenous languages and the cultural values they promote fit in? Indigenous languages predominate in informal situations. Yet because the system of education greatly minimizes the importance of these languages, it also minimizes the unique culture they carry. This seems to contradict the government's educational goal · of "social cohesion" with the languages (Shona and Ndebele) which carry these skills for teaching and learning in these languages, and the cultural values they carry remaining outside the classroom beyond the elementary level. It is not just words that are being excluded here, but the entire world view and interactional structure of the culture of a people who make up the majority of the population. Like all languages, English carries embedded cultural and political values. As such, it cannot meet all students' needs nor solve all their learning problems.

While students learn a lot about English in schools and this learning is outlined in the English Syllabuses, Zimbabwe's native ways of knowing, teaching, living, and using language are not clearly addressed in the English language classroom. This study observed that, because indigenous languages do not exist in English classrooms except as subjects (as the table illustrates), the mastery and the use of these languages depends mainly on attitudes and a willingness to learn them. However, the Ministry of Education in Zimbabwe recently (1992) initiated a program in which all these languages were to be taught universally. This is a positive step, since by any standard and all definitions, Zimbabwean cities are bilingual cities.

Although the number of people who speak English as their mother tongue is quite small (about 3.5 percent), as a second language, it is spoken by a much larger number. Ngara (1982) surveyed secondary school students, school teachers, and other professionals in the country, concluding that competent African speakers of English at that time numbered between 600,000 (6%) and 1,000,000 (10%).

While indigenous languages nationwide are slowly growing in use in the cities all across Zimbabwe, it is still English that is spontaneously jumping ahead, regardless of the official status of these other languages. This is because English, again, is associated with profitable business and modern professions, and because the people who want English for their children support it without question as the medium of instruction and as a home language. Relative to their numbers of speakers and their historic traditions and cultural achievements, the effect of indigenous Zimbabwean languages is weak in the classroom. It is English that has become the vehicle for creativity in most genres of modern thought. Indigenous languages are not used in any of the sciences or in agriculture at school. Fieldwork notes (Appendices I and II) reveal, with confirmation rates of 80%, that some parents would be content if their children had knowledge of English alone. In some interviews (1991) it was obvious that parents encouraged teachers to use "only English" with their children.

In 1990 Kate Allen observed that "students are coerced and made to do English" (p.97). Such uniform application of English continues to be employed and, in what others say is 'structural dependence', is seen to be perpetuated by English books and all that they signify about tradition and culture. The problem with this one-language book material and culture is the influence it has on the African children. They are second language speakers of English who innocently see in the English language great literature, model speakers and British usage and speech, and they take these as a universal standard of excellence. Teachers and other adults do little to modify this perception. Zimbabwean students then spend most of their school days trying to speak and use English according to a model which in their context is artificial and stilted.

To understand the language situation that is under study, some historical background is necessary since the present-day Zimbabwean education system is the project

of an interplay between a series of processes that began with Zimbabwean colonization by Britain in 1890.

> On 12 September, 1890, the 'pioneer column' ran up the Union Jack on Harare Hill in Salisbury and in the name of Queen Victoria, took possession of Mashonaland, and all other unpossessed land in South-Central Africa that it should be found desirable to add to the Empire (Martin and Johnson, 1981).

As soon as this happened, English became the official language of administration. It met with little resistance from the indigenous people, but their own languages remained almost completely underdeveloped, and unintegrated, apart from some pioneering work done by missionaries (Devenport, 1977).

During this colonial era, education was available only to a small minority, and English was the medium of instruction in schools. Even though the African students spoke English as a second language, no allowance was made for this fact in teaching methods and materials. Rather, it was assumed they were as proficient as mother tongue speakers. This assumption, together with a highly selective examination system and the expectation that all students would attain a high level of English proficiency, ensured that education was limited to a small minority.

Content was also patterned on the British model. The history taught, for example, was British history, with only token recognition of African history. Textbooks for all subjects were imported from Britain. Examinations came from various British examining boards, such as the London General Certificate of Education (GCE) and Cambridge Examinations Syndicate Cambridge Certificate.

Most students grew up with the idea that the English language meant primarily correct grammar. They spoke carefully and precisely (as I learned from my mother's stories of her school experiences). From today's perspective, this was education dominated by an inadequate view of learning, and of teaching African children. It was a traditional view that saw learning as knowledge and skill acquisition; teaching as transmitting knowledge and skills; and testing as the only way to ascertain whether students had acquired knowledge and skills. This view of learning and teaching continues to dominate both school and university education in Zimbabwe. The

government's educational policy, as I found during school visits (1991-1992), and as it is still, seems conceived for career paths, indicative of the type of linear thinking that goes against a modern approach to teaching and learning.

Ivan Smith (1990, p.142) points out that by World War II, the rapid growth of towns and the extensive development of industry was accompanied by the movement of large numbers of people to urban areas. Consequently, even more Africans were exposed to English in these centres where all important administrative and economic organization was controlled mostly by the English-speaking people until independence in 1980.

Brief as this summary is, it may help us understand the present language situation in Zimbabwe. We can also draw on similar situations outside Africa to increase our understanding.

The Australian educationists Harris and Jones (1988), in their paper entitled "Curriculum Perspectives", discuss what appears closer to Zimbabwe today:

> ...the Western school system evolved to help people adapt to the industrial revolution. It is evolving further today to help Western society adapt to its 'high technology revolution'. Furthermore in Western schools, subjects like history, geography, economics, art, music, politics and home economics all have strong culture reproduction functions; they tell students, 'this is how we do things, or view things or evaluate things in Western culture...' (p. 12)

For most African students this accumulation of factual knowledge meant learning was a matter of quantity. They had to know a lot about everything. They memorized facts and were able in most cases to reproduce this memorized information and to practise memorized procedures. (Field notes, 1992, Rain Chidamba Masawi of Seke Materera School: Appendices I and II)

Since 1980, although educational policy has obviously changed to reflect political independence and changing local conditions, traditional approach to teaching English continue to predominate for a variety of reasons, one of them economic. Today, as experienced also in other countries, ability in English still determines students' academic success and, unless students pass English, they do not make it to higher education.

For many Zimbabwean children, school provides their first exposure to the language that is the key to social mobility. At an early age in their lives, these children leave their known world of home and family life and enter a new world of English and, through it, other cultures. Learning here is mediated through English.

One of the issues here is that Shona and Ndebele do not enjoy the same rights in the English classroom of Zimbabwe. Children master their mother tongues before they start school. By the time they enter Grade 1, they have learned all the basic sentence patterns, have a good vocabulary, and can use either Shona or Ndebele for a wide variety of purposes. Thus, Zimbabwe's indigenous languages, while official, are less important in the school curriculum.

From a linguistic point of view, Dr. Tove Skutnabb Kangas (1990), arguing for instruction in the mother tongue, writes:

> All languages spoken natively by a group of people have equal worth. All are logical, cognitively complex, and capable of expressing any thoughts and concepts (provided enough resources are devoted to cultivation-creation of new lexical items, among other things). (p. 31)

One of the questions asked here is whether English as the only medium of instruction in a multilingual society adequately expresses the linguistic, psychological, cultural, social, economic and learning needs of the majority of Zimbabwean students, who speak Shona and Ndebele. In other words, should Shona and Ndebele be given a greater place as languages of instruction in the Zimbabwean curriculum? If so, when and how much?

Many authorities agree that in a multilingual setting national consensus grows out of an interaction of all the component languages, not out of privileging only one. Moreover, scholarly consensus rejects the notion that any language can be taught well merely by presenting the grammar, vocabulary and syntax. Modern authorities encourage styles in learning and teaching that are closer to students' environments (home) and comprehensible to learners, regardless of what language is being learned, be it first or second language.

At the time of independence (1980), the Government of Zimbabwe quickly established a democratic government whose aim was to respond to the nation's linguistic and cultural diversity. From the first, a broad education was made available to all people so they could become familiar with various fields of knowledge and understand their interrelations. However, it appears that the government and society failed to resist the pressure to focus mostly on English. The ethos and attractiveness of English did not tie in with independence, but remained compelling, and not only for native English speakers.

Ewa Clayton (1992) who has written analytically on language and ideology in Poland, adds this perspective:

> The quest for English is even more unconditional: it is seen by career-oriented people as an indispensable prerequisite for upward mobility and a key to the world, a marker of worldliness and sophistication. It is on the way to becoming Poland's second language. It will not be an exaggeration to say that English teaching has become one of the most thriving businesses in Poland. (p.10)

While Clayton focuses here on Poland, parallels can be drawn with Zimbabwe's experience with English. The findings to be discussed later in this thesis suggest that certain cultural environments are crucial to learning and to using language meaningfully and purposefully everywhere. The fieldwork, as I hope to show, further demonstrates the importance of students' mother tongue even in the development of positive attitudes towards English.

The question here is how much the populace knows or understands about the goals and objectives of Zimbabwean educational policy. Nor is it clear that this policy represents the best possibility. For example, could English instruction begin earlier, and with more time and more instruction? Would students then know the language better to become fluent enough to do better in class and examinations than now? Dr. Skutnabb Kangas (1990) sums this kind of argument when she says:

> Language is basic to identity. Therefore a fulfillment of basic human needs for development includes a basic human right to one's mother tongue, to being able to identify with it, learn it properly, use it in all official situations (human economic needs). A development policy which aims at universal literacy and uni-

versal primary education must formulate a policy which puts basic human needs, not economic growth, in focus. (p. 27)

However, being part of the international community, and concentration on economic growth are very much the priorities in Zimbabwe's education system today.

While the phenomenal expansion of the education sector in Zimbabwe since 1980 has often been characterized as one of the major achievements of the post-independence government, and while the number of secondary schools catering to massive expansion increased, as Dr. Skutnabb Kangas suggests there was no clear language policy other than making indigenous languages (Shona and Ndebele) official. The ZANU (PF) (Zimbabwe African National Union) 1980 Election Manifesto pledged, as one of its six cardinal education principles, to establish free and compulsory primary and secondary education for all children in Zimbabwe, regardless of race.

Fay Chung, then Secretary for Primary and Secondary Education, said in an interview (1987):

> Given that the country's rural education facilities had been decimated by the civil war, and that the educational financing of urban schools under the previous regimes had favoured European schools, this promise was not an easy one to fulfill; but it was fulfilled.

She focuses, in this interview, on the rebuilding and financing of schools throughout Zimbabwe, and for a good reason. It is clear that the medium in which children learn is not an issue here, although results had by then indicated that one source of problems in children's low performance in school was the result of language policy.

Most Ministry of Education Annual Reports (e.g., 1989) concentrate on school enrolment figures and schools. In 1979, for example, about 800,000 children attended primary school in Zimbabwe, reports the Secretary of Education and Culture (1989). As well,

> Almost 2.3 million attended in 1989. Whereas there were 74,966 students enrolled in secondary schools in 1980, the number had shot up to 695,612 in 1989. The number of secondary schools to cater for this massive expansion increased, according to the same statistics - from 177 in 1979, to 1,502 in 1989.

This clearly shows how the Ministry of Education has achieved remarkable increases in school enrolments, particularly at secondary levels. The Ministry also undertook to allow all pupils to sit the Ordinary Level Examinations ('O' Levels) after four years of secondary schooling, which was not the case before. But by so doing some people say Zimbabwe encouraged an unrealistic belief in the importance of academic qualifications and thus triggered a crisis of expectations among pupils. Others, such as Joseph Tlou (1990), say that almost all technologically developing nations, including Zimbabwe, face similar challenges. The first challenge is to win independence from colonial rule, but this does not guarantee national cohesion and successful self rule. National development in African countries demands a strong sense of national unity and identity along with technological transformation. Such development in culturally diverse societies must be cultivated with deliberate determination.

This explains to a certain extent Zimbabwe's choice of English and its use as a lingua franca. This study speculates that one reason for debate on languages in Zimbabwe is that knowledge of English is considered synonymous with being educated. In Zimbabwe principles relating to nation building and to education for development have followed economistic, neo-colonial language policies, which have in turn impeded students' proficiency and development, and even literacy.

The curriculum was of a vocational nature emphasizing agricultural and industrial training instead of academic or literary education. For years, this colonial process systematically eroded a sense of indigenous culture, although indigenous languages were taught. This period of colonial interference also extended to African society at large, where people believed they could only acquire knowledge through English. Knowledge acquired outside this linguistic route became less relevant in one's life. Those without the knowledge of English were "not educated".

Upon independence in 1980, no immediate change in the status of English --seen as "neutral"--occurred, and indeed, such a change remains unlikely, given the capacity of English to help the nation realize what Dr. Mhundwa (1981) calls its "nationalist" goals. In his paper, Dr. Mhundwa defines nationalism as the "search for national

identity through sociocultural unification." This category of "nationalist" goals is explained by Ivan M. Smith in his paper "Implications for schools in Zimbabwe" (1993), as encompassing "the nation's efficient handling of its affairs."

In these spheres, Smith adds, as in the areas of economic development and technological advancement, English is likely to play a very important role (p. 8). Professor Ngara of the University of Zimbabwe (1982) refers to English as a "developed" language in that:

> ...it has been elaborated so as to be used as a medium of education, technological development, and administration. (p. 7)

He also points out that African languages are just as complex as English in terms of form, but they are insufficiently developed to be used for all the needs of a modern and technologically advanced state.

These opinions are held by many Zimbabwean people, including authorities in government and education. They are also supported by daily events in Zimbabwean society that reveal English as a widely used language in formal situations and communicative activities related to education.

Ivan M. Smith (1993) compares this situation to that of the U.S.A. and he cites Mancil, who says:

> [...many American adult bilinguals] are able to use their first language only for very informal purposes, such as casual conversation with friends and family on everyday topics. For more formal communication and when using language in more intellectually demanding tasks, they feel more comfortable with their second language. These differences in their use of the two languages reflect the fact that all their formal education was carried out in the second language. (p.9)

The Zimbabwean historian W. Chirenje (1973) gives the following reasons for English-only as the policy of instruction:

> ...the purpose for English then was to enable native children to learn English for job purposes, and serve the colonial government, and not for integration, as races then lived separately.

> ...The purpose was also for the integration of natives into the ways and economy of Rhodesia...(p. 10)

These policies forced Africans at that time to view English as the most important language in the world, while their local languages, although made available and taught in schools, were deemed less valuable in their own country. Chirenje further explains that:

> ...in Rhodesia of that time schools were not seen as extensions of the home: that is, places where the knowledge, skills, and family values that are valued in society are taught, demonstrated or reinforced by the school. This was an imposed, non-consultative school system, which not only ignored community African educational values but sought to destroy them, and therefore survived only by force and coercion. (p. 12)

Dr. Chirenje's words are echoed by many respondents, as seen in the Appendices of this study. These respondents expressed concern about the scanty information available on "the importance of all Zimbabwean languages in schools" and their role in education.

It is frequently the case in Zimbabwe that educated African second language speakers of English, most of whom have also received their formal education in English, prefer to use it in communication with one another. English is also extensively used in even fairly informal written correspondence between educated second language speakers of English.

While these facts are not all negative, they necessitate further investigation into language learning and the use of mother tongues in order to understand the many issues that emerge. Dr. Skutnabb Kangas confirms this when she says:

> Statistical information is urgently needed on the proportion of illiterates in the world who have to accept instruction in non-mother tongue languages, and how many are illiterates as a result of having been taught through the medium of a foreign language. (p. 9)

She argues that substantial further research is necessary to determine how far education through the medium of a non-mother tongue language has been a major pedagogical cause for illiteracy for minorities. This is a matter of growing concern to a number of people. If some students in Zimbabwe, for example, are unable to fully

exercise their human rights, and if they face discrimination through the linguistic isolation of Shona and Ndebele in the classroom, then it is reasonable to assume that there will also be higher rates of failure both in the education system and a greater instability in society at large.

However, while English-only as a policy of instruction can be viewed as causing problems, we are reminded that English is also the language most closely associated with economic progress, personal success, and social status. English alone is promoted as the language of national and international participation. And Zimbabwe does want to participate internationally. Zimbabwe shares the same vision of development as the "Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa 1980-2000" (SECAM 1985 Kampala, N82). Because of the failure of the three decades of the United Nations Development Program for Africa, the Lagos Plan is trying to find appropriate ways and means of mapping out the integral development of Africa. This plan suggests restructuring of the African economies on the basis of self-sustaining development and national and collective self-reliance.

Education in English-only can be said to be motivated by the conviction that commitment to integral development springs from the basic mission of promoting national development through the formation of an elite human resource. Many government papers from workshops and conferences, for example, favour integral human development as an essential part of education, calling on schools to become self-reliant. However, what this means exactly is not clear, and this uncertainty affects classroom teachers.

This study shows that classroom English teachers in Zimbabwe are facing realities that most politicians outside the schools often do not understand and may be unwilling to accept. In some areas schools operate in a setting where adequate funds are virtually impossible to obtain and community constraints are many. This lack of sufficient resources can lead to students failing, and does little to improve education, or create better schools or produce "enlightened citizens" through English-only instruction. People do not understand why things are always hard or difficult, and those responsible for enlightening the public many times send misleading signals.

At the time of writing this thesis, it seems that Zimbabwe does not have a clear policy on the language of instruction. What is available are government statements and reports from which we assume balanced trilingualism, even though it is English which still dominates.

Professor Mkanganwi (1985), a linguist who writes about language practices and development of minority ethnic groups, believes the question of language policy is a political one. It is beyond the control of linguists, who he says can only plan and offer suggestions if requested to do so. A language policy would clearly spell out the domains of use of each of the three official languages at school. In the National Language Project (NLP, 1992), Mr. Mkanganwi, a professor at the University of Zimbabwe, further expresses concerns about the way language operates, and the non-official policy on it:

> Although the 1987 Education Act attempts to spell out government policy on language in education, we maintain that as long as procedures for the implementation of the act are not articulated comprehensively, policy decisions represented by the act are meaningless...

Mkanganwi points out that British linguistic policies derived from a colonial policy which emphasized separate development for the different races, with a political counterpart in the theory and practice of 'indirect rule'. It was due to the evangelical self-interest of missionaries, in whom a great deal of African education was vested, that as many children as possible learned to read and write their own mother tongue. These and other factors (rather than the constitutional position), we are told, have contributed to Ndebele and Shona ranking with Swahili, etc. in being among the leading African languages. This is also why, more recently (Education Act of 1987), all of Zimbabwe's known languages have been recognized for use in schools at levels prior to the fourth grade. Zimbabwe therefore leads in the implementation of the 1953 UNESCO principle, itself an endorsement of the 1930 Resolution of the International African Institute (IAI), which stated that to be educated in and through one's mother tongue is a universally accepted principle in modern education, and this privilege should not be withheld from the African child. This principle has also been endorsed

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by numerous conferences about the use of African education in Zimbabwe or else-where.

Kashoki (1990) is a prominent Zambian linguist who has criticized Zambia's preoccupation with political integration and national unity of the type which justifies the use of English in schools and society for "unity", as a "lingua franca" and for other purposes, when culturally indigenous languages (like Shona and Ndebele in Zimbabwe) can be said to serve the same purposes. Kashoki asserts that unity in diversity is what Zambia should pursue, making use of as many of her indigenous languages in the process as possible.

Languages are not neutral, and that is why the presence of English poses a problem, even though Zimbabweans have always had mutual respect for their diverse cultures and languages. The proposal for the promotion of compulsory indigenous languages to grade 7 (still under study; for now, secondary school instruction continues in English), would benefit schools whose local languages have for a long time been rendered almost instrumentally valueless in practice, for it has never been through speaking good or fluent Shona or Ndebele that people get jobs. The prominence that has been given to the English language in the Zimbabwe national education system has been a negative influence on both these languages and their culture, especially in the classroom, and by extension on national cultural development.

Mkanganwi (1992) observes that governments before and since independence have not attempted any meaningful language planning. Even though numerous forces have worked and continue to work to focus the attention of Zimbabweans on the place of African languages in both national development and cultural self-identity, he adds that the impact of these observations in English learning school contexts has yet to be realized.

For now, Zimbabwean students learn English through a lengthy and expensive process of formal education which is limited by the nation's resources. What this means is that the number of those who can learn the language to functional oral mastery is limited to what the nation can support at any given time. In most schools only a minority of students succeed. The more resources dwindle, the fewer the

number of those who can go through the system and the more the use of the language points in an elitist direction, where a privileged, advantaged few "make it up the ladder."

It is these divisive structures embedded in the English-only system of instruction, with the many connotations the people have assigned to them and the English language itself, which are faulty. The real enemy is the country's inability to approach the language policy practically, sensitively and systematically to change it and to equalize opportunities for the majority of students, given the state of affairs where the African majority population has been left out of the national system for years.

This study observes that English, with the elevated status given in the classroom functions in a vacuum, in isolation from Zimbabwe's languages. A clear resolution of the country's language-planning needs is a necessary condition for the long-term stability of the country and its people. What is needed is a thorough analysis of schooling and socializing processes as they function in the secondary schools and other settings elsewhere in society.

This summary of the background history of Zimbabwean linguistic experiences and policy will be referred to throughout this research study to help explain the country's educational policy and the ways in which English is learnt and taught in secondary schools. Understanding this context and these former practices enables one to examine the English syllabus critically for its relevance or lack of it to the Zimbabwean learner's sociocultural, political, linguistic and economic environment. This study will argue that the national and cultural good of Zimbabwe require a radical revision of current educational language policy.

CHAPTER TWO

The Problem in Learning and Teaching English
in Zimbabwean Secondary Schools Today

The problem is complex. English is taught using traditional teaching styles based on an outdated British system that has extensive set examinations with little to do with Zimbabwean reality. This has numerous effects on teachers, students, and parents.

Teachers feel the pressure to "teach to the tests", and students and parents feel the pressure of seeking a "good education" in order to succeed in a difficult socioeconomic situation. The education system of today can at times look suspiciously similar to the dual system of colonial days, and students still do poorly on examinations. The question is why.

One significant reason put forth by this study is that in this teaching/learning context, the students and their views and perspectives are left out. Students feel distant from both the language and the content of what is being taught, and therefore, do not always succeed.

A second reason for the problem lies at the level of the Ministry of Education and its exclusionary policies. These too will be explored in this chapter.

How is English taught and learned in Zimbabwe today? This study found that English language teaching today is still characterized by a formal traditional way of teaching, in which teachers are the only experts. Because of a type of language teaching popular in the past, in which prescriptive models of language are broken down into language items (structures, functions, grammar...) to be taught in a particular order, the teacher becomes an expert technician, trained to develop skills for controlling and organizing language input so that learners can be carefully guided through the various stages required to learn the target languages. The study found this type of English teaching dominant in many classrooms, even when years of research

into language learning development have shown people that learning is not a linear process (James Moffett, 1968). As well, there is no move toward distributing expertise, to encourage students to become creators as well as critics of their own work and that of others through the English-only medium of instruction (see Chapter 4).

Teaching in Zimbabwe that I observed during this study included formalized lessons in grammar and sentence structure, spelling tests, and heavy dependence on textbooks. English language teaching was also characterized by lectures or elaborate teacher talk, coupled with drills, rote repetition, note-taking and lots of homework. Questions posed to students were mostly for the recall of facts that had been presented. Students rarely asked questions or initiated interactions. Teachers controlled both the language and the students. Teachers initiated talk and, in lesson activity sequences, served as evaluators of talk. Classroom interactions, as many educators have observed elsewhere (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1974), appeared based on teacher eliciting - student responding - teacher evaluating.

The traditional school offered today is built on obedience: on following directions, listening carefully and sitting up straight, or properly. While this in itself is not bad, students comply mainly because they want to pass examinations. (Appendix 1) Students I observed showed respect to each other and to teachers and authority.

In some classrooms, English teachers place an inordinately high value on order, routine, and discipline, in order to guide students in successful learning. Communication between teachers and students is, at best, problematic. They operate on different value systems of politics, culture, history and language. Although on my visits I noticed many Zimbabwean students appearing more comfortable with this difficult formal or "ritualized" form of communication and interaction than with spontaneous forms (culturally this is normal, as obedience is characteristic of a good student), unfortunately some of their teachers seemed to mistake this behaviour for passivity or cowardice. In speaking to these students, the teachers repeated words several times and sometimes shouted at the students, believing these students were somewhat "slow" or had more problems in learning than others. This happened more often in Forms I and II. (see Chapter 4)

Students almost always worked alone. This was striking given that modern workers in most fields today 'collaborate', and draw on each other's skills and knowledge where necessary to get answers.

Another characteristic of English teaching and learning in Zimbabwe is that there is a strong emphasis on British-set examinations, such as the "O" Level Examination and the local Zimbabwe Junior Certificate (ZJC).

The ZJC is written after two years of secondary school. As students may leave school after Form 2, this examination functions both as an achievement test measuring the first two years of secondary school and as a proficiency test, indicating a certain level of ability to employers. Before 1980, a pass in ZJC English was the minimum requirement of the Police Force, the Post Office, and banks. The ZJC follows an examination tradition modelled on the British Cambridge School Leaving Certificate Examinations pattern and widely used in Britain and its former colonies. Skills tested include knowledge of facts, vocabulary, and inferences. The format includes multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer questions. Although listening and speaking skills are emphasized in the syllabus, they are not tested. Language proficiency is interpreted as the ability to read and write in English.

The Cambridge 'O' level examination is taken after four years of secondary school. It is set and administered by the Cambridge Examinations Syndicate and costs the Zimbabwe Government annually Z$25 million (Herald, March 17, 1986). The students spend two years preparing for it, and, as in the case of the Grade 7 and ZJC, English is compulsory.

Since 1980 more students have been taking the examination. This contributes to more problems as the shortage of classrooms, books and teachers increases. The Cambridge examination is used to select those who may go on for sixth form studies and as a school-leaving certificate. (Many students leave after Form 4.) The selection for Advanced Level (A-level) is highly competitive. In 1986, the sixth form entry figures showed that of the 16,000 eligible students, only 5,000 (31.25 percent) were chosen (Ministry of Education).

The Government of Zimbabwe has begun to localize the examination, and soon the 'O' level will be set, administered, and marked by Zimbabweans, but monitored by Cambridge to ensure standards and thus international recognition.

As a result of the importance placed on these tests, teachers "teach to them". However, by teaching to the test, teachers are imposing a false interpretation on learning, instead of exploring texts and meaning with their students realistically regardless of examination demands and requirements. The result often is that very worthwhile and relevant aspects of the different cultures are never learnt, and thus never understood. Besides, the fun and challenge in learning is in the process, not just the end product and passing examinations.

Kate Allen (1990) studied some Zimbabwean examinations in English, beginning with Grade 7 which is taken after seven years of primary schooling. She writes:

> The examination consisted of 50 multi-choice questions that tested reading comprehension and knowledge of grammar rules. There is no testing of written composition or spoken skills, even though these are emphasized in the Syllabus. Teachers are clearly aware and know well the importance of success at the Grade 7 level, and they tend to use the final year of Primary school to train their students to pass the examination and neglect written and spoken skills which are not tested.

While teachers sincerely want their students to think broadly and deeply, it was observed during the interview and classroom observations for this research that their methods of teaching and assessment convey a different message and encourage the acquisition of detailed facts. Students were quick to participate and engage in the classroom behaviors that they assumed would pay off in good grades.

There was emphasis on direct instruction with very strong teacher control and guidance. Teachers determined the pace and order of instruction, with little room for students to influence their own behaviors and learning. Teachers were too preoccupied with covering the curriculum content by moving students through sets of materials, mostly from textbooks, to diagnose and address students' problems, even though in education, diagnosis is central to the teacher's task. Teachers need to know not merely

that students got the wrong answer, but also the cause of the error. This was not always the case. Students aimed at getting things right most of the time, and tried hard to avoid error.

Throughout most of this learning process, English instruction is often restricted to those terms and phrases in English that have previously appeared on ZJC, O and A-level examinations. Thus the official approach has an indirect but serious effect on the teaching process of English because the results of these examinations not only determine access to scarce spaces at the school, hospitals, university, colleges, and workplaces, but they are also used to rank school districts, schools and teachers.

Some texts do not reflect the world of the students. Zimbabwean school children learn the target culture mostly through the teachers' eyes, and through the prescribed textbooks. However it must be asked whether English texts written mostly by English authors and teachers of English can adequately teach Zimbabwean values concerning mutual respect, patience, commitment, intimacy and self-sacrifice, qualities needed and necessary to achieve in any academic or related discipline.

For the majority of the Zimbabwean African students, the school education system is one which ignores their prior knowledge, or labels it irrelevant. This happens through teachers' interpretation of syllabuses and teaching methods, creating an artificial classroom culture. When students have no knowledge or experience of the English-life values, a lot of their classroom participation and performance is likely to be only superficial. In Zimbabwe one is often struck by the wide parallels between syllabus theories (e.g., ZJC) and teachers' practice. These appear to affirm an educational theory that undemocratically controls students, at a time when many educational trends are placing emphasis on "empowering students".

One wonders how much "empowering" can happen when texts examined during fieldwork show a European world view that is in complete contrast to the value systems of the African people. For example, in Zimbabwe, as in most African countries, people place importance on collectivity, respect for nature, and spirituality. Some students in this research study clearly recognized the books they read as written by authors from faraway countries that had nothing to do with their land (Nyamuzawe

Secondary School: M'toko, 1986). Students spoke of writing things they said had nothing to do with anything. Sentences they copy are unrelated to their life experiences, and most assignments are from prescribed foreign texts. (Appendices I and II)

In some cases, students and teachers were able to relate to indigenous peoples in particular, and drew parallels according to their own cultural codes or behavior. But what did not happen was an exploration and understanding of the differences between the lives and cultures of "textbook people" (authors and characters alike) and those of the students.

Most English texts on language and literature carry the western European liberal ideology which is based on the premises of individualism, egalitarianism, and universalism. Although liberalism is usually optimistic, unless the assumptions underlying these texts are carefully interpreted and contextualized, they can falsely seem to be norms. This denies access to other kinds of assumptions. Presented with these norms students see other cultures and the history of other peoples as being secondary or irrelevant. This tends to discredit indigenous forms of knowledge and national issues, and this is unfortunate. Besides, this situation discourages particularly the creativity of students in adapting themselves and their culture to the English classroom environment and its conditions.

What this study found was a noticeable discontinuity existing between the culture of most students' everyday life at home, which is lived in Shona and Ndebele, and that of the school English-speaking environment.

> We all tend to assume that the African child takes this dramatic change in stride and we expect her/him to respond to this new situation as an average English, American, or Irish child would.(Fafunwa, 1990, p. 58)

Today's Zimbabwean English classroom does not emphasize the culture of the majority of students. Instead, there is more emphasis on 'good English', good 'O' level results, and better schools. In part, this is because teachers do not want to make mistakes in interpreting the ZJC or O and A level syllabuses wrongly or spend time on

areas of English instruction and study that are outside the examination contexts (Appendices I and II).

The consequences of this teaching and learning theory are many. First of all, teachers feel caught in a bind. Their fear of misinterpreting syllabuses is a major problem, as it deprives them of their own role in preparing students, through the English language, for a life that goes beyond what they currently know. At the same time, and in broader terms, teachers cannot be held solely accountable for what is not totally under their control. Instead, it is the Ministry of Education which has this control. Despite the presence of teachers on many panels and committees, effective authors of official language policy are people within the Ministry. Too often these officials attempt to overcome problems simply by directing them to "improve themselves, work hard", and so on. However efforts by teachers alone especially in isolation cannot transform English learning and teaching, let alone examination results.

Teachers are beset by many contradictory and paradoxical pressures and demands,. both internally and externally. They are positioned between the demands of relentless objectives, based on testing and mandatory adherence to models on the one hand, and trying to teach English on the other. The result is that classrooms just are not as dynamic as they could be. This situation reflects how teachers continue to be manoeuvred and manipulated by the head office authorities in Harare. Not much questioning or inquiry goes on.

One could add too that teaching in Zimbabwe requires an extraordinary and highly ambitious teacher and many become so in order to achieve both their own personal goals and those of the community and the students they serve. Many bright, talented, and committed teachers now leave the profession. They are tired of being messengers. Many have gone to teach in South Africa, Botswana, or Namibia. While this man-power drain is regretted in many schools, the Ministry itself hardly addresses it.

Parents and students, as well as teachers, also feel pressure to do well and succeed in school. In the larger socio-economic context of Zimbabwe, this creates the myth of better education.

Zimbabwe is only halfway through its five-year Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (E.S.A.P). But it has already become clear that its impact on the economy, particularly on employment and labour relations, has been far from positive. Lloyd Sachikonye (1993) discusses this problem and says:

> Between May 1991 and June 1992, lower income urban families experienced an average 43.6 percent price increase. The price trends showed that this lower income group was being more severely affected by consumer price inflation. Yet most wage awards in 1992 were below 15 percent, implying that the living standards of many workers were seriously affected. (p. 11)

In this context of layoffs and unemployment, workers face a crisis of job insecurity and falling living standards that in turn have a negative impact on their families and school-going children. This leaves little or no hope for some students to acquire the skills and confidence they need to remain in school or in work experiences later on after school.

Clayton Mackenzie (1988) adds:

> Today, the tens of thousands of pupils who annually fail 'O' level are likely to be left not only with a deep sense of personal inadequacy, but also with an academically oriented education that has failed to give them the practical skills that they could have utilized in the cause of national development (p. 349). In the face of these dilemmas the Zimbabwean Government finds itself in danger of its politicians seen to be responsible for widening the many gaps between the 'haves' and the 'have nots', a distasteful situation given the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front) Party's democratic stand. (p. 9)

The problem is made more complex by the system equating "knowledge" with what can be learned in English. Many people are thus excluded and so are the other languages they speak. This raises more questions about an educational system in which indigenous forms of education are not clearly reflected in the curriculum. In the past, the explicit object of colonial education was to impose a different culture, ideology, and world outlook which the colonizer believed was superior to that of the indigenous people. Today it would appear that the better economic income groups of society, regardless of race, are doing exactly that, as discussed earlier on in this study.

Some responses from parents and students reflect fears that African children in particular will be deprived of the country's educational benefits and privileges if they are not brought to multicultural urban or private school settings that were formerly European schools (Appendix II). It is still common in Zimbabwe for some parents to seek out every opportunity to send their children elsewhere for better education, through a relative within the African extended family circle, or friends. This is when real traumas begin for many students, finding themselves in some urban areas or private schools far away from immediate family, friends and most things familiar. Their new families are affected as well, and in their new schools, while people are welcoming and accommodating, they don't always know how to help these new students. It becomes an unnecessary burden on everyone.

This kind of alienation causes many difficulties to students, and is not to be underestimated. It has serious consequences for the students and others in both school and family situations. Students receive different messages that appear to be telling them to be in contact with, and part of, the larger world, 'like those over there' in better homes and better schools (Appendix II).

Students and parents then experience--through their school staff, politicians and the media--"flashes" and "bulletins" of compliments, eulogies and encouraging words about "the best schools" that are everywhere else but where they are, especially if they live in low-income urban or rural areas. Such statements have a negative impact on student learning of English, and are outside the purview of school and beyond the reach of whatever expectations the Ministry of Education has today.

However, they do lead to the feeling that the education system is still dual. The government-funded schools in urban and rural areas where majority African students learn are seen to be made to compete with long-time, well-funded private schools, some of which are former all-white Rhodesian schools. These private schools of the well-endowed elites co-exist with the underfunded schools of the state sector, although the examination results achieved are not necessarily of a higher standard in these private schools. Still, this situation suggests that the dual colonial education system has been reproduced in a modified form in post-independence Zimbabwe. This creates

a problematic situation that puts enormous pressure on majority parents and students in most parts of the country.

Ngugi Wa Th'iong'O (1989), in explaining why he writes in his mother tongue Gikuyu, says the following:

> ...poverty and illiteracy do severely limit access to knowledge and information. But after some time institutions are built around this uneven and unequal development. ...rural schools are denied what is freely available to the wealthy sections of the urban centres. (p.72)

Not all Zimbabweans see things in the same way. Professor Pauline Dodgson (1990) refers to Levi Nyagura's overview of curriculum issues in Zimbabwe and reports:

> ...Levi Nyagura states confidently that Zimbabwe has changed from a class to an egalitarian society and that this is reflected in the creation of an egalitarian education system through the expansion of primary and secondary schooling...

Pauline Dodgson argues that this is to look at social formation only in terms of racial identities and to ignore class re-alignments which form to suit economic interests. In what appears to be in agreement with Lloyd Sachikonye, she adds:

> Mass education after independence did not bring egalitarianism because of the inequality of educational provision. This inequality can most clearly be observed if one has to take into account the opening of new private schools and the unequal distribution of qualified teachers, textbooks and other resources.

Added to this duality of the education system is the ambiguity of the role of English in Zimbabwe. What students see, experience and try to understand is similar to what Clarence Maloney (1990) describes from his experience in India:

> ...those who use English in education and administration have turned language into a deep and unbridgeable gulf between classes and use it to sustain elite prerogatives. Worse, it is said that this has prevented the bottom-up flowering of indigenous civilizational values, thought, and creativity. (p. 1)

Most people see the main function of English as not to facilitate science or travel or economic development, as some authorities would have people believe, but rather:

> ...to preserve the privileges of the rich and powerful, and there can be no true
> development until the sway of this colonial relic is ended and the people's idiom
> and creativity is released in its multiplicity of native languages (Maloney, p. 3).

The intellectual elite, who live mostly in low density suburbs of cities and in commercial farming areas of the country, remain very separate and apart from the majority of the population, the low-income groups who inhabit both the cities and the rural areas. This is why, when English is entrenched in the education system, it is not seen as foreign domination, but rather a reality of the Zimbabwean society that students try to understand.

The people interviewed (see Appendix II) see English as inseparably bound up with economic problems or with progress! Religious and other sentiments indeed influence the linguistic situation, but any indifference towards English was seen mainly as a protest against the privileged minority English-educated Zimbabwean class of all races. Thus sometimes the educational system is analyzed as commercial, colonial, and even repressive in nature, because even those who do succeed feel excluded from this British education system, a system that devalues the rich social and cultural heritage contained in African languages. This situation continues to create learning problems for students and most people in Zimbabwe.

Barnes (1976) observed this "lack of reference to personal experience and the dependence on teachers' perspectives of experience" as "characteristic of classroom discourse" (p. 27). The problem in the Zimbabwean classroom is that the teacher belongs to the minority elite as either an educated African, European, Indian or expatriate. Although the teacher may use indigenous languages at home or at work with colleagues, she/he belongs to the modern urban social class now marked mostly by English and its culture, the old Rhodesian model of homes, schools and lifestyles that, strangely, are still idealized by the English-speaking urban elite and the Education Ministry. This situation leaves the economically deprived population dreaming, imagining, wishing for, and struggling together with their children for the same "new and modern life." However meagre economic resources often mean failure to achieving their goals and fulfilling their expectations.

But how is a school child to understand or support the government stand on English when the main arguments for keeping English are that it is a window on the world, it is necessary for modern thought, especially in science and trade, and enables people to keep up international contacts and go abroad (Chapter 3). These comments were echoed in most Zimbabwean English classrooms by teachers and principals. They invite all students from all economic classes and rural areas to aim for the city schools, where they will learn to appreciate less their rural farming environments and indigenous languages. Their purpose in higher education, says one rural headmaster,

> ...is to qualify for jobs which will lift them from the social strata of the rural farmers, village life and urban labourers for something better in the city or abroad.

In all of this —at home, school, and society at large— English remains a mark of status and indeed economic class. A person not initiated into the English-using class life through childhood education can scarcely ever join it comfortably and successfully, later in life. The problem again is that the Ministry of Education does not clearly explain why English is the medium of instruction, or tell students that their bilingual process is ongoing and an asset in their learning English and other subjects. Instead, like elites everywhere who misrepresent reality, some of these English-using middle-class citizens of Zimbabwe, themselves misinformed by the past colonial experience, education and today's modern life, assume decision-making prerogatives for the rest of the population, and prescribe the 'development' and 'uplifting' of the low-income urban and rural people through the Education Ministry, whose philosophy in practice is very misleading, if not misguided.

Although a minority, this group claims the moral right to set the standards for the rest. It is obvious the former colonial government has now been displaced by the English-using educated elite minority. The tragedy in Zimbabwe is that low-income groups and their children do not always get equal opportunities in schools or in jobs. This study observes that English and education generally in these unequal spheres have both become means for exploiting the economically weaker sectors that cannot afford an education in the language that is synonymous with education. School

becomes difficult; so does English. In this process students are stripped of their self-esteem, dignity, pride and faith in their culture and tradition, as they roam the streets later after years of schooling, as the "job seekers, the unemployed" who failed 'O' levels or other examinations.

Drawing on fieldwork notes and records, this study makes the assumption that some of the widely accepted notions about English as the only medium of instruction are more political and economic than cultural and pedagogical, and they raise serious questions and concerns regarding the true motives of those perpetuating English-only use.

Poor examination results indicate that these assumptions correctly point to language problems. Judging by the success rate in examinations, for example, the results of 1984 Cambridge School Certificate (sat at the end of four years of secondary school) were that of the 67,962 students who wrote papers, only 22,950 (33%) passed (Sunday Mail, March 10, 1985).

Questions have been asked about all these examinations and what they really mean: Does failing the examination in English mean that students are unable to communicate in that language or that they are unsuitable for sixth-form studies? This lack of clarity is true of all the examinations under discussion and contributes to pressures and problems that students and teachers face in schools.

In all three examinations, English is tested as a subject as well as a medium of instruction. If students pass their other subjects, all written in English, but fail the English paper, they fail the examination. All three examinations ignore the testing of spoken language, even though this is again emphasized in the syllabuses. It is clear that these examinations are difficult for students and demand a high level of expertise from teachers as well as adequate materials. But if a significant part of the syllabus is not tested, then the teachers will not teach it, as their success depends to a large extent on getting their students through the examinations. These examinations dominate the system and exert a great deal of influence on what is taught.

Although changes have been made to syllabuses and materials since independence in 1980, there has been no thorough analysis of the examination system. The three examinations Kate Allen studied are costly in terms of time, money, and expectations.

It is mostly because of examinations that progress through the school system, which affords students access to further education, is hampered. Statistics indicate this:

Progression from Form IV to Form VI
in Zimbabwean Schools from 1977 to 1985

| Year | Intake to | | Progression |
	Form IV	Form VI	
1977	12,927	1,643	12.70%
1978	13,373	1,594	11.91%
1979	13,294	2,641	19.86%
1980	12,926	2,751	21.36%
1981	15,547	3,243	20.85%
1982	16,416	3,680	22.41%
1983	24,509	4,218	17.21%
1984	71,632	5,957	8.31%
1985	91,732	6,516	7.10%

Source: Central Statistics Office, Quarterly Digest of Statistics, December, 1985

In the three years preceding national independence, Clayton G. Mackenzie (1988) found a very low ratio of Form IV students proceeding to VIth Form education:

> Soon after independence, the percentage of IVth year students entering the 6th form (V, VI lower) rose impressively, peaking at 22.41 percent in 1983. Thereafter a strong decline has been in evidence with the percentage of Form IV pupils entering Form VI Lower, reducing to 8.31 percent in 1985, and to 7.1 percent in 1986.

Behind the figures, Mackenzie explains, lies a frightening reality that cannot be ignored. By promising all secondary school students the chance to write the Ordinary level examination, the Zimbabwean administration has created for itself a crisis of expectations. Indeed many 'O' level aspirants expect that a successful completion of the examination will open up certain opportunities for them. After eleven years of school education, students expect to find employment. Sadly, it is becoming increasingly evident that the government is unable to meet these expectations in the case of most pupils and will be unable to do so for the foreseeable future. In short, it will simply not be possible to avoid widespread disappointment for the majority of school leavers. (Mackenzie, 1988)

So why are there still poor examination results? One explanation considered by this study is that because of the content and style of teaching that we have seen, there is no place for the students' view, and they feel alienated.

The Zimbabwean student is in an ambivalent position. The mismatch between the home and school environment of the Zimbabwean African child begins at five or six years of age, when she/he enters into another educational system almost completely different from the one to which she/he was accustomed. Some of the children grow up in one environment and suddenly find themselves in another environment with an entirely different approach and a new language different from that of the home.

In Zimbabwe, students experience linguistic and cultural inequalities, and this affects them. Education that excludes familiar, common, and indigenous languages is criticized by Robert Pinauin, who in 1993 represented the League of Filipino students in Montreal and who spoke at various meetings. He described this exclusionary education as:

> ...education that is there to function as a multinational, to give the people enough
> skills to maintain whatever is the social, political and economic order, and to
> make them believe that it is the best....(p. 60)

Pinauin confirms in many ways what is happening not only in his home country, the Phillipines, but in most former European colonies including Zimbabwe, where the former British education through English has effectively domesticated the people, in

that it subtly discourages critical thinking, and leaves little room for them to question the standard ideas given to them from foreign sources. According to Pinauin, the effect of such education is that only ten percent of Filipino youth can afford a college education. He suggests an evolution of the educational system that serves the needs of the population. This, he adds, will only come about with a complete and holistic transformation of Filipino society.

In Zimbabwe, however, the situation is somewhat different. Not only have local languages been carried along on the wave of new ideas, they have "flourished culturally" to the extent of becoming "official languages" (Shona and Ndebele). The major problem arises from mandating English-only at the expense of indigenous languages in learning, and the philosophy and practices that determine how English is taught. The whole nation of Zimbabwe is faced with an encroaching, universal and alienating modernism, forcing men, women, and children in this developing country to abandon their traditional and cultural forms of expression for the English language and culture in a predominantly African society, even when both forms of education could be accommodated. Their mother tongues, a guarantee of their identity and personality are outside the support of schools, where they are needed the most. This deprives students of vital social interaction with their predominantly Shona or Ndebele environments.

Sometimes the pressure to learn and speak English well, at the expense of students' mother tongues, comes not only from the schools and teachers, but also from parents.

> My mother says if we speak English at home it will improve. I don't want to speak to my mother in English. I am learning my language Shona. I grew up in England. I am home now; some children laugh at me for not knowing Shona! They backbite and speak behind my back a lot...

While some teachers thought such a student was all right in English because of her background, the student thought otherwise; she wanted to learn and know her "mother tongue". Fieldwork interviews revealed that there were many students who

grew up outside Zimbabwe in other parts of the world and neighbouring countries who expressed the same sentiments on English usage, in and outside of school.

The school is expected to play an important role in developing in students the ability to order and express thoughts and feelings, to explore their own unique interests and talents, to understand something of their own and other people's languages and cultures, to master the basic literacies enhanced by their indigenous languages which give them access to knowledge by which they can continue personal development throughout life in the target language.

The school syllabus itself focused more on the system of examinations (ZJC, 'O' and 'A' levels) than on students' needs. This research observed that, as a result, students are not given much opportunity to get to know themselves, their customs and find a sense of identity with the community.

Zimbabwean students are therefore confronted with the problem of reconciling the demands made on them by their personal goals, ethnic loyalty, modernization and nationalism. As a result, in today's students, not only is the specific free flow communicating vocabulary in English often lacking, but there is a strong feeling among many people who use English that the whole process of English-only in education is intimately bound up with Western values and languages. Classroom evidence from lessons observed was scanty on whether teachers' approaches in learning were empowering students to explore through language, beyond "the correct tone, vocabulary, and fluency" often displayed.

> To empower is to enable those who have been silenced to speak. It is to enable the self-affirming expression of experiences mediated by one's history, language, and traditions. It is to enable those who have been marginalized economically and culturally or misled somewhat, to claim in both respects a status as full participating members of a community (Simon, 1987, p. 374).

The questions one asks about empowerment in the Zimbabwean English classroom are: What pedagogical tools, methods or philosophy are being advocated here? What content would best express the spirit of "people's English"? Would this philosophy be committed to establishing participatory, non-discriminatory and non-authoritarian

learning processes and seek to transfer skills and resources in such a way that schools, communities and individual students are empowered to take charge of their own learning projects?

These questions are difficult to answer. Students observed were often exposed to too many tasks with textual facts and figures. They then rapidly became aware that they were good at one skill, but not so good at another. Because most of what is learned in and through English is foreign, for much of the time in classroom teaching methodology, many students underfunction as learners and do badly in examinations. (see Chapter 4)

In addition, the majority group of students from lower socio-economic groups in particular, do not participate as well in this school learning process as do students from middle and upper socio-economic groups. This study attributes some of these problems to language use in the classroom and to uneven funding systems. Bernstein (1973) and many sociolinguists (Bereiter & Englemann, 1966; Blank and Soloman, 1968) have attacked the schools for failing to adapt language to the needs of students. Dillon (1980), Labov (1969), Barnes (1976), Dias (1990) argue in their writings that the communication in the classroom is the most important factor in shaping the actual curriculum taught in the classroom.

Many people interviewed in this study believe that to succeed, Zimbabwean students must master Western high school learning styles. The Zimbabwean school learning styles included heavy use of "important words to use in your assignment" (from a handout given to an 'A' level class): contrast, describe, list, illustrate, outline, prove, demonstrate, relate, review, state, summarize and trace (1985). These hypothetical problem- posing structures are not just linked to Western culture, but more fundamentally to industrial technologies and cash economics (Harris, 1989). As such, adoption or continued use of these formal approaches and related information-processing strategies place students where the government wants to involve them, in an industrial technology and cash economy. This then becomes the focus for most learning, with limited choices, opportunities, and above all, with fewer considerations

for students' personal growth, life, and concerns about themselves and their future as Zimbabweans.

Many students' problems in the study were also a result of their not having many family people to talk to about school matters, not even their grandparents, who feel left out by the English-only school system and cannot offer help. In many situations students did not get the kind of trust one would think adults (both parents and teachers) could give them. Lack of trust and confidence among most subjects is viewed here as contributing to learning problems.

> My daughter has bad friends who don't study. They go to a different school where they speak mostly Ndebele, instead of English.

Students, sometimes with great humour mixed with levels of seriousness, often echoed some of these negative comments about them and their work by their teachers and parents, but said:

> ...that they did not find learning or studying English difficult as reported...they know English and wanted to keep learning and studying it.

In class after class I continued to witness and experience with students environments that did not connect people, where there was instead incredible power of teachers over the students. What was also evident and disturbing in most secondary schools was that the primary source of information for students was mostly the teacher and the book: not friends, peers or the environment that students often explore and know. Many students admit they are mostly influenced by teachers, texts and school in the English classroom. If so, they are being denied sources of influence that are most crucial in learning English. How then can these students be helped to develop their linguistic skills and their self-confidence when the solutions and power are outside themselves? As a result, many Zimbabwean students now carry what teachers recognize as characteristic of "not knowing what they know" until confirmed by official adults (teachers again).

This knowledge has been called an imposed discourse, embraced to make it, and to pass examinations; it has no aesthetic value. New knowledge is not created, the

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teacher and the students are passive. Old knowledge is simply poured into students' minds from texts. In other words, knowledge that students already possess while being used to a certain extent by the teacher is at the same time being devalued or dismissed.

This official style does not allow the reader much freedom of choice for words or expressions. Learners find it difficult to become honest in expressing themselves through language, since language is said to be expression of self. Formal official language makes this impossible in most linguistic situations (conversations...). Under such strains some students were found to abandon English for all other purposes except for examinations, having been trained not to read for example "with their hearts", but rather to "look for messages" and approach books as if they were puzzles. No wonder few students were found or seen to read after school.

The Zimbabwe Ministry of Education has developed programs which clearly define "objectives and content in order to facilitate the teachers' role in the classroom and the continual progress of the students" (ZJC and 'O' Level Syllabuses) in all learning situations. The problem is that learning languages (and English in particular in a multilingual society) does not take place only through formal practices as currently experienced in schools, but through contact with others and their immediate environment.

In fact, this research views the Zimbabwean Ministry of Education, through its language curriculum and examination systems which continue to be set or heavily influenced by mainly Britain, as part of the reason English is not learnt or taught well in Zimbabwe.

The Ministry continues to make most important education policy decisions. These decisions do not always express the processes of students and societal realities. Moreover, the Ministry of Education does not always make its processes of interpreting complex performances visible or clear so that other people can confirm or contest them. The programs are just set, and distributed to schools. Teachers are then subjected to a teaching and evaluation system that focuses mostly on scores or 'right and wrong' and on outside feedback. This results in the creation of ideological

dependence that in turn distorts the truth about language, learning, and use generally. Students are then denied a good chance to develop to high-level 'multilinguals' as they spend more time in cramming summaries than in practising all communication skills (Barnes et al., 1971), much less employing their own experiences.

This study is critical of this authoritarian way of doing things because it keeps the power in the hands of those who have quite different expectations and values from teachers, students and parents. Teachers in Zimbabwe need to be in better decision-making positions in program development areas at their schools or elsewhere to get their priorities, values and visions enacted in the system in order to effectively help students.

As well, many parents spoken to and interviewed during the research fieldwork in Zimbabwe (see Appendix II) explained their hardships and disappointments with those 'powers-that-be' that do not consult or listen to them as equals. Some of the parents say they have been denied education, if not their existence, by the colonial and neocolonial governments of the past, and were left on the margins. They see now some of the government officials in the Education Ministry as trying to stop and discourage them from articulating and understanding themselves, and from having dialogue with other people on their own terms. To these parents, this is dictatorship, and it affects their children too.

The problem is that the Ministry of Education in Zimbabwe does not involve parents enough. Parents need to know about and be supported in their role as the primary teachers of their children whether or not they speak English. In general, parents, including those who do not speak English, need to be accommodated into the school system, not merely as "cultural resources", but as experts in their own right and partners in collaborative relationships in the school system. This would help many students who at times feel silenced in English classes when they attempt to respond or give their viewpoints, but are afraid to identify themselves because of differences based on linguistic, social and economic situations. Knowing their parents are being fully consulted helps them learn better and support each other in a less isolating manner.

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There is a need for strong ties between schools, parents and the community. Education, and especially in English only, is today in vain if it continues to have no support in the home or the immediate culture.

In summary, this study observes with concern that today, the learning of English in Zimbabwe is done with little connection to students' cultural contexts. As a result, students are not always conscious of what is being learned. Some of them are very alienated. Indigenous languages, as already pointed out, do not seem to be treated seriously for academic purposes or culture maintenance. Yet they are important if the major aim is to improve Zimbabwean students' academic performance, and their present and future lives. What is fairly clear is that the Zimbabwe Education Ministry and school have not addressed the language problem adequately. Even where the school is both sensitive to the problem and willing to help, it is far from evident exactly what should be done, when, how and by whom.

Thus, students experience too many difficulties in this world of rapid change and abundant modern knowledge. As the former Principal of Belvedere put it, on welcoming teacher trainees in 1983:

> Students must be helped to become active, engaged learners who construct their own meanings. Classrooms where active learning is fostered are cooperative, interactive environments where learners struggle constantly to solve problems and put their thoughts into words and actions, both written and spoken, and into other forms of representation like improvisations, visuals of varying kinds, since this College is both Academic and Technical.... (Principal Keith Youds, Belvedere Teachers' College, 1983)

Clearly, alternatives are needed. In chapter Four, I will present and discuss specific fieldwork and classroom observations that demonstrate need for changes.

CHAPTER THREE

Theories of Language Learning; Fieldwork and Methods:
Discussion and Interpretation of Fieldwork Findings

This chapter addresses the approach to research or theories I used to guide my research in and outside Zimbabwe on the topic of language learning and teaching in Zimbabwe: English as the sole language of instruction in Zimbabwean schools. The major goal was to seek opinions from a range of people, especially students, teachers and parents, on both the policy of English-only instruction and on the way English is taught and learnt in Zimbabwe. In this chapter, I describe how I gathered the data, explaining why I chose a qualitative research methodology.

Gathering Data and Something About my Approach To Analysis of Data

The roots of this study go a long way back in my life and interests first as a student and later as a teacher of English. I had always felt a desire to know, on a broader basis in and outside homes, schools and universities, people's answers to these questions: How is English taught in Zimbabwe? Is this method effective? Are the English syllabus and other English programs relevant to the learner's social, linguistic, political, and economic environment? Do they reflect the cultural ideologies and philosophies of the learner's community? These questions and others were asked of various groups of people, as listed further on in this chapter. Reader Response theory guided my study during these early stages of my interest in these questions as will be discussed later in this study.

The understanding reflected here and the materials and documents used in this study draw on several periods of my professional life as well as the formal research activities associated with doctoral studies.

I started in 1983, informally gathering data from primary schools (Seke Teachers' College and surrounding schools) and secondary schools through Belvedere Teachers'

College in Harare. My work was carried out through the Ministry of Education. I worked with the then-principal, his deputy and principal lecturer in charge of teaching practices and distance education, at Belvedere Teachers' College in Harare, Zimbabwe. By working with the Ministry, I had access to schools and to many people engaged in teaching-practice supervision and observation, for purposes of education and research. Encouraged by the deputy principal in particular, and by results from my own supervising of teacher-trainees at college, I gathered and selected materials on language learning, teaching, indigenous languages and cultures and school tests and examinations. I operated at many different stages and in a variety of ways:

1. Teaching an invited class from one of the nearby schools (e.g. Highfield 4) while students observed and took notes for follow-up discussions with me and department lecturers.

2. "Team teaching" by students with other lecturers and myself as participants as we observed other lecturers teach.

3. "Observation" where I sat alone with other teachers at the back of the class and watched the classroom activities.

4. "Teaching Practice Supervision" and "Distance Education" work that was ongoing (1983-88) and kept me and others very much part of the school system, through the visits, seminars, conferences, workshops, feedback from schools (reports...) library research, meetings and interviews.

Fieldwork information also came from classroom observation and teaching, reports, and interviews. The primary purpose of classroom observation was to allow myself the opportunity to better understand instruction in Zimbabwe in the 1990's. As well, this classroom observation enabled me to reflect on the reasons for the observed behavior of both students and teachers. Participants were provided with opportunities to describe and discuss their feelings and opinions on all languages, especially English. These discussions often exposed me to many enthusiastic informants and made it possible, sometimes in short periods of time, to capture events as naturally as possible. While I had some insight into both past and present education practices in Zimbabwe (from my grandparents Vasekuru Benjamin and Ambuya Siraye Masawi, who first

taught me how to talk, read, and write, and from my own experiences as a student and teacher), I was a novice in this whole area of research and sought to understand another culture from the viewpoint of its participants. This understanding is gained through participation, observation, and analysis which is then reported. My role in this research, therefore, was that of "participant observer", a role in which the researcher forms relationships with the participants as they provide information.

The following table gives a summary of Fieldwork responses obtained from some schools in Zimbabwe and Cuba.

Group	Contacted	Responded
Sec. School students ('O' level)	135	111
High School ('A' level)	87	80
Grade 6	48	43
Grade 7	52	49
Dropouts	40	31
Parents	80	74
Grandparents	54	50
Teachers	58	54
Education Officers	6	6
Principals/Vice-Principals and School Administrators	10	8
School Support staff, Cooks, Groundsmen, Drivers, Messengers, Random Citizens	46	20
Citizens at large	62	58
Zimbabwean students studying in Cuba for Advanced Degrees	187	182

Answers were in Shona, Ndebele, English and Nyanja (a Malawian language).

The belief I held as I asked the research questions was that the behavior of an individual can be understood only in terms of the behavior of the whole social group of which he or she is a member, since his or her individual acts are involved in larger social acts which go beyond himself or herself and implicate the other members of that group. As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, my first readings and literature review related to this topic were greatly influenced by literary theory, in particular, "Reader Response Criticism". According to reader-response theory, readers become involved with and contribute to a text. They ascribe meanings as they interact intellectually and emotionally with the record (for the present purposes, "record" and "text" mean an account of a cultural setting) before them. The meanings of a text are the "production" or "creation" of the individual reader (Abrams, 1981, pp. 149-150)

I used this approach then and continue to do so now because it provides useful tools for understanding issues of language, culture, and learning; and it highlights the significance of the reader (learner in my case) to the outcomes of ethnographic research and reporting, which I also use.

Most important in this study, and in light of this theory, is the recognition of the reader's crucial role in creating "meaning" in a text. Louise Rosenblatt (1938) suggests that too often a reader reads only with the surface of his mind, registers only the outline meanings of the phrases presented, and may never even glimpse what they mean in actual human experience. For Rosenblatt, literature is not read only to instill information but to develop a capacity for social sensitivity. Prolonged exposure to literature in which an aesthetic response is permitted and subsequent reflection encouraged allows a reader to develop a personal and social identity. She says the reader "learns imaginatively to put himself into the place of the other fellow. He becomes better able to foresee the possible repercussions of his own actions in the life of others." (p.218). While this may ensure a more satisfying personal life, Rosenblatt claims that this ability has broader social and political ramifications. In terms of the state she says:

> A democratic society, whose institutions and political and economic procedures
> are constantly being developed or remoulded, needs citizens who will possess the

social sensitivity and imagination to see what political doctrines mean for human beings. (p.218)

The Ministry of Education in Zimbabwe emphasizes, as does Rosenblatt, national democratic institutions and the interplay between education and democracy.

> ...Education plays a crucial role in the transformation of society as well as in national development. As a fulfilment of people's expectations information published for the public will get them more and more involved in affairs connected with the promotion of education in their areas. (Zimbabwe Government, Ministry of Education Handbook, 1985, p.2)

In classroom contexts, however, the liberating potential emerges from a variety of sources, some of which do not always succeed in moving students beyond their own perspective, demands, or expectations. Again, Rosenblatt gives an indication of how wide-ranging texts, for example, can be:

> The student will not be limited to one kind of literacy diet. She will not read exclusively the work of the past or present. She will not be nourished entirely on the literature of England and America. Instead she will be permitted an insight into ways of life and social and moral codes very different even from the one that the school is committed to perpetuate. (p.255)

It became more and more obvious during the fieldwork that Zimbabwean students, like those in Rosenblatt's experience, also require far more than what I came to regard sometimes in some schools as narrow and limited to great minds in British textbooks. A lot of the information that appeared in English language classes revealed little imagination on the part of the teacher, and had almost no social references, concerns or sensitivity. One Form II class worked for 40 minutes on a chapter titled "Police, Uniforms, Law and Order", without one mention of the country's Zimbabwe Republic Police, or the ways in which our system compared or differed from the one described in the chapter from a British textbook.

In such circumstances, I was encouraged and guided by the once-pioneering and highly influential work of Emig (1971). Emig introduced a descriptive method of reporting on the composing processes of twelfth grade students. By observing students

in the context of their school classrooms, she sought to discover the important aspects of the nature of their composing strategies, as well as their attitudes toward writing.

Likewise in this study, by observing and interviewing Zimbabwean students in the context of their school classrooms, I sought to discover the important aspects of the nature of their learning experiences, their attitudes and concerns towards English. Emig entered the world of the students, and through careful interviewing and naturalistic observation, created "writing biographies" for a relatively small number of students, including one in-depth case study. Emig did not set an artificial writing task in which to observe certain pre-established variables. She developed ideas of what was important to students in their own settings. The result was an examination of a writer's composing process that attempted to describe many interactive components, including the context for writing, the pre-writing activities, the composing, the teacher influence, and so on.

My study in Zimbabwe tried to characterize the learning and teaching processes of secondary school students by using a research method which embodied the descriptive, qualitative dimensions of "Reader-Response Theory" and of Emig's ethnographic study. Through the services of the Education Ministry in Zimbabwe, I was able to organize in-depth interviews to ask about strategies used by teachers, and to learn about general attitudes, feelings and experiences of other people. Thus, I was able to analyze what learning and teaching meant for each of the groups of students, parents, teachers with whom I worked.

Emig's ethnographic approach enabled her to identify a need for more incorporation of student interests and motivation in writing programs offered in schools, and to outline specific strategies for teachers to employ in order to engender the positive attitudes their students would need in order to become more fluent and to use their personal knowledge as a base for school writing. To that end she encouraged classroom practices such as personal journal writing to stimulate students.

In my own study I am interested in interactions between student and student, teacher and student, parent and student, parent and teacher, and each of these individuals with their society or culture. The learning and teaching methods used and

attitudes of those involved to language and learning are also areas of interest and focus. It is understood here that students have different views about their schools, families, teachers and the language they use. Furlong (1984) better explains this when he writes:

> Not all pupils "know" the same things about their school lives. They do not all form the same common sense judgements about their teachers or the curriculum: they do not all see other pupils in the same way. Because of this, a study of pupil experience of "knowledge" of school life must begin by looking at the way some pupils come to share common perspectives, and how pupils influence each other in what they know. In other words, we need a more detached understanding of pupil interaction. Only when this process is fully understood will it be possible to go on to document what individuals or groups actually know. (1984, p. 145)

Like Emig, Furlong provides the groundwork for a more detailed study of pupil knowledge. In a multilingual society like Zimbabwe, an understanding of student attitudes and knowledge is valuable to the researcher whose interest and focus is on students' linguistic development.

In my fieldwork I used a number of methods: readings, observation, interviews (structured and unstructured), questionnaires, discussion, recordings, reports and reviews of the relevant literature to seek opinions on language-learning and education in Zimbabwe from parents, students, teachers and many others directly and indirectly involved with education.

In "Participant Observation with Pupils", Stephen Ball (1985) acknowledges and encourages the role of students in particular. The students' role as informants is sometimes ignored in classroom research, he writes, adding:

> This is not always deliberate but unavoidable due to time constraints and availability of information about school settings and students in the principal's office. (p. 18)

This limitation was soon realized during the several preliminary observations, interviews and discussions I had with different groups of people in the Ministry of Education in Zimbabwe. The problem was then considered linguistic and cultural.

Could it be lack of interest in the English language and culture? In order to address these issues, I sought information through libraries, classrooms, and meetings.

I was also curious and keen to know how respondents defined and categorized the new Zimbabwean schools, English, and other learning and teaching practices. Some of the questions were short and direct: Did they want to learn in English? Why? What were their attitudes to English, a former colonial language that placed their mother tongues (Shona or Ndebele) in a lesser position in class? School headmasters, principals, and teachers often provided me with useful literature and documents that I borrowed, read, interpreted and incorporated into my data. I attended some of their staff meetings. Based on one of the assumptions I made that students' linguistic performance in English is poor, I conducted interviews for several purposes: to gain background information about the participants and their responsibilities as parents, teachers, and students; to explore their beliefs, feelings and views about learning in English only; to know from them their expectations and hopes during and after school: I also needed to confirm, compare or verify my own understanding of the problem I saw in learning and teaching in English.

Interviews took place almost everywhere: offices, marketplaces, hotels, buses or trains, workshops, classrooms, supermarkets, churches, homes and hospitals were among the settings where there were students, parents or teachers. Interviews with most headmasters were by appointment. I found some of these most useful as they included other key informants who enriched the discussion. Some interviews were unstructured and open-ended, with many points to discuss. Most of these were clarified and verified by others in the group. I made field notes during all visits and kept a research handbook (diary) in which I recorded my observations.

Guided by the research question "How is English taught and learned in Zim-babwe, and is this effective?" and the desire to improve students' linguistic competence and examination performance, I chose the Qualitative Research Method (used inter-changeably with the term Ethnography in this study). I selected this method in order to avoid the use of statistical sampling procedures that neglect other important aspects

in the research setting. Ethnography is an informative inquiry particularly into cultural descriptions and interpretations of events, areas that feature prominently in this work.

Zimbabwean school settings need an examination of the "phenomenon" of culture in order to develop meaningful ethnographic accounts of the "multilingual" settings to which audiences and respondents belong. This research recognizes the primacy of culture, and sees ethnographic inquiry as one of the methods in education research that reflects upon issues associated with the search for understanding of culture. Qualitative research, rather than presuming that human environments are interactions that can be held constant, manipulated, treated, scheduled, modified, or extinguished, posits that the most powerful way to understanding human beings and the social environments they have created is to watch, talk, listen and participate with them in these environments. Qualitative research focuses on a different way of knowing, one based on experience, empathy, and involvement. The qualitative perspective would contend that to understand any social program or social setting, one must describe and analyze, in an ecologically valid manner, the values, behavior, settings, and interactions of the participants. One must ask the question, "What is going on here?" which is at once disarmingly simple, and incredibly complex. It is the answer to this question that qualitative research addresses itself (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983).

As a participant-observer myself, this information was useful and the method had many advantages, since in most situations the observer has no need of any prior acquaintance with particular settings, students, class or teachers. Thus, throughout the fieldwork research participant observation, interviews, questions, questionnaires, note-taking, tape recordings and memory were the data gathering techniques used. These methods were used with a wide range of subjects and schools, to allow comparative analysis of what different respondents said about learning English. Throughout the field work, using ethnographic methods, I was able in most situations to capture the sense of some cultural settings and feedback from participants in the three Zimbabwean languages (Shona, Ndebele, English) and get a basis for further learning in terms of the various cultural contexts.

S.B. Merriam (1985) points out that:

> ...ethnography is distinguishable from other qualitative approaches not so much
> by its methods as by the product of research: "grounded theory" strategies
> generate theoretical frameworks of high levels of abstraction: descriptive studies
> of specific individuals, programs, or policies report fully upon those "slices of
> life", but ethnographies provide interpretations of life in sociocultural settings. (p.
> 204)

Woolcott 1985) confirms this when he explains:

> ...ethnography calls for more than mere "chronicling of particular events": it
> demands also "looking beneath them to understand how people cope with such
> events and maximize or minimize the likelihood of their recurrence." And this
> necessitates ethnographers' attention to "self-conscious reflection about the nature
> of culture..." (p. 192)

The three Zimbabwean official languages (Shona, Ndebele, English) and others
(Nyanja, Hindi, Arabic...) represent different ethnically diverse communities within the
country. One of the assumptions made in this study is that English-only as medium of
instruction in schools occurs outside of the majority "cultural milieu", contributing to
students' poor linguistic performance and high failure rate.

In all the different linguistic settings during the research work, one of the aims
was to discover people's perception and evaluation of their education in English
experience, their customary way of categorizing the world around them and their
definitions of what they understood was happening to them or among them. How did
they use English and how was it learned, alongside other languages or alone, in
Zimbabwe?

Murphy (1979) is more specific in this regard when he says:

> Culture is a body of knowledge and tools by which we adapt to the physical
> environment; it is a set of rules by which we relate to each other; it is a
> storehouse of knowledge, beliefs, and formulae through which we try to
> understand the universe and man's place in it. Culture not only tells us how we
> should act, but it also tells us what we can expect of the other person. (p. 23)

One is informed here of how "shared cultural knowledge" shapes inhabitants'
perceptions and guides their behavior. This "cultural shape" was evident among
different Zimbabwean ethnic groups even when they used the majority second

language, English, to respond to questions. The need to emphasize commonplace cultural events in order to consider and understand social meanings behind events, as well as the events themselves, makes it possible for one to recognize the interdependent nature of all cultural events. They often reflect and contribute in the classroom contexts the overall Zimbabwean cultural scene, even when the other languages are not as dominant as English.

Analysis of the Fieldwork Survey

The ethnographic document, it is argued, must capture the sense of a cultural setting and make it intelligible to readers from another setting. It must give the reader a basis for learning to operate in terms of the culture described. Within the Zimbabwean context, I tried to assess my own work, and that of others, critically. Although at times I engaged a "creative style" of ethnographic reporting, as some situations demanded, reality of events in these settings was never distorted. Field work notes show clearly the efforts and enthusiasm of participants to communicate meanings vividly, to demonstrate certain aspects, to engage in personal reflection and interpretation of what they understood was going on in English classrooms. The social, political, linguistic and cultural environment of Zimbabwe was central in this research, and meaningfully expressed by most participants. (Appendices I and II)

I consider coherent the points of view I developed, based on the research question of how English is learned and taught in Zimbabwean schools. People spoke from the conditions that characterize their normal life in Zimbabwe. Plain language that makes information understandable was naturally used, as well as familiar English, Shona, or Ndebele words that saved time. (Appendices I and II)

It is hoped that this research is not only important, but necessary, useful and relevant to everyone interested in language learning and teaching. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) note:

> What damages research is not the absence of a truly "open" mind at its outset, but the false presentation of classroom observations as "objective" data constituting an independent test of the theory hidden within them. What observations will be selected as significant, and how they will be interpreted, will vary widely

according to the researcher's perspective. Unless that perspective is made available for criticism and discussion, it is impossible to evaluate the usefulness of the research. (p. 127)

These remarks suggest many approaches to the analysis of data of the fieldwork research study. What is clear is the importance of close scrutiny, and an objective critical analysis of this work by the parties involved. The participants had a great effect on me and the work, and are part of the audience and readers of this work as well. The question is what effect will this work have on them as parents, teachers, students and Ministry. I was a learner among them, experiencing the same school culture as experienced daily by students and teachers. I was in the same role in the culture outside the school and classroom, lived by most parents, the students and other participants. As a participant-observer, I identified and shared with them in some of the learning, teaching and parental supporting experiences. I was not an expert to make any judgments on what they knew, did or said. As one using the qualitative research method, I was highly personally involved, which results in "observer effect", considered to be an integral part of the research setting, where the ethnographer is often the primary data-gathering instrument.

In this study, however, while I naturally held personal beliefs and perceptions on language, culture and learning, for example, the participants and their presence often provided a sounder basis on which to generate theories, and then debate, generalize, interpret and incorporate these into our ever-evolving experiences.

I often verified participants' responses and meanings by comparing them with my own. For example, in responses to why students fail examinations (cause), and what this did to students (effect), strong opinions were expressed with great interaction of participants during some of the meetings. (Appendices I and II)

Heath (1982) suggests that comparison studies are needed in order to generalize ethnographic conclusions from one setting to another, but notes that ethnographies of communities are not yet abundant enough to allow comparisons (pp. 42-44). She, like other ethnographic researchers, focuses on the "human" aspects of each situation, and

is concerned with the processes involved in each individual's personal interpretation of significance for that situation.

All Zimbabweans are included in this research, whether or not they are fluent in English, they are incorporated into the school system through either Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), or through whatever language they speak. As such, in some areas such participants held positions at schools, e.g., Secretary of the Building Fund Committee. Most important too was the recognition by the majority of people of the crucial role of education in their lives and that of their children. These elements were paramount in forming a very broad dialogue about students and education in Zimbabwe today.

During the research fieldwork and the process of collecting information, I read Zimbabwe Ministry of Education Handbooks, reports, documents, and reviewed textbooks written in the indigenous languages of Shona and Ndebele as well as those in English. I read many books on the history of Zimbabwe, its land, culture and people. I read and analyzed syllabuses, and familiarized myself with the grading system and administrative procedures governing these.

In transcribing such conversations and interviews notes, and by analysing and synthesizing the content, I was able to discover key patterns or personal meanings in these contexts. In some schools children of parents I had earlier spoken to confirmed, for example, the poverty in their homes and how they felt they did not get the same kind of positive attention from some teachers, as children without these problems. In such cases, on-the-spot suggestions were made for school heads to intervene, identify and support poor children at risk of education problems. I also reviewed and compared notes and integrated study findings with my colleagues at different schools and colleges, but especially with Mrs. Cattaneo, who was Head of the English Department at Belvedere Teachers' College in Harare.

CHAPTER FOUR

Exploring Classroom Experience:
Classroom Instruction and Activities

This chapter offers a critical observation and discussion of the dominant pedagogical discourses about learning English and teaching I found in the Zimbabwean classroom. It asks how English is learned and taught in Zimbabwean secondary schools. It asks further how effective this teaching is. Specifically, this chapter begins with a description and analysis of four classes that were selected to highlight how the communication skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, as required by the syllabus, are taught. This descriptive analysis serves as a springboard to an in-depth discussion of teaching methods as well as students' learning patterns in Zimbabwe. I also refer to and draw on observations made in many other classes during this research study, as well as to other research literature to develop my arguments.

I sought here to make connections about schools, classrooms, and learning experiences in Zimbabwe, where each year many students fail to achieve passing grades after four years of secondary education. The high failure rate can be attributed, at least in part, to the policy of English as the only medium of instruction in a multilingual society in which the indigenous languages have a lesser status in the classrooms where the majority of students are second language speakers of English.

Teachers in particular are seen here as not always successful in making things work or in improving linguistic competency in their students. A substantial number of Zimbabwean students underfunction in the educational system because of language problems, language deprivation, educational disadvantage and difficulties with English in particular. These language problems hamper learning in secondary schools.

After four years of secondary education, these students' attainments are low and most of them are not able to remain in the school system because they cannot meet either the demands or the costs of education. They are also later on unable to perform

crucial functions such as those involving language at work. These students' disadvantages are linked to the language deprivation they suffer as children at home, to the country's cultural differences, and to the quality of the primary and secondary schools they attend. The concepts of deprivation, disadvantage, and cultural differences, however, are all complex and controversial.

Throughout my study, I adopted a holistic view of linguistic development, a view that considers human beings in the completeness of their culture and tradition, in all dimensions: religious, social, political, and economic, as well as educational. I saw then and still believe that promoting this integral development is an essential part of English instruction in schools, but only when educators recognize the specific role indigenous languages play in the classroom.

When I started this research work in 1990, however, I had various assumptions of my own about English as a foreign language and the foreign culture attached to it (through books). My intention was then to propose to the Ministry of Education mother-tongue instruction in secondary schools. My intention changed after many school visits and many interviews in which parents, teachers, and students spoke their minds on why English-only instruction is not in itself a problem in the Zimbabwean education system. In fact, students and parents themselves clarified this. They all echo the government policy of reconciliation after the war of independence in 1980, and state that English, which in general terms is really used most in the urban business and 'modern' sector of the society, is a lingua franca between and among speakers of different languages. It is intended, they pointed out, to promote national unity. Its use, however, outside schools in rural areas in particular, is not frequent.

Daily life in rural areas and high-density suburbs is marked by use of the indigenous language that corresponds to the ethnic community of residence (Mashonaland or Matabeleland, Harare or Bulawayo, and so on). Zimbabweans, like other African people in Africa, do not normally sever ties with their rural home communities or its languages when they leave to work in cities or distant mines or farms. Yet most people who were interviewed supported the government for making English the medium of instruction and also for making Shona and Ndebele official languages. I

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had assumed people in rural areas were ignorant of the implications of English-only instruction in schools and did not fully understand what I thought were cultural disadvantages to themselves and their children.

Responses in the study (see Appendices I and II) show clearly that most parents in Zimbabwe understand and appreciate the role of English in the multilingual settings of the school and society. I then began to discover, through interviews and less formal discussions in schools, villages and homes, that school life experiences of teachers and students were different from what I had believed was happening, based on my own teaching experience and work for the Ministry of Education. I found, for instance, that the social relationships among the students were already well established. This of course did not mean that all was perfect and stable, only that there were no problems that schools did not handle. What was obvious were social class tensions among some students. In some of the responses to questions on discriminatory practices, the attitudes of certain teachers, parents and students were ambiguous or wavering. But I was happy that their attitudes towards ethnic or racial groups were very clearly articulated, directly addressed or challenged. People were given the chance to question themselves, their history, political ideologies, religion or beliefs about their identities within schooling, families or the immediate social environment.

Some expatriate teachers whom I interviewed explained that teaching which addressed identity and racial conflict was for them risky and uncomfortable. They believed their own identity and that of their students was well understood in Zimbabwe. Many of them agreed that, in this African context, some English textbooks are not particularly helpful for understanding and discussing the lives of people whose histories and cultures are distinct and sometimes totally unrelated to those lives in the textbook. This made me realize that people in Zimbabwe, like elsewhere in the world today, want to address their own problems. Cultural knowledge is everywhere in Zimbabwe, but is not always seen to be a part of how people interpret the world and their place in it. English classrooms in particular seen to operate on a view of culture as something outside of African students' ordinary lives.

The four classes selected as examples of how the various skills of English are taught and learnt in Zimbabwe Secondary Schools are identified in the following chart:

Class	# of Students	Age in years	Lesson Observed	Type of School	Area of Residence
Form I	42	11-13	Listening comprehension and vocabulary	A Government mine school	Commercial farming / mining community
Form II	28	12-15	Oracy / speaking discussion and reports on Trip	Government boarding and day school	In communal (rural) areas
Form III	32	14-16	Reading and writing activities	Government day school	Urban high density area
Form IV	18	15-17	Writing on teacher assigned topics	Private school: day and boarding	In low density suburb

The Zimbabwean Junior Certificate syllabus recommends the communicative approach to teaching English (1992, p.1; 2.1) in Forms I and II. The General Certificate of Education ('O'level) classes (Forms III and IV) conform mostly to the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES). The 'O' level syllabus emphasizes too that language learning incorporate Zimbabwean social, economic, political, scientific and technological experiences and reflect national needs in these areas (1992, p. 2; 2.1). In practice however, the study found different interpretations not always reflecting the syllabus.

Listening Skill   Form I

In this Form I class of 42 students a teacher read listening comprehension passages from two different texts in a clear, very loud and articulate voice. She prepared the class by telling the students to "remember only the highlights or facts" from the passage.   Students sat still, quietly looking and listening as she read to them. Most of these students were between the ages of eleven and thirteen.

The reading time was immediately followed by questions on the passages. These questions, which I was allowed to read in the teacher's lesson plan, were asked and answered orally.   Although there were pauses between her reading of each passage and questions she asked later, there was not much time for reflection or recall.   Students gave oral answers only as requested, and most questions were answered correctly. Teacher comments were quick and brief: "good", "yes", "correct", "say that again", "right", "not quite", etc.   The reading and listening procedures were repeated for the rest of the passages.   Students responded routinely in the same manner, and there was · little variation in the procedure, both on the part of the teacher and the students them-selves.   The teacher commented that:

> ...the lesson went on as planned and students were very well-behaved and did very well...

Students did not read. There was a shortage of textbooks, and only the teacher could read well and clearly enough for all 42 students to hear and understand. The lesson was a double period, that is, 1 hour and 20 minutes.   In this lesson students did the following: listened to the teacher read; answered questions; and asked the teacher some questions.   The title, author or pages from which the passages came were not given or written on the chalkboard.   Questions written by the teacher on the chalkbo-ard were read out by her to students, who answered them orally.

Questions which students asked on word meanings were directed to the teacher, who alone answered them.   Students rarely turned to each other in consultation or for anything else.   A few students who shouted out correct answers out of turn, however, were not ignored or reprimanded but praised for the correct answers, with again, "good" and so on.   According to the teacher this was "a good and successful lesson".

To set the above class in context, it is necessary here to examine the Zimbabwe Junior Certificate English Syllabus, which guides English instruction in Zimbabwe. The objectives for the seven years of primary school, as spelled out in the Primary English Syllabuses, have been revised after intensive consultation with the school districts. The terminal nature of the objectives has been removed. This means, in effect, that the Primary English Syllabuses seek to lay the foundation for the Zimbabwe Junior Certificate (ZJC) English Syllabus, which in turn prepares students for the 'O' level. The various parts of the National English Panel, including the Curriculum Development Unit and the Examinations Branch, have worked jointly on the production of the ZJC Syllabus (Ministry of Education, English ZJC Syllabus, 1992, p. 1).

With regards to listening and comprehension, the Syllabus (p. 4) states:

> Listening differs from hearing; it requires effort and involves comprehension and interpretation of what is being said. Pupils should be able to:
>
> a) listen attentively for information.
> b) listen with discrimination and distinguish between general topics and specific detail.
> c) answer factual, interpretive and evaluative questions based on what they have listened to.
> d) follow instructions and directions.
> e) understand messages, announcements and explanations.
> f) listen critically.

In order to assist her students, the Form I teacher whom I observed broke down her task, as required by the Syllabus, into subskills when she said, "Class, please listen carefully", "Pick out the main ideas", etc. These subskills were then practised as one or two individual skills, in relative isolation from the rest. This approach would appear to disregard Vygotsky's (1978) claim that these skills (that is, total thinking, listening, speaking, reading and writing) are interrelated, and that collaborative interaction with experts, that is, adults and peers, to help the learner reach higher levels of understanding and performance, is important.

In this class, the teacher was well-prepared and conducted a teacher-directed class. Students aimed for success in comprehension. They were not encouraged to take risks, or to vary their manner of response to questions. Rather, they just did what they were told. The teacher did not arouse students' curiosity enough or give them a sense of success, or to challenge them or to make them feel they were in control of their activity. As such, language in this class was not a means by which students represented their experience (Moffett, 1968; Britton, 1970) to themselves and others. From this perspective, the Form I class was disadvantaged and the teaching style revealed a language practice that was identified during this research as one of the key factors contributing to the problems of many students as a dominated and sometimes oppressed classroom group.

The students, who had been in Form I for only five months, already spoke of being "not good in reading", "I am trying hard...". There was also an obvious preoccupation with the acquisition of new facts, textual facts, from both the teacher and students.

...without textbooks we shall not cover the syllabus... (teacher)

The teacher operated under many constraints: classroom routines, department schedules and deadlines she had to meet. While she was aware of the "revolutionary approach" in language education practices that offered equal access to all students through focus on the individual and on self-growth (Barnes et al., 1971; Dixon, 1967; Graves, 1983) and other such philosophies and trends, she applied the principles in ways that inadequately involved students in meaningful language use and learning.

According to these new language education practices, in the "good" classroom, language learning is perceived as natural, personal, individual, spontaneous, truthful, involved, emotional, and real, whereas in the "bad" classroom, language is associated with the unnatural, impersonal, the premeditated, the contrived, and the artificial (Gilbert, 1989). However, such pedagogical theories very much depend upon teachers' own interpretations. And so students in this listening comprehension class were rarely asked for their opinions or for what they thought of the comprehension passages or

type of language, length and purpose. They were not asked to use language in any spontaneous fashion.

According to Donald Murray (1978), successful language learning in all communication skills is about finding a "personal voice". Barnes (1971) advises teachers to listen for individual "voices", and students are advised to write what they think in their natural "voices" (Gilbert, 1989). These "personal growth" and "process approaches" to learning English through communication skills are advocated in the ZJC Syllabus. However, they do not seem to be well accommodated in lesson plans or learning activities. Instead, language (English), the "natural tool", and flow of day-to-day existence, is regarded as a "very serious examination subject, in which formal and language structures will prepare Form I students well, help them know English and pass it." (Appendix II)

Although Form I was active and keen to learn, students adopted a passive, submissive and docile learning stance. Observations here reveal broad teacher/ social patterns of control and domination in the teaching of English.

Carl Rogers (1983), in answering the questions, What is learning? and What is good English? in his book Freedom to Learn for the 80s, says:

> I want to talk about learning. But not the lifeless, sterile, futile, quickly forgotten stuff that is crammed into the mind of the poor helpless individual tied into his seat by ironclad bonds of conformity. I am talking about learning, the insatiable curiosity that drives the adolescent to absorb everything she/he can see or hear or read about gasoline engines in order to improve the efficiency and speed of his "cruiser". (p. 18)

Carl Rogers is here rejecting a traditional view of learning and teaching language. This traditional view focuses on what is to be taught, or what has been taught. It is concerned with product or results. It is the dominant view in Zimbabwean language classrooms. Even though some teachers ask the question, "What do students do when they learn?", which considers the process of learning in Zimbabwe, they still, to all intents and purposes, operate in the product mode of learning.

Traditional views of knowledge are quantitative (many facts are known) and reproductive (to know means to be able to give back, or call up memorized material). Such views are deeply rooted and widespread in Zimbabwean education and language classrooms such as the class observed. Quantitative and reproductive views of knowledge entail methods of teaching that emphasize memorization and testing. Teaching and tests emphasize certain types of knowledge. Rewards, marks, and grades are given for relatively simple performances, like the reproduction of memorized factual material, or the execution of memorized procedures in mathematics. There is little emphasis on deeper understandings which are harder and more time-consuming to measure.

Many teachers of English genuinely and sincerely wanted their students to think broadly and deeply, but their methods of teaching and assessment conveyed different messages and encouraged the acquisition of detailed facts. Students are not slow to hear the message, and to engage in the behaviors that pay off in good grades. This Form I class is no exception.

Oracy/Speaking Form II

The Form II class which I observed focused on oral communication skills. The ZJC Syllabus (1992) outlines some of its objectives for oral communication (speaking) as follows:

a) Expressing ideas orally. Pupils should be able to communicate their ideas clearly, accurately, concisely, and fluently through such activities as:

   - describing simple processes associated with activities within their environment;

   - group work: interviewing, role playing, dramatizing, choral speaking and poetry reading;

   - action chains: describing activities in a logical sequence.

b) Useful conversation skills. Pupils should be able to:

- display ease and courtesy in social interactions such as: introductions, greetings, invitations, requests, congratulations, expressions of appreciation and regret, apologies and answering the telephone.

- speak in the appropriate register in formal and semi-formal situations (such as at offices, banks, the post office, hospitals and clinics, the police station and shops) as opposed to the register used in informal situations with friends, relatives and acquaintances.

- develop language awareness and a more informed knowledge about learning how to learn in order to foster intelligent participation and, thus, develop greater self-reliance as language learners.

What is emphasized in the speaking skill is language structure and use. Learning English or any language involves knowing structure and the appropriate uses for various forms of the language (e.g., "ease and courtesy..." as outlined in the Syllabus). Both structure and use are governed by rules, some of them strict ones. However, most of such rules are not consciously known by native speakers of a language. Native speakers do not or indeed cannot articulate the knowledge that governs their language production and use (Chafe & Danielewicz, 1987; Finegan & Bensier, 1989; and Finocchiaro, 1974).

This information is important for Zimbabwe English teachers to know because it affects the majority of African students, whose mother tongue is not English. Both students and teachers would then be assisted to focus "initially on the notion that human language exists primarily as an oral phenomenon." (Language and Development: The St. Lucian Context, 1981). Zimbabwe, like most African societies, did not have writing systems in the past, as Western nations had, for their own languages. It should be stressed, however, that the absence of a writing system for Zimbabwe and other African countries is not a contradiction or an unfortunate event in its language status or history. It is simply an indication of the use made of the language over a period of time and the social situation in which the speakers of the language (Shona and Ndebele) have found themselves over a number of centuries. Skills known and still identifiable among some speakers of these languages could be part of the oral lesson as one of many ways to interpret the syllabus. This would encourage among

students in English classrooms greater language awareness and a more informed knowledge about learning how to learn in order to foster intelligent participation and, thus, develop greater self-reliance as language learners. This was not observed in the Form II speaking class.

This Form II class was being taught by a teacher with many years of experience. This class of 28 students had recently returned from a trip, which was the subject of discussion. There was a lot of excitement in this hour and twenty-minute long class (double period). The teacher organized the class as follows: Group 1 reports to class about Day One of the trip; Group 2 takes notes to prepare questions which will be asked later; the rest of the class will comment on the report and the trip.

Instructions for students were given orally and later written on the chalkboard. Students listened attentively to the report by Group 1. Group 2, who had been taking notes, were ready to talk and share their observations with the rest of the class. All eight students in this group wanted to say or add something. However, while they spoke well in English, a few of them kept switching to and from Ndebele. The teacher reminded them this was an English class and that they were to speak in English only. The Form II class was not discouraged by the teacher's interventions, and continued to switch from one language to the other (code-switching). The teacher was accommodating and flexible, and sometimes withheld discouraging remarks. D.S. Gxilishe (1989) cites linguists Javier and Marcos and their definition of code-switching:

> ...a case in which a linguistic processing of information in one language (e.g., semantic, phonemic) is shifted into a comparable linguistic processing in another language. Code-switching is a shifting from one language to another language at the lexical, phonemic, semantic or grammatical level...(p. 94)

Gxilishe says that some speakers switch languages in order to express or assert expertise and knowledgeability, either about an issue or when giving judgement or opinion. In fluent code-switching, she adds, no new structures are created. Citing studies done by Bloom and Gumperz (1972), she points out that this strategy of code-switching is used within intra-group relations, (i.e., within the same ethnic or social

group) to affirm group membership and identity. Gxilishe refers to still other studies that show that far from being a form of anomalous behavior, recourse to code-switching is evidence of bilingual competence on linguistic as well as social levels. Code-switching then, rather than representing deviant behavior, is actually a suggestive indicator of bilingual competence.

Andrew Morrison (1989) quotes Ngara (1987) as having indicated that:

> ...although with a limited sample of adolescent learners, there is a range of structures which are transferred into English by L_1 Shona speakers. McGinley has examined scripts from one first year university course and found that there is a considerably lower rate of transfer of these same structures into English.

This information provides some evidence that certain linguistic practices by Zimbabwean students need to be better understood, and not simply corrected as defects arising from insufficient knowledge of course content or material in the Form II class. In most work written by these Form II students, as well as that by many others of the same level in different schools, English was the only language used.

Speech or oral work was popular and liked by many students, perhaps because the emphasis is removed from correct grammar and pronunciation. For example, students enjoyed debates and performed well in them. Teachers, however, often punctured the students' pleasure with comments like these: "Remember you are still weak in composition", or "If you did as well in spelling as you do in debate..."

This tendency to remind students not of what they do well, but rather of what they do poorly in, seems to be repeated at higher levels of education as well. For example, Bessie Stephenson (1992) of the University of Zimbabwe says:

> Students coming to 'O' level or secondary schools are familiar with the specialized English vocabulary and discourse features of their school subjects. In addition, school entrance requirements are high, being similar to those for British universities...They have considerable exposure to English and satisfy school requirements at most levels. However, they still need more instruction in English. Although they are fluent, many students are not equipped to handle the higher-level skills required by academic disciplines. (p.5)

Nomsa Masuku (1992) believes, as most linguists, psychologists and language theorists do, that language is not only an abstract structure, but in practice, language is socially constructed, produces change and is changed in human life, in or outside the classroom (p.60). Masuku is of the opinion that, and indeed takes the position that African languages can enhance an effective development of language learning, self-confidence, resourcefulness and innovativeness in English classrooms, as part of learning, even when English is the medium of instruction. This view provides another perspective for the Form II teacher's worry about what she listed as one of the student's "bad habits" of sometimes speaking in Ndebele in an English class.

Reading Skill   Form III

The General Certificate of Education Syllabus (1991) outlines its objectives regarding reading skills as follows (3.2, p. 2): To develop reading abilities and skills that:

- are useful for everyday life e.g., reading instructions, newspapers, reports;

- are essential for reading books on various subjects across the curriculum, including appropriate techniques for intensive and extensive reading, e.g., skimming, scanning;

- will motivate pupils to develop a lifelong reading habit for enjoyment and knowledge.

In the Form III class observed, some textbooks followed the traditional unchanging format for the reading lesson: have a text for each student, read it "slowly and carefully", and then answer questions. Students were motivated, and reading techniques to develop skills in reading for inference, literal understanding and interpretation were well integrated into the various activities in which students participated. Assigned group reading tasks involved, for example, interpretation of passages by students, in pairs or individually.

Students were involved in the work. While they did not choose the reading material, the teacher explained to me that she made the choice for them in several ways, depending upon the theme or purpose for a given assignment. The students told

me sometimes they were responsible for bringing in pieces of books they wanted to read and cited some Zimbabwean authors whose works are in English, Shona or Ndebele, (e.g. Solomon Mutswairo, Charles Mungoshi and others) The teacher, still, brought in sometimes text sets which she said enhanced the student's ability and encouraged them to find connections between and among text passages as expected of them, and required by the syllabus.

While time was provided to students for asking questions, and even carrying on informal discussions, students carried no response exercise books. The teacher was a focal point for guidance in reading and discussion.

In turn, her verbal advice or input came in as a natural process of supporting students' guided discussion on topics or themes assigned. At one time I joined one group and asked them about the structure of the passages they were reading and the impact this had on the ideas we were debating. Some students found this interesting, and this led on to talking about formats, reading between the lines and so on. What students did generally in this class with their teacher reflected thought, anticipation and levels of struggle with the written word. Others still concentrated on fluency, good pronunciation and being clear. The teacher was clear on the purpose of her exercises and believed the students gained a lot from the activity.

In this class, although the teacher in most classroom contexts offered students reading material such as Charles Dickens, D.H. Lawrence, and Ngugi Was Thiong, students themselves did not choose from this body of literature. The teacher read aloud a lot, as did some students--but with few suggestions on how to improve this. Robert E. Probst (1994) emphasizes the fact that learning occurs when we make connections to our own experiences.

One of the main reasons why in some ways, the reading in this class was not as challenging and exciting was that the activity as planned by the teacher, did not take into consideration the backgrounds of the students. There was an assumption that students wanted to read because of the knowledge and meaning they gained from it. Yet reading and writing (which was not used as a follow up) involve special chal--

lenges to students, just like other skills; hence the need for choice or students' personal opinions as feedback on the reading material.

Whenever appropriate, choice involves tackling more sophisticated and challenging texts in the classroom, by those ready to do so. This choice strengthens the community of learners by bringing them together to share ideas and materials. The students take ownership because they are empowered to enhance the learning of others as well as themselves through this exchange. Allister Cumming, (1994) points out that a successful English teacher is constantly involved in the process of needs assessment, working out aspects of the English language that learners know and do not know already (p. 677).

This information is important in helping a teacher make some decisions. Such decisions, in consultation with the students, are likely to motivate, encourage and stimulate students learning interest and participation in all the communication skills.

In some schools the lack of adequate reading materials and textbooks created what many teachers said were "serious problems" for the development of reading skills. However, many teachers were innovative in creating materials, making use of available resources, and even adapting the materials on hand for a variety of purposes.

Writing Skill   Form IV

Writing was very important in a Form IV class seen in Harare. It was allotted a large portion of class time. There were, on teachers' notes and timetables, varieties of writing listed: paragraphs, essays, compositions, and creative writing. Examples of the type of writing that students were often asked to produce included descriptions of a step-by-step process (e.g., how to repair a bicycle flat tire), descriptions of a person or thing (e.g., living in the city and living in the country), explanations of causes or descriptions of effects (e.g., of drought), descriptions of some event or circumstance (e.g., a house on fire, being in the orchard alone), and so on. Students observed in these writing activities used mostly facts, statistics even, as well as personal observations and experiences to achieve the purpose of their work. This was an examination

class, to take the 'O' level examinations that year (1987). The 'O' level syllabus for candidates in Zimbabwe English Language (1122) and the syllabus for Literature in English (2013) both outline writing skills as follows:

At the 'O' level examination candidate should be able to write:

a) a continuous narrative, an argument and a piece of descriptive or informative writing, e.g. of a process, of a character, of a scene, of an event;

b) letter, both formal and informal, and a report from notes, diagrams, statistical data, pictures;

c) in style and register appropriate to the subject matter, displaying a range of vocabulary and idioms appropriate to that subject matter;

d) make general points and exemplify them;

e) organize their work satisfactorily into paragraphs and show a sense of cohesion/coherence within paragraphs;

f) show awareness of discourse markers e.g. however, moreover, on the other hand, firstly, thus;

g) write with grammatical accuracy, spell accurately and punctuate their work correctly. In particular, in punctuation, they should be able to mark sentence boundaries and direct speech.

This syllabus is developed on the British model. It is therefore dependent on the British norm, and the British standard model in Zimbabwe, encouraged and accepted by the Zimbabwe Ministry of Education as the standard form.

Students in this particular Form IV class in Harare, and in other writing classes observed, wrote for many different purposes and in many different forms, but mostly formal. For most teachers, teaching writing is a central aspect of their teaching responsibilities. This is especially true for examination classes at the 'O' level. Teachers whom I observed had very clearly laid out procedures for making outlines and composing, but these were mostly for "transactional or expository writing".

Teachers revealed an awareness that not all writing in Form IV needed to be formal, but they emphasized the need for their formal approach to writing because of examination requirements their students had to meet. As such there was not much

student personal writing (letters, postcards, journals, memos, short stories or poems) but numerous follow-ups to prescriptions proposed by composition texts and composition teachers. These were based less on actual data about how people compose, and more on old examination question papers.

Research on writing processes and strategies, carried out by Emig (1971), and Flower and Hayes (1981), for example, examines what happens and what people do when they compose. Flower and Hayes (1981) produced an influential model of composing based on generating ideas, planning, composing, revising and editing. Flower and Hayes believe that for students to become proficient writers they need to learn how to engage in the kinds of processes that expert writers use. Students need to learn how to find topics to write about and real purposes for writing. However, students in this Form IV writing class were given most topics by the teacher, so many wrote on the same topic. There was not much choice of topics. This is a traditional approach to teaching and learning writing, which Emig (1981) has compared to a newer, process-oriented approach. The comparison is as follows:

Traditional approach	Process-oriented approach
Writing is a product to be evaluated.	Writing is a process that results in a product to be shared with an audience.
There is one process for writing.	Writing processes differ for different writers, topics, and kinds of writing.
Writing is taught rather than learned.	Writing is learned rather than taught.
Writers must be taught to write sentences before paragraphs, and paragraphs before whole pieces.	Writers learn best from attempting whole pieces.
The process of writing is conscious.	The writer often engages in unconscious processes.
The process is linear: plan comes before writing; revision follows the first draft.	Writing processes are not linear but recursive; planning and revision can occur at any point.
Writing is a silent, solitary activity.	Writers may benefit from collaborating with others.

In each of the selected groups of classes (Form I - IV), this study found teachers still teaching in the traditional manner, although aware of writing process approaches. Process here is understood to involve, in addition to the outline already given, exploration through language. It involves discussion and revision, and an understanding of how parts are eventually related to the whole. Process values the contribution of all the learners and makes every member of the group responsible for the learning experience. The teacher's role is to make this possible. This would not seem to be happening much, if one is to judge, for instance, from some humiliating, discouraging and sometimes unnecessary comments made by some teachers: "Stop talking and listen", "Just write", "Think for yourself", "That's a wrong answer", "I know reading is difficult for you"...

Still, even under these insensitive and hostile circumstances, students still performed well. Unfortunately some students in this Form IV writing class in particular believed they were very bad writers who were neither going to improve or pass 'O' levels, and said some teachers had already told them so.

In the Form IV double-lesson class there was little "topic discussion" before writing, and students did little reflection on their ideas individually or in pairs/groups; nor were they seen to explore them through discussion or brainstorming on paper. Instead, students worked from the teacher's topic list on the board, from the words she gave them, and followed instructions promptly and carefully. Students were mostly being taught how to write, without learning writing for themselves. As already indicated, a process-centred approach to writing informed by recent research is very different. It requires teachers to provide an environment that facilitates learning in order to help students become skilful writers.

Summary of Classroom Activities and Skills Taught Forms I-IV

I undertook this study because I wanted to know more about language learning and teaching in Zimbabwean secondary schools. I found out during the research that while some students and some parents were optimistic about and happy with teachers'

work in many classrooms, many students were then, and now, underachieving (Allen, 1986 and Mackenzie, 1988).

There were also signs, through interviews held with students, parents and teachers, that some students fell below the level of competence they had attained in primary school. Some secondary-school students were unhappy, while they had felt the opposite in primary schools (Marikopo School, Appendices). I and many other people see this as a result of the change students make after Grade 7 when they leave for new secondary schools, sometimes very far away from their homes and familiar environments. Rural school students who get placed either in mission, private or urban city schools are affected most by such changes at the beginning of each new school year. Parents here believe such new schools, regardless of distance, are the best for their children, especially in view of the competitive 'O' level examinations that later determine their academic future in society. There appears to be a general attitude that things are "better there than here", an attitude that poses real problems and needs investigation.

Form I students observed doing listening comprehension work were already being prepared for the ZJC exam like everybody else, native or non-native speakers of English. These students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds were not used adequately in this rural farming community. Their teacher came from a totally different socio-economic background and did not even speak the students' indigenous Malawian language, Nyanja. This is an area where most parents work on farms or in mines. The school is actually a mine school. Some of these students are the children of migrant workers who came from Malawi, Zambia or Mozambique. Although they speak Zimbabwean indigenous languages and English, their mother tongue is Nyanja, and it was dominant in the school grounds and the compound not far away from the school.

Based on the students' behavior when I entered the classroom with a student teacher, and later when the teacher followed, one felt a gap between the students and we the staff (language, power, culture) in this class. This distance, or sense of isolation from the students, was felt even more so after the usual greetings, in English

of course, and introductions. Although this Form I class looked happy, students were quiet and shy. The students were very much aware of the linguistic and socio-economic differences among us. When spoken to before the class, in groups or individually, they hesitated, and stammered unnaturally, not only because some of us were strangers, but strangers who spoke English well and better than they. They were afraid to make mistakes in English. Yet most of them were already semi-fluent in English, having had instruction in the language for five years. They had just written and passed their Grade 7 (end of Primary School) examinations and passed in English.

The students had been in this class with the same teacher for about six months. She was not supportive of their efforts, and made no mention of their Malawian culture and accents that in different ways influenced their English pronunciation. The teacher controlled students at all stages and, at times, interrupted their speech in mid-sentence. At the same time, characteristics of African speech, more pronounced in Malawian languages than Zimbabwean, such as gestures, pointings, hissings to draw attention to themselves were discouraged along with any ungrammatical utterances. This was just as we thought students were beginning to open up from the dead silence that had earlier prevailed in the room.

Weedon (1987) speaks of language as not only an abstract structure but one which, in practice, is socially constructed, producing change, and change in human life:

> Language is the place where actual and possible forms of consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity is constructed. (p.21)

In this class, the "sense of self" was almost totally repressed. The language, English, dominated. Like all other languages, English among learners invites individual and group struggles over meaning, access, and power to use it. This struggle takes on different forms in different societies, communities, organizations and schools. English, like all languages, carries its perceptions, attitudes, values, and goals. It helps if teachers know that, through these perceptions, learners and other users of the

English language absorb certain attitudes and practices that can either discourage linguistic development, or motivate and promote linguistic competence.

In the Form I class, the teacher's expectations (unrealistic expectations, from a process perspective) made it difficult for students to learn the listening skill meaningfully. There were too many repetitions of words by students. Certain commands ("Again," "Clearly"....) were found tedious to the ear as students spoke clearly and were never in a position, or had the power, to ask the teacher to repeat anything.

In the Form II (speaking), Form III (reading), and Form IV (writing) classes, the stress of each skill was on correct usage of English (grammar) and in many situations de-emphasized communication as we understand it from, for example, Alex McLeod (1986) on "Critical Literacy" in which he says:

> Being literate in the 1980s means having the power to use language-writing and reading, speaking and listening-for our own purposes, as well as those that the institutions of our society require of us. (p. 5)

The content and format of the ZJC syllabus have changed since the days when it was used to stream students for stringent selection for different programs. A new English syllabus (1992), using the communicative approach, has been introduced at the Primary and Secondary levels, in particular at the first two years of secondary school. The communicative method emphasizes the use of the language in the classroom. Students learn to use the language in discussing issues. However, across classroom sections, discussions as required by the communicative approach, did not often center on issues and themes relevant to students' interests and backgrounds, such as family, friends, social and cultural events. The students' speaking practice was not always imaginative or realistic, but formal and directed. This did not help students learn to express themselves naturally, especially in Forms I and II. This does not mean all formal teaching of language should be abandoned; however, emphasis on grammatical accuracy sometimes discouraged and bored students.

Language competence extends beyond an understanding of the rules that govern the English language and the appropriate use of English within Zimbabwe. Language competence includes the ability to say and write what one means, to hear what is said

and what is hidden; to defend one's point of view; to argue, to persuade, to negotiate; to create, to reflect, to invent; to explore relationships--personal, structural, political; to speak, read and write with confidence; to make one's voice heard; to read print and to interpret it meaningfully (National Education Crisis Committee, 1986/1987). Language competence thus defined includes understanding of language as socially and historically constructed, and therefore open to debate and further change.

The syllabus further states that "the language to be taught should be authentic and relevant to what students need both in their other school subjects and outside, such as in vocational training." The emphasis of the syllabus on a communicative approach requires then that language be related to real-life situations. Communicative language teaching can take many forms, depending on the emphasis favoured by the teacher. These include student-directed activities and multidisciplinary strategies in which language learning is related to other subject areas such as geography or history. However, the study observed teachers who still rely heavily on their own intuition and experience rather than on any theory or philosophy of language. Such teachers are reluctant to depart from the traditional format and thus make learning English difficult for students.

Ivan M. Smith (1990) suggests a thorough examination of the language situation that exists in the Zimbabwean society.

> This should include the purposes for which the various languages in that society are used, as well as the attitudes of the community toward these languages. (p. 141)

The fact of the matter is, says Fafunwa (1990):

> ....the African child's cognitive equilibrium has been disturbed and this abnormal situation (the gulf between the traditional, nonformal African system of education and the formal, Western-oriented system of education) tends to retard the cognitive process in terms of the anticipated outcomes of the Western forms of education. (p. 4)

In most classroom lessons observed, very little or no continuity was revealed between the African child's home experience and school experience in the activities. This situation no longer arises in some Western countries where, in most cases, the

child's school experience is a continuation of her/his home experience and exposure. The result in Zimbabwe can be summarized as a continuing decline in the degree of proficiency in the required standard British English, as shown in the success rates in the examinations, in Chapter 2.

Conclusion

On the basis of my observations, I can say that the dominant method of English-language teaching focuses more on language itself and language structures (grammar) than on language as a tool of the student's "self". Teachers observed did not take into account the sociolinguistic, cultural and economic aspects of students' background, concerns and realities. Hymes (1979) argues:

> We have to account for the fact that 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 engagement of language in social life has a positive, productive aspect. There are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless. (p. 15)

Realizing "rules of use" by applying any modern linguistic theory to curriculum and language programs is a difficult task if it does not include a nation's dominant culture and indigenous languages as vehicles of culture and as forms of linguistic reference in the classroom. The teachers' sensitivity and understanding of the students' diverse cultural backgrounds and indigenous languages are the keys to building a successful English as a second language curriculum.

Alastair Pennycook (1989) quotes in his study (Kothari, 1987; Nandy, 1983) sociologists and philosophers of education (K. Harris, 1979) and critical pedagogues (Apple 1976; Giroux 1988; and Simon, 1984, 1987) as having argued, from their different viewpoints, that knowledge is produced within a particular configuration of social, cultural economic, political, and historical circumstances, which therefore always both reflect and help to (re)produce those conditions. Furthermore, since all claims to knowledge represent the interests of certain individuals or groups, we must always see knowledge as interested.

This research aims too, at creating a whole picture of the Zimbabwean teaching and learning environment that reveals, to a certain extent, the interrelatedness of all the component parts—home, school, and so on.

In order to implement therefore, both the ZJC and 'O' level syllabuses in schools, there is a great need for an integrated approach to the development and practice of language skills based on the use of authentic materials and communicative tasks. Emphasis should be put on all skills in every lesson, whether oracy is tested or not. This could lead students to develop, in a more natural manner, early communicative competence and a positive attitude toward reading and communication in English.

In many classes, mostly Form III and IV classes, I observed teachers and students trying to do everything possible to relate reading and writing skills activities to the students' interest. Assignments given illustrated efforts teachers made to include students' interests in their school work. Among these teachers were the few who willingly discussed mistakes they made in either lesson planning or presentation. "Although they have studied English for many years (almost 14 years for some of them), they still don't feel they speak well enough to express their thoughts," one teacher explained.

There is need here to stimulate authentic and spontaneous communication, and keep students actively engaged in English as well as crediting them for the good school work they do. This research saw then, and now, in Zimbabwe, the need for an authentic environment in which to speak and learn English, the need for peer interaction and exposure to natural communication.

In Zimbabwe today, where the national school-leaving examinations play a large role in determining the future of most students, examinations and tests continue to be recognized and approved by teachers and by parents. The Ministry of Education, through its syllabus (e.g., 'O' level), assumes the responsibility for determining what material is to be mastered, and the teacher has the responsibility for passing this material on to the students. I found that in such an environment, it is very difficult for a teacher to engage in "pedagogy" as defined by some of the Ministry of Education literature.

> ...the burden of preparing students and for teaching so many hours a day, and to
> so many large classes, reduces me to a state of nervous exhaustion and really
> keeps me from fully appreciating classroom pleasures of interacting with students
> in some of the learning activities. (Teacher, 1985, Appendices I and II)

Another teacher told of how students always welcomed him warmly, but before

long they saw that he was all wound up and irritable.

> ...I was so obsessed with lesson plans, notes and so concerned with organizing
> and controlling every single event that occurred in the classroom that I lost touch
> with reality, lost interest and real knowledge of whether the students were actually
> learning the stuff. All I had in my office and classroom tables were lesson plans,
> exercise books and texts. My face was most times buried in my notes. Even
> when an activity was going well, I worried about how long it was going to last
> and what I was going to do next. (Appendix II)

Yet another said that, as a good teacher, she tries to prepare a perfect lesson and

to give "my students a performance that could not go wrong."

It was observed that over-reliance on written plans and textual notes cut teachers

off from the students and stifled the vital interaction a true learning environment must

have. Some teachers tried to adapt to other demands. One explained:

> ...I try not always to stand in front of the class of 20-30 students. I now realize
> I could have fun with them, sitting down with them whenever possible... children
> very easily become excited and engaged, when classroom horizons are expanded
> in meaningful ways... (Appendix I and II)

Common among students in some class situations, however, are ridicule and

teasing from peers, who mimic non-standard speech patterns. Many students, especial-

ly those from low-income group or rural areas who have just arrived in some private

or urban schools, suffer for speaking English differently. Demeaning and discouraging

remarks by students on other students ought to be investigated by teachers and

headmasters of the schools involved. However, not all the learning and teaching

problems identified will be solved by parents, teachers, and students alone. Ian

Pringle (1983) suggests that the answer is not to be sought in the psychology of

bilingualism. Instead, it should be sought in politics. He adds:

> The factors that create and maintain disadvantaged groups in society have little
> to do with language, as such, for all their complex effects on language. They have

to do with power and with the maintenance of certain groups in positions of privilege. (p. ?03)

What Ian Pringle discusses calls for greater awareness among policy makers in Zimbabwe of socio-economic factors that put some students in disadvantaged learning situations in schools.

There is need for strong ties between schools, parents, and the community. Education, and especially in English-only, is today in vain if it continues to have little support in the home or the immediate environment. The research notes that the general passivity of parents and some teachers is related not only to a lack of proper training (teachers), involvement (parents), and education, but also to a significant unwillingness on the part of the Ministry to entrust serious responsibilities, especially at the level of policy and decision-making, to some parents. In turn, parents continue to blame "recessions" and "unfair economic policies", and to judge and condemn political leaders for most of what is wrong in school today. Unfortunately, this does not help students who want the best out of home and school. This includes parents' desire that their children develop a positive self-identity, respect others as well as themselves, and develop self-esteem, self-control, and self-discipline in learning.

This chapter concludes that Zimbabwean language classrooms, as observed, studied, and analyzed in this thesis work, have the potential to provide secondary school students with both insights into the nature of learning about themselves as well as with the power they need and deserve to share and use language for themselves, and to communicate meaningfully in different multicultural settings, in and outside school.

CHAPTER FIVE

Policy Implications, Alternatives and Options for Education in Zimbabwe

This thesis argues the need for change and alternatives in three areas of education: national policy (goals and objectives), curriculum development and classroom methods. The present teaching methods and practices generally tend to exclude indigenous languages, traditional ways of learning, and the contributions of parents, students and teachers. This study tries to interpret and better understand the responsibility of the schools to the students, parents, teachers, and the society at large, in such a way that the diverse political, social, cultural and linguistic experiences are strengthened and used freely as resources in learning and teaching English.

A look at a sample of minutes of meetings at some schools in Zimbabwe, and English departmental meetings (see Appendices), gives us an idea of the issues discussed. In eight schools and two colleges in rural and urban Matabeleland and Mashonaland (Belvedere Teachers College, Marikopo School, Mpopoma Secondary School, among others), meetings I attended were concerned mostly with the following:

- teachers' salaries

- specific areas of student weaknesses in English and other subjects: error analysis in speaking, reading and writing.

- timetabling: teachers requesting more time for their subject areas or complaining that English had too much time

- school uniforms and discipline

- the Ministry of Education policies and regulations: examinations, tests and results. (Appendix II)

As we can see, none of these issues address effective teaching and learning methods that centre on and emphasize learners, their role and their world.

People who spoke in some meetings attended were aware of the role of all the languages used in Zimbabwe, the schools' respect for and loyalty to British institutions and other Western academic standards, and the "importance of English". However, what the meetings did not confront was the urgent need to evolve towards an English policy that accommodates and serves all Zimbabwean schoolchildren. There was little theoretical or philosophical input in most presentations. Yet this is important if English is to be placed firmly within the framework of change, to offer many options and alternatives for all those who show strong support for Zimbabwe's adherence to the principles of academic excellence and international recognition, through the use of English.

In this light, the Ministry of Education needs to shift its identity more towards a true Zimbabwean school policy in Africa, and seek alternatives to the current way of teaching English. This chapter focuses on possible alternatives to how English is taught in Zimbabwean schools, that is, changes at the classroom level, leaving policy-level recommendations to Chapter 6. Recent views about language, its uses, and how we learn and teach it are examined. Then one specific approach, which I have labelled Reader-Response, is presented in detail as one possible way in which to make the teaching of English in Zimbabwe more effective.

To begin, let us look at the research about language, its uses, how we learn and teach it, and the role it plays in learning. Drawing first from the field of linguistics, we focus on some research about what listeners do when they understand a sentence (Dittmar, 1976, and Stern, 1983, among others). This research suggests that readers actively construct their own meaning from texts they read. Iser (1978) further maintains that meaning is dependent on and mediated by the prior knowledge and experience of the reader in the same way that listeners interpret sentences based on what they bring to the conversation. He says:

> The significance of the work, then, does not lie sealed within the text but in the fact that meaning brings out what had previously been sealed within us. (p. 157)

This concept of prior knowledge suggests further that students use their own knowledge of the world in comprehending what they hear, read or write. Labov (1969) has demonstrated that social factors are important determinants in verbal behavior. These factors put any classroom in a distinct language setting (Stubbs, 1976). Although the Zimbabwean English classroom has changed socially, especially in urban areas and in some private schools, where students of different races, ethnic groups and cultures learn together, there continue to be persistant basic patterns which establish without question the teacher's control over both the interaction and content related to classroom language.

When designing courses and developing learning input, teachers need to take into account that language learning is a learner/learning-oriented activity, developmental, and largely subconscious. In many English department meetings, there was very little discussion about getting students to use the language, that is, getting students' view of language as a natural response to a communicative need.

Such views of learning emphasize the role of social interaction in cognitive development. Learning takes place within a social context in which the interaction supports and extends learning. The Russian psychologist Vygotsky (1978) stressed the importance of collaborative interaction with experts–adults and more capable peers–by means of which the learner is helped to higher levels of understanding and perform-ance. In Zimbabwe, this collaborative interaction, if it occurs, does so largely within classroom walls because outside these, most parents are not educated in the language of the school, English, and so the home is excluded as a site of such English learning.

The Genevan psychologist Piaget (1980) believed cognitive conflict to be indis-pensable for intellectual development. Cognitive conflict occurs when one engages in interaction with peers and is confronted with their conflicting points of view. It is through the resolution of such conflict that cognitive growth takes place. But this requires verbal interaction.

Jerome Bruner (1966, 1976), an American psychologist, also stresses the role of verbal interaction in both language acquisition and cognitive development. Language, thinking, and learning are therefore intimately related. Relationships between the three

have been discussed by psychologists such as Bruner, Piaget, and Vygotsky, by philosophers such as Popper (1979) and by curriculum theorists such as James Moffett (1968) and James Britton (1970). In making sense of the world, language is the major means by which we represent experience to ourselves and to others. Language plays a central role in thinking, knowing and learning.

Yet, in Zimbabwe, classroom instruction and activities are set in accordance with mostly grammar-based and drills handbooks. In this situation, speech, which is supposed to become the student's principal instrument for exploring the world (Britton, 1970, p.93), is directed into a series of do's and don'ts in the classroom, instead of the social support systems among students and teachers that need reinforcement in the Zimbabwean classroom to attain some of the defined goals. These would enable students to go beyond present experiences (Bruner, 1966) and allow both students and teachers to free themselves from the immediate foreign-laden grammar-based English context.

A number of writers (Andrews, 1981; Applebee, 1978; Dias, 1987; Dias and Hayhoe, 1988; Langer, 1989; Richards, 1929; Rosenblatt, 1978; Squire, 1964, among others) have demonstrated the role that literature plays in broadening the linguistic and cultural horizon, as well as sensitizing students and teachers to cultural diversity in a given community. These writers emphasize the role of the reader/learner in making sense of literature. They explain that what the reader brings to the text determines the experience the reader will have of the literature. This theory provides tools that are applicable to most Zimbabwean school situations, to highlight appropriately the significance of the student in all learning and teaching areas.

Abrams (1981) examines the reader's involvement with and contribution to a text. According to his theory, readers (students) ascribe meanings as they interact intellectually and emotionally with the record before them. A work of literature is therefore transformed into an activity on the stage of the reader's mind that is created in conjunction with the expectations, attitudes, emotions, and experiences of each reader. In other words, the meanings of a text are the reproduction or creation of the individual reader. Culler (1975) asserts that literary rules and conventions serve as guides

so that readers can interact meaningfully with a text. Accepting the student's crucial role in creating "meaning" in a text or elsewhere allows and also invites each individual student and teacher to reflect upon, and contribute to, the interpretation of situations and events as they perceive them. It also accommodates most students' way of life in Zimbabwe.

This approach is recommended as it is seen to lay the groundwork for a more detailed study of pupil knowledge. It also involves the student in the formation of concepts, the exploration of symbols, the organization of information, and interaction with her/his environment.

Louise Rosenblatt (1938) explains what is involved here:

> Literature itself cannot be viewed in isolation from other aspects of man's activity in society. Moreover, the particular images of life presented in literature should be approached with a sense of the complexity of man's life and an awareness of its tendency to reflect some dominant pattern. (p.159)

Rosenblatt emphasizes the need to recognize, maintain and promote language learning and the individual rights of students through literature that students like and enjoy. This opens up other possiblities, one would add, for students to use English to think about important issues such as gender equality, personal identity, and one's role in the world.

Where there are differences between ethnic groups, as in Zimbabwe, a common language of instruction can serve as a means of communication between diverse factors in a multicultural milieu, freely and respectfully tending towards a unity where everyone has his or her own place, dignity, and opportunity. In this sense, all ethnic groups are the bearers and guardians of cultures and of values for humanity in general; no one suffers isolation or discrimination. This way the individual gets involved in the use of language to plan projects, collaborate on agreed tasks, act out dramatic roles, interpret attitudes and feelings, and express imaginative experience (Dias, 1990). The appropriate application of this theory allows for and creates environments in which teachers and students share valuable learning and teaching experiences. Stephen Harris (1989), in a keynote address to the joint Australian Reading Association and

Australian Association for the Teaching of English National Conference in Darwin, Australia, said:

> ...Literature might be part of the means of gaining for written English a long-term function in society. Supporting different ways in which writing might be used, other than academic purposes for which English printed matter is used in schools, may not only be a matter of allowing students the variety they need, but also may be a matter of providing needed support to preserve their world view from being undermined.

This address put an emphasis on the social, cultural, economic and traditional aspects of human experience. This emphasis supports Paulo Freire's argument that curriculum content ought to be drawn from participants' experiences and to invite reflection on these experiences. The goal of this kind of curriculum is to challenge and change oppressive conditions in learners' lives since the role of education is to empower learners to use their native language actively in order to generate their own curriculum, and therefore their own knowledge.

The teaching methods and classroom activities based on such theories are usually · motivating to students and engage their involvement and a desire to learn. These methods allow choices to be made by students and teachers alike. They would challenge some learning practices common in Zimbabwe, practices that privilege the interests of the advantaged people of society and reinforce inequalities and, in the process, humiliate disadvantaged students from the low-income groups. As discussed earlier, the fieldwork notes reveal great imbalances of classroom power and relation-ships among different social and economic groups of students, leaving little or no hope for some students to acquire the skills and confidence they need to remain in school or in work experiences later on after school.

This research emphasizes the importance of all the official languages and the cultures attached to them in English classrooms. This means using in learning information on the status of English and why it is the language of power in schools, and explaining Zimbabwe's need (as a developing country) for international technology (in English) to survive economically. In this context, my fieldwork shows people accepting and appreciating the learning of English as necessary and relevant. The

colonial models of learning and linguistic structures foreign to Zimbabwe and its school population therefore need to be addressed and challenged.

In Language, Politics and Modernization in India, Clarence Maloney (1990) gives a brief linguistic historical background of some countries:

> ...Korea, Israel and Netherlands, though not very large, are creative societies because the people from bottom to top in society contribute to the process...

He argues, thus:

> A historical lesson for India is that civilizational creativity cannot be maintained by a minority elite speaking among themselves in a foreign language--there is hardly an example of such to be found in history. South Asian societies will be creative in the modernization process when foreign and elite influence are better balanced by grassroots influences which can only be through the people's languages.

In Zimbabwe many people (among them, Italian, Jewish, Greek, Portuguese, Indian, African) do not consider English foreign. Most people claim "ownership" of this language, probably because of years of study and achievement and, more justifiably, because of their clear knowledge of who they are, the other languages they speak, the culture, tone and pronunciation uniquely Zimbabwean among the majority of people. In the absence of the reinforcement by schools of these positive aspects, however, this study wonders and asks how competent such students or young people are as citizens in the life and struggles of Zimbabwe. Some school leavers interviewed in Zimbabwe, signalled in their responses a complete sense of hopelessness, as they are forced to look everywhere (in and outside Zimbabwe) for career opportunities and jobs that do not exist. The research heard very little from or about school leavers considering going either to the village they came from or to the low-density suburbs in various cities to do something for themselves there. Most school leavers frequented government offices, city stores, colleges and schools, and slept in parks when they were tired and hungry. Some of their counterparts from low-density/high-income suburbs stayed home and watched television or videos, went to films, or helped in the family shop or farm somewhere.

> ...the students look to government for employment and white collar jobs, and for such reasons spend much time learning and preparing for examinations,

contributing less to the enrichment of national culture which will not help them achieve their academic goals... (Maloney, p. 8)

While the above statement refers to Indian students in India, a similar situation exists in Zimbabwe, although parents, teachers, and the Ministry of Education fear that early or hasty change of the English medium of instruction would isolate Zimbabwe from the stream of contemporary thought and modern scientific progress.

Most education and language theory suggested in this chapter centres on people who are exposed to both instruments (languages) and the ideological messages (cultural content) which are used to unite them. In such theory, formal education is believed to reinforce the relative importance of different languages and cultures, as reflected in the society. This happens partly through the way learning is organized, where some languages are media of education, that is, all subjects are taught in that language (English), while other languages are learned as subjects (e.g. Shona and Ndebele in Zimbabwe), and still others are not at all. The belief here is that language is not just for communication but provides a basis for economic, social, and cultural development, on a national, group and individual level. This central role of language in education and the means to realizing the strong link between language and learning are key issues that drive this research study. As such, success in teaching English, according to fieldwork results, is knowing what the students really want to listen to, to see, to talk about, read, do, write, and then carefully providing it in an attempt to meet the social and educational needs of the students, instead of future job promises or examination requirements as commonly experienced today.

This study encourages and suggests what has become known as the James Britton et al. model: Transactional - Expressive - Poetic (1975). One aspect of Britton's hypotheses was that:

> Progress in the skill of writing depends upon the ability to make increasingly fine distinctions with regard to the needs of the reader (audience) and to the purpose of the writing task (function).

Here the expressive function is "the matrix" from which a writer moves in one of two opposite directions, that is, towards the transactional or the poetic, according to

the demands of different situations and his/her own response to them. Below is a diagram showing the three main function categories:

Mature Writer   Transactional --   -- Expressive --   -- Poetic
▲   ▼   ▲   ▼
|
|
Learner   Expressive
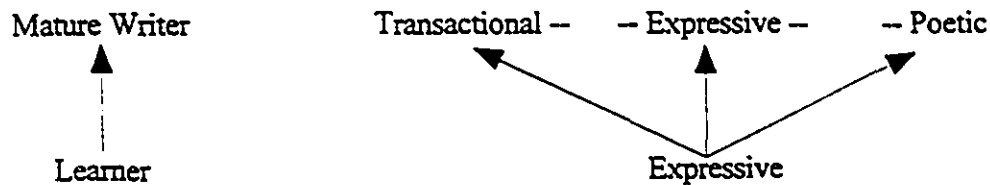
The move from expressive to either poetic or transactional is in general a move from an intimate to a public audience. These three functions are conceived not as clearly distinct and exclusive, but as lying along a continuum. James Britton explained that:

> The expressive utterance, for our purposes, is one in which the expressive function is dominant. We would describe it as an utterance that 'stays close to the speaker', and hence is fully comprehensible only to one who knows the speaker and shares his context. It is the verbalization of the speaker's immediate preoccupations and his mood of the moment... (p. 82)

The expressive as a matrix for the development of other forms of writing, Britton et al. said, provided them with a major hypothesis regarding the development of writing ability in school: that what children write in the early stages should be a form of written-down expressive speech, and what they read should also be, generally speaking, expressive. As children's writing and reading progress side by side, they will move from this starting point into the three broadly differentiated kinds of writing and, in favourable circumstances, their mode of doing so will be by a kind of shuttling between their speech resources on the one hand and the written forms they meet on the other. Thus, in developmental terms, the expressive is a kind of matrix from which differential forms of mature writing are developed (pp. 82-83).

Is this theory applicable and appropriate for Zimbabwe? To answer this question, let us look at one situation where it was applied. In Belvedere College, one of the colleges of Education in Harare, students were introduced to James Britton's theory, and taught "the main function categories", especially the notion of "Growth from the

Expressive". They later used this theory in the different schools where they were deployed.

To see more vividly what was involved in classroom practice, lesson activities were demonstrated as follows:

1. Zimbabwean syllabus, updates and specific content to be covered in a particular class.

2. Specific authors and work under study.

3. Community in which teaching and learning occur.

4. Examination of core information to be covered.

5. A thorough demonstration and teaching of content.

6. Awareness that students will be taking tests and examinations in the end: their grades and future will be affected as will their learning experience.

A selected work was given, in this case, William Wordworth's 17-stanza poem "We Are Seven". It was presented in a manner different from that suggested by the syllabus or from typical Zimbabwean teaching approaches, which are characterized by students eventually working on tests and examinations.

What we opt for here instead is an emphasis on the role of the learner (student) in making sense of literature or language. The class would proceed as follows, as did the class with this Wordsworth poem:

1. Students get the poem with only a minimal introduction, and only the most necessary background material. The whole poem is read silently by both teacher and students in class.

2. Students are then encouraged by the teacher to respond to the text without preconceived notions from the critics or as to the "proper" way to react.

3. After the first silent reading to the whole class, students group and discuss and exchange ideas, reactions and judgements on the text.

4. They listen to one another, discuss, and express ideas.

5. Students, through observations on the poem, clarify and critically re-evaluate their own preoccupations and assumptions that influence their reactions and to examine these in relation to others.

Teachers using this approach will need to know the students, their home backgrounds and community and the other languages they speak. This enables teachers to explain most of the observed behaviors of language users during "language events".

In reading, discussing and explaining the poem "We Are Seven" to each other in groups, students showed great interest in the author's life as a poet, as well as in the composition and meaning of the poem. The author's period, lifestyle, politics, and language were analyzed, in particular, in the way the poem exhibits cultural, moral and sociological ideas about people.

Various grouping strategies and instructional approaches based on students' background, goals, interests (e.g., in music), and a list of Wordsworth's other specific works were given for students to select materials for themselves outside class.

Because of the importance placed on exams in Zimbabwe, it is important to recognize each subject's special terminology. Students here learned how to respond, react and comment in an informed way on what they learned, at the same time dispelling myths about the nature of poetry, difficulties of language and so on. "We Are Seven" was chosen to inform students about the nature of language (whose purpose is mainly to communicate) in everyday interaction. In this case, students connected the past (Wordsworth in England) to their own understanding of life in Zimbabwe. Students learnt about the linguistic resources and problems of Zimbabwe and regions or districts they came from, as well as about the relationship between language and individual, and group identity. Students were involved with the teacher in Shona, Ndebele, and English, an environment in which they live, work, and learn.

Emphasizing their recognition of their own words instead of those of the teacher most of the time, or those they thought "spoke English better", students became more flexible, as they read further to discover the author's ideas, to recall ideas acquired through reading, to recall specific information and to annotate author's ideas in their notetaking. Through listening, speaking, reading and "re-reading", writing and "re-

writing", "re-working" their personal experience as Rosenblatt expresses it, these students' focus remained on themselves and their work. Their personal lives in different parts of urban and rural areas of Zimbabwe were all part of this learning process and this was emphasized. (Appendices I and II)

Louise Rosenblatt influenced teachers' guidelines in the poem. In The Reader, The Text, The Poem, she makes a distinction between two types of reading processes:

> ...efferent and aesthetic. In efferent reading the reader's concern is with making use of what he reads, with what he takes away from reading. In aesthetic reading, in contrast, the reader's primary concern is with what happens during the actual reading event... The reader's attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text. (pp. 24-25)

Efferent reading is the predominant mode in most non-literary texts, where the reader is searching for specific information, that is, reading for facts. Aesthetic reading focuses on feeling, on images, and on the shape of the text itself. While students were familiar with reading generally, they had to be taught "aesthetic reading". They were very eager, learned fast, and began to talk about the things in the poem that they saw (...a little girl...); heard (poet's voice); tasted (...and eat my supper there, stanza 12); touched (my kerchief there I hem, stanza 11); smelled (she had a rustic, woodland air... stanza 3); and felt (her beauty made me glad, stanza 3). In brief, students learned the general nouns that stand for whole groups, classes or species, and specific nouns that stand for individual things or particular actions. Students were able then to identify ideas and feelings from the poem. The teacher asked challenging questions which were seen to extend the students' thinking.

The local languages and the culture they carry were also used in learning. Students were motivated and they not only knew what they were doing and expected to do, in English, but understood and discovered for themselves different ways of using English to think and communicate with themselves and others, using language tools they already possessed.

Within the Reader-Response learning activities, writing exercises, summaries and oral presentations were also incorporated into the lessons. There were no additional materials prepared and given to students by the teacher other than what students produced and presented as "assignments" or "writing". The challenge of this approach is that all students' work is usually intended, expected, or meant to be available to individuals, teacher or group in a form which makes it immediately usable in the classroom. Students, therefore, through their own initiatives, worked on the translation of "We Are Seven" into Shona. The teacher took no part other than that of an audience or listener. Students decided on punctuation, words and format. They focused on meaning and their understanding and interpretation of the poem. They interviewed, interacted, consulted and involved other departments such as history and languages (Shona and Ndebele), as well as certain members of the college community, for more ideas or opinions. When asked if the poem "We Are Seven" made sense to them, or if the message reflected real life situations, students were in total agreement with the poem's authenticity and found it true to life. They gave examples from their war involvement during the Zimbabwe War of Liberation in their different home areas when "children were not allowed to talk to strangers", and added with some humour "Wordsworth was lucky the 'little girl' spoke to him at all." Others identified with the girl and said many Zimbabwean eight-year olds would respond in similar manner if confronted by a stranger. Interesting too, were the many political, cultural and religious interpretations of the poem ("churchyard laid..."), which many students related to and understood well.

As work progressed, another poem was introduced, as students had shown enough interest in the country and life of William Wordsworth, as well as his literary characters, to juxtapose with an African poet. A poem by Leopold Sédar Senghor, from Senegal, was selected. It was not translated but worked on in a variety of ways. Following is an excerpt from this poem:

Prayer to Masks

Masks! Oh Masks!
Black mask, red mask, you black and white masks,
Rectangular masks through whom the spirit breathes,
I greet you in silence!
And you too, my panther-headed ancestor.
You guard this place, that is closed to any
Feminine laughter, to any mortal smile.
You purify the air of eternity, here where
I breathe the air of my fathers.

This poem initiated heated arguments and debates on Africa, on morals, art and beliefs about poetry.

Students made their group and class presentations, which took various forms: poetry recitations from memory; alternate readings in pairs to groups, class or teacher as audience; written summary presentations; singing out verses from poems; acting out "We Are Seven". At these stages the students were mostly in charge. They organized their own groups and style of presentation and assigned tasks to each other (e.g., Secretary of the group, etc.). The play of "We Are Seven" was very well received by the student class audience and performed exceptionally well in all three Zimbabwean languages by three different groups. Each of the groups performing the play reflected its national, socio-cultural environment through the language, the dress, the food, and whatever else "the little girl" was doing when the poet approached her (sewing, playing a game alone, sweeping outside in the yard...). William Wordsworth of England wore a suit, tie and heavy coat; the Wordworths of Zimbabwe wore local outfits befitting their environment and climate. In indigenous languages, the little girl did African tasks and played games such as "pada" (a throw and jumping game) or "nhodo" (working from a dug-out hole with several small stones, popular with children).

So many games were practised (Shona, Ndebele, English), discussed, and written about that later on, the college community (through the student union and the English department) organized a public performance in the lecture theatre. This was repeated again in 1986 by a different class and groups, with encouraging results.

Working through poetry and language together along similar lines of instructional techniques as those used at Belvedere Teacher's College, Zimbabwean students studying in Cuba translated Rudyard Kipling's poem "If" into Shona, Ndebele, and Spanish. Unlike in Zimbabwe, students did not dramatize any of the poems, but did the following instead:

a) Gave class presentations on reading poetry (to audience) in the three aforementioned languages.

b) Performed "If" in dialogue format (father and son) in the lecture theatre.

c) Recorded on audiotape all performances and activities.

d) Listened to the audio cassettes, individually, in groups and classes.

e) Wrote poems for themselves and taped them for their own use.

This group of students (1986-1991) graduated with a B.Ed in Science, and went to Zimbabwe in 1991 to teach both their subject majors and English.

Different instructional approaches, and specifically Reader-Response, are suggested in this chapter as "alternatives" to current language teaching and learning in Zimbabwe. Most approaches do not deny what tradition has associated with the class-room, but merely ask that certain qualities be accepted as natural and valued in all people, cultures, and languages. They instead incorporate socio-cultural and linguistic aspects of students' backgrounds into meaningful language learning experiences, and apply these to content areas taught through English. Although some approaches emphasize literature in language classes (English in particular), vocabulary and contexts which are relevant to students' learning experiences and to their lives as members of linguistically and culturally diverse communities, are taught, and not in isolation from each other.

The richness of culture in its diversity is cherished, and recognizes the urgency of the problems that people face in their lives while united with other students by the common oppressions and classroom challenges they all face, without involving the success of one student at the expense of another. English thus taught in Zimbabwe

may not only be a matter of allowing students the variety they need, but also may be a matter of providing needed support to preserve their worldview from being undermined.

> If English language is to receive more spontaneous support from students and therefore contribute more effectively to their linguistic competence and to the long-term maintenance of their culture, it will have to fill different functions and uses outside the classroom, and those will have to be, from the national perspective of the students and people, functions which enrich their lives. (Harris, 1989)

What Harris is saying is that English needs to be indigenized, but this is more likely to happen if students are also reading and writing their own languages. The examples provided at Belvedere, even if the circumstances under which that happened are influenced by English ways of learning and using English, demonstrate that students still learn well. Harris emphasizes that:

> What is important is that ownership is real. Because the most usable and valued knowledge needs to be constructed by the user, actively built, invented, initiated, negotiated and appropriated.

This rules out, and rightly so, some of the many course materials and summaries teachers used, but instead stimulates critical thinking and creates a sense of belonging and interaction with class, school and society at large. None of these participation techniques are inherently right, good or best, but they are right or good when they fit in with the way teachers teach or when they respond to the needs of the students.

The teaching approaches suggested here do not dismiss traditional teaching approaches; rather, they work to incorporate these into a more holistic system that does not exclude or put down other aspects of the human experience such as the other languages that students speak. If Zimbabwean schools are to help more students learn English well, they need to use the indigenous languages of the majority more effectively in schools. Language will be learned only if it matches the communicative needs of all learners and is taught in anxiety-free and richly contextualized situations.

Recommendations

The kinds of teaching strategies advocated in this chapter are those that encourage active, constructivist, meaning centered learning that includes:

a) <u>Active learning</u>: Here, students are actively engaged in making meaning, and spend little time as passive recipients of predigested knowledge from the teacher-as-expert. Some of the ways in which students were active in this research study were as follows: predicting, observing, discussing, solving problems, writing, reading, and transforming and applying what they read and hear into written and visual forms.

b) <u>Self-reflection</u>: Students are encouraged to reflect upon their knowledge and their learning. They comment on what they know; they hear and ask questions on what they do not understand or know. To encourage self-reflection, writing is used—spontaneous, free, unedited, and unpolished. Formal writing follows from such exploratory writing.

c) <u>Collaborative, cooperative learning</u>: This type of learning, which has been examined in a variety of forms, by Johnson and Johnson (1974), Slavin (1983) involve small, mixed-ability groups working collaboratively on tasks, problems and projects. The basic notion behind all these procedures is that learning is a cooperative, collaborative, interactive procedure.

d) <u>Integration</u>: This concept refers to many aspects of integration of knowledge. School learning in Zimbabwe is marked by compartmentalization. What students learn in one subject is rarely applied, or even remembered, in another. Whitehead (1947) has described such school knowledge as "inert" knowledge of little use except to pass a test or exam in the subject in which it is learned, and not available for other purposes. Learning, it is commonly known, occurs when students actively assimilate new information and integrate it with what they have learned in other ways and in other contexts.

Knowledge is whole and should not be rigidly compartmentalized into subjects, or into what is known from experience outside the classroom versus what is learned in school. "Education needs to deal with students as whole persons and encourage inquiring attitudes both in the classroom and in the world." (Whitehead, 1947)

Teaching strategies such as these, which include the experience and culture of the student, offer a viable alternative to the exclusionary nature of teaching methods this study observed in many Zimbabwean classrooms. They focus on change in individual and intergroup relations, people's critical awareness of their historical and societal positions, and the redistribution of cultural power and privilege in school and society.

Agar (1985), Pike (1967), and Smith (1992) explain that the value of ethnography lies in its emic and holistic view. The holistic view refers to the ethnographer's goal of creating a whole picture of the particular culture, cultural situation; or cultural event under study—a picture that leaves nothing unaccounted for and that reveals the interrelatedness of all the component parts. In this study these parts would include home, school, classroom and the larger society. Alister Cumming (1994) complements these views when he writes that one of TESOL's (Teachers of English to Speakers of other languages) orientations to research recommends an openly political agenda which views language education in relation to issues of social equity. This orientation he adds, aims its inquiry at transforming the social conditions of disadvantaged participants in language education seeking to empower them through their participation in research rather than to establish systematic accounts of their behaviour, improve the institutional status quo of language programs, or reach more refined interpretations of how they learn or are taught (p.690).

In a similar fashion, this study encourages parents, teachers, students, and policy makers to foster learning environments where students are given full opportunity to participate in the mainstream of Zimbabwean society while also, if they so choose, maintaining their separate cultures and identities.

CHAPTER SIX

Recommendations and Suggestions for Further Study and Research

This research study has tried to give an overview of education in English in Zimbabwe, a country that has changed much since independence in 1980. In order to make recommendations about education policies and specifically, about English-only as the medium of instruction, it is important to recapitulate the Zimbabwe of today.

First of all, my fieldwork and other observations indicate that Zimbabwe is now at the point where it can concentrate on education at most levels, in addition to expanding quantity.

> The socialist ideals of education for production, and reciprocal school and community development, are materializing in many ways. (Baker, 1993)

Many communities are supporting the schools' efforts, and are doing their best in . the improvement of school facilities and learning itself. These schools are, through their own efforts, overcoming many material constraints with new desks and new classrooms.

Second, there is increased pride and confidence in using African cultures and languages, and this in turn affects the perception of English. With Shona and Ndebele, and their cultures, substantially elevated since independence from Britain in 1980, and to a certain extent before then, there is less of a social, cultural, or political need to assert Zimbabwean or African ethnolinguistic identity as a norm for official use alongside English. Only in education does English-only as the medium of instruction in schools remain a concern, and is therefore the focus of this study. The notion of English as a "colonial language" rooted in the past, when Zimbabwe was struggling for sovereignty, is now out of date: it no longer describes the language situation in present-day Zimbabwe.

Characteristic of this new language situation is what the interview data reveals, that is, the absence in students' vocabulary of words such as "colonial language" (English), "former colonial master" (Britain), "language of the oppressor", and our

languages are treated as "inferior". Even when an answer to my questions demanded the use of such words, very few employed them. Students--primary, secondary, and college students--did not use these words. Most of the teachers did not use these words either. One conclusion can be made here: that preoccupation with "foreign and local languages" is almost alien among Zimbabwean students. They view all languages as theirs, but in education, they view English as the most important. This research shows innocent, free, genuine and positive attitudes towards all languages used in Zimbabwe. Mother tongues are used a lot more outside the classroom (according to school rules), and for "good and understood" reasons, "because some of our teachers are expatriates from Ghana, Mauritius, Canada, Holland, Britain. etc. and they don't speak Shona/Ndebele." Such answers were given to me verbally by students in many schools I visited, and from all age groups. The responses and expressions of individual points of view convinced me students understood the role of English in school and in their lives.

A third element of the Zimbabwean context today is that of the cultural void or loss of values in society through English-only instruction. One observation made in some schools was that though students did not totally abandon their linguistic and cultural practices (speech habits, dress, food, religion, music), they disguised them and practised them privately in small groups at break or on the way home, or later at the festivals and commemorations which are essential elements of national Zimbabwean culture, but mostly outside school. The practice was more common in cities, especially in Harare, where through the very successful zoning system, students from low income/high density suburbs travel to schools in high income/low density suburbs to learn.

There are many problems faced by students as a result of the diverse student body in schools. Since most materials and models are not local, students find these difficult to follow. Unlike their parents, whose problems tended to be local or specific to a particular group, these students are learning English in a global economy driven by market forces and fuelled by rapid advances in technology, and one which promises them opportunities when they succeed.

During my research, I observed with concern what appeared to be failure on the part of the Ministry of Education to address the mentality of the contemporary Zimbabwean student, now accustomed to a lifestyle based on mobility and plurality. Some students have now created a resolutely English-speaking worldview of their own. This world often only remotely resembles the beliefs or values of their parents, especially if these parents live in rural areas or poorer sections of society.

A fourth characteristic of Zimbabwe today is that of its diversity and changing population. This research recommends that the Ministry of Education recognize this context in which it is operating, in which the school is primarily a place of education for all, and not for just a few. The large number and increasing diversity of students do pose significant questions about and require adjustments to the school system, although in Zimbabwe integration, and not assimilation, into each other's society has always been emphasized. In 1980 Zimbabwe established one Ministry of Education for all, as opposed to the former Rhodesian Ministry of Education, with its divided responsibilities. This brought about a remarkable unity that developed among all races. In spite of differences of language, background, and cultural perspective (Indian, Ndebele, Shona, European, etc.), cooperation among teachers, students and parents in most schools exists today. In this time of what appears to many as a linguistic transition, the government is faced with a choice: to manage the crisis now and plan for the future, or risk higher failure rates.

The European community in Zimbabwe today, whose numbers have dwindled and who are a minority in government-run schools, cannot make decisions for the majority in the way they used to, even in their private schools. There is a need for the government to evaluate these private schools and their language curriculum to see how indigenous languages are treated, for the benefit of all students. That the European community is an involved minority in terms of school life became evident in this research. Its participation in education is stronger than that of other large populations in Zimbabwe, who often, for genuine economic reasons, are less involved.

Amidst all this diversity, where much spoken communication occurs in the indigenous languages (Shona in Mashonaland and Ndebele in Matabeland), there

continues to be a strong presence of English. The English language has always had a strong presence in Zimbabwe since the early days of occupation, when the government began to officially promote English language education for the indigenous population as well as for the minority English-speaking community.

English continues to be so strong because we are now living in a global market economy. In scientifically advanced countries such as Germany, Japan, and Russia, learning and teaching English has increased, especially since the Second World War. English is likely to enjoy its present importance into the foreseeable future. Zimbabwe is no exception to this growing trend towards the use of English. For scientific studies, international affairs, trade and commerce, great as well as small nations feel it to their advantage to extend and improve the learning and teaching of English to the new generation. (Yada, 1966)

Developing countries have other difficulties. Some of them, like Zimbabwe, have urgent need of professionals: scientists, engineers, doctors. They face pressing problems of material development. Although the basic principles of science have universal application and honor no national boundaries, the problems in agriculture, economics, medical science, etc, of these countries are not the same as in advanced countries.

Articles and reports on "Education in Zimbabwe" (Zimbabwe Institute of Development Studies Consultancy Reports) clearly reveal that Zimbabwe is also:

> ...preoccupied with moving on, in trying to rapidly build an entrepreneur class, develop material environment, and create jobs and so on. (p. 7)

The public view seems to be that the country needs to target young people especially for this entry into the market economy to liberate resources and create the kind of resources needed, as well as material wealth. In a society such as Zimbabwe today, with rampant consumerism and a widening gap between haves and have-nots, the survival and credibility of the school depends on its willingness to intervene morally on behalf of the students and parents. Instead, indigenous school systems get anglicized or westernized, and students believe that "they are at school to improve their standard of living and take advantage of the country's economic prosperity."

(Appendix)

As in other African countries, students in Zimbabwe know that the most important and best paid jobs are available only to those who have a strong English base, and consequently they make serious efforts to learn the language. This research study found English was favored by most people mainly for educational reasons that in turn brought commercial, social and economic benefits. The fact is that the government reinforces such opinions and beliefs about this language through the new school curriculum (1987) where English alone dominates as the language of the classroom.

However, according to findings of this study, there are few jobs available for even the best-educated students. The study argues that it is not possible for the present school system to provide the sophisticated preparation required to meet the needs of an emergent nation wishing to expand in the industrial and technological sectors, without a proper reflection on Zimbabweans' ethnic loyalty that has its origins in a past that includes languages and cultures other than English.

However, students see upon admittance to school that economic power speaks English, although as the language of instruction, English has never meant in Zimbabwe that the indigenous population becomes assimilated into the English-speaking community. In Harare summer jobs, particularly in major company stores (Meikles, OK Bazaar, and so on) go mostly to urban students from mostly private schools who speak English with the right accent, which is either non-indigenous, or British, if not former Rhodesian. A good knowledge of English and 'learning' or 'education' continue to be synonymous in Zimbabwe.

While the study found a strong desire to learn English among parents and students at all levels of education—from nursery to university—for educational, social and economic reasons, this was not at the expense of their indigenous languages and culture.

> Being educated in English is important for our children in this world of commerce and business. However, we need too to know our own languages and culture, and we already know these. (Field notes)

When Zimbabwean students and their parents say they want to be educated in English, and do not mind if it is only English, they are likely to be misunderstood by nationalists and other elites of the national and international community as being ignorant of linguistic facts in their lives. In fact, all that these people really want is to be able, through English, to share in the "good life".

Zimbabwe needs to employ English for national purposes, international affairs, trade, and scientific and technical education. The people (parents) want to use their indigenous languages of Shona and Ndebele for national purposes, but for other purposes such as diplomacy and higher education, the two languages alone are believed inadequate. Teachers, educators, and linguists can help in clarifying the issues.

In accepting people's opinions that English ought to remain as it is in schools, this study recognizes that the chief reason is broader than just for getting good jobs. The complex undertakings of modern life in Zimbabwe today, as some Ministry officials explained, "depend on the cooperation of many people with different specialties in different places who mostly function in English: where there are language problems, communication fails, as do the undertakings sometimes." While we understand that most third-world countries operate in these dilemmas, the study believes that the function of national literacy is to foster effective nationwide communication.

This study, in accepting that, almost nationwide, Zimbabweans want English-only as the medium of instruction for now, understands this also from the point of view of the examinations students take and which decide their status as citizens and their future in Zimbabwe. As long as these examinations for high school and university entrance continue to be necessary, English in Zimbabwe will be the people's choice, especially when there are not many alternative institutional and career paths to follow through indigenous languages.

Given these realities and attitudes in Zimbabwe today, a country with a changing identity, this research study finds a growing need to recognize and value even more the heritage of Zimbabwe's cultures and languages. One place where this can and

should happen is in the area of education. Therefore, at a policy level, this study recommends the following:

A. That the Ministry of Education Implement a Clearly-Articulated Policy of Multilingualism

This study proposes the instruction of indigenous languages, Shona and Ndebele, alongside English from Grades 1 to 7 in all non-private schools, that is, public or government or government-aided. This should not require extensive consultation and research into the status quo of these languages because Shona and Ndebele instruction already exist up to Grade 4. Thus, extension to Grade 7 would not only be sensible to implement, but should be automatic. This policy is important in Zimbabwe's situation where language change appears affected more by social than by any bureaucratic decisions.

This study calls for English and the indigenous languages to be treated as complementary modes of communication, in both primary and secondary school, and not be segregated, competing areas of knowledge as practised, when they are presented and dealt with in education contexts. This way it is hoped students will develop a richer understanding of the nature of language as a system. Indigenous languages, as first languages, could benefit from insights coming from second and foreign language teaching theory and methodology. This will be reflected in all subjects (the whole curriculum) allowing students to experience multiculturalism or multilingualism as a norm and not a special case dominated by the English language. In secondary schools in particular, this way of using English while studying subject areas would be an ideal way to foster bilingualism, recommended in this study as an alternative practice to teaching English-only.

The results of the University of Life's (Nigeria) six-year primary education program in Yoruba, launched in January 1970 with a pupil population of 1,500 and now adopted as a Pilot Project by the Oyo State Government of Nigeria involving 85,000 pupils, are interesting. This project showed that the child lost nothing by his

exposure to six years of primary education through the Yoruba medium. Rather, the child gained cognitively, linguistically, and emotionally. The project also showed that the child's exposure to Yoruba as medium of education and English as a second language for the first six years did not in any way adversely affect his/her secondary and tertiary education. The child understood mathematics and science concepts better when instructed first in the mother tongue and later in English. As well, the child's exposure to English as a second language placed her/him at an advantage as compared with peers who learned English as a first language. Finally, the child developed self-confidence and self-reliance traits earlier than his cohorts. These results were the same in urban and rural environments. (Fafunwa, 1985, p. 58)

This study believes a similar policy for Grades 1 to 7 in Zimbabwe would also succeed. The progress made with transcribing African languages for the masses and their use in literacy campaigns, teaching, politics and the indigenous languages press (Kwayedza in Zimbabwe) have improved the situation considerably to make a positive contribution to learning in the mother tongue.

While the Ministry of Education in Zimbabwe already encourages "bilingualism" in its curriculum and English programs, there is no clear policy on it, nor does there seem to be any philosophy behind language instruction. Advantages of a multilingual policy can be found both at the individual and at the social level. Citing Peal and Lambert (1962), Gardner and Lambert (1972), Lambert (1962), among others, Rama Kant Agmihotri writes:

> Bilingualism leads to great linguistic competence and more mental and cognitive flexibility. (p. 11)

Again, quoting Cummins and Swain (1986:207), Agmihotri adds that access to two languages in early childhood can promote children's metalinguistic awareness and possibly also broader aspects of cognitive development.

Many teachers interviewed in this study said that multilingual education unites schools and communities at a higher level. When all children learn that their people and themselves contribute equally to the development of Zimbabwe, this is going to engender a higher level of respect across racial, ethnic and social class lines. Students

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are encouraged to learn, read, speak and write English about life experiences and the life of their individual imaginations. They then analyze the effectiveness of their interpretations in the security and support of their families and familiar environments.

> Write what you know, write about anything you read, including letters from your parents, grandparents, or friends. If these are in Shona or Ndebele, translate them into English for yourself or others if you wish (Field notes, Prince Edward School, Harare; Margaret Munyati - Department Head: Shona, 1986)

What this suggests is that language adapts and responds on the basis of individual needs, acknowledging the real experiences and real knowledge of the learners, their cultures, their communities and the conditions in which they live.

NOT to bring in more mother tongue instruction runs certain risks. Those who have written on the importance of mother tongue instruction, for instance, discuss experiences in many countries where foreign languages have been in use as media, and shows that persons graduating from colleges are very conscious of their rights and privileges, but do not take seriously their obligations to society. They advance their claims and defend their interests tactfully and forcefully, but lack that close identification with the nation and the country which makes possible great sacrifices on the part of the educated elite. They are exiles in their own country.

> Education through the medium of a foreign language may encourage a kind of opportunism which is not prepared to give any unselfish service back to the community. (Yada, 1966)

Zimbabwe, like most newly independent countries of the British Commonwealth, has had to contend with this problem.

B. That the Ministry of Education put in place a Zimbabwean-Based Curriculum
which Recognizes the Wealth and Knowledge of the Diverse Cultures and
Emphasizes the Participation of Parents.

This research study does not in any way discredit the entire Zimbabwean school
system, but requests an immediate reconsideration of the content of the curriculum.
Without it, as some educators and fieldwork informants pointed out, Zimbabwean
schools remain the domain of an advantaged middle class. The Zimbabwean society,
through the school system, continues to retain this past middle class ethic, involving
majority disadvantaged low-income group parents and their children to the exclusion
of the values, the knowledge system, and the expressive needs of other ethnic groups
and cultures (African, Arab, Indian, Portuguese, and so on).

Curriculum study would begin with the assumption that "all communities contain
a wealth of knowledge and skills which can be recognized and used by schools to
facilitate instruction." (Leone, 1992) Zimbabwean cultural values should be
incorporated more fully into the curriculum in order to combine linguistic and cultural
activities with formal education to make better learning sense, and improve language
development, competency and performance among students. Simply outlining and
discussing these does little to remedy the difficult task in learning and teaching. They
must be implemented.

One example of how to do this can be found in a Schools Resource Guide,
developed by one of Canada's First Nations, based on what was developed by
participants at one of their education boards workshops. As indicated in the chart on
the next page, emphasis is on the need to assume control of education now, develop
expertise in the community, have aboriginal teachers as role models, and develop a
less structured but flexible and non-intimidating environment for learning. (Ministry
of Education, Ontario, Native Languages, 1977)

FIRST NATION SCHOOLS
COMMUNITY DEVELOPED / LOCALLY CONTROLLED
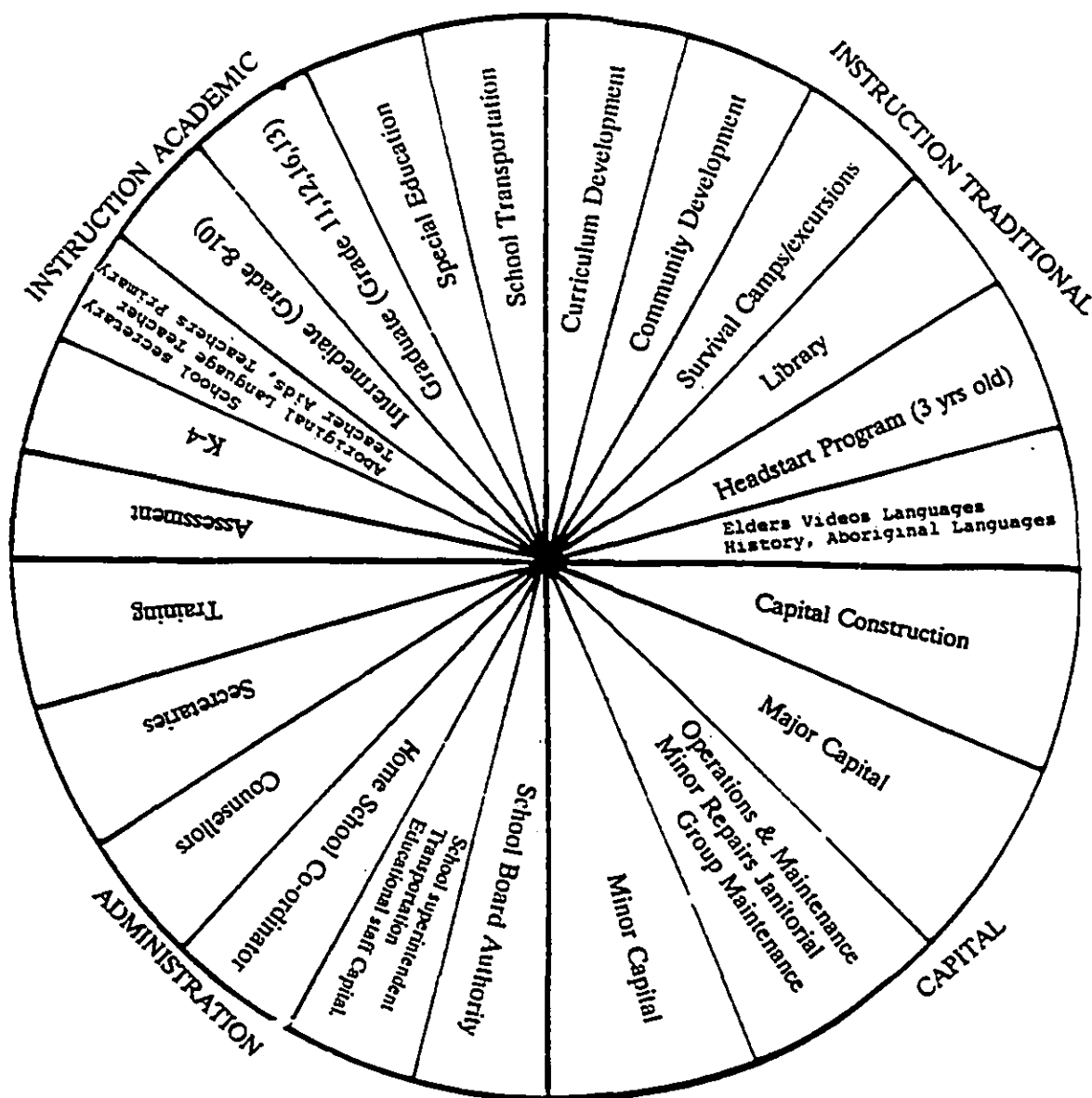
Each area would have a number of items to be identified and formula
funding requirements as developed by the community.

The Resource Guide is intended to serve as a support document for the curriculum. It provides teachers with essential information on the Native School Language program and includes materials outlining the basic principles of five of the languages most commonly spoken in Ontario. We, in Zimbabwe, where we have but three official languages, can learn much from this document about involving all language groups.

Emphasis through English instruction should be on texts students use, with teachers informing students that while Britain has had the greatest influence in Zimbabwe and elsewhere, other cultures such as those of Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Cuba, and India have also had theirs. The origins of African festivals rooted in Zimbabwean culture, and in the traditions of the different ethnic groups which contribute to the shaping of Zimbabwe society and nationality should be discussed and learned in language classes, not only in extracurricular activities as "cultural dances or music" mostly for school entertainment and for welcoming visitors and politicians.

A Zimbabwean-based curriculum would stress the importance of involving parents in education, as they can share a wealth of knowledge and cultural heritage with the school. A clear policy by the Ministry of Education would help open up communication between the school and parents, rather than maintain the current one-way communication from school via students to parents. One parent explained:

> I can speak as a former student. This practice of saying, 'Go and tell your parents to come or do this or that...' has been running our lives since Rhodesia. I think parents, and especially mothers like myself, are the cornerstone of society. Better ways must be found of getting together so that learning becomes our business too. (Field notes)

Schools and the government, by negating the leadership potential of parents, by not promoting the contribution of parents to education, are in fact removing a principal resource that is needed to go forward.

Some official statements and ideas excluded "the masses", who they said "had too many problems raising fees for their children to be depended upon on matters of school administration and Zimbabwean education policy." (Appendix II) This research study asks how the Zimbabwe Ministry of Education can expect the community to be

an agent of change in the world of education if it does not allow them to be agents of transformation within school structures it controls mostly alone. In some of its bulletins, the National Education Crisis Committee of South Africa (1987) emphasizes that:

> Every student is entitled to an English education that provides preparation for a full range of careers, not only for industry, examinations, job interviews and tests, but to be informed citizens.

Many parents of Zimbabwean school children are the people for whom survival is a constant struggle, people whose values are not always appreciated by the wider society except when there is, for example, political gain. These are people whose status, language, self-esteem, confidence, and power have been removed from them through years of past colonial exploitation and now corruption in their midst. These people are low-income groups (in urban or rural areas) in Zimbabwe, who continue to suffer disproportionately the effects of poverty, discrimination, under-education, and unemployment. These parents were seen to participate in school activities almost each day, in order to keep their children in school. This study is interested in these people being heard, and their 'human condition' described and displayed in English and indigenous languages too, as befitting them as part of a larger Zimbabwean community or society.

But these hardships, though very real, represent only one side of most of these parents' lives. The other side is rich in experience, and parents have much to say about the education of their children and the languages they speak. Their stories and reflections on work, farming in the past and today, what they say about the impact of technology on their farming practices, about their families and their communities, is useful information to be heard and shared by all, and used wherever possible.

Parents' knowledge of children's capacity for learning, especially in today's Zimbabwe, and of parental influence on learning is closely related to children's intellectual development. Increasing knowledge of parental roles is called for here, of not only providing but also planning, organizing, and procuring educational experiences. The research, from parents' responses studied, considers this one of the

goals of parent education.

What results strongly support is increased emphasis on the role of parents in the education of their children, and teachers' awareness of the linguistic, social and cultural backgrounds of students. In many situations parents appeared too dependent on teachers for the best outcomes of their children's education. As a result, students looked more to teachers and schools for the best solutions to their learning problems and less to themselves and their families. Yet, schools and teachers alone have not been able to meet students' needs and solve their problems. Students have failed, and because the parents' role has been made mostly "financial" (paying fees and for uniforms), success as viewed or understood by both parents and children, has largely eluded Zimbabwean society.

In <u>Research and Practice in Parent Involvement: Implications for Teacher Education,</u> Gordon E. Greenwood and Catherine W. Hickman (1991) describe implications of parent involvement for teacher education. They say the teacher's role, particularly in the elementary school, interacts with six types of parent involvement: 1) parent as audience; 2) parent as volunteer; 3) parent as paraprofessional; 4) parent as teacher of own child; 5) parent as learner; 6) parent as decision-maker.

Most Zimbabwean parents were found in Role I at school meetings and social activities, but not in the classroom or school or staff meetings. "Parent as learner" has in this research the second largest following, especially in the rural areas where teachers "know best", are "experts" and where some parents learn a lot from their children's schooling (Role 5). Role 6, "Parent as decision-maker" happens mostly in the family home, although in some schools (mostly private) parents participate. The other roles, although crucial, remain insignificant to really influence change or child's learning. Gordon E. Greenwood cites Schaefer (1971) as advocating the wisdom of taking a broader view of education as extending beyond the classroom. The family is a critical institution in this regard, and parents are teachers of their children.

The job of the Ministry of Education and teachers is to give such information, and more of it, to parents.

Greenwood adds:

> The Coleman Report (1966) indicates that the home learning environment accounts for a significant portion of school achievement variance. In short, events in the home influence a host of student school performance variables at least as much as do the teacher and the school. The question then becomes: given this state of affairs, how can the home and school most effectively work together as partners? (p. 280)

While a few models are suggested in Greenwood's paper, Potter (1989) prefers the term "parent participation" as a way of bringing parents and schools together. "Parent participation", Potter says, "focuses more on parents being coeducators, co-decision makers, and leaders (p. 281). The most effective educational program is the one in which the home and school work together on behalf of the child. Many schools work well with parents in Zimbabwe, but not in the "parent as participant" mode, as suggested in Greenwood's paper. There is good reason to incorporate into school programs in Zimbabwe contributions parents make at home and in society.

Conclusion

This research work is not only about what is wrong with language learning and teaching in Zimbabwean secondary schools, examinations, tests, the Ministry of Education, etc., it is also about school life, as experienced by students, teachers and parents, through English, and the other languages spoken and used in the country. Language learning and teaching are not just about grammar and correctness, but also about the power language has to make issues come alive for the learners, without sorting out winners from losers. Language here builds on learners' linguistic strengths.

The research findings encourage further explorations into learners' experience in all its dimensions and possibilities, since language as lived deals with people's most pressing concerns—family, death, religion, love, good and evil, destiny, will, justice, character, courage. These issues become more real when the medium of instruction is allowed to represent human experience in the very specific individual terms of a text, story, novel, poem, or an essay, requiring individuals to experience and to participate. It is partly this type of environment that the study encourages schools to create, in

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order to enrich methods of teaching and stimulate students of all ages to take charge of themselves and their learning. Language policies, thus designed with people living the issues at the centre, rather than developed in response to, and anticipation of tests, examinations, or future job opportunities, will better serve the school communities. This study found that the dominant English language and culture of the traditional school and its administrative structures offer limited support and resources to innovative, thoughtful and critical reform. The research sees and encourages better sensitivity to and understanding of linguistic, socio-economic and cultural diversity in the schools. These responsibilities, difficult as they might be, require the help of the school, family, government and community in the evolving, demanding and challenging environment of school and society.

While the Zimbabwean Ministry has always paid attention to what goes on in schools, it has continued to encourage, among teachers in particular, educational debate on current issues affecting teachers and students. It needs now, however, to also acknowledge and involve more parents, grandparents, and community leaders across the country, the majority of whom are non English users or speakers.

Finally, I found this fieldwork experience stunning and eye-opening, with an enormous influence on my teaching and sensibilities. Much as I disagreed at times with respondents, I later recognized my job here was to search for ideas about the learning and teaching of English and other languages, to respect all opinions, and to present these as given. One hopes too, for further explorations leading to new depths and connections on the same issues, and that, in their widest sense, such ventures will seek new ways to improve language education and communication among all people in Zimbabwe.

The non-native users' attitudinal readjustment toward English, writes Kachru (1982) entails the following acts, among others. First, non-native users must now dissociate English from the colonial past, and not treat it as a colonizer's linguistic tool. Second, they must avoid regarding English as an evil influence which necessarily leads to westernization, although it is true that such use of English has resulted in a linguistic elitism in some parts of South Asia and Africa (p. 53). Kachru

also deals in his book at length, with "the unique international position of English", which he says is certainly unparalleled in the history of the world.

> For the first time a natural language has attained the status of an international (universal) language, essentially for cross-cultural communication. Whatever the reasons for the earlier spread of English, we should now consider it a positive development in twentieth century world context. (p. 50)

Kachru says that "we should realise that this new role of English puts a burden on those who use it as their first language, as well as those who use it as their second language" (p. 50). This responsibility, he adds, demands what may be termed "attitudinal readjustment." What Kachru discusses here is already being experienced in different ways in Zimbabwe. The roles of European and African languages in African education need be carefully evaluated however, so that comprehensive and realistic language policies that are consonant with African developmental goals can be adopted.

It appears from this study that if African languages cannot be developed to serve as media of education and across national boundaries alongside English, many students will continue to see English more as the language for school and success, than a useful tool for communication. Many schools visited, intentionally and unintentionally appeared to operate according to the norms of an English curriculum or syllabus to a certain extent outside the community in which students lived. The study sees schools contributing, by so doing, to the academic problems of students face in learning.

Not all students in Zimbabwe, of whatever race or ethnic group, perceive and respond to schooling and other institutions in the same way. They do not perceive the treatment of language (Shona, Ndebele and English) alike or respond alike. The study revealed that the students had and continue to have a cultural frame of reference that demonstrates and encourages school participation and success. Thus, some students had difficulty in the English classrooms just adapting to and interpreting aspects of their learning experience. The success of other students in some of these schools generally appears to depend more on what teachers and schools do to help them, and

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less on students' perceptions of themselves and their circumstances.

There is need for an approach that takes account of how students respond to school rules, and parental and community pressures. There is also need to recognize and support students' efforts to take fuller responsibility for their own learning. The classroom environments that cultivate such responsibility are the ones that schools need to foster. A major aspect of such environments is a policy that promotes and values equally the use of both English and indigenous languages in the pursuit of learning.

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APPENDIX I

Fieldwork Questions, Responses, Observations and Summaries:
Both Written and Spoken

Target Groups

Primary School Students
Grades 6 and 7

Parents

Secondary School Students
Forms 1-4

Secondary School Students
Forms 5-6 (A Levels)

School Leavers and Dropouts

Zimbabwean Students in Cuba

Teachers

Ministry of Education

All Group Questions

TARGET GROUPS

Teachers, principals and vice-principals

Teachers and school administrators were asked questions, and most responded helpfully.

Students

At primary schools mostly grade 6 and 7 students were asked questions.

Parents

Most parents were interviewed at their places of work, residence or at school functions (e.g. St. George's School, Eagle's Vale Open Day Celebrations), or at meetings (e.g. Munyawiri, in Domboshava).

Grandparents

Like parents, most of these were interviewed at their homes, and at schools their grandchildren attended, in both urban and rural areas (although most grandparents live in rural areas).

Secondary school students

Forms 1-4 students in different classes at different schools were interviewed. Those in Forms 5-6 (e.g. at Eagle's Vale School) were interviewed mostly during school functions such as Open or Parents Day.

Dropouts

The dropout students were mostly interviewed in rural areas, at shopping centres, homes and schools; some of those in towns were usually interviewed at parks, outside offices or school gates where they were either applying for school place or work.

Citizens-at-large

A cross-section of individuals were interviewed, including community leaders, farm laborers, communal farmers, miners, workers, among others.

Languages used

In Zimbabwe, Shona, English, Ndebele, and Nyanga were used. Translation was done.

The next section provides a list of the questions asked of each group, as well as observations and comments.

PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS: GRADES 6 - 7

Questions

Do you like English? Why?

Do you learn English outside the classroom?

Do you enjoy learning English?

What textbooks do you use?

Which ones do you like and why?

Do you take them home? When you do, what help, if any, do you get from your parents?

Do you want to continue learning in English? Why?

When do you speak English, and with whom?

What books do you read at home?

What exams have you written in English?

Did you pass?

Does your Shona teacher speak English to you all the time? Do you like that or you don't mind?

What exactly do you learn in English and how do you learn? Alone? In groups? With your teacher?

Do you have problems learning English? If so, what are they?

Do you prefer Shona or Ndebele to English as medium of instruction? Why?

What do your parents say about your English class? Do you speak to them in English?

Do you speak to the Headmaster in English?

What is English to you?

What subject teacher do you like the best?

Observation and Summary

The students appeared surprised at these questions. Although the purpose and meaning of the exercise was explained to them, they had never been asked such questions before. They had a serious Grade 7 examination to consider and prepare for. The students, however, responded sometimes in groups, individually or in writing. They did have ready answers to most of the questions. Most of them stated clearly that they liked English and that their parents helped them sometimes. The teachers, most students responded, were friendly and knew English very well. "I want to speak English like my teacher..."

Examinations terrified Grade 6 and 7 students. They showed fear for examination as well as determination to pass. They need English to go into Form I.

They read at school, and did most of the work at school, especially in the rural areas. In urban areas students already spoke English more fluently and indicated fewer problems and less fear of exams than students in rural areas. In general these grade students appeared happy, comfortable, in and outside class, and very close to the school staff.

PARENTS

Questions

What language do you speak at home with your family, friends and neighbors?

What do you think of education in Zimbabwe today?

What about English? Are you happy your child is learning English? Why?

What if Shona/Ndebele were introduced as a medium of instruction? Would you like that? Why? Why not?

What books (Shona/Ndebele/English) do you have at home? Do your children use them?

Are you happy with your children's school? Why? Why not?

Examinations are said to be difficult. Do you agree? What is difficult about them?

What do your children tell you about exams?

Do you read your children's school reports? If not, who does?

What do you learn from these reports about your children's school performance and what do you do later?

Is the present government spending on education necessarily being directed to the present needs of the youth? Please elaborate.

Are you actively involved in the daily school routines so that you interact continually with school personnel? If not so, why not?

Do you attend PTA meetings? If not, why?

How many children/grandchildren do you have? How many go to school?

Do you discuss their education, school life and homework at home?

Do you encourage your children to do better in school and at home most of the time?

How do you encourage or motivate them?

Do you think you have power over your child's school work, from your experience? Do you use it?

Who is an educated person: one who speaks Shona, Ndebele, or English? Explain.

Do you help your children learn, or speak better English? Why? Why not?

Who is the most important person/s in the education of your children or grandchildren?

Are you involved with and committed to using the following languages: English, Shona, or Ndebele?

Is culture part of your children's life and education? Explain.

Observation and Summary

Both groups were curious and interested in the research study debates. Some expressed surprise that questions of this nature were being asked them. A few even told some of the assisting student teachers that "we are not educated". (Hatina Kufunda) Why is she asking us these questions?

After some dialogue they responded positively, mostly from their own standpoints. They were very elaborate in their responses:

> ....Everyone has a role to play in the search for language solutions. The people in our schools, colleges, universities and women's groups, and the churches. They must help our students pass examinations... (Munyawiri School, Domboshava)

It was clear from the beginning, at most schools, centers and villages, that parents were interested mostly in solutions to the problems – problems of expensive school materials, building fund and problems of high failure rate among students.

In their responses, parents also discussed authoritarianism, which they know still exists in some Zimbabwean schools. We were made to understand how this hurts the learning process and can have a devastating effect on young people. They defined an authoritarian teacher in particular as "one who doesn't know how to make the material relevant to students." Such a teacher gives students "hard and incomprehensible stuff to fail" and s/he doesn't care. (translation)

Parents were clear on authoritarianism:

> ...teachers who just teach without feedback from students... Teachers who discourage students from asking questions. (Marikopo School, Seke Materera)

They feared some of the students were not "allowed to learn by talking about their everyday experiences..."

A former headmaster, grandparent, now retired, summed it all up by saying:

> ....a lesson, for example, has to be accessible to students for it not to be authoritarian. When you are teaching language you are dealing with everyday experiences. You and the students, then, just become the same people in the class... I trained at Domboshava and Waddilove, and taught for many years in this country. I know what I am talking about...

Some parents showed anger at poor examination results, while others were still optimistic and emphasized their commitment to their children's education.

On English-only, one repeated that she had already told me that "being educated in English is important for our children."

And finally, an Education Officer said:

> We chose English and this is not a problem...maybe the problem is in the school...untrained teachers are still here, you know...languages are not a problem.

SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS: FORMS 1 - 4

Questions

Do you like school?

What subject do you enjoy the most? Why?

English is very important. Do you know that? Why is that, do you think?

What do your parents or grandparents say about English? Your Headmaster and teachers?

Do you want to learn in English all your life - I mean, in school and everywhere else? Why?

Is English interesting to learn?

Where does your English teacher come from? Is s/he Zimbabwean?

Do you prefer a Zimbabwean English teacher to an expatriate teacher? Why?

Do you speak English at home?

When do you use English?

Is English difficult to learn?

What do your teachers say?

What do your parents say about your English? Do you agree with them?

Could you do better in school, in all your subjects, if Shona or Ndebele were used instead of English as the medium of instruction?

Explain to us why it would be better for you, or not better.

Do you think you are going to pass your examinations? I mean, 'O' Level

Examinations.

Do you understand your English teacher, and the class exercises you do?

Do you get good marks or grades especially in comprehension and composition?

When working at home, doing homework and so on, alone or with others -- what language do you use? Why?

Do you speak to the school staff in English all the time? Is it the rule?

Do the kitchen staff, gardener and groundskeeper speak to you in English? Why?

Do they know English well? Explain.

Do these same people come into your classrooms? To do what?

Have you ever heard them speak English?

If so, to whom and on what occasion? Is their English better or worse than yours?

What is good English for you? Explain this to me (us).

Do you want to become an English teacher? Why?

Is it a good thing for us in Zimbabwe to learn English?

What do your friends, teacher and headmaster say? What do your parents say?

Why is it good or bad?

Do you agree?

Why don't we use Shona in the classroom?

You could write 'O' Level in Shona or Ndebele, and learn English as you learn your other subjects. Have you ever thought about that?

Do you talk about that with your teachers, friends, or parents?

Is it difficult to learn English?

What is hard? What do you find difficult?

How do you feel in such difficulties, if you have any? What do you do to solve them?

Are you and your classmates happy in your English class?

Do your parents attend PTA meetings and school functions?

Do you and your parents like your school? Why?

Observation and summary

Responses from these students show determination and zeal to make something of themselves, great belief in success, and that without hard work and self-discipline they could never amount to anything, and didn't deserve to. There is a sense of "it's up to you, students" to pass or fail. You are lucky to have found a place here...". The students realize the importance of education and are very positive about learning. There are few problems with discipline.

Many students addressed the importance of learning and reconciliation, which they interpreted in different ways, especially in the urban schools where there were different races learning together in both private and government schools. Some of these students said they also disliked the way they are taught English and other subjects and were highly critical of some teachers and their methods.

> School is sometimes dull. It makes us learn verbs all the time, even when we know them. We must not forget them.

Many students claimed that teachers were prejudiced against "slower" students, and are basically unresponsive and uncaring (in Shona).

While the English language poses problems, students prefer learning in English to learning their mother tongue and cite numerous positive aspects of English that they believe contribute to a better life in society. The lack of resources, however, seems to contribute to the generally alienating nature of the English classroom and course material contributing to the diminishing motivation of some students. This problem, however, seemed to affect teachers more than it did students.

Some students responded positively to the last question on whether they and their parents liked their school. Others preferred some place else, where there are "better facilities and good teachers."

SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS: FORMS 5-6 (A LEVELS)

Questions

What do you think of final exams and the results, especially your results in English?

Are you happy you did well? Is it because of your "good English"? Vice versa if it is the opposite?

What do you think about fluency in English? About your Grade English Symbol?

Do you enjoy your English classes? If so, why? If not, why not?

How long have you been learning in English?

Could you teach in English at primary or secondary school levels?

What do your teachers say about English in your life?

What do you say to that?

Do you buy your own extra English books to read at home? What books do you read?

When do you use English?

What subject teacher do you like the most?

Would you like Shona/Ndebele as the medium of instruction in their respective regions of Mashonaland and Matabeleland?

Observation and Summary

These students were enthusiastic. They were open and cooperative and asked questions too, for example, "Is English not used everywhere in the world?" Most questions were sharp and more penetrating than many asked by people in education upon whom we have confirmed status! They are even sensational! Following is a sample of some of these students' questions and comments:

Why are you asking us these questions?

What will you do with the answers we give you?

Will this change everything?

We are tired of pronunciation, new spelling lists...

Our teachers know this -- do you know that?

Have you asked them about us/me...?

We passed 'O' level exams; that is why we are here.

We know English. We like it, but some of the things we do are boring...

I really hate some of the things we do in English.

We compete too much. Competition is unhealthy.

It was obvious from their reports that the competitive nature of some of their course work destroyed the incentive and the desire to exchange ideas. People steal from others sometimes, instead of sharing.

For these levels (Secondary 6 and 7) daily evaluations and grading rather than fostering creativity or risk-taking or imagination promote game-playing strategies and even lead to petty jealousies among students. I found this disturbing. Some teachers hardly noticed.

SCHOOL LEAVERS AND DROPOUT STUDENTS

Questions

Did you pass 'O' level examinations?

Why are you not at school?

What do you spend your time doing? Where and with whom?

What do your parents say?

Do you miss school?

Will you go back? To do what?

What do you miss the most about school?

What language do you speak/use?

What about English/Shona/Ndebele?

Do these languages help you? How?

Do you want to speak English all the time? More? Better?

Is English important to you now? Explain.

Do you write a lot? In what language?

Do you get help from your former school, that is, from teachers, parents...?

What books do you read at home?

What do you think of examinations?

Are they fair to students? Useful? Necessary?

Observation and Summary

There were very few dropouts. Most Zimbabweans do not leave school, but some stay out for financial reasons, and in the majority of cases for failure to procure a place at a secondary school. There are not enough secondary schools to accommodate Grade Seven graduates. Most of the school leavers did not want to be out of school "at home doing nothing". Most of them spoke fluent English. They tend to have extensive English vocabularies without any muddled notions of what words mean and scant means of joining them into phrases, sentences or whatever. They were very comfortable in their mother tongue too (Shona and Ndebele), as well as English. These students, at least some of them, suffer from the negative image the rest of society projects upon them: "S/he is at home doing nothing." It is a generally and commonly accepted notion that if one is of school-going age, and is not at school, one is doing nothing. Students hear this all the time. Yet they are looking for work, and schools where they can continue and complete their education.

Many students during interviews spoke of inequality, exploitation and injustice. They were not angry, but showed they wanted a special kind of recognition, grounded in "dignity and equality". A good number of school leavers generally said they did not like exams:

> I do not like them. What counts is student ability, not the school exams. Our provinces are different, like rural and urban areas, and we could do better if we were taught about them, even in our English classes. (Bulawayo)

Asked why there were so many school leavers "doing nothing" in both rural and urban areas, most

Ministry of Education officials stated:

The dropout rate is not always officially defined, but we know we have a school leavers' problem on our hands.

What are the causes? The same officer said almost half the dropouts are the result of a student doing badly in school. Students, however, say they also dislike the way they are taught, and are highly critical of teachers and some of their methods.

It was clear to me at these meetings, that the wide variation in dropout rates where this happened in urban or rural areas, suggest that poverty influences the problem in many cases. One dropout student explained:

> I had no sports uniform...and didn't any longer feel school a center of my life, or even important. I felt no sense of belonging in school, and although my father had paid the fees....I left school. (Harare)

At another center in Harare, another school leaver said:

> I don't like the work any more, even if I find money to go back to school. I don't like the English teachers. I don't like the school administration. They all don't know me now, and they don't care.

The dropout rate in Zimbabwe is said to be decreasing.

ZIMBABWEAN STUDENTS STUDYING IN CUBA (1990)

Questions

1. The philosophy of self-determination and the whole concept of independence necessarily implies that young nations such as Zimbabwe will seek to preserve their identity in the name of national prestige. Contrary to this statement, the English language in Zimbabwe is not only official, but also the medium of instruction in schools. Explain this rather puzzling and contradictory linguistic situation in Zimbabwe today.

2. How do children, through the ordinary everyday linguistic interaction of the family and peer group, come to learn the basic patterns of their own culture in a multicultural society such as Zimbabwe?

3. Do you think learning and teaching English in a predominantly African culture contributes to students' poor performance in English examinations? Can it also be

because of the texts being used, that come mostly from Britain? Explain.

4. What are your experiences in Zimbabwe as a second language learner and teacher of English?

5. You now learn, study and teach in Spanish, after one year of language instruction in Zimbabwe. Is Spanish easier than English? Discuss comparatively your experiences in these two languages.

6. What advantages did you have learning Spanish in Zimbabwe and Cuba that you did not experience during your thirteen years of learning English? Give specific examples to illustrate your practical situations and performance in both languages.

Observation and Summary

Zimbabwean students in Cuba were enthusiastic about exercises I gave them, through the Department of English and Linguistics. They were studying in Spanish and had a deep willingness to communicate in their indigenous languages (Shona and Ndebele) and English. They gave mostly positive responses to English in Zimbabwe and enjoyed their learning experiences in English and Spanish in Cuba.

Unlike in Zimbabwe, many students studying in Cuba were more aware of their rights and responsibilities as students. They had civic education in Zimbabwe and Cuba in order to cope with a Cuban culture so different from their own. They were consulted and represented on every panel of discussion about their University life. Debates on English, Spanish and Zimbabwean indigenous languages made possible experiences that students shared with each other, and later became a great way to lead into fruitful responses to questions asked.

A lot of time was spent on interviews and some exercises were incorporated into the English programs (taping, demonstration, poetry, and drama).

TEACHERS

Questions

Are you aware of problems your students face in learning English?

Are you sensitive to these?

What are the problems your students face?

Do you have solutions?

Is there racism or prejudice in your class?

What do you think of English as the medium of instruction?

Is it fair to the African students that they learn English only in class?

Are you a good English teacher?

What do you teach and how do you teach to make you so?

Do you know a lot about your African students, their lives and cultures?

What about the European students? Do they have problems in English?

What kind of problems?

How are these similar or dissimilar from the African students?

Why do so many student fail 'O' level English examinations?

What are some of the reasons for students' problems?

Do you reach out, through class work, easily to students, in your English classes?

What themes and topics interest your students, arouse their curiosity, and give
them a sense of success, and feel that they are in control of their learning?

Give a brief summary of your normal English Department meeting.

Is there time for interdepartmental class activities (with a history, geography,
agriculture class...)?

Do your students like you? Why? Why not?

Do your students use their mother tongue in class?

What is your mother tongue?

How do you deal with negative attitudes towards learning English or towards
using indigenous languages in class at times?

What role does English play in students' lives now? In the future?

How involved are parents of your students in the work you do, school and
students do?

When do you meet some of the parents?

How long have you been teaching English in Zimbabwe?

What methods, techniques or approaches are you using since a lot is changing today?

What do you find most difficult in teaching English? Explain.

What do you need to teach English more effectively and get performance from your students?

Observation and Summary

Most teachers were very knowledgeable of their subject matter and sounded sensitive to some of their students' needs. Many expatriate teachers were quick to discuss the Zimbabwean teaching, bent to school national tests and examinations, "nearly half a century old, that never did have much to do with using language." Unlike the high school students and school leavers, some teachers were a little reluctant to express their views for fear of misrepresenting their departments or schools, and they said so.

Many teachers, both in rural and urban schools, expressed among other things, the concerns of marginalization experienced by some students in the classrooms, and spoke of techniques to reduce this form of oppression.

Some teachers spoke of "establishing and implementing school policy in their classrooms, and cultivating an awareness and an openness to students" in order to better their performance.

> We observe how these students fit into the class profile. Are they shy, quiet, new, reserved, withdrawn, aggressive, fearful or violent. We make an effort to know their anxieties, their backgrounds, their expectations. Then we try to instill and bring out in them a sense of pride and self-worth.

In responding to the questions, many teachers spoke of:

> Large classes and time spent performing "evaluation after evaluation" instead of teaching, makes it impossible to review if students are experiencing difficulty.

Other teachers cited "Resources" as another problem.

> We are just overburdened and this affects the quality of our work.

In rural areas specifically, teachers complained more and more about their students whom they said worked during the entire year, and still they have to be a

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school as everyone else, and write final exams as everyone else.

Student teachers were among the most vocal, and in support of students they taught.

> I just ignore all of the difficulties and just concentrate on providing a program that works. My students succeed, they are happy, and so am I and their parents. I am satisfied with what I do here. [I observed this teacher's English classes in Murehewa.]

There were numerous complaints from teachers about "students' laziness, being weary or absent..." While teachers answered questions well, they showed restraint and total agreement with their school policies.

Another teacher added:

> For me it's the workload; there are just too many discomforts and I have no solutions.

Many examples of students' problems were given:

> These students have lots of problems. Reasons for problems are many. Students in Zimbabwe now are defining themselves more and more materially, especially here in Harare. They have little patience at times, for the formation of the mind. Perhaps television has impacted, and all these Western products everywhere... Their parents I know work very hard that they don't have time to develop or observe their children's social skills. They are away all day, and only come late in the evening, to find their children away, or sleeping...

At many schools and in most discussion it was repeated by students, teachers, and other parents, that some parent don't always lend the support they should. School management is not always able to get parents involved themselves more.

Headmasters in urban and rural schools said this of African parents in particular:

> It is difficult to reach some of them, and even more difficult to discuss their children's school life... They just don't come to school events... Parents, teachers and education officers must cooperate to radically alter the present situation.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION OFFICERS, SCHOOL ADMINIS-TRATORS, AND DEPARTMENT HEADS

Questions

Who is the school serving?

What are the real needs of students? Parents? Teachers? Society?

What school resources are deployed to meet these needs?

How might language be taught, English in particular?

Why is English the only medium of instruction in Zimbabwean schools?

Students perform poorly in 'O' level final examinations. Do you think English is the main reason?

Do the 'O' level examinations nationwide prepare youth for a future here in Zimbabwe? How so?

Is present spending on education necessarily being directed to the present needs of the Zimbabwean students? Is this really directed to make them learn better, and pass?

What is the role of the indigenous languages Shona and Ndebele?

Is English being taught well in your school? Do students do well in English?

Some teachers say the English curriculum is based on the British model. Could you explain this? If so, so you foresee some changes so it will become "Zimbabwe-based"? If so, what will you do? What will change? Will this improve learning and examination results?

The Ministry of Education launched a massive recruitment of teachers from the Western world, plus extensive staff development and ongoing coaching, etc. Many educational programs emerged. Do these include language programs? I have not seen any, other than revised English syllabi.

What has changed in the teaching of the official languages (Shona, Ndebele, and English) since independence in 1980?

What do you think of examinations ('O' level)? Are they fair or useful to students? What about grades, tests, etc.? Why do we have so many of these?

What is your analysis of the cause of inequality in Zimbabwe secondary schools today? Is it race, class or religion?

How is the diverse Zimbabwean culture (African, Asian, and European), important as it is, being appreciated in schools, especially in English classrooms where the textbook culture is mostly British, European or American?

Many people say Zimbabwean education is based on the knowledge, the culture

and values of Western and mainly Zimbabwean urban middle class. What are your comments?

We all know classrooms in Zimbabwe are culturally diverse; students therefore have the right to be provided with an education that reflects this diversity. Is the Ministry of Education, through languages (all the official ones) responding to these demands?

Observation and Summary

Some principals, headmasters, department heads, and education officers gave valuable and informative responses to most questions asked. Ministry of Education officials in particular expressed deep concern and commitment to designing and implementing programs through the Curriculum Development Unit in Harare, in difficult circumstances at times, but at the same time working and responding to most needs and challenges.

What was obvious also here was the uncertainty regarding English, which is yet another factor producing mixed signals about its role in situations outside schools, parliament, cities or towns. Teachers, parents, and students need to know the government's clear position on languages, other than their official status.

There was often, in most meetings, an open dialogue about these issues through which people identified and analyzed their attitudes head on, and right there. People really sorted out what they really felt as they responded to questions, and believed certain practices needed re-examination in the way students were learning English and their mother tongue.

> There is need for the Ministry of Education to introduce educational reform. An English program that will have a language philosophy on all languages and English as a medium of instruction in a society where other languages are just as dominant. (Summary from a meeting at Dema, Marikopa; Mr. Saimon, Mubaiwa)

ALL GROUP QUESTIONS

	Questions	Responses
1	The philosophy of self-determination and the whole concept of independence necessarily implies that young nations will seek to preserve their identity in the name of national prestige. Contrary to this statement, the English language in Zimbabwe is not only official, but is also the medium of instruction in schools. Explain this rather puzzling and contradictory linguistic situation in Zimbabwe education today.	(Some university and college students also responded to this question.) The majority of subjects saw "no contradiction at all", understanding that Zimbabwe is a home to English-speaking people, Indians, Arabs, Malawians, and the indigenous population. English here was referred to as "a writing language, international, lingua franca..." What is not clear from the data is that English is not only accepted by all groups as the medium of instruction, but preferred to indigenous languages. Reasons for such a choice were given, most of them convincing, in view of the social, economic, and cultural experiences of Zimbabwe as a former British colony.
2	By using English as the only medium of instruction, Zimbabwe is promoting the existing social and economic inequality to keep that inequality entrenched, since farm labourers, some rural communal masses and farmers do not speak English. Discuss or comment on this statement.	Many people spoke (and wrote) at length on this question. Focus was on both "inequality" and "English". Many did not see how English could be responsible for inequality. They strongly believe English unites Zimbabweans. Ironically this was expressed more in the rural areas where a lot of respondents blamed students' high failure rate at 'O' levels on social injustice, other problems of politics, and even on students themselves.

	Questions	Responses
3	Indigenous languages in Zimbabwe are popular. These are national languages and mother tongues spoken by the majority of the ten million people; which one of these do you think should replace English as the medium of instruction in schools (Shona, Ndebele, or Nyanja)?	Overwhelming response: "None." English should not be replaced...
4	Economically advantaged homes in Zimbabwe, people say, do prepare children more adequately for school. Their children do better and succeed. Is this statement true? Explain.	Mixed reactions were heard to this question. As to who the advantaged people are, again people spoke of politicians and highly-paid people in society who could afford books, high fees in private schools, and so on. Many respondents made it clear these people are in both urban and rural areas. Of interest to me were remarks like "Their children still fail 'O' levels" or "Their children are the same as mine/ours. They also fail 'O' level examinations."

	Questions	Responses
5	Do you think there is something wrong with the English of students who fail in school?	This question sent people into camps, across groups. Most teachers said, "Yes", and gave examples and reasons for their answers. Some parents said they did not know. Some school leavers agreed with teachers and said, "Yes", but for very different reasons from teachers. Of great interest and concern to me were the opinions and discussion of secondary school students: "No, my English is good. I don't know why I fail." (1991-92, Harare) Some education officers and other Ministry of Education representatives believed there was something wrong with students' English: either they did not practise it enough or they took it less seriously.
6	Does the English of the students or the teachers act as a barrier to successful learning and teaching in Zimbabwe?	Parents, some teachers and most students were in agreement as they blamed African teachers, expatriates, especially "the Mauritian teachers on contract with the Ministry of Education in Zimbabwe", who they said spoke differently with an accent difficult to understand. There was a lot of finger-pointing here. "Yes, that's because of the same expatriate teachers...."
7	Is educational failure happening in social-class terms, in which the "economically advantaged" students do well, and the "disadvantaged" fail?	A lot of people said "Yes" and added, "The disadvantaged are the most affected, especially at some rural schools..."

	Questions	Responses
8	Should Zimbabwe strip English of the many functions it solely has (medium of instruction) and give these to indigenous languages? Do you think this would solve the problem of high failure rates among secondary school students?	Generally this question was dismissed as irrelevant, if not unrealistic. People just didn't understand why I was asking them the obviously "impossible". As one student snapped, "What is she talking about? I am working hard to pass, and I don't care what language I use. But does she want us to change now?" People fear the unknown and "don't mind English as it is used." They hope things will get better "with better instruction."
9	Do you like English? Is it difficult to learn?	Differences of beliefs and opinions were heard here, and more contradictions. This was contrary to what I thought I knew, and my colleagues too, i.e., that students did not like English that much as a subject. In fact, students said they "liked English and it was not difficult." Few teachers agreed, citing negative attitudes which students sometimes display in English classrooms as an example of resentment and dislike of the language. Parents thought students liked learning English and encouraged them to do so.
10	Do you have problems learning English?	Parents didn't think so, while students said they had problems sometimes. "Teachers fail us a lot and tell us it's bad all the time..." Many teachers, however, were clear about the problems they themselves and their students faced in learning English. Views were openly expressed and useful dialogues sometimes took place between students and teachers on this question.

	Questions	Responses
11	Do you like teaching English? What problems do you encounter the most?	Those teachers who had taught English for years didn't take this question lightly, since they had their record to show their "dedication and competence as teachers of English." Parents and students say, "Teachers like teaching English and know little of our problems." However, teachers point to students as problems, in that, "They don't listen ...don't do homework...get little help at home because their parents speak Shona... speak Ndebele and Shona all the time..."
12	Do you want to learn and use English all your life in Zimbabwe?	Students in particular did not appear to consider this a genuine question, responding with "Why not?" "What else can we learn?" "Yes." Teachers gave support to English, as did other groups. "This is Zimbabwe." "Jewish people, Indians and Arabs speak English, the Portuguese, the Italians. In their homes they speak their languages like us."
13	Do you prefer a Zimbabwean-born English teacher to an expatriate teacher, or does it matter?	"Yes" was the answer from most groups except some teachers and some Ministry of Education representatives responsible for hiring expatriates. However, other data make it clear some students and most parents understood expatriate teachers to be those who do not speak British English (Ghanaians, Mauritians, and many others).

	Questions	Responses
14	What subject teacher do you like the most? What subjects do you enjoy? Please list these in order of preference.	The few students who answered "English" meant English Literature, and not English Language. However, both English Language and Literature were the least favored subjects by many students. Most students preferred science subjects and maths. Teachers of English like their subject area and admitted students did not always appear to take them seriously, for whatever reason.

APPENDIX II

Fieldwork Contexts, Categories and A Selection of Comments:
Both Written and Spoken

Parents and Grandparents

Teachers

Students and Languages

Students and English

Textbooks and Use in Schools

Culture and Students

Race and Discrimination

Examinations

Methods

Religion

Ministry of Education

PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS

School literature says much about "the rapid social change" common to modern societies everywhere, but says little about "farm huts" in which some of the students live. Parents here did. The dynamics of the social life of these students ought to be studied and parents spoken and listened to more often. (All languages were used and translation done.)

Comments:

Again and again, people here, and especially those in rural areas, in response to statements by headmasters that they rarely attend Parent-Teacher Association meetings, cite problems of work at home, in the fields...where they say "the fees for our children's schooling come from." At Mutorashanga, for example (farm and mine schools there), there are always the additional economic burdens created for farm laborers and farmers, causing immediate adjustments and gradual changes. I found here social groups that are innately conservative, so established modes of · everyday life and behavior in the small hamlets of the country, remaining the same in more ways than they changed. Discussed this at length with student teachers and the Teacher in Charge of School (TIS). Most African parents, regardless of their meagre financial resources, support elaborate fund-raising schemes including sometimes making bricks themselves (rural areas). In urban areas all different economic group sections of society, in school after school, successfully meet and make efforts to pay for field trips, for example, transportation and other activities. I wonder how it works, even as the studies that have been carried out at the University, for example, seminars that have been set up, some of which I attended, with international invited guests at times (Belvedere College, Seke Teachers' College...) but without involvement, direct or indirect, of parents, and even when their own interests are at stake. I really wonder how policies that truly take into account their needs and those of their children can be formulated.

Grandparents (Mtoko, All Souls Mission: translation)

"We need to know that every student is capable of achieving and making a positive contribution to Zimbabwe society, through school...education. These students fought against evil and colonialism and won!"

Parents

I read some term reports sent to parents of some families near "Munyawiri School" (Pa JIRI, near M'tonda School). These reports are all in English (primary school children). Parents don't respond, at least most of them don't. Others know English; lack of response is not lack of interest, but because their literacy is confined to their first language. Very little effort, if any at all, except when the child misbehaved, is devoted to making communication more effective. This is discouraging. Attendance by African mothers at meetings is low.

> ...meeting attendance will keep parents informed enough to maintain the credibility they need.

Still, parents should be made to attend more of the regularly scheduled meetings with mainstream teachers... Some schools try hard to involve them (St. Georges, Harare) in both urban and rural areas. African parents in particular, and especially mothers, fail to attend. Because parents work in relative isolation, the validation that comes from sharing their experiences with others will definitely be revitalizing. In some schools, headmasters are happy that "in dealing with students, parents, etc., we created an open dialogue about some issues through which people identified and analyzed their attitudes head on and right there...." "Parents expect to get their money's worth, you see they pay lots of fees..." Listening to parents was sad at times.

Poverty - Hardships

Bleak job prospects; with no hope of finding work, therefore there is little incentive to encourage children because they see and know it. One teacher said under such circumstances it was difficult to reach parents, and more so difficult to discuss...and suggested more cooperation among teachers, education officers and parents "to radically alter the present situation."

Questions from some mothers

"What will our children do with Shona or Ndebele? Where will they get jobs? Without English what is the alternative? Tell us...." This was in the Bulawayo area, where some parents had their children go to school in the city, where they stayed with different relatives. Parents here believed schools in their rural areas were just not good enough. "The children are better somewhere else..."

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TEACHERS

The influence that culture plays in the daily life of students appeared less considered by many teachers.

Comments:
Generally I found teachers everywhere I went were very aware of problems their students face at all levels of their learning, and in English. They do have the know-how and sensitivity to become advocates on behalf of their students to the nation at large by making other people aware of the problems that language (English) poses, the source and how to overcome them. Many expatriate teachers adjust very quickly to their schools (Mauritian, British, Canadian...), and begin very quickly to understand and use the people's wisdom.

Teachers' workload
"The burden of preparing for and teaching so many hours a day reduced me to a state of nervous exhaustion and really kept me from fully appreciating students' simple pleasures. Some of them, especially in my English class, just annoy me...I am sorry, but this is the truth here..." (Bulawayo - Magwegwe).

Many teachers saw their role too as motivating students to work harder.

Generally many teachers try to analyze the needs of the students and engage them in activities that respond to their needs at school. Teachers did this in obviously very different ways and often with good results. However, the pressure among students and even teachers was a little too much...

Primary school teacher:
"I try to adapt to other demands, e.g., not always standing in front of a room of 20 - 30 students. I now realize I could have fun with them at times. I tell you it's one of those efforts....to keep my job."

Discipline

I really think today teachers should believe in students trying to make something of themselves, and tell them that without hard work and self-discipline they could never amount to anything and did not deserve to.

Few teachers had problems with discipline. In Bulawayo urban students themselves told us they didn't mind, for example, Ministry of Education policy which forbade all children from "perming their hair". At Luveve, in the English class, students politely spoke in Ndebele, switched a lot to and from English. The teacher handled this very well (student-teacher from Belvedere). I thought the learning environment in most Bulawayo urban and rural schools was friendly and accommodating.

A foreign teacher

"The students always welcomed me warmly, but before long they saw that I was wound up and irritable. I was so obsessed with the lesson plans (as required) and so concerned with controlling every single event that occurred in the classroom that I lost sight of how students were learning sometimes. My face was most times buried in my notes. Even when an activity was going on well, I worried about how long it was going to last and what we were going to do next (as I saw others do — mostly Zimbabwean teachers). Besides, for myself, I wanted to see as much of Zimbabwe as possible before my contract with the Ministry of Education expired..."

Another teacher — very dedicated, I found.

"I put a lot of effort into day's planning, lesson plans, I mean. I try hard each day to give a performance that could not go wrong. The headmaster comes in at times and sits at the back of the class during lessons...."

Myself

I found this over-reliance on a written plan cut teachers from the students sometimes, and stifled the vital interaction a true learning environment must have.

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Headmaster in a rural school

"Students want their future. They look forward to work, after school. They want something better in the cities..."

Teacher, asking

"I want to know whether or not these students really like learning at all. Classes here are very large. I do my best to prepare them for exams."

Another teacher in charge of Secondary School (TIS)

"English is serious here. Students do their best and students pass here."

STUDENTS AND LANGUAGES:

Shona, Ndebele and English

Many young people appeared in despair in some English classes.

Comments:

Parents I spoke to, citizens at large, and students themselves expressed surprise at why this was important. "Everybody knows we have three official languages..." Again I concluded that problems with language may be the 'parents' responsibility'. Parents should do more at home with their children on the importance not only of English but their mother tongue as well.

The use of all three languages plays fundamental roles in the development of Zimbabwean communities across Zimbabwe. Respondents here (on language) included many people of all races.

Many people cited, in the church, and during the Zimbabwean liberation struggle. I suppose by nature all Zimbabwean languages are so closely linked to the reality in which we live, reflecting a common history, one of common experience and freedom for all.

High School Student, Oriel Boys' School, Harare

Language to me is English "that's what you mean, isn't it, madam?" "School is sometimes dull. It makes us learn verbs all the time. Even when we know them, we must not forget them."

Parent (native speaker of English), on language

"...teachers don't always lend the support they should." [To her too, language is English.] "School management is not always able to get us parents involved more in schools — I mean, to discuss real language issues." [Again, she meant English only.]

Teacher on language question

"For me it's the workload. English requires hard work, especially when you teach non-native speakers. There are just too many discomforts and I have no solutions...Focus attention on the school system as the place from which to address the language issues.

...The absence of a systematic approach to language education, despite available pedagogical material, suggests a continued need for research.

Classrooms in Zimbabwe are linguistically diverse, and students have the right to be provided with an education that reflects this diversity.

Furthermore, our relatively limited comprehension of the manner whereby racist sentiments translate into behavior is a challenge to many people. As you can see, we are all trying. Generally, the individualist competitive model of education, in everything from math to English, has not proved effective in encouraging positive attitudes towards the learning of English.

Linguistics Conference, University of Zimbabwe

English (although people don't say this), and its culture, can be completely alien to students' lives. In Zimbabwe, Shona, Ndebele, and English are official languages. They have shared status for the transaction of government business. However, there are numerous imbalances that hamper, if not actually polarize, English language and teaching processes because the other two languages are

suppressed. (translation)

Shona, Ndebele, English: English and the indigenous languages ought to be treated as complementary modes of communication rather than segregated, competing areas of knowledge when they are presented and dealt with in education contexts.

It is clear from what I hear and see, that English and indigenous languages are really never paired off as irreconcilable adversaries or compared in any way. However, Zimbabweans are challenged to defend their heritage and vernacular. Again, they don't see the learning and use of English and the official policy on English-only as medium of instruction as representing a genuine threat to the survival of Zimbabwean culture or indigenous languages. Students can be helped to develop a richer understanding of the nature of language as a system. On the other hand, the teaching of indigenous languages as first languages could benefit from insights coming from second and foreign language teaching theory and methodology.

Mutual value for all languages needs to be reflected in the curriculum, and multilingualism treated as a norm, not a special case.

I see some contradictions at times, especially from students, with respect to what they say they want and what they actually do. Yet they are clear on bilingualism, as a natural condition in which complementary languages serve specific and distinct learner needs and practices.

STUDENTS AND ENGLISH

English as the only medium of instruction in schools

Comments:
Far from being homogeneous (Italian, Greek, French, European) English also contains more dividing elements within itself, such as accent and vocabulary, than unifying factors. Different people...show language conflicts to be as much a product of rural-urban tensions as they are of English...disputes.

Learning English

We must approach English learning and teaching in other ways (education officer). Its link with the experience of Zimbabwe must be emphasized.

Students

Not only do students represent Zimbabwean population, they are a product of the way of life of people today. (Nkai in Matabeleland)

European student (Bulawayo)

Question: Do you enjoy learning English?

Answer: I feel I am surrounded by a dictatorship of principal, teachers, religious leaders (they come here once a week). They want me to speak in a certain way. I like to write more.

Headmaster, in response (Magwegwe-Bulawayo)

"He knows what he is talking about. You see, authoritarian teachers just teach, and without feedback from students to assess their material. Students should be allowed to learn by talking about their everyday experiences, for example, in more meaningful ways than what happens today."

Teacher responding to student (Magwegwe-Bulawayo)

"These students themselves are sometimes resistant to non-traditional styles of teaching. For example, they want the English of the books, and by the books. We teach them to pass."

Comments on student's report

"She is intelligent, and can do better if she wants to. She isn't just trying."

The student says:

"I don't just like the work, I don't like my teachers. I don't like the school administration either. They don't understand me. They don't care even....I like my friends. I like school."

Another student

"Teacher told me English will always be hard for me because I did my primary at a village school..."

Professor in languages, University of Zimbabwe

"One is told to think, act, and speak correctly. What does this mean? Language, especially English, is a living thing. Society changes and so does language to reflect evolving social attitudes. It is difficult to know or understand how this is being manifested in our English classrooms."

Teaching and learning English

Many community leaders, students, parents...across the country and in many schools were asked to give opinions on how students could effectively be taught and learn English in schools.

High school students: they want to be allowed to practise their learning styles in schools, express their ideas and questions.

Many addressed the importance of learning about and educating against overlapping forms of unequal social relations of power among teachers in particular [my own interpretation]. Many students and teachers expressed the concerns of marginalization experienced by some students in the classrooms and spoke of techniques to reduce marginalization.

This is the only way students learn "to make children submit to authority, most of the time, some of the teachers said (most expatriates) is to violate their human rights. To teach students critical thought through mutual respect is to teach human rights. This is possible only when adults and those in positions of power at home and school trust students.

Teaching English

Those involved must learn the truth about people and their lives, and create a space for it to be heard, learn and teach children to share themselves across race and cultures. We are meant to share knowledge of ourselves, not to promote our-selves.

Students' experience

Students' own experiences can serve (if permitted) as springboards to the creation of fictional scenes. When working with social issues, roles work best when they are easily distinguishable and collectively owned, so that at any point, if the teacher calls for a role reversal, anyone else can play the character.

Students' learning experience, and homework

There is here a great need for a period of active reflection. Students need a chance to integrate what has happened during the learning process, to deepen their insights and to ground themselves in their own personalities. Reflection can also be extended into homework on questions to ponder or write about. Like their country, the students continue to experience great changes in racial, cultural, religious, and ethnic composition.

Students must be assisted, and made more aware of the multilingual, ethnic, religious and cultural nature of the society and school, to ready themselves to face challenges in positive and creative ways.

Students (English)

With or without the experiences valued by school, I found most students easily excited and engaged whenever their personal horizons were expanded in meaningful ways, e.g., in readings in which a diversity of voices were reflected without emphasis on "proper tone", for example.

Research fieldwork notes show that...

...most secondary school students do not speak English at home. English language is perceived as important at school only, in education only. Unfortunately schools do not always, in a practical way, include realistically students' homes, their families or their indigenous languages.

Teaching English

(Education Officer) "Teachers get caught up in this. If they show any serious commitment toward the teaching and dissemination of English, then they are labelled "Ve Chirungu..."

These negative attitudes and labels about English have de-motivated some people and do reduce the serious teaching of English.

Student teachers (English): their reports on English learning experiences

They don't question the relevance of English, at least most of them don't. Indigenous languages and English are not seen as being in opposition to each other and mutually exclusive. They are just not the same. They are very different. However, learners must be told that this is a good thing and more explained to them.

Common among students is when they attempt to use English outside the school or in the classroom at times, "they are ridiculed and teased, by peers, who imitate them and their accents."

These and other such contradictory messages about Zimbabwe culture, and the role, status and relevance of the English language in Zimbabwean society in general, lead to equally contradictory responses to learning and teaching English, particularly when teachers are African.

Roman Catholic priest on "English" – a native speaker of English (Kutama) Murombedzi

Students come from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds and speak, even Shona, in different dialects. Their socioeconomic backgrounds are widely varied. For all this variety, these students have one feature in common: the nature of their English program to 'O' level exams.

The priest's comments

He has a wide experience as a priest, teacher, school principal (Chishawasha) and school supervisor in Seke Materera, Marondera and Chihota. He agrees that teachers have little choice but to focus on the 'O' level syllabus and its requirements, rather than students' cultural backgrounds which won't help much in good English grades which they need so badly.

High school students

Those I have spoken to hate some English activities during class. "It's baby stuff...it's childish." "We already know English. Teach us the real 'A' level stuff." (Both African and European students said this.)

Comments from some staff members on English: Linguistics Department, University of Zimbabwe

"There seems to be a psychological reason why students resent English, even these first years here, talking the English course in this department. They feel stigmatized by being in this program (University of Zimbabwe), which they think is not for them at university level. Most problems indeed are language-related and we believe this English program addresses the specific needs of this type, of these students. Students may think differently...they always do."

Teachers using different approaches spoke a lot (some comments were on tape made at Luveve Secondary School, in Bulawayo. Students spoke Ndebele, Shona and Nyanja.)

"We are trying out alternatives." We discovered the syllabus was "too theme-based", rather than "skills-based". The major component that ensured the English curriculum's success was the themes we chose. They were all of great interest to the children, but somewhat offbeat.

We made a point of creating an atmosphere where students felt that they were involved in serious, valuable work that elevated them in their own eyes, not the usual "school stuff" which they had already started to resent. Themes included learning about making tapes, on wild animals, different breeds of dogs, fields in urban and rural areas where people get into trouble with the municipality, etc... Every possible thing is done to relate our curriculum or interpret it ourselves, to the students' interests.

I read the assignments in the classroom, went through students' exercise books, spoke to other teachers and students, taped one 45-minute English class. The English classes here were having high levels of success in all the communication skills, especially in speaking, reading and writing.

From this experience, important to me, my new definition of English

English could be defined as an authentic speaking environment of peer and

teacher interaction in which their exposure to natural communication is maximized through choices for them to participate in their own way.

English learning and poverty: views of a headmaster

Poverty creates obstacles to learning that we should address more often. These result in many students remaining unable to read or learn well enough, or speak English well enough to cope with everyday school and social life. Many poor children are at the greatest risk of not getting enough education. They cannot concentrate at school. They worry a lot, naturally about everything and are often afraid to do many things alone. In parts of urban areas, crowded homes mean few quiet places to study. Poor parents lack confidence and power to challenge the school system.

African students who are native speakers of English were interviewed (born or raised outside Zimbabwe, e.g., U.K.)

I met most of these students at secondary schools, in private schools mostly, and in some urban government schools. The views they expressed are reinforced by others of their age and level in school who say learning English is not a challenge to them, but a problem, and it's not important. "Teachers don't give us anything challenging, but punish us with a lot of work. They just don't do things our way. They teach and say things the same way all the time, e.g., Do you understand?"

Headmasters' comments

These students learned English naturally in the U.S.A., the U.K., and so on, and don't realize the importance of learning it the way students here do, and so they are negative towards the idea of learning it and towards the emphasis we place on it.

Again their parents and their teachers too, are not aware of the importance of being bilingual, like you said. I am not aware, I don't even talk about these things. Parents in particular do not always communicate in English although when they travel and are confronted with another reality, they see the need to use English more often. But it is not that important in their life, outside of work.

Agriculture teacher

> Indigenous languages are not used very much, not even in agriculture. We speak English here, in the garden...

Mr. Ronnie C. Masawi, Masawi Tinhidzike Village, Sekematerera

> He spoke of memorizing facts as a student, and admits it took too much time. It was fun sometimes, he added.

Students

Teacher of large classes (In his class, desks were organized in rows, all facing the teacher.) We copy most things from the chalkboard, 40 - 50 students said.

TEXTBOOKS AND USE IN SCHOOLS

Almost everybody spoke about texts: lecturers, education officers...

Comments:

> Mostly "foreign", many people said, "they give examples and tell stories mostly from other countries' point of view. Some stories are very sad, with characters driven by greed, for example, and armed with a sense of their own innate superiority." (e.g. Macbeth) Many people argued that it was how these were presented that made a difference. "For those who grew up studying Julius Ceaser...murders...as most teachers, the African texts, the few available, tip the historical perspective sharply in the other direction. I keep wondering how many of us are on the road back to finding ourselves.

> Generally one finds that "language as used by a patriarchal society (England throughout the centuries), government and religion is often ineffective to the 20th century anywhere today. It is the spoken from these voices which are the most oppressive upon readers' consciousness. (Mrs. Cattaneo, Head of the English Department, Belvedere)

Textbooks

Many complained about texts used as stereotyped that reveal very few new ideas about the nature of Zimbabwe and its people. The worst stereotype is that of Black people everywhere. Even those by African authors sometimes alienate those whom they are trying to reach, overdramatizing poverty, ignorance, disease, death and so on. Whatever facts emerge are often made to make hearts bleed for African mistreatment by authors. Some of the texts lack credibility. Even the portrayal of some people as helpless victims of the economic system is sometimes stereotypical. Too many people are victimized by one system or another, and are taken advantage of almost everywhere by society. "Many characters take charge of their destiny, and that is after they have rejected their roots."

Texts should reflect the experience of unemployment, poverty... Students would study and reflect on this experience in the light of the textual message.

There are vague political points in presented products. One hardly reads anywhere in Zimbabwe, of the rich Malawian culture, for example, its linguistic diversity or the hard work, contribution and perseverance in a foreign land, of its people, or their role in Zimbabwe's national life.

Many people say "some foreign texts in schools do not necessarily provide an accurate source for learning about e.g., private lives of the nameless people who inhabited villages in England, or something that reflects our lives somehow." "I think the only legitimate way to deal with the thorny problem that plagues the students' interest in language learning, namely, the issue of an authoritative text, in which are embedded perspectives uncongenial to present values and situations, is to stop using such texts. The purpose for books is mostly to meet the needs of the existing demands of life and must be understood in that context." Certain broad aspects of the material world must be considered: Zimbabwe's status as an African country, the particular demands of agricultural subsistence in the rural areas, and the demographic or political....

Texts could reflect crop rotation, land use, primary products of Zimbabwe. Planting, fatherhood and motherhood, and work as competing alternatives for women and men.

Interplay of environmental influences and technological responses characterize Zimbabwe and shape social structures and values. The combination of environment and technology determine needs and rhythms of urban and agrarian life and thus the structure and size...that best met the particular conditions that affected the social organization on both community and family levels. Therefore examination of the agricultural system becomes necessary.

Too much focus (texts) on the individual, on autonomous development and self-fulfilment. When students complain about texts...the school needs to examine or address their concerns. People are calling for creativity: produce your own reading material, etc.

CULTURE AND STUDENTS

Comments
Many parents, teachers and headmasters said what could be summarized "students with lots of problems. Reasons are many. Students are defining themselves more and more materially, and have little patience at times for things we consider more important in their lives. Also many African parents work very hard, so hard they don't leave time to develop their students' social skills at home. Many students are home alone most of the time."

Schools
Must reflect Zimbabwean culture. To become aware of the people's way of life today is to come to grips with the reality that determines the people. In this sense every character is us, we must identify and describe the students' world. That world must be identified together with the dynamics of Zimbabwe life that determines the behavior and status of students.

Notes from a meeting
"My purpose is twofold: first, to promote an awareness among all who are affected by the students in Zimbabwe or of the very existence of the unseen life led by people in Zimbabwe; and second, to begin to make that existence visible in

the classroom. The goals are interrelated: the fact that student's life experiences differ considerably from the school like is causing discomfort among some of us."

Women discussing

For centuries Zimbabwe has looked at education through the distorting lenses of patriarchal, British tradition. Now perhaps we can examine it in the clear light of our own Zimbabwean world, in school, home and everywhere else.

Me

I may not have understood why students' roles, for example, in society, tend to exhibit certain features largely not identifiable in the classroom.

Me...at Ellis Robins School in Harare

I find students are adapting very well to what I thought was difficult and alien. What I see and experience in bringing to light materials concerning a wide variety of differing social configurations -- all new to me. This is illuminating. I am discovering new things daily.

Culture

Observing both rural and urban life in family contexts is a great task...critical too, especially when one tries to examine the students' role in that setting. This is why there are problems in trying to assign uniform cultural values on people. It is not practical and it generalizes students' value systems and society.

Reports

Some reports (Education Officers) or even school, did not necessarily mirror social reality. Some people wrote what students told them. Others, I think, were problems of interpretation that consisted of generalizing from limited information about students, parents and teachers. The more remote a school is, the more likely observers are to form opinions on the basis of a small number of highly visible conditions (overcrowding, etc.).

Extended family

Because of its inherent ambiguity in English, this term is woefully inadequate to represent the lineage level of tribal organization.

Formal education in the family

The socialization and education of Zimbabwean children take place within the household setting. As contributors to the household economy and as managers of specific aspects of household life directly affecting all household members, mothers and grandmothers both play a critical role in the socialization process. Like mothers everywhere, beyond their primary role as nurturers in their offspring's early years, they, along with others, instruct children by word and example in the technical skills and behavioral modes essential to household life. The parental role and consequently the women's share of it, operate in ways indescribable by any texts that students use today. The instructional wisdom of women in Zimbabwe continues to be an integral part of daily life, yet little of it is reflected in the texts or other school literature.

Religion in Zimbabwe

Religion in Zimbabwe is personally and family oriented rather than institutionally conditioned.

Politician in a conversation

"To understand Zimbabwean view of education, one needs to know something about Zimbabwe history. Zimbabwe integrated their spiritual, political, and economic life around the reality of land and the environment. Ancestral knowledge is important. African people observe the animals and develop ideas from them, nature and people...I can say parents are the most important part of the education of young people. Young mothers need instruction on how to help their children learn. Parents Teachers Association (PTA) meetings in rural areas in particular are mostly about unpaid fees and fund-raising."

Retired teacher

"Our education system ignores the most important resources -- the old people. Grandparents know a lot that they can teach students."

Grandparents

"...Everybody should be involved and committed to using our languages. Culture is our life, part of education.
...too much competition among students and their families."

Parent

"It is the school system supported by the culture we live in which is promoting competitiveness at home and school. As parents we must know that we have tremendous power, knowledge and advantage in terms of culture and experience, and should use it."

Expatriate teacher

"The goals which the school sets for itself must be in accord with the goals of the society, i.e., government, business, labour and a host of other agencies for whom schooling is a necessity of life. I find gaps and inconsistencies between the school and the real life these children live."

Me, Summary

Important as it is, appreciation of different cultures is simply not enough. Critical thinking has an important role to play because prejudice is sustained and rationalized by faulty reasoning. Complex personal, political, and economic factors enter into it. Eradicating prejudice is not an easy task. Prejudices are deeply ingrained, the product of years of effective social conditioning.

Notes from a history class debate

Students should examine nationalism, colonialism, as well as discuss solutions that fight oppression from anyone. What is happening in a free Zimbabwe, in the absence of colonialism, is important to discuss.

Teacher from U.K.

"The present urban middle class student population is homogeneous; families for whom English is a native language, or spoken in the home (White or Black or Indian), are representative of the new Zimbabwean linguistic and cultural mosaic that is part of the landscape of cities and the country as a whole..."

Summary Mrs. Regina Kwenda

"Zimbabwean students in discriminatory situations are forced to choose to be one or the other, and in making that choice, they cannot choose to be themselves. Here lies the tragedy."

African parent (back home from U.K.)

"We should never take anything for granted. We should never assume that people are coming from the same experience as we are, that we are all Zimbabweans therefore our expectations are the same. While our reference points are not similar, at least let's get them practically understood."

Expatriate teacher

"In a multicultural society like Zimbabwe, it is necessary that each ethnic group be proud of, and celebrate, their ethnicity (they do) as part of a mosaic that is rich and diverse, making up a very colorful whole. Different ethnic groups complement each other, and each has a rich contribution to make to the whole. We can celebrate our uniqueness while inviting others to share with us their particularity and their uniqueness."

History class notes

Young people should be encouraged to find solutions to oppression, both on a personal and classroom level, and on a larger scale." ....In our study of history (teacher) I invite more questions on: What could they have done instead? Who resisted these forms of oppression and how successful were they? And most important, "How can we do better?"

Student teacher

"We have helped other teachers understand the different cultures represented in their classrooms, suggesting ways in which children contribute to their education and that of their friends, in English or other languages."

School caretaker spoke in English and Shona

"Some students are from commercial farms and villages and know best their regions. Some are shy to speak in English."

African festivals

The origins of African festivals are rooted, as is Zimbabwean culture in general, in the traditions of the different ethnic groups which contribute to the shaping of Zimbabwe society/nationality. Britain has had the greatest influence, but other cultures such as India, Malawi, and Zambia have their mark also.

European farmer (Mazoe)

"The African people do not totally abandon their cultural practices, but rather disguise them in order to display at the festivals and commemorations which are essential elements of national culture. Sometimes I see African people in many situations link the virtues and characteristics of their cultural practices with the Christian deities whose names they took. I don't see anything wrong with this at all. Their extended family life to me show the value they place, in resource, of intergenerational life sharing experiences/family living."

Principal on media

"Some Western magazines routinely preach scary stories about Africa, e.g., it's a kind of psychological warfare. Given this hostile atmosphere under which African life is discussed, many students have gone through profound identity crises. Some, although they don't say so, have rejected their heritage (from their behavior) in favor of a "modernized" western style. What surprises me is that some of the parents appear not to object or disapprove."

Discipline

Few teachers had problems with discipline.

Observation: Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP)

Ref. Lloyd Sachikonye, a researcher at the Zimbabwe Institute of Development Studies, Southern Africa Report, May 1993, p. 16: Zimbabwe Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) is only halfway through its five-year lifespan. But it has already become clear that its impact on the economy, particularly on employment and labour relations has been far from positive.

Dropouts

Some students, as a result of most of the above, drop out of school.

Culture

Traditional dancers organize colorful festivals in Harare annually. As assortment of traditional dancers and singers from all over the country gather in Harare for this festival. The Neshamwari festival is held annually, and organized by the

Zimbabwe National Traditional Dance Association. Each year thousands of people come to witness this colorful performance at Mbare No. 7 Ground.

These traditional dancers pound their feet in styles so captivating and entertaining. The choirs sing and all of them project authentic dance movements and original styles. Having groups from many parts of the country in one competition enables people to see and appreciate the wide variety of traditional dances performed in Zimbabwe. The standard of performance by competing groups is often exceptionally high. This fosters a sense of appreciation of music and the development of all dynamic traditional dance disciplines in the country.

Themes of conservation, e.g., of elephants; ongoing debates on culling elephant herds. Discussion on the many different viewpoints between the Southern African states and the East African countries continue to take place.

Teacher

Zimbabwean provinces with their governors, district administrators, education officers, etc., have the power to determine what will be taught to children, and since Zimbabwe provinces and communities differ radically, tests, as now administered, or exams, cannot be fair to each province and each school community.

Tests should reflect what is happening in the country and the world, without overlooking important circumstances that cause poor academic performance.

Traditional culture

It is important not to idealize traditional cultures. Leaving .and in pursuit of paid employment, students bombarded with one-dimensional images of the west. Now they think they are poor. Children learn from experience....learn moral values, education training for jobs that are not there. Children should be allowed, through the school system, to learn about themselves more, using local literature and expertise. When they fail, children will not go to traditional way of life, but will want to re-establish their connection with each other and their community/society/world.

RACE AND DISCRIMINATION

Discussion and meetings

Comments:

Some people silently accuse Africans who spoke out against racism anywhere, of being racist themselves. Some people usually think that prejudice is racism. Racism is not prejudice solely or alone. Racism is about domination. The fact is the institutionalized forms of power. So I don't think white people alone can be racist in that sense...Some people generally can have prejudicial, xenophobic attitudes, but have not that institutionalized power over the lives of people to determine that they can or cannot have jobs, etc. Those are the forms of racism most Zimbabwean African people talk about...not just European supremacy everywhere in Zimbabwe, but the privileged minority domination of society.

...Maybe there is need for a greater political action to recognize the role of ethnicity in Zimbabwean society. Some African parents and their children, especially those of the low income group, are largely unaware of some of the educational changes or of consequences they involve.

Explore possibilities that allow all groups to be responsible more fully for their own development as self-creating people.

Generally I found the issue on race and discrimination the least concern to many people.

What is your analysis of the cause of inequality in Zimbabwean secondary schools today? Is it race, class or religion? There are interlocking systems of domination that are race, class and religion. They come together as a whole, domineering and imperialistic. If we look at some of the private schools we can see on all levels how race, class and religion and imperialist values determine their school regulation. It's about the continued isolationist or separatist attitudes towards low income group African children. These are things that have been cultivated in the last several years and continue to see school population that way too.

Observation

Some teachers were reluctant to express their views for fear of being branded intolerant, or irresponsible.

Question: (Priest at Mission School) Is the present government spending on education necessarily being directed to the future of the youth?

No. It is directed to make the young people happy today, in school. I don't know about tomorrow, although there is hope for the better.

Disadvantaged students are very often subjected to discriminatory practices by, among others, the children of the majority culture, and occasionally by teachers themselves, sometimes unintentionally. Although this problem is very widespread, schools, staff and teachers seldom have established guidelines for dealing with it.

Report based on students' complaints

The problem of discrimination is usually ignored as many teachers have not been trained to handle the situations or simply cannot be bothered. Students who complain or report this to the attention of teachers are often said to be overreacting or overly sensitive. Teachers who take a stand against this type of behavior often face the same accusations. In the meantime, students who are subjected to these discriminatory practices often become lonely, frustrated, isolated, rebellious, or timid, and very often fail to learn comfortably.

Notes and suggestions

Establish and implement school policy in your classroom. Cultivate an awareness and an openness to students. Observe how they fit into the class profile. Are they shy, quiet, reserved, withdrawn, aggressive, fearful or violent? Make an effort to know their anxieties, their backgrounds, their expectations. Then try to instill and bring out in them a sense of pride and self-worth.

Observations based on parents' reports

As educators, teachers must prioritize respect and acceptance as the acceptable conduits for radical changes in attitudes and perceptions rather than opt for the cosmetic patchwork of reconciliation. Teachers need to become true agents of

meaningful change.

Minutes (on students)

Some Zimbabwean students, on the one hand, are systematically subjected to an education based on the knowledge, the culture and values of western and mainly urban middle class, and, on the other hand, are sometimes exposed to clearly discriminatory educational practices that tell them they are intellectually, emotionally, physically and morally inferior, because they... Teachers should take a strong stand against ever-present racism.

My summary

...too many people referring to 'deprived': Expressions such as 'culturally deprived', 'culturally disadvantaged', and 'culturally inferior' are clearly disparaging. They presuppose that there exists only one unique code of ethics to which everyone should subscribe, that of the Western and Zimbabwean urban middle class culture. These Zimbabwean children who do not fit into this group are perceived or labelled different or disadvantaged.

EXAMINATIONS

Questions and answers

Comments:

"Teaching in Zimbabwe, many people will tell you, is bent to school tests and exams that don't always have much to do with using the language."

What do you think of exams? Are they fair or useful to students?

I don't like them. What counts is student ability, not the school even. People differ radically, like in rural and urban areas, there is no way the test can be fair to everybody.

Notes from a staff meeting on exams

The reason for testing students nationwide is to prepare them for a future in a competitive world. Many teachers proposed last week that more tests be drawn up following the headmaster's suggestions on the matter.

Observation

For students the goal should be to gain skills and competence, and not just to memorize and pass exams. I wonder from these notes how much of such information is made available by parents and teachers to students.

Students also oppose examinations: said the test would only reflect what is happening in class and would overlook important circumstances that might cause a poor academic performance.

Suggestion

Collecting background information on problem. Home situation should be included in current plans by the schools.

Question

What do you think about grades?

I don't really care about grades anymore, especially in English. It's not my language: my satisfaction comes from what I learn in English. No matter how well I try or do, the teacher always tells me and everybody else in this room that it is not good enough. But I want to pass...

Reports

They are so uninformative our parents don't understand the comments. They are all written in English.

Language classes (high school student)

I hate them. We compete too much. Competition is unhealthy. People steal from others instead of sharing, just to be on top.

Observation: Daily evaluation and grading

Rather than fostering creativity or risk-taking or imagination, these promote game-playing strategies and... The competitive nature of course work destroys the incentive and the desire to exchange ideas.

Grade fixation often deters students from the risky investigation of unfamiliar academic territory. High schools should provide students with an opportunity for exploration and experimentation, so students don't stick to what they know best, thereby limiting their scope of learning.

Question

What do you think about non-examination classes?

I am interested, but worry very much about my certificate or final report. I am concerned about what will be in them. I need a pass mark of some kind, some sort - a certificate.

Observation

The key factor in non-examination is cooperation...Students would work together to ensure that all maintain the high level of involvement. Non-examination system works in the context of highly motivating environment.

So called students' poor performance is based on fear, guilt and shame. And the fear that turns up most is the knowing feeling that you will be rejected because you can never measure up. You are going to fail.

But that fear, in some classes, comes from being raised to believe you are not worthy of praise, that your imperfections outweigh any good points of your personality or whatever else.

Teachers and parents should use affirmations such as "You'll pass", "you are fine just as you are", repeating those positive thoughts whenever one's self-esteem is slipping. But sometimes students can't pull themselves out of the too many negative comments from home and school.

Grandparents (translation)

Nobody is born incapable of good. That kind of thinking is a lie passed down through generations, and it brings nothing but shame and hopelessness. Students should be taught to like what they do, and to like and appreciate themselves and their families. They are very good children here, very respectful. They work hard, even after school.

Questions

Whom is the school serving? What are the real needs of students? What school resources are deployed to meet these needs? How might language be taught?

Dropouts

Why do so may students drop out of high school? The dropout rate is not always officially defined...What are the causes? The Ministry of Education says almost half the dropouts are the result of a student doing badly in school. Students say they also dislike the way they are taught and are highly critical of teachers and their methods at times.

Interviews

Many claimed that teachers are prejudiced against "slower" students, and are basically unresponsive and uncaring.

Teacher (many people agreed)

Large classes and time spent performing "evaluation after evaluation", instead of teaching, makes it impossible to review if students are experiencing difficulty.

Ministry of Education Officer (former principal)

I don't think present spending on education is necessarily being directed to the future of the youth. It is directed to make the young people happy today, when they pass the exams, or very unhappy when they fail the exams.

Examinations and tests

In localizing exams Zimbabwe hopefully will draw tests or exams following the recommendations of education professionals or experts. Among other things, people would learn from results and their analysis if students are acquiring the

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knowledge they need.

Observation

There is emphasis and focus on tests that are useful and fair. A lot of talk on "good and bad schools..." and what's fair on students. What really counts is student ability, not the school or all of the above. Better performance or high test scores would depend, and will always depend on the affluence and family stability of the community. Most parents wish for good quality education, more than anything else.

METHODS

Suggestions for methods

Comments:

Use anything that has special meaning or familiar use to the students in order to spark their interest, e.g., tools, playing cards, musical instruments, etc. Barbara Osterhandt cites a teacher, Jim, who has ridden a bicycle into the classroom and has sent students around the school to measure rooms and corridors; both tactics were intended to focus attention on new vocabulary while establishing links with what the students already knew.

Teacher's comment

Students in Zimbabwe are at so many different levels. The disparity in achievement occurs at most secondary school levels. It's hard here.

Teacher's comments on her class

Most are orally proficient while others are less educated and sometimes semi-literate. The result is great diversity in rate of progress. In this type of classroom, individual instruction is ideal. Many college students, fortunately, have willingly helped with individualized and group instruction, whether as part of student teaching practice, or as an assignment for a special class.

Class observation and report

Students find it time-consuming and difficult to develop topics individually. Therefore the teacher may help students develop topic sentences and brainstorm for ideas as a group.

Students

Encourage them to read a text that can be completed and discussed within a class, such as a short story, or a piece of student writing may work best. Students will then publish their favorite essays, poems, etc. in a booklet for other students to read. This makes them very proud of their work.

Observation

High school students being asked to think rather than memorize is very appealing to us (only true learning). These students have gone beyond mere knowledge to the beginning of realization, the only true learning. This results in an observable change in a student's understanding of the world.

High school teacher

In daily lesson plans, I not only focus on the day's activities, but also try to integrate bits of information on language development and language learning.

High school teacher on her students

Some of them can be called "fluent low-achieving". These students have a fairly high degree of oral proficiency but cannot read well, cannot write sequentially using correct sentence structure, and cannot perform academic tasks due to personal language problems.

Teaching skills (skills are integrated into themes)

Most topics provide the teacher with unique opportunities to present "personality words" such as affectionate, alert, enthusiastic, obedient and revengeful.

Observation

Students demonstrated tremendous progress in their academic work. Their vocabulary expanded, and their reading and writing skills improved. The impact of

the curriculum on the students was not only academic but also psychological. Teachers witness broadening of their minds, expansion in their range of interest, and arousal of their curiosities. Students broke up with the "security blanket" of the familiar limited interest to which low-functioning students tend to cling so obsessively, and reached out to the wide and exciting world around them. They finally had enough self-confidence to do so.

A group of students (shared by my colleagues at the Distance Education Centre) Teachers make mistakes too; we all do. Some students feel that they have learned enough English when they speak it fluently. Although they have studied English for many years, they don't feel they speak well enough to express their thoughts. There is need to stimulate authentic and spontaneous communication, and keep them actively engaged in English.

Reading method
Shared teaching gives students personal contact with stories and helps them develop a sense of context, the ability to predict meaning, and a love of books, among many other benefits. Because stories also convey cultural values, reading them aloud helps students integrate these values into their lives.

Family
Create rituals; church, environment, etc.

Classroom strategies
Various grouping strategies and instructional approaches based on students' background, goals, interests, and learning styles are presented as important aspects of literacy instruction in the meetings attended.

Reading
In reading, the technique emphasizes the concept that print represents spoken words, and the importance of getting students to recognize their own words before recognizing other kinds of reading.

Life skills
Reading provides practice in structuring information that will assist the reader in

performing some tasks for work or in daily life.

Narrative reading involves reading in paragraph form, as in textbooks or newspapers. The technique focuses on global understanding and on the development of reading skills.

Teacher's role

Facilitator or coach allowing the students to manage much of their learning. The process of getting to know the students is continuous, beginning at the initial...

Students

Students have a great deal to learn from each other and should often work together in small groups or pairs. Different activities will be effective with different students. Providing several activities in a given class session means a greater chance of success for everybody.

RELIGION
African pastor/teacher

Comments:

The Church, at first, had a mission to eradicate native spirituality and replace it with its own teachings. For the African people, legends and beliefs represented the intimate connection between themselves and the land. The African people believe the earth is something to be nurtured, not subdued or ravaged for its wealth "building dams" when flowing rivers were there....they were often labelled 'uncivilized'.

Question and Answer

How do you feel about the clear-cutting of forests...?

Very upsetting. Almost crying. Caxton, in the many years he visited home he kept saying, "It's like a horrible wound to me and to this yard: I can almost feel the axe on me, and yet he was then a very young man. There is religion in these things.

Bible (students)

Remains the major source of information about the population of the biblical period. A number of serious obstacles arise when students try to analyze certain character roles via the Bible. Zimbabwe is largely Christian. Most students have Bibles at home in all languages spoken in Zimbabwe.

Texts

The exclusion of not just women but mothers from these elite segments in texts, not only unrepresentative of mothers and grandmothers, elders, but unrepresentative of their population as a whole. Most bureaucrats are removed from the masses in these texts. Things are different here today. Some bureaucrats interact well and meaningfully with people. There is need to identify factors that separate shapers of tradition from many of their people. As only source – present problems of omission in their treatment of the Zimbabwean people, as individuals or as a group. Whether rural or urban, elite orientation mean that even the information it contains may be a distortion or misrepresentation of the lives of women removed from urban centre and bureaucratic families.

Bible

Western literature (process of translating the Hebrew Bible): Western literature and art are replete with expressions of stories that express the author's or artist's own social views. Perhaps the most influential of all has been John Milton's Paradise Lost, which developed the Eden tale so strongly. His portrayal of Eve was negative. Milton no doubt did not intend to distort the biblical material with which he worked. Yet his own view worked its way into the characterizations in his poetry. (This is very important as many arguments on opposing views were heard.)

Milton's hierarchical worldview led him to assume that every creature had its proper place in an elaborately descending order from God who is pure spirit, to angels, men, women, plants, and finally, non-living creatures. Even within human society, this hierarchy was necessary. Consequently Milton saw both political rulers and husbands as God's deputies, controlling the state and the family, respectively. Although both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, Eve was somehow less in God's image. Adam's perfection far excelled hers in all real

dignity. (Paradise Lost: 150-151) Eve had fallen. Interpretive concept has become so common and familiar that no one notices that it does not belong to the Genesis story itself.

Conclusion Data: Notes from school library

Barriers of traditional perspectives should be removed and some observations made that place students, teachers, in the context of Zimbabwean life.

People should come to grips with the nature and meaning of their own existence. In this sense, the textual approach differs fundamentally in purpose from local explanations or theories, fields, etc.

"Dismantle some of the obstacles."

Family ties

Culture: Recognize through integration of personal identity with social context. In 1926, the Danish biblical scholar Johanes Pedersen set forth a classic definition of the soul, the individual as a totality and not as the sum of physical and mental or spiritual parts, in biblical thought. His exploration of the individual and of his or her identity led him to conclude that individual existence is inextricably linked to its biological and social matrix and that an individual removed from or cut off from his or her social context is in pain and danger. Life is something individual to be shaped according to the needs of each individual person is only what he is as a link in the family... When we look at the soul, we always see a community rising behind it. What it is, it is by virtue of others. It has sprung up from family which has filled it with its contents, and from which it can never grow away. The family forms the narrowest community in which it lives. But wherever it works, it must live in a community, because it is its nature to communicate itself to others, to share blessing with them. These are bonds integrating individuals with community.

Meeting at Nyamuzuwe

In short, although as human beings we have much in common with our fellow humans throughout history, all over the world, we must recognize that funda-

mental differences among world views exist among various cultures. Bible makes us part of each other. Yet, for all the continuity, there are radical differences.

ZIMBABWE-CUBA PROGRAMME:
Zimbabwean Students in Cuba

Comments:

Technology is used to connect children cross-culturally. Students are encouraged to analyze and critically deconstruct media that targets youth. Students are also learning how to manipulate media themselves: making videos and tapes in response to sexist media images of youth, making videos which show cooperative alternatives to prejudice.

Students in Cuba

Had a great willingness to communicate in English. They were positive and immensely enjoyed their experiences. Some of them taught English part-time and translated a lot of their work.

English

They used English as integrated whole (literature, language, etc.) and worked on translation work, writing poetry, drama, etc.

Observation

Excellent student discussions have resulted from listening to speakers. Experiences that students share with the group are a great way to lead into discussions of their rights and responsibilities. Because these subjects affect their lives profoundly, there is always motivation and interest in most materials they use.

Students

Students really sorted out what it is they really felt and believed about learning English. Students decided and expressed their beliefs on English learning and teaching.

Students in Cuba, 1990

Teaching linguistics that embraced all languages, I think gave them factual information about language contact that helped them make more informed judgments about English.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Ministry of Education Officer

Comments:

The prime objective of the Zimbabwe Ministry of Education is to promote the welfare and interests of students by persistently pursuing the educational, environmental and social conditions of students.

Teaching staff

Expatriates (Ministry of Education): Zimbabwe is facing a teacher shortage. She needs each and every one of those children to be the best he or she can be. The Ministry has also opened doors to massive immigration and is bringing in the skilled workers who can generate the wealth to support...

Observation of Curriculum Unit

Department creates curricula and designs programs for the country. There is not much shown though, on language development of young children from multi-lingual backgrounds. I need more information on this observation.

Recruitment

The Zimbabwe Ministry of Education launched a massive recruitment of teachers from the Western world plus extensive staff development and ongoing coaching, etc. Many educational programs emerged, but rarely in languages.

My observations

The Curriculum Development Unit is sometimes driven by a complex bureaucratic and politically driven system. One wonders how sociocultural, linguistic and economic backgrounds are dealt with in such authoritative working environments.

Student teacher

(The student later won great support from his headmaster in his English programs...)

"Institutional malaise didn't dampen my spirit and collective school disapproval didn't defeat me. Pedagogically, I knew the students were thriving; enthusiastic and joyfully providing continual inspiration to me and them."

Teachers

Teachers of English must remain advocates and spokespeople for linguistically and culturally diverse children and their families. In spite of sometimes political, administrative, and operational constraints, there are advantages, occasions and opportunities for continuous growth and personal development of teachers and students through rough creative explorations that use local material and expertise to learn language.

Programs

The Ministry of Education is concerned and committed to designing and implementing programs through Curriculum Development Unit in difficult circumstances, at times, and continue to meet challenges.

New Programs

An English program that will propose using Reader Response Theory philosophy and communicative methodology would work well here. This, like in Puerto Rico, would include an integrated approach to the development and practice of language skills based on the use of authentic materials and communicative tasks. This could lead students to naturally develop early communicative competence and a positive attitude toward reading and communicating in English.

Language across the curriculum

English and indigenous languages: content from other classes/subjects could be brought to the English class. Science, social sciences, and maths activities, content or themes could be incorporated into tasks in the English class.

Official statements about parent involvement

The masses have too many problems raising fees for their children to be depended

upon on matters of school administration and Zimbabwean education policy.

Parent on education

I find the education system here very formal, selective. Obviously it omits facts and personalities of great political or social importance, for example, Mbuya Ne Handa. More texts could be now available for use in classrooms.

Reflection of students' work (Zintec)

Part of their training meant passing hard judgments on themselves. This has led others to pass hard judgments on the values by which they live. It is the old face still going on. I find this work appealing. One of the few who praised students.

Observation

Obsession with ambition and striving for success is especially heavy for some students. it is expected that students achieve highly.

Private conversation with friend

Children: driven for success and change. Materialism, ambition, and success were the rule. People are resigning themselves peaceably to the status quo. Self-gratification is exalted.

Everywhere one sees adults transforming their children into middle class, parents themselves are not, pressuring tots for grades that would get them into elite colleges, which would not get them elite jobs. Maybe not?

Teachers speaking on student labor

Complaints here on students in rural areas (working in fields) and high density suburbs (helping out at tuckshops, in the market place) work before and after school. The students look tired and sometimes are very restless in class.

More on reports and minutes (Summary)

What is discussed mostly in schools visited so far in Bulawayo area and Harare rural and urban, is talk and debate mostly on salaries, discipline, students' weaknesses, and so on.

Margaret Munyati, Prince Edward School, Head of Department Shona, Principal M.R. Barnes

Language is taught well here. They do translation in both English and Shona. The principal is very supportive. Good learning is taking place here.