Chapter 3

Developing Good Practice in Teaching English

Introduction

The two general tasks that were concluded from the previous chapter were: first, understanding the processes through which constraints resulting from economic and political policies seem to be undermining the quality of achievement in Zambian secondary schools; and second, exploring ways in which the quality of teaching and learning processes, and the quality of achievement, might be improved without substantially increased resources. The two tasks of this book are enormous and given the limitations of the study it centres around, it is necessary limit them to an extent. Hence the study concentrated exclusively on the teaching and learning of English in secondary schools, because English is of central importance in Zambian education and society.

Given the decision to focus on the *processes* of schooling in Zambia, it is important to reflect on which processes are key and in what terms they should be considered. The first section of chapter 3 discusses research-based models of school effectiveness and improvement, their relevance to schools in Zambia and what can be learned from them. In that section the case for concentrating on classroom processes as a critical perspective is made and will significantly inform the way findings are interpreted and used in the final chapter.

How then can one best study classroom processes, given especially the lack of previous research on classroom processes in Zambian secondary schools? This is the focus of the following section in this chapter. Here is argued the case for seeking the views of teachers and pupils on effective classroom teaching and learning.

As the main official language of the country, but not the first language for many people, English has a rather complicated position. In particular, the teaching of English in Zambian secondary schools cannot be treated

either as first language teaching or straightforwardly as second-language teaching. The following section explains the distinctive place of English in Zambian history, society, education and the consequences of this for the teaching of English in secondary schools.

Finally, there is the problem of what kind of literature of English teaching, if any, might usefully inform research and interpretation of the study's findings. This is a problem because of the distinctiveness of the Zambian English teaching situation and because there has been no previous research on English teaching in Zambian secondary schools and very little literature on English teaching in other similarly situated African countries. This chapter argues first for a broad-based review of the international literature on effective teaching, taking some account of this particular concern with English teaching, but relying mainly on more general perspectives. This is because the English teaching with which this study is concerned does not conform to any of the particular traditions, for example teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) or English Literature, that have been widely researched. The other arguments are that the focus should be on widely-used *strategies* of teaching (Beresford, 1998) and accordingly explore the extent to which there is a broad international consensus on effective classroom teaching strategies.

While a great deal of classroom research from 1975 to 2000 has been directed towards determining the kinds of teaching that are most effective for promoting pupils' learning, there has been a decisive shift in researchers' attention towards a focus on teacher cognition. This shift has come about through recognition that effective teaching is not primarily a matter of well-implemented behavioural strategies, but is rather a matter of teachers' expert *decision-making*, both in their planning and in their classroom interaction with their pupils. In order to be well placed to interpret teachers' perspectives, there is a need to understand what international research has found out about classroom teachers' cognition. Therefore the second area of research literature to be reviewed is on teacher cognition, with a particular emphasis on teacher cognition in second language teaching.

Understanding within school processes

This section argues that this book's research into school processes, which connect inadequate inputs to inadequate outcomes, should be focused on *classroom* processes. Three main arguments can be advanced to support this focus on classrooms.

The first is that in Zambia, as almost everywhere, schools are organisations set up with a view to facilitating teaching and learning *in classrooms*. Whatever else happens in a school is primarily for the purpose of facilitating classroom teaching and learning. The second is that there is ample evidence for the usefulness of research into classroom processes: classroom researchers have been able to reach conclusions, which seem to be both valid and practically useful. The third, the most complex but perhaps the most persuasive argument, is that the many researchers who in the last 20 years have focused on whole school effectiveness and improvement have increasingly tended to the conclusion that it is after all what happens in the *classroom* that matters most (Harris, 2003; Rita, 2002; Heneveld, 1994). Much of this section will be concerned with elaborating on this third argument.

A second purpose of this section will be to consider the relevance and appropriateness for the Zambian situation of the managerial perspective that has dominated school effectiveness and improvement research and thinking. For example, researchers in Britain offer some ways of dealing with the question of improvement. Hopkins et al. (1996) argue that in the research literature on effective schools there is strong evidence that success is associated with a sense of identification and involvement that extends beyond the teaching staff. It involves the pupils, parents and other members of the local community. Pupil involvement seems to be a particularly important factor. At the classroom level, this occurs when pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and, through involvement, to learn organisational, planning, discussion, decision-making and leadership skills. It is therefore necessary for teachers to set conditions that will enable them to facilitate the learning of all students.

The conditions Hopkins et al. (1996) propose may not be in a ranking order, but the notion of the relationship between pupil and teacher seems to be at the centre of what they find to be important. *Promoting the learning process*, or better teaching and learning in classrooms, appears to be the goal for such conditions to be effected in schools. These conditions seem to relate directly to what happens in classrooms. Some of the conditions proposed by Hopkins et al. (1996) are in figure 3.1 below. These conditions seem to influence how teaching and learning in classrooms occurs.

'Authentic relationships', for example, might occur in a school where there may be a culture of 'collegial' relationships, understanding and respect for individuals and groups of individuals within schools.

Before accepting the detailed recommendations of Hopkins et al. (1996) or school improvement writers, one would need to be sure of their

- ***Authentic relationships*: the quality, openness and congruence of relationships existing in the classrooms**
- ***Rules and boundaries*: the pattern of expectations set by the teacher and school of student performance and behaviour within the classroom**
- ***Planning, resources and preparation*: The access of teachers to a range of pertinent teaching materials and the ability to plan and differentiate these materials for a range of students**
- ***Teachers' repertoire*: the range of teaching styles and models internalised and available to a teacher dependent on student, context, curriculum and desired outcome**
- ***Pedagogic partnerships*: the ability of teachers to form professional relationships within and outside the classroom focusing on the study and improvement of practice**
- ***Reflection on teaching*: the capacity of the individual teacher to reflect on his or her own practice, and to put to the test of practice specifications of teaching from other sources**

Figure 3.1: Conditions that may facilitate student learning
Source: Hopkins et al. (1996, p.37) *Improving the Quality of Education for All*

relevance to the Zambian situation. Nearly all the work concerned with models of school improvement and effectiveness has been done in the relatively rich countries of Europe and North America, and it would be unwise to assume that the conclusions of such work would be relevant in the very different context of Zambia. For example, one obvious weakness of importing the Hopkins et al. (1996) framework to Zambia is its underlying assumption that all schools may be well resourced.

Even within the European context, there has been growing criticism of such generalised models for school effectiveness and improvement because of their lack of adequate attention to *context*. While valid generalisations based on significant statistical relationships may be asserted about the importance of certain factors, the translation of such school effectiveness research into school improvement strategies has not been found to be straightforward. Contextual factors of an economic and especially of a cultural nature, including cultural variations relating to criteria of effectiveness, seem to be of major importance in considering how schools can be improved (West-Burnham and Bradbury 2003; Teddlie and Reynolds 2000; Harber and Davies 1997).

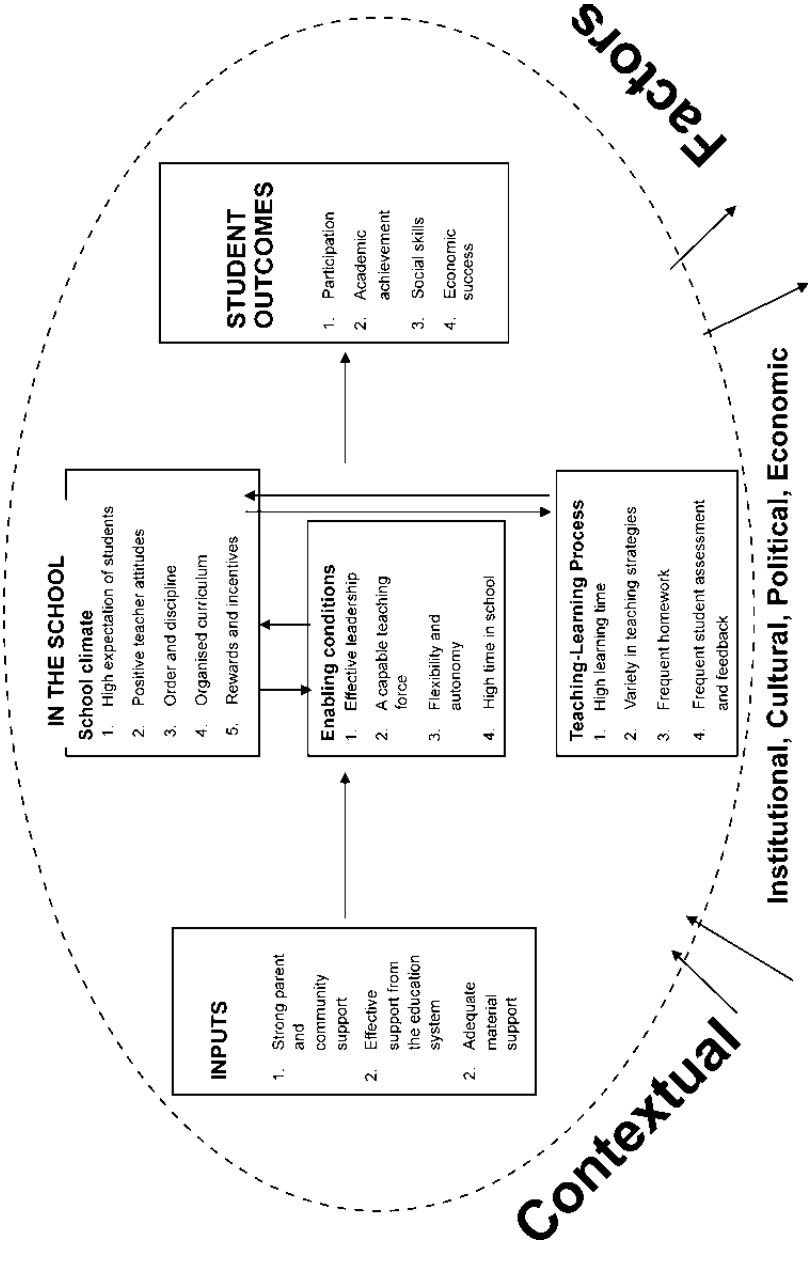

Figure 3.2: A conceptual framework of factors influencing good quality education (adapted from Heneveld, 1994)

Heneveld (1994) is one of the few writers on models of school effectiveness who has addressed himself explicitly to conditions in sub-Saharan Africa. He argues that there are many factors that influence what happens in the classrooms, and these factors may not be ignored. Heneveld (1994), for example, discusses the external and internal elements that may influence teaching processes and learning outcomes. These are presented in figure 3.2.

The arrows in the diagram indicate that *inputs* flow into a school where the 'school climate', 'enabling conditions' and 'the teaching/learning process' combine to produce student outcomes. The factors influencing a good quality school are embedded in a context that includes institutional, cultural, political and economic factors. These are also surrounded by conditions within, for example, the African continent, sub-Saharan region and within the country itself. Such conditions are also continually being influenced by the international and global conditions. The institutions surrounding the education system, which include the country's ministry of education, may condition how the education system functions. Cultural values and practices condition how the factors in 'inputs' and within the school affect student outcomes. Political and economic conditions may significantly influence how the education system operates and what inputs it receives.

Perhaps one of Heneveld's (1994) strengths is the argument that in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning, all the elements that influence schools and classrooms may have to be considered as they have significant influence on what happens in classrooms. He claims that within classrooms, enabling conditions include a good amount of learning time, a variety of teaching strategies, frequent homework, frequent student assessment and feedback. It seems the reverse may be the opposite of an efficient classroom – low learning time, rigid teaching strategies such as lecturing, lack of student assessment and little feedback. While classroom processes are at the centre of the work of schools, it is important to understand the contextual factors that most heavily impinge on what happens in classrooms. It is also important to note that classrooms are complex places to study (Cooper and McIntyre, 1996).

Heneveld (1994) suggests a model of what quality schools should be, almost suggesting the elements as yardsticks for measuring quality of leadership, teaching and learning and outcomes. Heneveld's model might be valid in its prescriptions for what ought to happen, but it does not seem to be helpful for guiding schools towards that ideal, nor indeed for explaining what happens in practice. It does not, for example, provide an explanation for the type of authoritarian classroom environment that prevails in most developing countries. For example, in Nepal 78 per cent of fifth-grade sci-

ence instruction was through lecturing with less than 7 per cent involving student participation (Harber and Davies, 1997, p. 51). Authoritarian classroom environments have frustrated policies theoretically aimed at greater participation and pupil involvement, and Heneveld's framework seems unhelpful in understanding school cultures or why schools are managed in less democratic ways when most developing countries claim to be democratic.

More generally, the stringencies and contexts observed, for example by Harber and Davies (1997), are not located in generalised school effectiveness models such as that of Hopkins et al. (1996). The lack of contextualisation of ideas of effectiveness and the lack of consideration of economic, resource, violence, health and cultural factors are important. The neglect of contexts may mean that it is not easy to translate school effectiveness research into school improvement anywhere, but especially not in regions that are very different from those in which the school effectiveness research has been conducted.

However, Harber and Davies (1997) are more radical in their arguments for contextualising school improvement and effectiveness, questioning as they do the value of attempts like Heneveld's to adapt models based on schooling in rich countries to meet realities of developing countries. Harber and Davies (1997) argue that conventional school effectiveness literature has failed to grasp or to transform the nature of school management in developing countries because the models proposed have neither a proper empirical base nor an appropriate theoretical base. They claim that if schools in developing countries are ineffective they may display problems and dysfunctions very different from schools in industrialised settings. Schools are ineffective for different reasons, reasons concerned with the nature and purpose of schooling itself. One of the key reasons why schools operate ineffectively is fear. At individual and institutional levels, it is easier to maintain the current system than to take risks and experiment with challenges to orthodoxy. Conventional effectiveness research and school improvement programmes present no such challenges. What is needed for improvement is just such a challenging of assumptions about school management, something that frameworks such as Heneveld's fail to do.

Harber and Davies (1997) claim that improvement programmes in developing countries that are linked to effectiveness research, which compares schools on examination success, are doomed to failure in that not all schools in a selective system with winners and losers can be 'good'. They argue that research can best feed into improvement programmes: if it is confined to one country or region; if the identified goals are acceptable to

government, teachers, students and parents; if goals are potentially achievable by all participants; and if the goals are turned into relevant recognisable indicators, even if these are not tidy.

Harber and Davies argue that macro theories of development (right or left, capitalist or socialist) all come together to explain why schools in developing countries continue to exhibit features of inefficient bureaucracy. It is not just colonial heritage. Mass schooling is organised in a pyramidal, hierarchical and selective way and is able to maintain a system of natural selection and survival of the fittest so that a society roughly allocates and prepares 'appropriate' people for appropriate slots. For theorists and governments espousing versions of modernisation theory, the streamlined selective school is a deliberate choice; however, even those governments attempting socialist transformation and genuine mass education appear to have been unable to divert systems away from bureaucratic forms. The poorer the country, the more inefficient the bureaucracy becomes. Ironically, the poorer the country and the more fragile its government, the more important it is for it to retain the myths and inefficiencies. Dropouts, wastage, absenteeism, examination failure are all there because the country cannot cope with too much success.

Harber and Davies state that they have little interest in making schools in developing countries (or elsewhere) simply more efficient selective bureaucracies. They have tried to show that finding more efficient ways of getting marginally more children through examinations is not in the country's interest in the long term. This will not help the problems of world peace, poverty or inequality. Instead, they were able to find examples of what they call genuinely effective, post-bureaucratic schools or systems, in schools or countries that have been prepared to take risks. What characterises those initiatives are: a degree of consistency in the goals of all the participants; flexibility in organisation to maximise current learning and enable lifelong adaptability and lifelong ability to learn skills; and a democratic ethos and structure which not only enhances such learning, but prepares children for future political participation in a more sane world. Harber and Davies argue that the failure of conventional (or even bureaucratic) effectiveness research is the emphasis on changing processes instead of changing goals. Post-bureaucratic effectiveness research and school-improvement policy focuses first of all on the goals of all actors in the game in a particular country or culture; only then does it look at processes (including management processes) that may be able to meet or reconcile those goals.

Harber and Davies suggest a four-prong strategy in establishing school management for post-bureaucratic school or society:

1. To establish a range of goals *achievable by the majority of learners*, which match national goals for development. Democracy is now currently one of these national goals.

2. To establish a number of indicators for those goals at the level of the school. For example, if the national goal is health, then the school-level indicators may be health knowledge and application of related health skills; if it is citizenship, then the indicators may be participation in decision-making and knowledge of the political system; if it is mass literacy and communication skills, then the indicators may be students talking with each other to solve problems and ensuring that all can read.

3. To experiment with and to trace through a flexible range of processes, which may achieve particular goals, and to cost out their implications. This part of the strategy includes ethnographic research to establish how and whether participants come to share the same discourses, and what rewards or costs are experienced.

4. To engage in parallel work on 'footshooters', the logics explaining why teachers remain ineffective and why schools retain cost-effective ways of operating. Are these 'own goals' kicked in by the government, by the head, by individual teachers or by students themselves? (Harber and Davies, 1997, p. 170)

Harber and Davies argue that providing 100 textbooks (according to the World Bank-type improvement factors) will not alter the way teachers behave. In the context where teachers turn up irregularly, extra resource provision will not address the question of how or whether these books are used. *Why* teachers act in ways that mean that in the long term their role and status is ineffective should perhaps be discovered. Harber and Davies (1997) offer a theory of relationship between education and development and claim that the democratisation of schools can and should go hand-in-hand with economic and political democracy. Schools cannot transform society on their own, but schools and the individuals within them can help make a start. They claim that democratic initiatives will succeed only with some realism about what material and psychological gains people will accrue from.

Harber and Davies' (1997) work is potentially important for this book at three different levels. First, it argues persuasively for both the need for and the possibility of generating models for school improvement that not only give adequate importance to 'context', but also take as their starting point the realities of schooling in the developing world. Their argument is persuasive, and their attempt to develop a model that starts from African realities points the direction for those of coming after them. A second and more specific level at which their work is directly relevant is that they have suggested that the provision of greatly increased resources may not necessarily be the key to improvement. Third and most specifically, they offer some ideas that might be adapted for purposes of considering how teaching and learning in secondary schools might be improved.

This section has had two major purposes. The first of these was to make the case for concentrating this study on classroom processes. Three arguments were advanced for this. First, in principle schools are there to facilitate *classroom processes*. A second argument is that school improvement researchers have come to recognise that in schools, it appears that it is what happens in classrooms that is most important and a third, that there are several different approaches to studying the effectiveness of classroom processes, all of which have been productive. The second purpose was to emphasise the importance of *context*, and especially the major differences in the contexts for teaching and learning between schools in sub-Saharan Africa and those in the richer countries of the northern hemisphere. Sensitivity to context will need to influence both the means chosen for studying classroom processes and also the interpretation of findings, with any proposals for school improvement needing to be highly responsive to the distinctive Zambian context.

Block et al (1998, p. 5) observed that 'to some extent the expansion of education in sub-Saharan Africa has occurred without anyone examining the content [what is learned] and the *process* [how it is learned]'. There are various possibilities of studying *what* is taught and *how* it is taught within classrooms. Perhaps the proper place on which to concentrate attention is the classroom and the proper people on whom to concentrate are certainly teachers and pupils.

Perspectives of teachers and pupils

Although there are several ways of studying effective teaching and learning, the author is of the view that the best of these is seeking teacher and student perspectives.

The author's overall approach to studying effective teaching and learning in Zambian schools is very much influenced by her understanding of the usefulness and limitations of generalisations about effective teaching and learning. What will be effective in one classroom will depend on the distinctive context and history of that classroom and of the people in it. The best teachers are those who not only understand what is generally effective in their context, but who can judge correctly what they can most effectively do in each specific situation as it arises. It is evident from the research literature on teaching that some useful generalisations about effective classroom teaching and learning can certainly be made, and in a later section of this chapter such generalisations are derived from the international literature. However, all generalisations must be treated with caution because in teaching, cultural and other contextual factors are very important in determining both what is possible and what is effective. Caution is necessary at two levels. First, the Zambian context is clearly distinctive, so international generalisations must be applied only with caution to Zambia. Second, even valid generalisations about English teaching and learning in Zambian schools would need to be applied with caution in the context of particular lessons. Seeking teacher and pupil perspectives on their particular classroom experiences is one way in which the distinctiveness of findings for each classroom, or the 'generalisability' of findings across classrooms, can easily be explored.

A further argument for studying classrooms through teacher and pupil perspectives stems from the argument advanced above about the importance of contextual factors for this study. While the case for concentrating research attention on classroom processes is strong, understanding of these processes and any attempts to ameliorate them must depend on finding out about contextual realities, within or outside school, that influence what teachers and students do in classrooms, or indeed may be influenced by what happens in classrooms. Such significant contextual realities would not be captured at all by approaches to classroom study that relied primarily on observation, experiment or on highly-structured questionnaire or interview methods. On the other hand, a natural component of semi-structured conversations with teachers and with pupils about what happens in their classrooms will be discussion of the reasons and the implications of these classroom practices. Teacher and pupil perspectives on classroom processes include accounts of contextual realities that in their experience impinge on or are impinged on by these classroom processes. Such accounts

are of critical importance in understanding why the classroom processes are as they are and their implications for pupils' lives and learning.

It is also important to complement the tentatively-relevant international generalisations by investigating the realities of such teaching and learning in Zambian schools. The study highlighted here favoured exploration of the insights of teachers and pupils with regard to both good practice and to what actually happens in their distinctive contexts.

Teacher voice

Most researchers like the perspectives of teachers to be included in research as these are the 'active agents' of teaching in classrooms. Oplatka (2002) and other researchers argue that:

> *'Understanding teachers' perspectives towards their roles and responsibilities over the domain of schooling may help school policy makers and school governors in planning the involvement of teachers in policies affecting teachers. Any policy that ignores teachers' perceptions of the impact of educational policy upon their roles and behaviours may fail, for teachers seem to be both protagonists and the performers in any educational reform.'*
>
> *Source:* Oplatka et al, 2002, p. 180.

Cooper and McIntyre (1996) argue that through knowing about teachers' and pupils' classroom practices and the thinking that underlies them it is possible to theorise incisively about limitations of current practice. It may also be possible to educate beginner teachers to plan intelligently for the development of classroom practice. Cooper and McIntyre (1996) have observed that those who study classroom teaching and learning have become increasingly conscious of the complexity of classroom life and the difficulties of making helpful prescriptions for it. They suggest that:

> *'The things that teachers and pupils try to achieve in their classroom teaching and learning, the ways they try to achieve these things and the problems they encounter offer very fruitful starting points for generating hypotheses about effective classroom teaching and learning.'*
>
> *Source:* Cooper and McIntyre, 1996, p. 2.

The argument for teachers to be involved in educational change within schools and classrooms is clear. Teachers need to be considered as partners in any reform process, and it is important they are involved and have a voice in research in classrooms, education, policy and the production of instruc-

tional material, because they are active agents in education delivery at the heart of the school – the classroom.

Value of pupil perspectives

The perspectives of pupils have been investigated for some time, from Hargreaves (1967) to Rudduck (1999), although Hargreaves did not 'advocate' a pupil voice in educational decision-making as Rudduck does. It appears that research up to the 1990s had not yet fully provided the kind of information which might allow schools and teachers to do better. To do this, research involving discussion with students and perhaps comparing student and teacher views is needed. It is observed that after the 1990s research into classrooms tends to increasingly include pupil perspectives (e.g. MacBeath et al, 2003; Rudduck etal,1996; Cooper and McIntyre, 1996).

Pupils are sometimes considered as dependents and in societies like Africa, where the 'elders' are considered as having 'wisdom' and expertise, it is difficult to consult pupils on what they consider important in the teaching and learning processes. Nonetheless, researchers all over the world have suggested the importance of pupils' perspectives in enhancing student learning. Stenhouse (1983) argues that researchers need to focus on pupils' needs because it seems:

> *'…there is more that the school can offer to the pupil apart from the 'cognitive' aspects of learning. Pupils want to feel understood and given that which they expect the school to give. The teachers tend to think that they know what is best for the pupils, but the pupils know what is best for themselves. Pupils' views can be considered even in very important decisions affecting them like education in schools. Perhaps it may be argued that the effectiveness of schooling inevitably depends on meeting students' felt needs and it is only students who can tell us about these needs.'*

More generally, pupils have a lot to tell researchers that is worth considering, and this seems an argument that applies to them with equal or greater strength than to teachers. They can explain which lessons they enjoy and 'understand'; and how some teachers, by using a variety of teaching strategies, make their learning easier or more possible.

There seems to have been some neglect of pupil and teacher perspectives and the new light that these can offer on classroom processes. Erickson and Schultz (1992, p. 476), for example, suggest that 'virtually no research has been done that places student experience at the centre of attention'. In Sweden, Andersson (1995, p. 5) has noted 'politicians who decide about school reforms and the teachers who run the classrooms seldom ask how

students themselves perceive their school.' Levin (1995, p. 17) from Canada notes that 'while the literature on school-based management advocates more important roles for teachers and parents, students are usually omitted from the discussion.'

Nieta (1994, p. 395) proposes that 'one way to begin the process of changing school policies is to listen to students' views about them.' This is echoed by Phelan et al (1992) from North America who argues that 'it is important to give attention to students' views of things that affect their learning, not so much the factors outside school, but those *in school* that teachers and policy makers have some power to change.' Researchers like Rudduck and Flutter (2000) have similarly argued for pupils' perspectives. Rudduck (1999) similarly argues that:

> *'Pupils are not always the same, so we should listen to them. They are observant and have a right, but often untapped, understanding of processes and events. Ironically, they often use their insights to devise strategies for avoiding learning, a practice that can be destructive to their progress over time. Pupils' accounts of their experiences of being a learner in school can lead to changes that enable pupils to feel a stronger sense of commitment to the school and to the task of learning; and commitment can lead to enhanced effort and enhanced levels of commitment.'*
>
> Rudduck 1999, p. 82.

There is need to build more opportunities for pupil participation and pupil voice into the fabric of the schools' structure. It should be noted that it takes time and very careful preparation to build a climate in which both teachers and pupils feel comfortable working together on a constructive review of aspects of teaching and learning.

Some authors, like Krechevsky and Stork (2000), consider learning as *engaging students* cognitively, emotionally, aesthetically and ethically in solving problems and creating products considered meaningful in a culture. This 'culture' is further insulated *within* schools. Hence, it is difficult to change or improve schools from outside by outsiders, but this improvement can best work *within schools*, by schools and at the heart of each school – the teaching and learning process and by *those affected* by this process: the teachers and pupils.

Cooper and McIntyre (1996) argue that:

> *'Learning directly from pupils, about how their learning has been facilitated by other teachers, could be a powerful stimulus to teachers in en-*

couraging them to extend, and perhaps to reflect on, their own teaching repertoires.'

Source: Cooper and McIntyre 1996, p. 94.

Conclusions drawn by Cooper and McIntyre (1996) may be worthwhile and relevant, but the schools in Cooper and McIntyre's study were not under-resourced like Zambian schools. The important lesson one may draw from such studies and others is the importance of asking and listening to teachers and pupils' views about what they consider effective or practical to improving teaching and learning in classrooms.

English language in Zambia

An important part of the context of any subject teaching is the culture of the society and the way the particular subject relates to that culture. In the particular context of the teaching and learning of English in Zambian secondary schools, that is especially so because of:

- the distinctive linguistic and cultural context the teaching and learning have to deal with;
- the distinctive political, historical and economic place of English in Zambian society; and
- the total absence of previous known research directly relevant to the good practice in the teaching and learning of English in this kind of context.

According to the provisions of the Education Act 1966, the official language of instruction in Zambia was English from year one of the primary school; this was adjusted in 1996 to begin with a local language in the first two grades. Local languages such as Cibemba, Cinyanja, Citonga, Silozi Kaonde, Luvale and Lunda are 'official' Zambian languages approved for educational use in designated regions. They are used in specified situations such as school broadcasting, parliamentary debates, law courts and administration. English is used in education as medium of instruction, in the law courts, parliament, administration and commerce and trade (Kashoki, 1978; Mwanakatwe, 1974). It also serves as a lingua franca for intra-national communication purposes.

English being the key subject and language of instruction seems to be at the core of teaching and learning in Zambia. The quality of the teaching and learning of secondary English is likely to be a major factor influencing

levels of learning achievement and later access into the working world. The centrality of secondary English in any English-speaking country and the distinctiveness of the Zambian situation are significant reasons for this book's concentration on English learning.

History

Zambia, like many sub-Saharan African countries, is multilingual. Individuals in the country speak one or more local languages besides their own mother tongue. In the absence of a single, dominant or indigenous language, such as Swahili in Tanzania, Tswana in Botswana or Swazi in Swaziland, it is argued (Kashoki, 1976) that English is a unifying language. Zambia continues to use English both as a medium of instruction and subject throughout primary and secondary schooling and post-secondary schooling. There has been some debate on the use of English as a medium of instruction from as early as 1911, but at that time it appears there was almost no debate on *how* English was taught in schools.

The providers of education in the early 1900s in Zambia were mainly missionaries. Lungwangwa (1987) notes that between 1895 and 1923 there was no school system in Zambia to talk of. What existed were 'sub-schools' or 'village schools' organised by evangelists who, besides giving religious instruction, taught what they knew of the 'three Rs' (reading, writing and arithmetic) and a little English to irregularly-attended classes of both sexes and all ages. It is also reported that there were some missionaries who saw education as being synonymous with western civilisation and culture. They imposed not only English and its literature upon the African people, but sought to eradicate African culture, which was seen as depraved, degenerate and evil (Oliver, 1952). English was therefore instituted as medium of instruction and as an important language related to Christianity.

Tembo (1973) reiterates the above. He argues that English in multilingual developing countries, for historical reasons, is the chief language of commerce, industry, administration and most important of all, the education system. English is used for both intra- and international purposes of communication and in many countries is recognised as a lingua franca intended to promote national unity.

English as a school subject was based on what the British colonial government perceived to be best for the native population. In 1911 and 1923 there were the first and second imperial education conferences held in London. The 1923 conference was especially concerned with the problems

of bilingualism and the use of English as a medium of instruction. A memorandum on Educational Policy in British Tropical Africa (1925), a report submitted to the secretary of state for the colonies in March 1925 entitled *Education Policy in British Tropical Africa*, stated that:

> *'During the elementary and primary stages we regard it as essential that the medium of education should be a native language and that English should be introduced only at a later stage. In the secondary and further stages, English and English alone should be the medium of instruction. When English is taught at all, it must be taught thoroughly and completely and only to such pupils as are undergoing a period of school life long enough to enable English to be learnt properly.'*

A memorandum on 'the place of the vernacular languages in native education' (1927) underlined the recommendations of the earlier report and pointed out difficulties related to the multiplicity of languages and dialects; the implications of language pedagogy; and the economic implications of producing teaching materials, textbooks and literature in more than a limited number of native languages. The committee also remarked:

> *'There can be no doubt that one of the main incentives if not the incentive of African parents in sending their sons to school is for them to acquire knowledge of English. They naturally regard knowledge of English as the principal means whereby they can attain economic advance in later life. Any attempt therefore, to delay unduly the introduction of English into African schools would be regarded as the attempt of Government to hold back the African from legitimate advance in civilisation.'*

A memorandum on language in African school education (1943) reaffirmed the two principles stated in 1925 and 1927 reports. First that education should begin in the home language of the child and second that the teaching of English is essential. The country's recent policy (MOE, 2000) is similar to this. It states:

> *'In Grade 1, literacy shall be taught in a familiar language, and English as well as Zambian languages are additional language subject... The reforms in terms of language instruction have two purposes: 1) to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning; and 2) to increase the respect and fluency in Zambian national languages. The ministry's intention is by no means to diminish the importance of English. English is the official medium of communication and remains the gateway to higher education, to international training and to the international labour market. It is also a very important lingua franca in the Southern African region.'*

Source: MOE, 2000, p. 23.

Other earlier reports emphasised the use of a child's home language initially in school, but emphasised that English was to be the medium of instruction in schools. *The East African Royal Commission Report* (1953) revised the 1925 recommendation of the advisory committee on the use of a child's home language as the language of instruction in the primary school. The report stated:

> *'We think that the teaching of English should begin in as low a class as possible and should become the medium of instruction as early as it can be followed by the pupils.'* (p. 184)

There have been sharp criticisms in the past of colonial teaching of English language and culture: Nkrumah (1964) observes:

> *'Our pattern of education was formulated and administered by an alien administration, desirous of extending its dominant ideas and thought processes to us. We were trained to be inferior copies of English men, caricatures to be laughed at with our pretensions to British distorted standards betraying us at every turn; we were neither fish nor fowl. We were denied the history of our own past and informed that we had no present; we were trained to regard our culture as barbarous and primitive. Our textbooks were English textbooks telling us ways of living, English customs, English ideas, English weather etc.'*
>
> *Source:* Nkrumah, 1964, p. 57.

Leaders promoting patriotism like Nkrumah may be seen to be counteracting the 'negative' experiences of English and policies that may have seemed to be erasing the African languages and their culture. It appears that initially the concept of introducing English may not have included encompassing the culture and customs of the African or Zambian people. Most if not all textbooks at that time were simply imported from Britain to classrooms in Zambia and other colonies. However, English textbooks have now been modified and adapted to include Zambian situations and contexts.

Teaching English in Zambian schools

McGregor (1968) argues that teachers of English in Africa have the chance to help pupils to develop and use *skills* of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Through the exercise of these skills, pupils may learn to *think* and *feel*. Some essential aspects of good teaching according to McGregor may include teaching skills not facts, moral awareness and expectations,

confidence through *explanation, co-operation* and fruitful *silence*. McGregor argues that listening, discussing, debating, arguing and above all reading, provide children with the chance to make value judgments and choices. He argues that secondary-school pupils may need all these skills by the time they leave school, if they are going to be equipped to go on educating themselves. English courses must provide opportunities for practising such skills in a variety of enjoyable and purposeful situations.

Extensive reading, intensive reading and writing are important. In relation to intensive reading, McGregor (1968) advised that pupils should not be called upon to read aloud without careful preparation and until they have had a great deal of practice. Teachers should help them to prepare for reading aloud, recording meanings so as to improve standards, as often as possible within a limited and loaded English timetable. A pupil should certainly read aloud to the class, and practise him- (or her-) self until he (or she) can do it well. That children will enjoy this greatly is reason enough. On teaching writing skills McGregor argues:

> *'If we are going to presume to teach children in Africa how to write English, we ought to make ourselves aware of the possibilities, by knowing the best that Africans have already written in English. We should do this by buying much of what has been written by African writers, by lending it to our pupils and seeing that copies of suitable books by African writers are in the main school library and in the form/grade libraries.'*
>
> *Source:* McGregor 1968, p. 98.

What is assumed in this context is that libraries and reading books are made available to pupils. He stresses that:

> *'We are* not *primarily training pupils to write for any examination. We want them to write because writing is a valuable form of self-expression and because language being very closely related to thought, there is some chance that writing clearly will help to think clearly. All this is closely linked to the confidence flowing from the teacher and pupil. It is important for teachers to share with pupils the knowledge that writing is difficult, as it is. And for us to share the knowledge that we, like them, forget most of what we write. If we do not share these truths, then we simply ensure that the learning process is an extremely depressing one.'*
>
> *Source:* McGregor, 1968, p. 9.

McGregor's arguments were based on the newly-independent Zambia of the late-1960s, where perhaps many expatriate teachers were providing education to Zambians. Some of the constraints experienced in schools after 1980 may have been absent or minimal in McGregor's time. However,

the skills McGregor (1968) elicits are important for secondary school graduates not only in order to educate themselves, but for purposes of further education, communication, business and other careers that students may undertake in future.

Most discussions and debates about the teaching and learning of Zambian secondary English have focused more on what teachers ought to teach in order to help pupils to learn better. There has been very little research conducted to investigate the prevailing situation inside Zambian classrooms or to investigate the teaching-learning process and *how* teachers and pupils perceive the activities within classrooms, what is helpful or the constraints they face in realising the student outcomes expected of them.

Zambian secondary school English appears to have the same goals as those listed by McGregor (1968). The emphasis on learning English is on gaining, developing and using *skills* of listening, speaking, reading and writing while in school and later in life (MOE, 2000). One of the aspects noted about the English learnt in Zambia is that of deep ambivalence – the acceptance of English as the main official language of the country, despite all the negative connotations of English as the colonial language. Such a conflict of values may lead to contradictions in educational policy, in parental attitudes and in student motives (Serpell, 1980, p. 1).

The role of English in enabling individuals participate in the institutions of the country creates a dichotomy between those who can participate by virtue of their education and those who cannot for lack of it. English appears to have become a symbol of power, since it is associated with powerful institutions and the prestige inherent in those institutions. Most 'working-class' and 'middle-class' individuals possess the language. For most people, it seems knowing English and passing it in exams secures one's future. English is capable of conferring 'power' upon the individual who speaks it, including the power to pass examinations in other subjects, get into further education and embark upon a good career in order to survive.

In Zambia, it is observed that where two languages exist side by side, the relationship between the mother tongue and English is based on a functional division between two languages. It is argued that:

> *'…the local language appears to express traditional values and behaviour and the other (English) modernity and a new set of role-relations based on education and socio-economic status. Mother tongue may be associated with home and other intimate and non-formal situations, while those of English may be associated with those of the formal. However, the formal and non-formal domains overlap in their use.'*
>
> Siachitema, 1986, pp. 231–233.

In Zambia such distinctive and overlapping differences may be drawn, but in English-speaking countries like the United Kingdom, where English is the mother tongue, first language for most individuals and the medium of instruction is in English, English may not have the 'power' connotation when spoken outside the school or at home. The skills taught may be similar, but there are also major differences – including the availability of teaching and learning material in English schools and the lack of them in Zambia. In the two contexts, English can be seen as having the same goals and strategies. English in Zambia may also be viewed as the teaching of English as a second language in that it is not the first language for most students.

The components of English, like grammar, composition or essay writing, summary writing, listening and speaking are at times taught as complete separate lessons in Zambia. In the United Kingdom, this pattern seems to have been modified to some degree with recent innovations such as the National Curriculum and the National Literacy Strategy (Davison and Dowson, 1998; Brindley, 1994; Department for Education: www.standards.dfee.gov.uk/literacy). Furthermore, the major differences in the linguistic starting points of students make the learning and teaching tasks very different. Nonetheless, there are distinct similarities in the teaching of English in the two contexts.

Yet the question still remains: How can Zambian secondary English be taught to improve or enhance student learning despite the economic and material constraints experienced by schools in Zambia? The following section discusses strategies that may be helpful in the teaching and learning secondary English.

Strategies for English teaching and learning

Previous research has identified quite a large number of what seem to be generally valid conclusions about effective teaching for various purposes in language classrooms, but none of these can be treated as automatically valid for any particular context. They can, however, provide useful hypotheses from which to explore what makes for effectiveness in one particular context.

This section reviews some of the methods or strategies most commonly used in teaching. The argument here is for a very broad-based review of the international literature on effective teaching, taking some account of this book's particular concern with English teaching, but relying mainly on more general perspectives since the English teaching in this study does not con-

form to any of the particular traditions. The focus will be on widely-used *strategies* of teaching.

'Strategies' in this section refer to the broad kinds of purposive activities in which teachers and their students engage in order to promote learning. The review is based on evidence about kinds of strategies that are very widely used and favoured in practice by teachers internationally (Beresford, 1998; Good and Brophy, 1987).

In English teaching, the language skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing are interrelated and the learning context in English lessons may usually be planned to create situations in which students are given instruction and practice in using these skills in a variety of situations. In teaching these language skills, a teacher may employ different strategies in classroom teaching. These are the methods or strategies that will be discussed in this section, which include explaining, questioning, reading, writing, marking, group work, drama and role-plays, quizzes and games.

These strategies of teaching, like language skills are not used separately in teaching, but they appear to be used at different stages or even at similar times in one lesson depending on the activity. The aim of this section is to gather evidence of useful and good practice in teaching secondary English that may be helpful in improving the teaching of English in Zambian secondary schools.

Explaining

Explaining appears to be employed in most lessons and subjects in school. Wragg and Brown (2001) define explaining as 'giving *understanding* to another'. They claim that, after comprehensive review of research on explaining, teachers in classrooms appear to explain things every day of their professional lives and the ability to do this well is one of the things that makes a successful teacher. Effective explanation is the foundation on which sound learning is built, and it is a core teaching strategy that may improve teaching and learning for teachers and their pupils.

Wragg and Brown (2001) seem to take a very broad view of 'explaining', including the use of a variety of teaching methods, using methods which cater for the diversity of pupils' learning styles, and generally **anything** that is aimed at giving learners understanding. But not everything with this aim is 'explaining'. Explaining means trying to enhance someone's understanding through direct communication with them, in speech, on paper, using verbal or visual means, to encourage them to explore the issue through practical work or using reference materials.

Effective explaining according to Gage (1968) is getting to the heart of the matter with just the right terminology, examples and organisation of ideas. Other explainers, on the contrary, get pupils mixed up, use terms beyond their level of comprehension and draw inept analogies.

Conditions for effective explaining

- *Clarity*. The principal purpose of an explanation is to give understanding to the learner. Clarity in explaining any topic is important. Clarity includes a clear structure, clear language, clear voice, fluency and strategies such as questioning, use of examples/analogies, use of practical work and management of classrooms. Class management involves arranging discussions, activities and seating so that optimum conditions for learning and understanding are established and a high degree of attentiveness and involvement is maintained.

  Wragg and Brown (2001) note that researchers have identified clarity and fluency, emphasis and interest, use of examples, organisation and feedback as elements of explaining that appear to be related to pupil learning. By giving understanding to others, explaining things clearly, teachers can develop their own understanding and ultimately their own professional skills.

- (ii) *Empathising with learners*. The ability to empathise with the learner is the hallmark of an effective explainer. The ability to see concepts, issues and processes from the learner's point of view means that the choice of language, examples, points to emphasise, review questions and so on will be apt. Teachers spend a lot of time talking – explaining things. A question-based approach, combined with the need for variety in methods of classroom working, may stimulate learners. Part of the aim of every teacher must be to switch teaching methods in order to sustain interest of learners.

  It seems that pupils may learn a lot from one another if teachers explain things clearly to them so that they can do them later among themselves. In an environment where there are few teachers, such strategies seem to be more effective than teachers' explanations seeming to be rushed and brief in order to complete the syllabus.

- (iii) *Explaining the right things*. Teachers need to know the subject content well before they can explain it. Modern language teachers,

for example, are expected to be right up to date with contemporary spoken and written language, and able to cover non-fiction as well as traditional fiction. Knowledge of subject matter and strategies for explaining are often closely connected. If a teacher has a good grasp of what is to be taught (the content), it puts him/her in a better position to determine appropriate strategies (how to explain the topic). This idea of 'pedagogic content knowledge' is important: the expert explainer is one who not only has mastery of the content knowledge, but who also has the expertise to represent that content knowledge in ways that make it easily understandable to learners.

Teachers are also reminded in their explanation to find out what individual pupils already know and understand about a topic or concept; to use an appropriate language register with choice of words and phrases appropriate to the context; and find out about misconceptions which need to be unlearned because the pupils' perspectives are especially important (Wragg and Brown, 2001).

Goal: improving pupils' learning

The main goal of explaining in classrooms is to give understanding to students. There are certain points to bear in mind when talking of the pupil's perspective, as exemplified by Wragg and Brown (2001). In summary these can be expressed:

- *Understanding*: During the explanatory process, pupils' understanding should be growing and the teacher should be able to predict roughly the final expected level of attainment, given the capabilities of the child or group concerned.
- *Involvement*: Pupils themselves need to be involved in the process, rather than merely act as the passive recipients of an explanation, i.e. participating in discussion, asking and answering questions, making suggestions or observations and helping to shape the process, wherever this is appropriate. This is not to say that every explanation should be interactive, but that there should be sensitivity to the active role that members of the class might play.
- *Mutual explanation*: Opportunities should be provided for pupils to explain to teachers and also for pupils to explain to one another.

- *Listening*: Teachers must listen to their students and respond to what they hear, while pupils listen to the teacher and to one another. People sometimes say that they are listening, but they have often already decided what they are going to do next, or they think they know what pupils are going to say, so they 'listen' with closed ears.
- *Using and extending ideas*: It is important to secure some degree of involvement, but a further step is to weave pupils' ideas into the discussion or activity and then extend these.
- *Humour*: There are many kinds of humour, and studies have shown that children like humour, although they dislike sarcasm. Humour related to the concept(s) being explained, as opposed to gratuitously humorous asides not relevant to the topic, may help learning, since it can aid recall and, in certain cases, enhance understanding. Humour should appear natural and spontaneous because forced humour can have a much less positive effect.
- *Further appetite*: Try to create a feeling that something interesting and worthwhile has been learned and thus whet pupils' appetite for learning more (Wragg and Brown, 2001, pp. 55–56).

Aids to explaining

Audio visual aids have a significant purpose in classroom teaching and learning (Woods, 1996). They aid explaining, add concreteness and realism, complement verbal explanations, add interest, promote curiosity and break up a long explanation with something more tangible. Woods argues that much of pupils' learning in school is alienated because it consists of other people's knowledge purveyed in transmission mode. It seems that a good deal of Zambian political 'wisdom' on educational issues stresses the formal (lecturing) approach to teaching. However, one aspect of the teacher's role is to give effective explanations; **part** of the pupils' commitment is to listen to them. The more effectively explanations are constructed, the more learning is expected to occur. Nevertheless, explaining should not be divorced from its wider contexts. Explaining is one of the weapons in the armoury of the teacher and occupies only part of the teachers' time.

The next strategy is questioning.

Questioning in classrooms

Questioning is a teaching strategy or a set of strategies that is used frequently (Cooper and Hill, 2000). Both in theoretical debate and in practice, there seem to be several different purposes for using questioning in teaching. Perhaps the most common purposes are:

- to find out about learners' knowledge, understanding or views;
- to pose problems for learners to challenge their thinking; and
- to provide models for the kinds of questioning involved in successfully pursuing an intellectual task, such as making sense of a text.

Much debate about questioning as a teaching strategy is implicitly concerned with which of these or other purposes should be pursued, while research on teachers' questioning has not tended to be very conclusive. Much of the debate and of the research has been conducted in terms of different types of questions. Of the many ways of categorising questions, the distinction between 'higher order' and 'lower order' is probably the simplest and the most popular.

Low- and higher-order questions

The distinction between low and higher order questions is in terms of the tasks that students are asked by the questions to undertake. 'Higher order' questions are those that seem to require more intellectually demanding tasks, corresponding to the second and third of the three purposes suggested above – for example, tasks of reasoning or problem-solving. 'Lower order' questions are those that seem to demand less intellectually demanding tasks, such as expressing opinions or recalling previously-learned facts. The distinction is a crude and imperfect one, and embodies a built-in preference for the 'higher-order' type of question.

Most questions that teachers ask in classrooms are among the lower order questions, mainly of recall. The value of higher order questions may have less to do with passing examinations, and more to do with developing pupils' cognitive and critical faculties. Some researchers have suggested that higher order questioning in classrooms does not have a measurable effect on pupils' abilities to pass examinations. The evidence that higher order questioning falls off in examination groups suggests that passing examinations requires more repetitive and conformist skills of students.

There is some evidence (Davies, 1996) to suggest that teachers use the same repertoire of questioning skills, and the same patterns of questioning,

lesson after lesson. The number and type of questions used by an individual teacher tends to remain constant from one observed occasion to another. Teacher questions reveal the kind of thinking that person expects from students; it also sets the whole tone of learning in that class: enquiry, conformity, regurgitation, speculation and so on.

Common types of questions in English teaching include:

- What did we talk about yesterday?
- What does …… mean?
- Who is the writer referring to?

While all these questions might well be recall questions, only the first of them is ambiguously seeking recall and not a higher order question. What the other two questions certainly seem to do is to focus the attention of teacher and students on the same intellectual task. They seem to be the 'staple diet' of classroom questioning in the teaching of English. What these questions share is that they are all designed to help students recall or revise material that has already been covered. They are useful as a starting point to a session or a topic because they focus the student's mind on the subject matter before the teacher tries to move on. In the teaching of English literature or literature in English (literature not necessarily being English, but could be West African, American or Caribbean), the communal reading of a text exemplified by the particular questions quoted earlier, with the teacher working through the text by asking questions and elaborating on the most helpful answers, seems a very common type of activity in English teaching.

Recall questions

It seems teachers want to establish some common intellectual ground, some shared knowledge with pupils before the lesson moves on. Recall questions are valuable in serving that function. Sometimes these questions are also used during lessons as a means for the teacher to obtain feedback on how learning is progressing. Different kinds of questions are likely to be appropriate for different purposes.

Although learning of more ambitious and open kinds may be significant, it appears that low-order questions are important for teachers and pupils when it comes to passing examinations. Many academic commentators wish to promote more higher order, more open, problem-solving questions, while most teachers, faced with the real task, implicitly value a larger

proportion of lower-order and more closed questions (Wragg and Brown, 2001).

Reading

In learning to read, factors such as reading material, its use and availability, level of difficulty, silent or loud reading and support may contribute to the quality of the interactive learning context available for learners and teachers. A behavioural interactionist perspective comes into its own as a powerful model for understanding aspects of the process of learning to read and, more importantly, how to structure a responsive social context for more effective tutoring of reading. The emphases for reading in both Zambian and British English classrooms/lessons are to encourage pupils to:

- Read an increasingly wide range of different types of texts, or genres;
- Respond critically to this range of genres;
- Read voluntarily for pleasure;
- Become independent in their selection and evaluation of books and other materials as sources of information;
- Develop conscious control over their own reading and study strategies; and
- Develop sensitivity to an increasing awareness of the linguistic selections and patterns which distinguish one genre from another and which are used to achieve an almost infinite range of literacy, persuasive and communicative functions.

  Source: Davies, 1990

The difference in the United Kingdom and Zambia may be that in Zambia reading material is scarce, thus affecting the achievement of the aims of reading in secondary schools.

A widely-agreed goal of education is to foster in students an affinity for books and reading. Yet surveys show that children read comparatively few books and spend only a small amount of time reading (e.g. Farquhar, 1987; Garvey and Hegarty, 1987; Whitehead et al, 1977). For example, the 2001 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) found that 13 per cent of children in England disliked reading compared to an international average of 6 per cent. The report claims that children in England spent more time watching television and playing computer games[1] . Inter-

est in reading requires the cultivation of a reading ethos, of the teacher reading alongside students and promoting an interchange of opinions about reading, allowing students to explore their own reading interests, making recommendations as an adult reader and demonstrating one's own enthusiasm for reading. A wide range of reading materials should be available for independent reading, such as prose, poetry, dictionaries and language reference books.

As a teaching strategy, reading is distinctively important for language teaching and specifically English teaching in this context, but perhaps distinctive in its purposes and in its nature. Further complications arise from the differences between first and second language teaching, and from the linguistic realities faced by teachers in Zambian secondary schools.

Below the author considers conditions that contribute to effective reading.

Conditions for effective reading

- *Opportunity*. For pupils' reading, the most important setting event is regular opportunity to read meaningful passages from interesting books to an interested listener. This view is supported by authors such as Smith (1978), Clay (1979) and McNaughton (1987).

  The level of difficulty of books is clearly another antecedent influencing teacher and child interaction in reading. Books that are too difficult to read present so many new words that they become contexts for word-by-word reading and for excessive attention to graphonic cues. They offer severely limited opportunities for children to employ semantic and contextual strategies to solve unknown problems.

- *Guidance*. A related antecedent event in learning to read that teachers easily provide is a preparatory introduction and discussion of the material to be read. Research in New Zealand by Wong and McNaughton (1980) demonstrated that a seven-year-old reader improved her accuracy and self-correction of errors on occasions when the teacher carried out in advance a simple discussion of the story to identify events, outcomes and unfamiliar words and concepts. These results have been confirmed in two further studies (Singh and Singh, 1984; Knott and Moore, 1988).

  It seems clear that one-to-one reading sessions may well make more effective learning contexts if the tutor takes the time to introduce

the material to read, perhaps by discussing the story and by pointing out words the child is unlikely to have encountered before. This antecedent procedure may provide a more effective means of improving reading accuracy than the more intrusive and time-consuming method of the teacher responding to errors as they occur.

- *Level and variety of reading material.* Wharton and Race (1999) argue that reading is both a matter of quality and of quantity. Pupils need to learn the skills of target language reading and need a rich exposure to a variety of written texts. Such exposure will contribute to general language improvement, as well as fostering reading competence itself.

  Teachers need to supplement the readings in the textbook. Extra readings are usually easy to get hold of and may be an opportunity for the teacher to respond to pupils' particular interests and to bring new ideas into the class. Learners could also be asked to bring in texts for use in class. In these ways, the teacher can give pupils exposure to a wider variety of texts.

  Wharton and Race (1999) propose ten tips on enhancing effective learning through reading. Some of these include:

  — Using comprehension questions carefully;

  — Using reading as an input to other tasks, for example, writing summaries of texts;

  — Talking about good reading strategies such as skimming;

  — Talking about text structure, the parts of texts that carry important information;

  — Teaching dictionary skills: practice in looking up words and understanding the information and examples will give learners confidence to read outside class. By studying its explanations and examples, learners can gain a richer picture of the meanings of words they do not know; and

  — Encouraging reading for pleasure: including this as a class activity, occasionally with short texts, and helping learners to choose suitable books, magazines etc… and sometimes asking them about their reading.

- *Other methods to support reading*. Other strategies proposed by Davies (1996) may include: cloze procedure, where certain words are deleted from a text and pupils read aloud predictions for the missing words and explain the reasoning; a sequencing of events in a prose extract; predicting events by the look of the cover or during reading in class; questioning the text to understand it better and make meaning; teacher reading; shared reading in groups with good readers helping the less able; supported reading by classroom assistants; individual reading; dramatic reading from texts; and games and ice breakers such as those proposed by Davison and Dowson (1998). Other strategies suggested include still images of a group posing for a scene from a book and later bringing the characters to life; hot-seating, where pupils choose to represent a character in a book and other students devise questions to determine how the character feels at a particular moment; and plays reconstructed from the events in a text. All such strategies could be used to motivate students to read and develop other skills related to reading.

  Use of a good proportion of authentic texts is encouraged. Successful reading of texts from the world outside the classroom is motivating and exposure to such sources can provide language development opportunities on conscious and unconscious levels. Teachers may adjust the task associated with the reading to make the text accessible. Wharton and Race (1999) argue that one of the most important factors that predetermine success in learning of any kind is *confidence*. Language learning is particularly dependent upon confidence. Teachers need to give learners every chance to develop this confidence, and one of the best ways of assisting them to do this is to help them to gain greater control over the *processes* they apply during their learning.

Writing

This section focuses on writing as a strategy for teaching English, what teachers use writing to achieve and how best they can use writing to achieve such goals.

The role of writing in thinking and learning has been widely emphasised by Langer and Applebee (1987) and Langer (1986). For many students, writing in school consists of laborious handwriting, copying information from textbooks or note taking dictated by the teacher or written on the board. Different subject teachers may have differing expectations regarding

the content and style of written work, but some may emphasise features such as neat handwriting, tidy presentation and correct spelling of words already learnt in primary school (Langer and Applebee, 1987).

For English, the purposes of writing may be partly for examination purposes, yet there seems more to it than that. Davies (1996) claims that:

> *'In everyday life, we are more likely to use writing not only to remember things, but also to organise our ideas, reflect on experience, communicate with others, clarify ideas, report events, share opinions, entertain, inform and persuade. We use a variety of forms to transfer our inner thoughts to an explicit recorded form, ranging from notes and diagrams, to diaries and formal reports. If we are writing to inform, or entertain, we choose from a variety of literary and non-literary formats: plays, poetry or leaflets.'*
>
> Davies, 1996, p. 120.

There are certain conditions needed for effective writing. Some students may need peace and quiet, while others prefer background music. Resources such as dictionaries, a thesaurus, a word processor or spell-checker help to make writing easier. Students as writers appreciate a constructive and tactful response to their work.

Kinds of writing

The kinds of writing in English lessons depend on what objective the teacher would like to achieve. The National Curriculum in England and Wales proposes a variety of types of writing, which include accounts, stories, lists, captions, posters, instructions, letters, poems, invitations, play scripts, descriptions, reports and essays. Teachers and students should be aware of a clear sense of purpose for writing, and students need to realise that as writers in control of their writing, it is they who should decide upon the format and style that is most appropriate for the intended readers. It is argued that:

> *'Students are more motivated if they are asked to write with a genuine say in what they are to write about and if there is a genuine purpose for writing. Teachers may need to help students where they can write to appropriate people such as local politicians, to express their own views on genuine local issues. They can be encouraged to write to newspapers, magazines and television as an outlet for their views. Writing is easier if it is based on some form of reality, so if students are writing in the form of a report or survey, it may be more relevant if they actually carried out the research.'*
>
> Davies, 1996, p. 121.

The National Writing Project (1993) in England carried out several action research projects investigating effective practice in teaching students about writing. Their research identified the structure of the developmental writing process as:

1. Motivation to write
2. Brainstorming
3. Reflection
4. Making preliminary notes
5. Drafting
6. Revising
7. Editing
8. Writing final copy
9. Publishing/display
10. Response from readers

Source: Davies, 1996, p. 121

Whatever kind of writing a student is presenting, the above seems workable and likely to produce better writing skills than one where students just write one draft and submit for marking. Langer and Applebee's (1987) analysis of the effects of different writing tasks (e.g. note-taking, answering questions, essays) on different learning tasks (e.g. recall, argumentation, composition) yielded three main findings. First, all types of written response lead to better performance in learning tasks than reading without writing. The more the material to be learned is manipulated, the better it is understood and remembered and the more stable are these effects. Second, the benefits derived from writing tasks are situated; that is, the writing process only involves ideas and information dealt with in the context of a specific writing activity, and its effects cannot be generalised. Third, the various learning tasks differ according to the breadth of the information to be processed and the depth of its processing. Different writing tasks promote different kinds of learning.

In English, composition writing of descriptions, essays, reports, articles or stories help promote better writing skills. Grammar, comprehension, summarising and other shorter exercises may also enhance better writing skills in composition.

Purpose of writing

Tynjala and others (2001, p. 16) propose that writing may be a useful and effective strategy too for domain content learning, provided that certain conditions are met. These are:

- Writing tasks should promote active knowledge construction. They should induce students to engage in knowledge transforming processes, rather than in reproductive activities.

- The tasks should make use of students' previous knowledge and existing conceptions of and beliefs about the topics they are studying (free writing before studying the topic).
- The tasks should encourage students to reflect on their own experiences and conceptualise and theorise about them.
- The tasks should involve the students in applying theories to practical situations and solving practical problems and problems of understanding.
- The tasks should be integrated with classroom discourse and other schoolwork, such as small group discussions and reading.

Sometimes writing may be helpful if conducted collaboratively to enhance better learning. Collaborative writing, in pairs or groups, may be useful in classrooms. It seems that the Zambian context provides opportunities in classrooms for this (Kelly, 1998). Using collaboration in learning to write has been argued for on the basis of the Vygotskian view of the social nature of learning on the one hand, and on the basis of the process-based approach on the other hand. The literature in this field (Slavin, 1994b; Crook, 1994; Littlejohn and Light, 1999; Speck, Johnson, Dice and Heaton, 1999) suggests that collaborative writing may be:

- More efficient, because different aspects of the task can be shared out;
- Of better quality, because different individuals can contribute different ideas and different expertise;
- Better thought out, because each individual has to take into account the others' points of view;
- Written more quickly, because the less-able contributor is helped by the more able; *or*
- Written more slowly, because the less-able contributor holds back the more able ones.

Collaborative writing may generally provide a good context for learning to write and writing to learn.

Traditionally, different forms of class activities in English may be separated from each other. For example, separate reading and writing classes may be needed in order to teach and practise basic skills, but once students have acquired them, integrating different classes and combining different

activities may open new avenues for learning better. This idea has been applied, for example, in the writing-across-curriculum movement (e.g. Young and Fulwiler, 1986) and seems to have yielded good results. Some studies carried out on different school levels have shown that combining reading and writing tasks or reading, writing and group discussions is a promising approach and may enhance the positive effects of these activities; it may also produce more desirable learning outcomes than when the activities are used as separate methods (see, for example, Dysthe, 1996; Gaskins et al, 1994; Lonka and Ahola, 1995; Mason, 1998; Tierney, O'Flahavan and McGinley, 1989; Tynjala, 1998 and 1999).

Marking (feedback and assessment)

Marking is a task frequently carried out in private, away from the classroom. Dunsbee and Ford (1980, p. 1) argue that marking has always been a thorn in the educationist's flesh, one they wish would go away because it has nothing to do with 'real teaching'. Dunsbee and Ford conducted an investigation into correcting pupils' work and they advance their arguments after an investigation of everyday practice.

Problems in marking

It is important to consider the problems of assessment and correction that have been discussed and raised before. The Bullock Report (1975) raised a concern that:

> *'...there has been a welcome increase in opportunities for teachers to discuss the assessment of children's written work. This has ranged from the experience of inter-school assessment and moderation in 16+ examinations to the informal study of primary school children's writing in teachers' centres. We should like to see such opportunities taken up more widely, for we have no doubt that the understanding that grows from them can have a considerable influence on the development of children's writing'.*

An assumption prevails to the effect that genuinely enlightened teachers do not 'mark' extended pieces of written work. This emerges from a study of books about the teaching of English, in which the desultory 'marking' most serving teachers would recognise as being close to reality is roundly condemned. Instead, other kinds of feedback, calculated to contribute more effectively to students' learning are preferred. Marking does constitute a major teacher-activity, which consumes hours of their time. Despite new

teaching methods, 'marking' continues to represent virtually the sole means of written mediation between teachers and their pupils. Indeed, in schools where classes are large and the average teaching commitment is heavy, like the schools in Zambia, it may be the sole regular means of communication of any sort between teachers and pupils.

Goal: modifying pupils' written work

One key assumption underlying 'marking' appears to be that a pupil's subsequent writing will be modified for the better. In practice, this is an unrealistic aim for something so often ill-conceived and more of a pain than a pleasure for most teachers; indeed, it seems that when children eliminate mistakes in their writing, this does not follow directly from the teacher's drawing attention to them. *Correcting, marking, grading, assessing, evaluating* – these are all terms used relatively indiscriminately to describe what most teachers do when they collect in pieces of writing from their classes. What is implied is primarily the evaluation of aspects of what has been written.

One would expect that awarding of marks might be helpful to most pupils. It is even more helpful when the teacher and pupils agree beforehand that a finite number of marks may be gained by completing certain specified tasks satisfactorily. There is no doubt that marks used selectively can encourage further learning. For instance, a child is set ten sums to do and, having done them and had them marked, finds he or she has been given 18 out of 20. By studying the accompanying 18 ticks and two crosses on the paper, it will not take the child long to see that two answers were wrong and to begin to puzzle out why. Similarly, if a pupil is tested on ten spellings and gets seven out of ten, then he or she can set to work to locate and learn the three that were wrong.

At first sight, grading offers a teacher more flexibility, its comparative lack of precision often being seen as its saving grace. Yet the very fact that a single grade can be assigned to a broader spectrum of work than a single mark is also the system's greatest weakness. If 10 out of 20 is hard to interpret across the curriculum, it is much more difficult to relate a C+ in history to a C+ in science or English to B- or higher. Is the standard according to a pupils' level of achievement or in comparison with other pupils? How capable are teachers of unravelling such distinctions? Richard Atkinson (1975) has been:

> *'...tempted to wonder just how frequently members of a department sit down and discuss the criteria by which they propose to mark the third*

year English essays or the second year History essays. They may well discuss how certain components of their course are to be weighted... but this is not the same thing. Criteria, therefore, might be explicit or implicit; they might find common utilisation within a department or they might not be discussed at all.'

Atkinson's point cannot be taken lightly. If a pass/fail concept is additionally built into a marking or grading system, then it is only justifiable if the system itself and its sub-divisions can be defended on strictly rational grounds. Thus one moves from discussing an apparently simple classroom practice, to discussing what constitutes ethical behaviour on the part of a teacher. Of course, genuine doubt about the objectivity of either marks or grades, even at the highest levels of academic study, has existed for many years. For example, Sir Philip Hartog *et al* (1935) note:

'There seems to be a fundamental difference between the two systems. The literal system indicates only an order in classification, not ratios of proficiency. It would appear that the literal mark indicates in the examiner's mind a certain 'quality'. The question of 'quantity' probably enters into his estimate only in a subordinate degree. With the numerical system, marks for questions are added up to furnish a total, a procedure which is convenient, though it is based on hypotheses which it is not perhaps easy to analyse and justify.'

Perhaps one may regard the 'marking for impression' as superficial marking. According to Creber (1972) superficial correction may often be symptomatic of a poorly-developed teacher-pupil relationship. Superficial correction may also reflect a teacher's narrow conception of what constitutes an appropriate response to the pupils' writing.

Britton et al (1975) thoughtfully compared writing by students in school with writing in other contexts:

'In schools, it is almost always the teacher who initiates the writing and pupils expect that. The teacher also defines a writing task with more or less explicitness and nominates himself as audience. He is not simply a one-man audience, but also the sole arbiter, appraiser, grader and judge of the performance. He becomes an audience to whom pupils must focus a special kind of scrutiny in order to detect what they must do to satisfy him. The peculiar feature of this relationship is that the pupil will see his teacher's response as a means by which his progress is being charted. It is part of a larger and more elaborate system of making judgements and not simply a question of the reader's pleasure or insight. Indeed the writer is frequently placed in the position of telling the reader what the latter already knows more fully and more deeply.'

It may be argued that these points have no direct bearing upon the secondary school's function of preparing pupils for examinations. Taken together, however, they ensure that every academic lesson becomes testing in both senses of the word for the pupils and, as a result, pupils' attitudes towards writing in particular can be drastically modified. In secondary school, great variation in both presentation and reception of 'correction' tasks across the curriculum is unavoidable. How teachers deal with mistakes, in particular, often conflicts with the guidance pupils themselves feel they ought to receive. If the most effective learning does follow on from making mistakes (or at least false starts), then the alienation of so many pupils from the writing process may largely stem from a sense of frustration with teachers who ride rough-shod over the gaps in learning that mistakes signify.

Some comments may be helpful to some pupils' written work, while others may not. It may be helpful for a teacher to offer comprehensive corrections to be copied out and perhaps explain how they should be done. For instance, pupils could copy instructions into their exercise books at the beginning of the year:

- *Spelling mistakes – write the word correctly* three *times*.
- *Any other sort of mistake (punctuation, words missed out, bad choice of words) – write the* whole *sentence again*.
- *Rewrite the paragraph that has more three structural errors*.

All the above emphasise the technical mastery of language. Through writing, pupils may learn different styles and perhaps become better in writing skills. What pupils *learn* may be seen to a large extent in the use of the language and written work. It has been suggested that:

> *'We need to select examples that tell pupils, appropriately to their age and experience, what use man makes of words. There are some of the uses of language that pupils will encounter themselves. In asking pupils to use language, again in ways appropriate to their age and experience, a teacher has a particular function. He needs to specify the kind of use, for whom it is intended and its purpose. He may need to tolerate, and to expect tolerance of, degrees of hesitance and uncertainty in language, and to encourage co-operative work with it. At the same time he needs to prepare for linguistic intolerance, and for attitudes to language that may conflict with those which he is encouraging'.*
>
> *Source:* Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education report, 1977.

One may ask at this point: Do teachers help pupils refine their use of language by helping to see the kind of use for whom it is intended and its purpose? Is there tolerance in the kind of feedback teachers give to students? An examination of marked written scripts in Dunsbee and Ford (1980, pp. 41–50) reveals that a high proportion of the corrections teachers make relate to minor technicalities, because they are easiest to correct. In terms of the individual progress of pupils, writing should be appropriate to any given circumstance is more crucial factor than technical accuracy. Students need assessment of learning as well as assessment for learning, the latter referred to as 'formative' assessment (James, 1998).

Student feedback can be seen to have two or more purposes. It can give them formative feedback on their successes and guidance on those areas where they need to improve. It can also provide a summative assessment of the standard achieved in a particular task. In addition, perhaps it may be useful for teachers to encourage pupils to perfrom the same kind of marking of their peers' written work, because the giving of grades alone can undermine the formative intention of narrative comments. According to Black and William (1998), all feedback must be primarily formative: to improve learning and performance. Thus involvement of students may be helpful. Teachers may engage pupils actively and encourage them to review and criticise their peers' writing with a view to enabling *pupils themselves* to make comparative assessments of merit on a regular basis (James, 1998).

The way written work is marked may have a direct effect upon the kinds of writing that pupils actually produce. The *way* teachers *teach* in the classrooms may also have an impact on the kinds of writing and *learning* that takes place in classrooms. For significant change to take place, there must be the will *within* a school not only for radical action by the individual teacher, but also by departments and ultimately the whole school to enhance pupils' learning through constant feedback on their written work.

Differences in register have to be consciously taught. It is a false supposition that the English department will somehow always act as a 'language service unit' to the rest of the school, and that pupils' presumed inadequacies in written self-expression across the curriculum will continually be referred back to their English teachers. It is neither in English lessons nor at the instigation of English specialists that pupils are ordinarily required to write in registers of history, geography or science. However, the marking of English written work may help pupils in writing better in other registers.

Group work

For both teachers and pupils, group work appears to be a useful activity in classroom teaching and learning. Plenty of material is covered and most pupils participate in the discussions. Sutton (1981) argues that:

> *'Children learn by talking and listening, and should be given more opportunity to talk. Children talking in small groups are taking an active part in all their work. Tentative and inexplicit talk in small groups is the bridge from partial understanding to confident meaningful statement. Present talking is future thinking'.*
>
> Sutton 1981, p. 2.

Tarleton (1988), for example, points out that, 'we cannot expect children to improve in oracy without making explicit the skills behind the words'. He emphasises that pupils have to realise that talking is a way of learning. They have to know that what they say will vary according to the audience, the purpose of the talk and the style of the talk, for instance discussion, formal debate and so on. The role and presence of a teacher is therefore crucial in classrooms.

Purpose of group work

Communication in classrooms. Pair work and group work have become almost synonymous with the modern 'communicative' language classrooms and many teachers have found that these techniques have a lot to offer. Because they provide an opportunity for a genuine information and opinion exchange, they encourage very useful language practice. They also help learners to get used to working co-operatively and helping each other (Wharton and Race, 1999, p. 21; Slavin, 1997). Pupils may learn a great deal from each other. In small group situations, teachers can capitalise on this and help pupils to derive the maximum benefit from each other. It is claimed (Wharton and Race, 1999, p. 17) that group work will:

- Promote self esteem
- Promote cognitive challenge
- Provide a feeling of security
- Allow personal expression.

Motivate students. Teachers may need to use groups for learners' areas of interest. They can also help learners to be more engaged in the learning

activity by sharing the rationale for what they (teachers) are doing. Teachers are encouraged to discuss learning strategies explicitly and encourage learners to think about the sorts of activities that best help them to learn and to involve learners in decision-making.

Group work is one way to improve the students' active participation in class. The important point is that any improvement in teaching and in conditions of learning can better be achieved in a joint venture. Pupils learn to become more self-determined, to assume responsibility for class discussions, and the teacher learns to yield 'power' to the students, to give up his or her domination of class management, developments which greatly improve the work and also the social atmosphere (Hermes, 1999). Learner autonomy may be achieved in groups that work better when pupils take different leadership roles within them. It may be argued that learner autonomy is achieved most effectively through individuals working on their own. Holec, provides the most comprehensive definition of 'learner autonomy' as 'the ability to take charge of one's own learning' and elaborates on the decisions concerning 'all aspects of this learning', that is:

> *'Determining the objectives; defining the contents and progressions; selecting methods and techniques to be used; monitoring the procedure of acquisition; properly speaking (rhythm, time, place, etc.); evaluating what has been acquired.'*
>
> *Source:* Holec, quoted in Nunan, 1995, p. 193.

The comprehensiveness of this concept seems to be somewhat dangerous. It is an illusion to assume that even mature adult students would be able to reach such a degree of autonomy. The basis for each step towards more autonomy is discussion with the pupils themselves, in order not only to make them familiar with the advantages of group learning, but also to make them aware that the path to responsibility and self-determination is an arduous one that requires more motivation and dedication as well as persistence than they are normally used to.

Previous research into student interaction has shown clearly that the overall structure of a session has to be imposed by the teacher (Hermes, 1999, p. 199). This sounds counterintuitive, but it makes sense that the teacher pre-structures the session in order to save time for the pupils' learning processes.

Drama and role play

Drama and role play involve the use of language in enacting scenes or playing characters the students themselves may not necessarily be. In English, this promotes language use in a role that is not one's own and may be seen as one way to motivate students and perhaps promote better understanding of texts, books, grammar, listening and speaking English; it also provides practice for the wider use of English.

Goals of drama and role play

One of the goals for use of drama is to get students actively involved in their own learning of language styles, expressions, debate and so on. In addition, other overtly active methods, which Boekaerts (1997), for example, distinguishes are discussed here.

Active learning. Recent research on learning stems from a large variety of different approaches, all of which emphasise the learner's activity (Boekaerts, 1997; Boekaerts, Pintrich and Zeidner, 2000; Simons, 1997; Niemi, 1997). In modern learning, many concepts, such as authentic learning, self-directed learning, self-regulated learning, independent learning, autonomous learning, problem solving and active learning, have a common purpose, although they originate from somewhat different theoretical frameworks. The common feature is the learner's active impact on learning and the learner's involvement in the learning process. This active role may be manifested in individual and co-operative learning strategies (Simons, 1997; Slavin, 1997; Niemi, 1997).

Drama and role-play may help pupils to be active learners in classrooms. Active learning is one of the most important goals in the European scenarios. The important characteristic of the learning society is the learners' own initiatives and responsibilities for their own progress. Learning has been acknowledged lately in Europe to be the very core of economic development (e.g. Lundwall, 2000; Oliver, 1999; White Paper, 1995; Cochinaux and de Woot, 1995). Learning and the acquisition of competence and skills are the most important tools for achieving individual or organisational goals, and may be gained in classroom activities such as drama, role play and group work. However, achievement of the goal of active learning is not easy or self-evident. Teachers are considered as key factors in promoting active learning in classrooms. All pedagogical arrangements should improve the quality of learning, enhance the equality of opportunities for different learners and help combat social exclusion.

Active methods in teaching and learning have been requested in many educational debates at national and international levels (Randi and Corno, 2000; Stern and Huber, 1997). Monique Boekaerts (1997), as a researcher of self-regulated learning, describes a recent situation in schools and societies in the following way:

> *'Most classrooms are still populated with students who are not self-regulating in their learning, and most teachers are not yet equipped to turn students into self-regulated learners. In most cases, teachers are still steering and guiding the learning process, a situation which does not invite students to use or develop their cognitive or motivational self-regulatory skills. Usually, students are expected to reproduce and apply the new information that the teacher has presented or made available.'*
>
> *Source:* Boekaerts, 1997, p. 162.

Pupils' talking in groups is not the only kind of speaking and listening in which they need to engage. The school environment is inevitably artificial and every opportunity should be taken to let pupils go out in groups into the world outside the school and talk with as many different people as possible. In this way, pupils may be actively involved in their own learning. In English lessons, such activities may also help in producing some language that may be suitable for different registers.

One way of conducting such activities is through role play and drama. Pupils may experience or act out roles that they imagine or are directed by the teacher. Incidents could include: a council of elders disagreeing on something; a woman with three children wrongly accused of shoplifting; the local newspaper interviewing a teacher about an incident; discussions in parliament; and many more instances closer to the lives of the children involved. Role-playing activities seem enjoyable to pupils. One important aspect of talking and its importance to English teaching is the diversity of gifts it offers in the use of speech. Role-plays may help pupils of social backgrounds with different levels of language competence to mix easily. The teacher as facilitator is, therefore, expected to perform good management skills.

Peer and Teacher support. Promoting active learning in classrooms has a clear influence on teachers' roles (Grimmett, 1994). Case studies from different countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Active Learning Project (Stern and Huber, 1997) revealed that teachers who wanted to tutor their pupils to become active learners had a new pedagogical role. They became facilitators who gave more responsibility to students; they were more democratic; and they nego-

tiated more with students about aims, methods and control of learning. They saw, more than they had before, all learners as resources for one another.

Stern and Huber's (1997) study revealed that new teaching methods, which consisted of more independent learning, more collaborative arrangements, and more open tasks and projects, enabled students to collaborate with each other, but often with a teacher also as a partner in a learning team. The teacher's position was no longer in front of the classroom, nor in the centre of the classroom, but s/he was a circulating expert, learning together with students and trying to give them as much space as possible.

Quizzes and games

The main aim of using quizzes and games in English lessons may be to motivate pupils and make learning lively and as informal as possible. At the same time, the students learn different language skills that may be taken for granted, such as listening and speaking skills, expressions, spellings, authors, characters, scenes, plots in literature and so on. Such activities also contribute to the development of essential skills such as listening, observing, trust, attention and concentration. Quizzes and games are also a means to help students remember and use language in a relaxed atmosphere, which may not be marked for examination purposes and may be graded to groups rather than individuals.

Davison and Dowson (1998) stress the need for the teacher or leader to choose games that match the developmental level of the group. Such games could also contribute most to learning when linked to the topic of the lesson or scheme of work.

Beresford (1998), commenting on strategies most frequently used in classrooms, states that:

> *'Students of all ages tend to dislike the lecture as a teaching strategy. This may be because it remains the most common form of teaching strategy used in secondary schools. Students tend to like an element of activity or practical work in a lesson. They favour well-structured lessons with clear rules of conduct laid down by the teacher or negotiated with them.'*
>
> *Source:* Beresford, 1998, p. 24.

It may be argued that quizzes and games are most useful in primary schools, but in secondary schools such strategies may also motive pupils' learning when they are actively involved and competing in language games and quizzes.

Teacher cognition in language teaching

Researchers have increasingly recognised the importance of understanding teachers' cognition as a necessary basis for any kind of theorising about good practice. In keeping with that development, the following aims to summarise research findings on teachers' decision-making when planning and engaging in their teaching. The focus here is on teacher cognition primarily in language teaching.

The term 'teacher cognition' refers to the unobservable or revealed cognitive dimension of teaching – what teachers know, believe and mentally carry out. Mainstream educational research in the last 30 years or so has recognised the impact of teacher cognition on teachers' professional lives. In the early 1960s, authors like Ryans argued that

> *'…A major drawback to the improvement of teaching [and, hence, learning] has been the lack of understanding of teacher characteristics and the ways of estimating them. The effectiveness of teachers depends on the social or cultural group in which the teacher operates, the grade level and subject matter taught.'*
>
> Ryans, 1960, p. 9.

All these 'suggestions for improvement' reside somewhat outside of teachers' own thinking. More recent research has concentrated increasingly on teachers' beliefs, their thinking and the nature of their expertise. In contrast to Ryans' (1960) studies, later studies place the locus of improvement *within* the teacher. Bussis (1976) and other researchers, for example, assume that student learning will improve when teachers change their beliefs about the students and the curriculum.

Language teaching involves decisions about classroom activities, which are aimed at engaging students to learn a language.

Decisions about classroom activities

Teaching involves decision-making at each stage in a lesson. What is the nature of these decisions and why are certain decisions made? Studies of language teaching have attempted to identify reasons commonly cited by teachers in explaining their instructional decisions. In Breen's (1996) study, a concern for the cognitive processes that facilitate learning was the most common reason given. This means that techniques were chosen by teachers in the belief that these techniques would engage the cognitive processes of pupils that teachers felt were most conducive to second language learning. Johnson (1992) reported that the pre-service teachers in her study made

most decisions to ensure student understanding and motivation, as well as for instructional management reasons.

Nunan (1992) found that teachers' decision-making did not seem to take account of the distinctive issues involved in language teaching. In this case, teachers' concerns related mostly to pacing and timing of lessons, the quantity of teacher talk and the quality of their explanations and instructions. Richard's (1996) analysis of data from teacher narratives and interviews suggest that teachers accounted for their pedagogical choices with reference to maxims, that is, personal working principles. Similar principles were reported in Bailey (1996): for example, departure from lesson plans to deal with a question perceived to be 'for the common good' of learners or planned activities in order to maintain student's engagement and interest levels.

What is striking about these studies is the lack of consistency of their findings. In particular, there seems to be variation in the extent to which teachers' decisions are primarily influenced by thinking about pupils' learning processes. Because of such variation, researchers have been led to focus on factors that influence teachers' decision-making.

Factors influencing teachers' decisions

The factors that influence teachers' decisions can be external or internal. Borg (2003) claims that teaching practices are also shaped by the social, psychological and environmental realities of the school and classroom. These factors include parents, principals' requirements, the school, society, curriculum mandates, classroom and school layout, school policies, colleagues, tests and availability of resources (p. 94). There is evidence to suggest that such factors may also hinder the ability of language teachers to adopt practices that reflect their beliefs (Richards and Pennington, 1998; Burns, 1996; Johnson, 1996; Crookes and Arakki, 1999). For example, Richards and Pennington's study in Hong Kong reveals that teachers trained in a version of the communicative method almost without exception diverged from the communicative principles. This was due to the impact of large classes, unmotivated students, examination pressures, a set syllabus, pressure to conform from more experienced teachers, students' limited proficiency in English, students' resistance to new ways of learning and heavy workloads.

Other factors may also account for teachers' decisions in language teaching. Golombek (1998), for example, explores tensions in teachers' work. In one case, the tension is discussed in terms of a teacher's desire to achieve a balance in her lessons between attention to both accuracy and fluency. How-

ever, her own negative experiences of language learning discourage her from attending to accuracy as much as she would like to, for fear of making her students feel bad. The multi-faceted nature of this teachers' personal practical knowledge surfaces as she articulates and attempts to make sense of this tension. Golombek concludes that classroom practice and personal practical knowledge exert a powerful and continual influence on one another:

> *'The teachers' personal practical knowledge informed their practice by serving as a kind of interpretive framework through which they made sense of their classrooms as they recounted their experiences and made this knowledge explicit. Because teachers use this knowledge in response to a particular context, each context reshapes that knowledge. In this way second language teachers' personal practical knowledge shapes and is shaped by understandings of teaching and learning.'*
>
> *Source:* Golombek, 1998, p. 459.

Woods (1996) attempted to distinguish teachers' knowledge and belief by conducting a longitudinal study of planning and decision-making in English as a second language (ESL) classrooms in Canada. Drawing on interviews, observations, video-based stimulated recall, teachers' logs and document analysis, his study tracked a group of teachers as they went through the process of planning and teaching their courses. The work provides detailed insight into teachers' decision processes and the factors shaping these processes. These factors relate not only to immediate antecedent conditions, but also to influences stemming from teachers' professional lives as a whole, for example, their prior language learning experiences – external and internal factors. An example of the complex range of external factors which impact on the decision-making process include:

- Number of students turning up
- Availability of photocopying
- Knowledge about students' prior course experience
- A recent conversation with another teacher
- Estimation of the complexity of a task
- Estimation of how well the students are moving forward as a group
- Estimation of what the group can handle

- Estimation of how well particular individuals in the class are moving forward
- Estimation of what particular individuals can handle
- Class dynamics and individual dynamics in class

Source: Woods, 1996, p. 129.

Internal factors relate to temporal and logical relationships amongst instructional decisions. Teachers need to organise instruction chronologically and hence to make decisions about what comes first, what follows and so on. Logical relationships refer to the different levels of generality at which planning occurs (e.g. course, lesson, activity, text); teachers' decisions are thus shaped by their understandings of relationships among different levels of course units. Woods highlighted the problems inherent in attempting to distinguish between constructs such as belief and knowledge. He proposed the notion of BAK (beliefs, attitudes, knowledge) to reflect his view that beliefs, assumptions and knowledge are points on a spectrum of meaning.

Approach to language teaching

Teachers' strategies or methods of teaching are likely to vary according to their beliefs and knowledge. To exemplify teachers' cognitive beliefs and knowledge in language teaching, Borg (2003) cites the teaching of grammar. He quotes as an example the research of Brumfit et al (1996) showing contrasting connections between cognitions and practices in grammar teaching in secondary English and modern foreign language classrooms. Foreign language teachers viewed knowledge about language largely in terms of sentence-based explicit grammar work, something they felt made a 'direct contribution to development of pupils' target language proficiency' (Brumfit et al, 1996, p. 77). English teachers, in contrast, adopted a text-based, functional approach to language work, rarely conducting explicit grammar work, reporting that this was of marginal relevance to the development of students' overall linguistic ability.

Borg states that research into language teachers' knowledge about language is needed. For although it is clear that effective instruction depends on much more than a mastery of subject matter, the relationships between declarative subject matter knowledge and practice in language teaching are still undeveloped. Johnston and Goettsch (2000) examined the knowledge base underlying the grammatical explanations of four experienced English

second language teachers in the United States of America. They observed that 'the way experienced teachers give explanations of grammar points in class is pedagogical content knowledge par excellence' (p. 449). Their analysis showed that grammatical rules did not feature prominently in the explanations of any of the teachers. Rather, the teachers placed much more emphasis on using examples during explanations and on the importance of student input in facilitating explanations. Teachers believed in encouraging student questions and devoting significant time to student-oriented discussions.

Reading and writing

Apart from speech, language teaching mainly involves reading and writing. The studies that Borg (2003), Johnson (1992) and Collie Graden (1996) examined on teacher cognition of teaching reading did not report actual reading practices in language teaching. Teacher behaviour and practical knowledge were not examined. However, the studies revealed low appreciation for reading comprehension and instances where most teachers questioned the importance of reading comprehension. Burns (1996) and Tsui (1996) examined teachers' cognitions and practices in the context of writing instruction. While it may seem useful that process writing produces better writers, Tsui's study illustrates changes in teacher's cognitions and practices over time and highlights the manner in which institutional and curricular factors can constrain teachers' capacity to implement practices they feel are desirable. Tsui's study illustrates the value of longitudinal research in tracing and making sense of changes in teachers' cognitions and practices over time. Borg's analysis of the studies conducted on reading and writing instruction in language teaching suggests that teachers' voices are somewhat lacking (p. 104).

Perhaps Borg's question is important here: Can language teacher cognition be usefully studied without reference to what happens in classrooms? The study highlighted in this book suggests that it is important to seek teachers' perspectives about what happens in classrooms in order to change or improve what teachers do in classrooms. The additional voice of pupils may also yield useful insights into what happens in language classrooms.

A central issue that has emerged in school effectiveness and improvement research as well as in language teaching is the role of context. Greater understanding of contextual factors such as institutional, social, political, economic, instructional and physical factors, all of which shape what language teachers do, are central to deeper insights into relationships between

cognition and practice. Any study of cognition and practice, without an awareness of the contexts in which these occur, may inevitably provide partial, if not flawed, understandings of teachers and teaching. In global terms, the range of contexts studied appears to be only partially representative of the actual range of language teaching settings. There appears to be minimal insight into state school settings, especially state schools in developing countries where languages are taught by non-native teachers to large classes and to students who may not be first speakers of English.

Nonetheless, previous research in other contexts has made it clear that it is possible to generate valuable understanding of the kinds of classroom processes and teachers' knowledge that contribute to effective teaching and learning. It is on such classroom processes that this book focuses in order to understand how inadequate inputs to schooling in Zambia led to inadequate outcomes, and in order to explore ways of improving schooling.

Summary on teacher cognition

It is clear that teachers' cognitions are significant in contributing to what happens in language classrooms. Teachers are responsible for what happens in the classroom, for dealing with the complexity of classroom life and handling large and diverse amounts of information. In the context of classrooms, teachers also experience various factors that influence their thinking and the decisions they make. Some external factors such as parents' expectations, curriculum mandates, and classroom and school layouts may hinder or support teachers in adopting practices that reflect their beliefs. Teachers may diverge from language-teaching principles, which they accept, because of the impact of large classes, examination pressures, their experience in teaching, students' limited proficiency in English and heavy workloads.

Given the foregoing review of teacher cognition, it is clear that teachers necessarily respond to the great complexity of the classroom situations they face. Certainly they have their own professional beliefs and priorities, which differ according to their self-conceptions, their training and other factors. In addition, however, they have to deal with innumerable externally-imposed constraints and practical contingencies of classroom life, so they adapt to these realities with a necessary emphasis on what is practically possible.

Scholars of classroom teaching have noted this complexity and the ways in which teachers respond. Doyle (1986), for example, articulates six intrinsic features of the classroom: first, multi-dimensionality – there are

many different people in any classroom, with different preferences, needs and abilities, in addition to there being a restricted range of resources used for different purposes in constantly changing circumstances. A teacher's choices are, therefore, never simple. The second feature is simultaneity: many things happen at once in the classroom and the teacher must monitor and regulate several different activities at the same time. The third feature is immediacy – that is, the rapid pace of classroom events: teachers are engaged in successive quick interactions with pupils, giving directions, explanations, questioning or answering questions, praising and reprimanding. In most instances teachers have little time to reflect before acting. Fourth is unpredictability: it is difficult to predict how any activity will go on a particular day. Detailed long-term planning seems counter-productive and even short-term plans need to be flexible. The fifth classroom feature is publicness – all pupils observe whatever teachers do in classrooms. What teachers do on any occasion can have important future repercussions. Finally, there is history – a class meeting the same teacher over many months establishes shared experiences, understandings and norms which inform its future activities; planning and decision-making needs to take account of a class's history.

Teachers must be able to deal with the unpredictable, immediate, public, simultaneous, multi-dimensional demands of classroom life in ways that win and maintain respect from their pupils, their colleagues, their managers and themselves. Experienced teachers tend necessarily to rely heavily on intuitive decision-making within a framework of priorities and simplifications geared to effective classroom teaching.

The central implication of the intuitive nature of teachers' expertise is that when conditions change, it is difficult for teachers to stand back far enough to see whether their practices are well attuned to the new conditions. Instead, they tend to seek the conditions for which their expertise is appropriate. Teachers need to be provoked to recognise that these desired conditions are not going to magically reappear; rather, they need to think about what would be best in the real conditions they face, including the possibility of their developing new kinds of expertise.

Developing good practice: conclusion

This chapter has focused on classroom teaching and learning, pupil and teacher perspectives and on good practice in teaching English. Some strategies of better teaching to enhance pupils' learning have been discussed. There appears to be a greater focus on interactive teaching and providing

pupils with some form of quality learning environment in terms of what they may get out of it. Student feedback is encouraged, as are interactions between teachers and students, motivating students to learn and assisting them to learn better through various strategies. Some classroom activities, such as explaining, reading, writing, feedback, group work, drama, quizzes and games have been discussed in this chapter to elicit how such activities could be useful in teaching English.

In view of the discussion in this chapter, the two overarching purposes of this book – seeking to understand the impact of economic and other government policies on the quality of secondary school achievement in Zambia, particularly in English, and seeking to explore ways in which the quality of teaching and learning might be improved, despite economic constraints – were pursued through investigation of the following research questions:

1. *What classroom activities/strategies do teachers use in English lessons?*
   (a) Which of these activities are frequently used?
   (b) Which of these activities are rarely used?
   (c) Which of these activities would pupils like their teacher to use?

2. *In what ways are some classroom activities helpful or unhelpful to pupils as learners?*
   (a) How do pupils talk about these strategies as being more helpful?
   (b) How do pupils talk about teaching and learning strategies as being less helpful?

3. *How far is teachers' use of teaching strategies, which they consider helpful to learners, limited by practical constraints?*
   (a) How do teachers talk about the teaching activities that are helpful to learners?
   (b) How do teachers talk about the constraints in teaching?

4. *What suggestions do teachers and pupils offer as ways of improving the teaching and learning of English?*

Chapter 4 analyses the factors that are useful or a hindrance to improving classroom teaching and learning, in order to understand the constraints experienced by teachers and pupils, as well as poor achievements. This final chapter also offers a way forward in improving teaching and learning of secondary English.

Note

1. *Times Educational Supplement*, 11 April 2003.