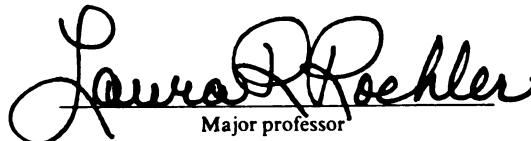This is to certify that the

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Teachers' Conceptions of Literacy and How
These Conceptions Relate to Literacy
Instruction in Zimbabwe

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AN INVESTIGATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL LANGUAGE

TEACHERS' CONCEPTIONS OF LITERACY AND HOW

THESE CONCEPTIONS RELATE TO LITERACY

INSTRUCTION IN ZIMBABWE

by

Albert Natsa

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
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1994

ABSTRACT

AN INVESTIGATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL LANGUAGE
TEACHERS' CONCEPTIONS OF LITERACY AND HOW
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INSTRUCTION IN ZIMBABWE

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Zimbabwe has undertaken significant steps to expand educational
opportunities at all levels since attaining independence in 1980. However, the
basic curricular structure continues to be modeled on the British educational
system. This orientates the goals of the system toward preparing students for
external examinations still influenced by the British examinations boards. This was
study aimed at investigating how current educational practices have shaped
language teachers' conceptions of the goals of literacy instruction and at identifying
the relationship between these underlying concepts and subsequent literacy
practices of teachers in their language classes.

This study was based on two major assumptions. First, literacy skills are a
major determinant of students' learning and thinking potentials both inside and
outside the school. Second, teachers make critical decisions which affect what
students learn and how they learn it. Teachers' efforts to make the best possible
decisions are hampered by several factors which include a general lack of
consensus in the literature on what literacy is, what it involves and how to teach

it. Further, there is no adequate guidance in the form of official curriculum policy on the teaching of reading and writing beyond rote learning in Zimbabwe.

Three main research instruments were used to collect data for this study. These included the administration of over 1000 questionnaires to schools in three provinces in Zimbabwe, and interviewing a sub-sample of 51 teachers who had filled in questionnaires. A further sub-sample of 16 teachers who had been interviewed were observed each teaching Shona or English on at least four different occasions. Furthermore documents relating to literacy instruction were analyzed.

The main finding of the study was that the majority of the teachers conceptualized literacy through the lenses of public examinations. Literacy instruction focused mostly on a narrow range of goals which centered around mechanical aspects of literacy and recall skills. The study found evidence to suggest that many teachers unconsciously conceptualized literacy from a positivist perspective which views knowledge and reality as objective and concrete rather than products of social construction.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Since 1980, the year Zimbabwe attained political independence from Britain, the Zimbabwe government has progressively allocated the biggest share of the national revenue to education. This has been done at the expense of other productive sectors of the economy and social developments. However this sacrifice of the national resources in the interest of education was done out of the new government's commitment to the provision of education to all children of school-going age and to make education play a significant contribution to national development through human resource development. This was in contrast to the colonial administration which used education to promote its racial ideology of white supremacy. During the colonial period education was organized along racial lines. It was free and compulsory for white children, but was neither free nor compulsory for non-white children. The state was by and large the main provider of education for white children while non-white education was the responsibility of voluntary organizations, mostly church organizations, and the state only provided a grant in aid of African education.

"Primary school enrollments increased from 819,000 in 1979 to 2,229,000 in 1985; secondary school enrollments increased even more dramatically from a mere 79,000 in 1979 to almost half a million in 1985, a sixfold increase" (Chung 1988 p. 121). Quantitative achievements in educational provision are readily acknowledged

by friends and critics of Zimbabwe's educational policy. Within Zimbabwe itself debate on education has turned to the question of qualitative changes.

Quantitative achievements in the field of education were mandated by popular expectations. Most parents desired for their children the kind of education which had been made a preserve of the white communities during the colonial administration. This was mostly academic education. This was the education which had been seen to give white children an unfair advantage over African children in terms of acquiring skills needed in high paying jobs in the private and public sectors of the national economy (Chung, 1988; Dorsey, 1989; Riddell, 1979; Zvobgo, 1986;).

Qualitative changes have been introduced, especially in primary and lower secondary schools where new syllabuses have been made to reflect Zimbabwe's cultural values. Subjects like history, social studies, and literature have been made to focus more on African experiences and values than they were before 1980.

However, the basic structure and goals of the school curricula continue to be tied to the pre-independence mold (Chung, 1988). As Johnson (1990) argues, a large proportion of African students who attended school before 1980 found themselves confronted by curricula which were inextricably tied to an ideology of racial superiority. Many received an inferior education designed to prepare them for menial tasks in society. Colonial education focused on low level skills in literacy and numeracy and emphasized habits of punctuality, obedience, diligence and respect for manual work. Those who slipped through the net for the recruitment of cheap labor, found that higher education provided them with little more than the ability to read and write accurately, and to make limited decisions in their working environments (Dorsey, 1989; Johnson, 1990; Zvobgo, 1986). Not only has the curriculum remained largely based on the British model, also the

language of literacy has largely remained English which is spoken by less than 3% of the population as a mother tongue. The influence of the British system of education is particularly strong on the means of evaluating educational quality in Zimbabwe. Although steps are underway to localize the setting and marking of examinations, British influence is still strong in the training of examiners and the supervision of the examination process. Examinations have a very strong influence on the curriculum and the way it is conceived and implemented (Chung 1988; Johnson, 1990). Johnson (1990) argues that any discussion about quality of education has centered around the pass rate for the ordinary level (O'level) examinations. He further argues that the use of O'level results as a bench-mark of educational success severely limits the possibilities for critical teaching and learning in schools. "Other aspects of schooling and the development of critical literacy are rarely focused on " (Johnson, 1990, p. 102).

Over 95% of the people of Zimbabwe speak Shona and Ndebele, Shona being the most dominant language spoken by about 75% of the population. Due to the efforts of some missionaries, these languages were made written languages mostly for purposes of spreading the gospel to the African population. The colonial administration promoted the use of English by making it the official language of administration, law and education while Shona and Ndebele were not taught in white schools and offered in African secondary schools as optional subjects. Since 1980 Shona and Ndebele became compulsory school subjects up to the second year of secondary education, form 2 (grade 9). However, they remain under-utilized in their written form partly because they are not the official languages of instruction, and partly because they continue to suffer from negative attitudes among many educated Africans who feel that they are not capable of communicating academic and scientific concepts.

Officially, Shona and Ndebele can be used as languages of instruction from grade 1 up to grade 3 in areas where the majority of students are of Shona or Ndebele backgrounds. In all schools English takes over as the language of instruction from grade 4 onwards. However, it has been observed that many schools situated in predominantly Shona or Ndebele speaking neighborhoods prefer to introduce English as the medium of instruction right from grade 1, arguing that this will make their students more able to understand concepts taught through English in upper primary and secondary school grades.

It has been argued that within schools and classrooms, English language teaching remains an area unaffected by political and ideological changes (Chung, 1988; Johnson, 1990). Zimbabwe has opted in classroom practice to model the teaching of English on British English as second language/foreign language (ESL/EFL) packages. Johnson (1990) maintains that although these models are largely successful in helping learners acquire a communicative competence, they very often fail to instill a critical and analytical ability. Nagel (1992) made a study of communication patterns in relation to cognition in teacher education colleges and found that teaching and learning in teachers' colleges, and in schools in turn, tended to promote uncritical rote learning. Everyday teaching and learning issues were not problematized or subjected to critical reflection by both teachers and students.

On the other hand current conceptions of teaching and learning for understanding put a premium on "conversation, experience, interpretation, criticism, engagement, voice, participation and purpose as characteristic features of interaction between students and teachers" (Holmes Group 1990). There is emphasis on making students learn how to interpret what they learn, and to relate it to what else they know, and whenever possible, to have some experience of

what is being taught. Learning is viewed as an active process in which children construct and reconstruct knowledge as they go along. Students need to develop critical literacy which helps them to understand their reality in terms of the social forces which shape it. As Freire (1985) argues, they need to master genre like written argumentation and critical analysis if they are to arrive at a critical view of their reality.

Current arguments about the evaluation of educational quality and general national development tend to center on literacy levels attained by students at various levels of the educational process. As Cook-Gumperz (1986) argues, schooling ideology makes literacy one of the basic components of schooling on which other learning must rest.

> It becomes essentially a cognitive skill, one which enables other cognitive growth to take place, and its evaluation becomes central to the assessment of other potentialities of student learners. In these schooling terms, a non-literate person counts as an uneducable person, not merely an uneducated one. Thus, the nineteenth-century ideology has been transformed into the twentieth century ideology which stresses that literacy may bring, not economic well-being directly, but equality of opportunity as a basic value from which other advantages can come" (Cook-Gumperz, 1986:34).

It is a central assumption of this study that teachers mediate what students learn through their interpretations of official curriculum goals. Teachers' interpretations of official curriculum goals are influenced by their understanding, beliefs, and philosophies as regard that particular discipline. In the case of literacy, teachers' understanding, beliefs, and philosophies about literacy goals influence how they interpret English and Shona national syllabuses, textbooks, and examinations and as well as how students experience literacy curriculum in Shona and English. Thus, this study is aimed at finding out the extent to which literacy teachers' conceptions of literacy and their current practices are developing or not developing effective literacy skills which help students to engage in independent

learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities needed by an independent nation for its social, economic and political development.

Statement of the Problem

As noted above, although impressive quantitative expansion of the education system has been achieved, the Zimbabwe education system is still tied to the external British Ordinary and Advanced level examination systems. Any discussion concerning quality of education tends to center around pass rates for the Ordinary Level (O'Level) examinations which have been steadily falling from 66.6% in 1980 to 12.4% in 1988 (Chung, 1988; Dorsey et al., 1991). This is due to the fact that, because of the expansion of educational facilities, and the removal of bottlenecks along the education system. many students of low abilities have access to secondary education, which was not the case before 1980.

The continued use of colonial literacy curriculum models in vastly changed social, economic, and political circumstances creates contradictions between prevailing school practices and the developmental needs of a young free nation. Classroom practices in many schools emphasize learning of abstract facts, correct grammar, spelling and punctuation geared toward examination preparation (Chung, 1988; Jansen, 1989; Johnson, 1990). Zimbabwe, as a young developing country, needs citizens with high level literacy and problem-solving skills. Students in present day Zimbabwe need to develop a critical literacy which helps them understand their reality in terms of social forces which shape it (Bizell, 1982).

Literacy skills determine the quality of students' learning progress in school and workers' adaptability in work-place settings in an increasingly print mediated world. As Eisemon (1988) argues, school-acquired literacy does not necessarily

promote problem-solving skills if it is acquired in a teaching environment which is oriented towards preparing children to recall information for national examinations.

It is important to study teachers' conceptions, beliefs, understandings, and dispositions toward literacy goals and instructional practices because what teachers do in their instructional practices constitute the content of the curriculum most students experience in their school learning. What teachers do is influenced by their beliefs and understandings. Thus, any attempt to improve the quality of what students learn should also identify teachers' beliefs and understandings as well as their daily classroom practices so as to determine the extent of congruence or lack of it between what we want to achieve through the education system and the daily classroom practices.

Dissertation Objectives

The study had three main outcomes which were to

1. identify secondary school Shona and English teachers' conceptions of the goals of literacy instruction for school and out-of school contexts.

2. identify the sources of these teachers' conceptions of literacy curriculum goals.

3. describe these teachers' current literacy classroom practices as a way of linking them with their beliefs and conceptions of the goals of literacy instruction.

Research Questions

The following questions were formulated to guide the conduct of the study in such a way as to achieve the above outcomes.

1. How do Shona and English teachers at secondary school conceptualize the goals of literacy instruction?

2. How do these literacy teachers make instructional decisions about what to focus on?

3. What literacy skills do these teachers focus on in their language instruction?

4. What factors influence language teachers' conceptions and decision-making processes as regards literacy instruction?

Definition of Terms

There are a number of terms which may not be clear to some readers because of the contexts in which they are used. This is likely to be the case in view of the fact the study was about Zimbabwean education issues written by the researcher while studying in the U.S. Hence it is necessary to define some of the terms as they are used in this study.

Literacy: As it is used in this study it means more than the ability to read and write per se; rather it is the ability to reason and problem-solve in multiple discourses with print. Literacy involves the ability to engage in reading, writing, reflecting, dialoguing, critiquing, comprehending and interpreting all leading to transforming one's understanding to a new height.

Primary School: This refers to the first seven years of formal schooling in Zimbabwe.

Secondary School: This refers to the next stage of education after primary schooling. It consists of three stages, namely junior secondary called form 1 and 2; senior secondary called form 3 and 4 or Ordinary Level (0'level); and lastly, high school, or form 5 and 6 or Advanced Level (A'level). For most students O'Level is the terminal point of formal secondary schooling. Those who aspire for university and other types of higher education enroll for the A'Level certificate. This study was focused on junior and senior levels of secondary education.

Shona: This is a language spoken as a mother tongue by about 75% of the people in Zimbabwe. It belongs to the Bantu language family spoken by people in central and southern Africa. It is the language of everyday oral communication in most areas in Zimbabwe. It is made up of five dialects which are mutually intelligible both in lexicon and language structure.

Overview of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter II provides a review of the literature related to literacy which is the central focus of this study. The first section of Chapter II discusses the social constructivist conceptual framework on which this study is grounded. The next section discusses various perspectives and conceptualizations of literacy. The section following that reviews literature related arguments about effects of literacy at a general societal level. The next section focuses on literature related to literacy issues related to school settings. The last section of Chapter II reviews literature focusing on teacher thinking, beliefs and decision-making processes.

Chapter III gives a narrative description of the research methodology, design and rationale for the procedures used to conduct this study. The data collection

instruments used include the following: (1) questionnaires administered to over 810 English and Shona teachers in three provinces, namely Harare, Mashonaland East, and Masvingo; (2) interviews conducted with 51 English and Shona teachers and two Ministry of Education officials; (3) classroom observations of 16 English and Shona teachers; and (4) studying documents related to literacy policy, curriculum and instruction and evaluation.

Chapter IV analyzes data collected through the various research instruments and presents findings of the study. Chapter V gives the conclusions and implications of the study as well as personal reflections in terms of what the researcher learned from carrying out the study and what he hopes to do next.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature related to the purpose of the dissertation. The chapter is therefore organized according to themes relevant to the study of literacy instruction. The first part of the chapter reviews the literature related to the conceptual framework used in the conceptualization of the study, namely social constructivist perspectives of knowledge and literacy and teacher thinking and decision-making processes. The second part of the chapter reviews literature related to conceptions of literacy.

Social Constructivist Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded on the social constructivist perspective of knowledge and cognition. The overriding assumption of the social constructivist perspective is that human beings make sense of their world through the process of interacting with their world and with each other. The need to transform the physical world in order to meet survival needs necessitated human beings to develop tools with which to subdue the physical world. While engaging in these survival activities human beings, over a period time, invented and continue to invent objects including tools, and procedures with which to subdue the world. In the course of engaging in these activities, human beings have come to have a better knowledge

of their physical world as well as their social relations (Kozulin, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Wertsch, 1981a).

Language is one of the sign systems which humans use to label objects and events in their world. Vygostky (1978, 1986) maintains that human beings use signs, including language, to make sense of their world. This includes concept formation and the processing of high-order psychological processes, like memory, paying attention, thinking and creating meaning. The social constructivist perspective maintains that the semiotic system enables human beings to construct meaning through their interactions. The meaning making process takes place at three levels: first at the personal level, second at the social level, and third at the generation level, i.e., over periods of time. According to this view, meaning is indeterminate because people at different historical, cultural, and social milieu experience different phenomena, and therefore give different meanings according to their physical and social contexts. People in the same historical cultural milieu develop shared meanings through the process of intersubjectivity. This is a process of constructing meaning among individuals through dialogue and reflection. In the case of learning situations, Vygotsky (1986) asserts that an adult, or a more knowledgeable other leads or guides a learner through interaction to perform those activities the learner is unable to perform on his/her own. Gradually the adult or more knowledgeable other reduces his/her assistance as the learner gains more confidence and skill till the learner is completely able to do the activity on his/her own. Vygotsky (1978) calls the learner's learning status the zone of proximal development.

The Vygotskian perspective of social constructivism of knowledge and cognition gives language a central role in higher psychological development. It has had tremendous influence on western scholarly research on teaching and learning a

whole range of school subjects including literacy. Prominent Western scholars like Bruner (1984b, 1985, 1986), Scribner (1984b, 1985b, 1987), Wertsch (1987, 1978, 1980, 1981, 1983) and Rogoff (1990, 1989, 1986) have espoused Vygotsky's views of social constructivism, and in turn, have exerted a lot of influence on research on teaching and learning in the West. The term scaffolding, coined by Bruner (1983), is derived from Vygotsky's notion of the zone of proximal development. So also is Palincsar's and Brown's (1984) notion of reciprocal teaching whereby the teacher models comprehension instruction to students by training them to ask 'teacher-type' questions about the reading passage, to summarize the passage at various points, to clarify difficult areas and to make predictions of what might happen next. When the students master these reading comprehension strategies from the teacher's modeling, they then take turns to teach each other comprehension exercises taken from unseen passages.

Bakhtin (1981) talks of the notion of multiple voices in a dialogic encounter. By multiple voices Bakhtin means that a speaker first hears views and opinions of other people on any subject matter and he/she internalizes and transforms some of these views making them part of his/her cognitive repertoire. Later in similar dialogic encounters the speaker finds himself/herself expressing views and opinions which originally were not his/hers as his/her own world view on the given subject. The notion of multiple voices in dialogic encounters is consistent with social constructivist perspective of knowledge and cognition. This is in line with what Vygotsky (1978) called interpsychological and intrapsychological processing of cognitive development. Intrapsychological plane is the individual processing of cognitive elements; and interpsychological plane refers to the social level of cognitive interactions.

The notion of social constructivism of knowledge and cognition functions as the overarching framework of the conceptions of reading, writing and teaching espoused in this study. From a social constructivist perspective reading is seen as a process of constructing meaning through the interaction of the text and the reader who brings into the process his/her existing knowledge of subject matter of the text, his/her purposes for reading and his/her knowledge of text structure and other relevant contextual variables. Writing is similarly conceived as a process of creating meaning between the writer, his/her sense of the intended audience (reader) his/her knowledge of the subject matter of the text he/she is writing as well as the purpose for which he/she is writing. Similarly teaching is a process of constructing knowledge or meaning between the learner and the teacher through their interaction which takes into account the existing knowledge, experience, motivation and purpose for the teaching/learning encounter. In this process students are active participants who use their existing knowledge and experience to reflect, critique, question and modify what the teacher brings to the learning encounter.

The social constructivist perspective is consistent with current views about literacy. The next section of the literature review discusses conceptions of literacy in various contexts.

Conceptions of Literacy-Definitions and Meaning

Conceptions of literacy vary according to time and ideological perspectives across nations. Before the era of mass schooling, literacy was associated with the education given to the upper classes in European and North American societies. It was the type of education which was meant to equip upper class members of

society with skills of judgment and proper tastes. As Cook-Gumperz (1986)

maintains:

> A literate person was seen not only as a good person, but as
> someone capable of exercising good or reasonable judgment, for a
> literate person's taste and judgement depended upon access to a
> written tradition--a body of texts--reflecting centuries of collective
> experience.

Cook-Gumperz, (1986) argues for a social perspective of literacy which

focuses on the processes by which literacy is constructed in everyday life, through

interactional exchanges and the negotiation of meaning in many different contexts.

She asserts that literacy is a metacognitive process that makes other cognitive and

social developments possible.

Scribner (1984) conceives literacy in three metaphors: (a) literacy as

adaptation, emphasizing the functional goals of literacy; (b) literacy as power,

emphasizing the political and liberating effects of literacy from oppression; and (c)

literacy as grace, emphasizing the spiritual aspects of the ability to have access to

religious texts. On the other hand Heap (1988) disagrees with the notion of

functional literacy, arguing that it confuses textual literacy, which is a product of

schooling, and reasoning in a practical manner, which may arise from experience

rather than schooling. He argues that those who talk of functional literacy

compound the problems of measuring literacy. Hirsch (1987) and Bloom (1987)

argue for cultural literacy which can be broadly taken to mean the acquisition of

a knowledge of selected works of literature and historical information necessary for

informed participation in the political and cultural life of one's society. Heath

(1985) emphasizes the indissoluble link between literacy, context and meaning. She

argues:

> Unless accompanied with cultural knowledge, personal drive,
> political motivation, or economic opportunity, literacy does not lead
> the writer to make the essential leap from literacy to being
> literate-from knowing what the words say to understanding what

they mean. Readers make meaning by linking the symbols on the page with real-world knowledge and then considering what the text means for generating new ideas and actions not explicitly written or "said" in the text. The transformation of literacy skills into literate behaviors and ways of thinking depends on a community of talkers who make the text mean something. For most of history, such literate communities have been elite groups, holding themselves and their knowledge and power apart from the masses.

Closely related to the notion of cultural literacy referred to above, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) advocate what they call high literacy which they associate with high academic skills like critical thinking, problem-solving and independent learning skills. The vision of high literacy as conceptualized by Berieter and Scardamalia (1987) may be difficult to attain because most of the students do not come from home backgrounds where such literacy is the norm.

Freire (1970, 1985), McLaren (1988); Aronowitz and Giroux (1991) advocate for critical literacy which focuses on the interests and assumptions that inform the generation of knowledge itself. As McLaren (1988:218) asserts:

From this perspective all texts, written, spoken, or otherwise represented, constitute ideological weapons capable of enabling certain groups to solidify their power through acts of linguistic hegemony. This can be seen in the ways in which mainstream schooling has stressed the cultural capital of certain speech communities that make up the dominant culture.

Freire (1985) argues that approaches to literacy, regardless of the country in which they take place, must constitute more than simply the "alphabetization" of the so called illiterate student. That children have linguistic and communicative skills outside the school which often go unrecognized in the classroom is the first consideration that must be addressed in any critical literacy program. Freire goes on to argue that:

If the texts generally offered students once hid much more than they revealed of reality, now literacy as an act of knowledge, as a creative act and as a political act, is an effort to read the world and the word. Now it is no longer possible to have the text without context. (Freire and Macedo 1987:43)

The major weaknesses of current approaches to literacy, according to Freire, are that these approaches not only do they ignore the learner's creative capacity, but also encourage a passive acceptance of the status quo. On the contrary critical literacy always implies a political reading of the world, accompanied by a transformation of the oppressive relations which constitute that world. Thus critical literacy is seen as a means of liberating the creative capacity of the students as well as a means of transforming their world outlook. Literacy is an instrument for human liberation and social change.

Gee (1989) and Michaels and O'Connor (1990) conceptualize literacy as ability to function in a given discourse. Michaels and O'Connor (1990) define literacy as the ability to reason and problem-solve in multiple discourses with print. Different discourses require very different ways of "reading between the lines". Without having been enculturated into the discourse through the process of engaging in meaningful social practices with more skilled members of the discourse, one simply cannot read the text. " Literacy then is less about reading and writing per se; rather it is about ways of being in the world and ways of making meaning with and around text" (Michaels and O'Connor 1990:11).

Lockheed and Verspoor (1991) and Cook-Gumperz (1986) conceptualize literacy as a cognitive tool for learning new information, ideas, attitudes and values. They see it as one of the basic components of schooling on which further learning and cognitive growth depend.

As the foregoing section shows, there are as many definitions or conceptualizations of literacy as there are scholars. It seems the major influence is ideological orientation in conceptualizing literacy. As McLaren (1988) argues, the term literacy has come to mean educating students to be bearers of certain meanings, values and views. The position taken in this study is that literacy is

more than the ability to read and write per se, rather it is a way of making meaning through interpreting, reflecting, questioning and problem-solving through print. This position is consistent with the social constructivist framework discussed at the beginning of this section.

Effects of Literacy

There is a wide range of opinions among scholars as to the effects of literacy. As far back as 1960's Williams (1961) argued that the extension of active learning processes, including the development of literacy skills to all people was a fundamental means of guaranteeing the growth of democracy and advancement of technology. He was expressing great optimism in the belief that literacy can lead to the improvement of the quality of life for individuals, social groups, and even whole societies. Writing about the potential effects of literacy for developing countries Akinnaso (1982) asserts that:

> The argument about the consequences of literacy--seem to run somewhat as follows: with the advent of writing and the spread of literacy came a new resource both of knowledge and technology that, over time, has systematically affected the nature of existing cognitive, linguistic and social structures and led to a gradual deployment into new channels of people's cognitive, linguistic and organizational potentials: (Quoted in Cook-Gumperz 1986:17)

Other scholars writing from the perspective of developing countries see a strong correlation between literacy and social and economic development. Eisemon (1988), Lockheed and Verspoor (1991), Cotler (1986), and Eisemon, Patel and Abagi (1987) argue that literacy and schooling lead to improved productivity in agriculture, lower fertility among women through the use of birth control methods, improved nutrition and health care, and the general readiness to use modern technology in the work place. Development advocates of the human capital thesis, e.g., Shultz (1977) argue that people invest in their own improvement through

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education which leads to the attainment of literacy and numeracy which in turn make them increase their own earnings. However, it is important to take heed of Eisemon's (1988) warning that school acquired literacy does not necessarily promote problem-solving skills if it is acquired in a teaching environment which is oriented towards preparing children to recall information for national examinations. The kind of literacy which is likely to bring about social and individual benefits is critical literacy. As McLaren (1988) argues, critical literacy links language competency to the acquisition of a public discourse in which empowered individuals are capable of critically engaging the social, political and ethical dimensions of everyday life.

Literacy in School Settings

In school settings, research on literacy has been focused on reading and writing processes and skills. Although there is a growing interest in conceptualizing reading and writing as related cognitive processes (e.g., Raphael and Englert 1988; Tierney and Shanahan, 1991), the traditional research approach has been to treat these processes separately. Constructivist views of knowledge and cognition permeate current approaches to both reading and writing. This section of the literature review focuses on reading and writing research separately in order to highlight the insights researchers have gained in the two literacy domains. Literature related to reading is reviewed first.

Reading

Conceptualizations of reading have changed from emphasis on texts to emphasis on readers as processors of texts, and hence meaning makers. Reading, according to constructivist perspective, is seen as "the process of constructing

meaning through the dynamic interaction among the reader's existing knowledge, the information suggested by the written language, and the context of the reading situation" (Michigan Reading Association Position paper 1984, p. 2) This new definition of reading is shared by most current reading specialists, for example, Pearson (1985), Guthrie and Mosenthal (1987), Wixson and Peters (1987), Anderson and Pearson (1991), and Duffy and Roehler (1989). The interactive dimension of the new conceptualization of reading assumes that the reader is an active processor of meaning. The construction of meaning is brought about when a reader activates his/her experience or existing knowledge of the content of the text and compares and contrasts it with the text he/she is reading. Reading comprehension is a term used to embrace all the outcomes of the learner's efforts to gain meaning from written language. Schema theorists of cognitive psychology orientation like Anderson and Pearson (1984) assert that:

> Whether we are aware of it or not, it is the interaction of new information with old knowledge that we mean when we use the term comprehension. To say one has comprehended a text is to say that he or she has found a mental 'home' for the information in the text or else that he/she has modified an existing mental home in order to accommodate that new information. (p. 255)

Guthrie and Mosenthal (1987) argue that in formulating descriptive definitions of reading there is a large variety of features to choose from. The choice of one set of features over another has ideological ramifications. For instance, to define reading only in terms of the features of the reading materials one tacitly endorses the notion that meaning is in the text, that meaning is literal, and that meaning has one interpretation--the author's. Cherryholmes (1991) presents the arguments of critical theorists of the reading process in these terms:

> If the text is regarded as material or concrete, as naturally occurring instead of socially constructed, then texts have power over readers. Critical theorists contend that texts are never neutral. They draw the reader's attention to some and away from other things.

The notion that reading is a process of constructing meaning through the process of reader response and interpretation of the text stems from a strong belief among critical theorists that "meaning is not the property of a timeless formalism, but something acquired in the context of an activity." (Fish 1973:89). It is perhaps an attack on attempts to privilege some types of texts or cultural norms against others. Those who subscribe to what Scholes (1989) calls textual fundamentalism, believe that some texts--the great Books--have meaning fixed eternally and that it transcends all times and contexts. Reading, according to constructivist theorists, is interpreting and critiquing the text. It is to question the text: Who is speaking? Who listens? What is written? What is avoided? Which ideas are privileged? As Scholes (1989) maintains:

> To read at all, we must read the book of ourselves in the texts in front of us, and we must bring the text home, into our thought and lives, into our judgments and deeds. We cannot enter the texts we read, but they can enter us. . . . Such reading involves looking closely at the text; it also involves situating the text, to make the text our own in thought, word and deed. (Quoted in Cherryholmes 1991:6)

However, there are some scholars who maintain that pragmatic approach to reading is preferable to the extreme positions of textual fundamentalism and reader-response perspective on the other extreme. Pragmatic approach to reading, according to Guthrie and Mosenthal (1987), attempts to develop a theory that is sensitive to the ideology of the students and teachers. In this approach, one first observes readers in a particular setting, who are reading materials for a purpose unique to that setting and situation. One then identifies the criteria by which readers are judged either effective or ineffective when reading for that designated purpose. These criteria are identified as the critical features in some definition of reading effectiveness (Hunt, 1990; Tierney and Gee, 1990).

Harker (1987) advocates the interactive model of reading. This model recognizes the contribution of both the text and the reader in the making of meaning. He argues that the text has some tangible attributes which affect the reader's response. He maintains that to discredit the text entirely as an autonomous contributor to meaning ignores much that has been established by research into the reading process.

The interactive perspective of reading is a pragmatic and viable approach to reading. Readers cannot ignore the text, its features and history. The text provides the first context for readers' response. At the same time the reader's schemata are equally important in shaping the meaning the different readers will come up with as a result of their interacting with the text.

Reading Comprehension Instruction

Research on classroom instruction across subjects at secondary school indicates great resilience of traditional approaches like teacher domination of classroom interaction, recitation, strict teacher control of students' encounters with print, over reliance on textbooks, and teachers' emphasis on factual textual information (Cuban 1984, 1990; Cohen, 1988; Goodlad, 1984; Edwards and Mercer, 1987; and Alvermann and Moore, 1991;). This is contrary to research findings on teaching for understanding, student empowerment, fostering of critical thinking and problem-solving skills in students.

In a now rather classic study, Durkin (1978-1979) found that elementary school teachers focused more on comprehension assessment rather than direct instruction. She also noted that almost all the teachers' questions were an attempt to learn whether the children had comprehended a given reading selection. This left her wondering whether comprehension skills were fostered through practicing

answering comprehension questions or through direct instruction. She made a follow up to this study by studying basal reader programs for kindergarten through grade 6 to learn what they suggested for comprehension instruction. She also found that the basal manuals said nothing about comprehension instruction. She went on to say "it is tempting to conclude that comprehension instruction consists of repeated testing with feedback" (Durkin 1981:12).

Winograd and Johnston (1987) argue that current research on reading comprehension has insisted rather too much that there be direct instruction. They suggest that rather research should come up with an extensive repertoire of strategies which can be used in a flexible manner so that teachers will know the conditions under which particular strategies are likely to work. Winograd and Johnston (1987) argue that teachers use teaching strategies which are being condemned by present research on reading comprehension partly because of the complexities of the job of teaching which involves conflicting demands and needs of different children, parents, administrators and society in general. They further maintain that teachers must make instructional decisions about reading based on an incomplete understanding of the reading process because there is little agreement about how children learn to read or how best to teach reading so that all children learn.

Accountability

Society in general demands that schools account for large public funds devoted to their maintenance. Determining accountability for students' learning is accomplished through formal measures such as standardized tests and public examinations. Most accountability systems require teachers to cover course contents expeditiously. Alvermann and Moore (1991) and Winograd and Johnston (1987)

argue that the problems with accountability and reading comprehension are defining the goals and deciding how these will be measured. In general society has 'solved' these problems by reducing the goals of reading to those that can be easily and inexpensively measured by large-scale standardized tests. Emphasis on literal information becomes the norm because the acquisition of facts seems to be more easily accomplished and is more readily measured than other cognitive operations. The present narrow conceptualization of accountability reinforces the outdated definition of reading and obstructs both the acceptance and implementation of a more accurate view. Winograd and Johnson (1987) maintain that researchers may view comprehension as an interactive process, or believe that strategic reading is important or feel the need to address both meaning and sense. Practitioners, however, are still held accountable for how well their children perform on tests of isolated sub-skills. Thus these apparent contradictions between the current accountability measures and implementation of the conceptualization of reading as an interactive process explain the resilience and regularities of traditional approaches to reading instruction.

Writing

Current conceptualizations of writing view it both as a personal and social cognitive process of expressing human perception of the world. It is a creative activity involving self--expression, discovery and critical thinking and is influenced by considerations of the purposes for writing, the intended audience and the form each writing episode takes. Writing is also a process of selecting, generating, developing and arranging ideas in ways which suit the form, purpose and audience selected. (Michigan Board of Education, 1985; Englert and Raphael 1989).

From a social constructivist perspective, writing is a social activity in the sense that the writer puts on paper ideas, views and opinions he/she originally heard from other people through his/her interactions with members of his/her own cultural group. These views or multiple voices, according to Bakhtin (1981), are internalized and become part of the writer's cognitive repertoire. When the writer commits his/her ideas on paper, he/she is interacting again with other people, the readers who are the intended audiences. The sense of an audience at the back of the writer makes the writing a social constructive activity. In the process of writing the writer is both recreating the multiple voices he/she internalized earlier on as well as creating new ideas. Thus, according to Vygotsky (1978), writing is both an individual act of creativity as well as a social act in which the writer is reflecting other people's voices which he/she had internalized.

There has been much debate about the degree of freedom students should enjoy when writing, that is to say, how much what students write should be a reflection of their own voices as opposed to what is judged to be appropriate writing by other people, e.g., teachers. Teachers impart writing skills to students through techniques like scaffolding, modeling and guided practice, until students master the required skills and can apply them independently. Modeling processes involve the teacher demonstrating: (1) the strategies used at the pre-writing stage whereby the writer generates and discovers ideas and considers the purpose and audience for writing; (2) strategies used at the drafting stage where ideas generated are written in a coherent form, (3) strategies used at the revision stage; and (4) strategies used at the proof reading stage. (Englert and Raphael, 1989; Florio-Ruane, 1991).

One way to induct students into the skills of writing which are part of skilled writers' repertoires is to bring novices and experts together at writing

conferences. Writing conferences in their ideal form are seen as dialogic occasions where teachers and students are practically free to trade conversational places. One of their perceived strengths is the participation of a reader/listener who helps the author plan or revise his/her text by means of questions and responses about that text. It is argued by advocates of writing conferences that, where beginning writers are concerned, the other's participation leads not only to the revision of draft, but gradually to the author's internalization of reader/writer dialogue (Murray 1968; 1979 Graves, 1983). The appeal of writing conferences is related to a contemporary shift in interest from evaluation of isolated student texts to dialogic support of the composing process and its development. This shift in emphasis potentially transforms the teacher's role from task-master and evaluator to reader and respondent and opens the door to greater peer interaction in literacy learning. (Murray, 1979; Beach and Bridwell, 1984; Show, Pettigrew and Van Nostrand 1983; Gere and Stevens, 1985).

However, in practice writing conferences have been found to be occasions that are largely teacher-driven and that communication is "unilateral, from instructor to student, that most instructors shaped and directed the conversation, that students didn't mind the teacher dominance, in fact they wanted it" (Jacob 1982:386). Other researchers found that writing conferences were occasions when teachers were more inclined to push their preconceived schema of how the text should be written than to listen to student's problems and needs (Florio-Ruane, 1991; Freedman, 1985;). A number of researchers have explained the apparent weaknesses of writing conferences in terms of absence of shared knowledge between teachers and students about writing and the text as well as the demand of time, mandated curricula and the school's evaluative climate (Erickson 1984, Florio-Ruane, 1991).

While acknowledging the potential of the process writing model in empowering students to articulate their own voices, leaders of minority and poor ethnic groups argue for the teaching of skills and other types of discourses considered important in mainstream society. In addition to learning to express cultural norms through certain dialects, students should also be exposed to the "culture of power", which is the discourse of mainstream society (Delpit 1986, 1988).

Teacher Thinking, Beliefs and Decision Making Processes

A related conceptual framework on which this study is grounded concerns teachers' thinking, beliefs and decision making process. A number of scholars have argued that teachers mediate what students experience and learn in classrooms. Teachers' beliefs, understandings and philosophies about the subjects they teach influence decisions they make about what to instruct and how to instruct it. Lipsky (1980) argues that teachers, like other street-level bureaucrats, determine curriculum through their interpretations of official policy and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties, contradictions, complexities and work pressures. Shulman (1987) argues that a teacher's mastery of subject matter knowledge as well as pedagogical content knowledge determines the quality of his/her instruction. Where such knowledge is high the teacher is usually flexible and adjusts his/her strategies to suit the kind of students he/she is instructing as well as other contextual factors prevailing at the time the instruction is given. On the other hand where the teacher's mastery of the subject matter is shaky he/she tends to be rigid and tends to resort to authoritarian model of instruction.

Clark and Peterson (1986) argue that teachers' thought processes consist of two related domains, namely, teachers' thought processes involving internal

unobservable cognitive processes like teachers' theories and beliefs which influence their planning activities (preactive and proactive thoughts). These thought processes are linked to teachers interactive decisions during instruction. The other domain of teachers' thought processes consist of teachers classroom behavior and are linked to student classroom behavior and achievement. Clark and Peterson (1986) and Clark and Yinger (1987) argue that teachers' thought processes are affected by the task demands and by the teachers' perceptions of the task.

Some researchers argue that teachers' planning decisions do not indicate profound and informed thinking about logical objectives related to their reading instruction. Rather, their planning decisions show a preoccupation with content coverage and their perception of how to make the school day flow smoothly (Duffy, 1982; Sard-Brown, 1990). Yinger (1980) maintains that planning is conceived as a three stage problem-solving task which involves the identification of content goals and experience, progressive elaboration of the activity and the implementation of the requisite activity.

Jones (1984) and Farr and Rosser (1979) maintain that a teacher's personal definition of reading determines the way he/she chooses his/her instructional goals and how he/she implements his/her instruction. A teacher who defines reading as a way of increasing knowledge and understanding in a particular subject will approach reading differently from a teacher who defines reading as a way of learning more and better vocabulary. They further argue that teacher's a personal definition of reading can expand or place limitations on the range of materials he/she gives students to read and also on the level of understanding of the materials his/her students attain.

Sardo-Brown (1988) maintains that planning decisions are nested, that is, daily planning is conducted within the context of weekly, by term and yearly

structure of plans. Teachers are influenced in their planning decisions by a number of considerations, e.g., textbook materials, standardized tests, physical facilities, student characteristics, curriculum guides, and those activities they believe will engage student attention (McCutcheon, 1980; and Sard-Brown, 1988). Sard-Brown (1990) asserts that school level and central office policies affect the way teachers make instructional decisions.

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has shown the existence of a great diversity of opinion on what literacy is and how best to make learners acquire it. The social constructivist perspective of literacy has been shown to be compatible with research findings about current conceptions of education. Current conceptions of education stress that learning at all levels should be an active process in which learners construct and reconstruct knowledge as they go along. This means education should be empowering to the learner so that he/she acquires critical thinking and problem-solving skills necessary for life long learning and a productive life in today's technology--using society. However, it has also been shown that adoption of social constructivist perspective of literacy instruction challenges traditional models of teaching and learning characterized by teacher domination of the learning situation, emphasis on factual information, over reliance on textbook information, and forms of accountability which rely on standardized tests and examinations. The resilience of traditional models of teaching and learning have also been partly explained by complexities of the teaching and learning process in real classrooms and the lack of corresponding structural changes in the roles and functions of teachers and school administrators. Another explanation for limited influence of research findings on current instructional practices are differences in the

perceptions of researchers and practitioners about what is important and worth focussing on in order to promote student learning.

There was no literature found focusing on students learning literacy in contexts where students' home experience as well as students' home languages are different from school knowledge and the language of instruction.

Thus this study set out to investigate the conceptions of teachers about literacy in a context where the language of instruction is not the language most students use outside the classroom situation. It is a key assumption of this study that the way teachers conceptualize literacy largely determines what they focus on in their classroom practice. The main questions guiding this study are the following.

1. How do Shona and English teachers at secondary school conceptualize literacy instructional goals?

2. How do these teachers make instructional decisions about what to focus on?

3. What literacy skills do these teachers focus on in their language instruction?

4. What factors influence language teachers' conceptions and decision-making processes as regards literacy instruction?

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology used to find answers to the above questions.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study set out to investigate how secondary school Shona and English teachers conceptualized literacy instructional goals. It was a major assumption of this study that literacy skills are a determinant of students' learning and thinking potentials both in side and outside school. Teachers make critical decisions which affect what students learn and how they learn it. Zimbabwe does not have an official curriculum policy on literacy instructional goals. English is the official language of instruction in schools from Grade 4 onwards although it is spoken as a mother tongue by less than 3% of the population. Shona and Ndebele are taught as compulsory subjects up to Form 2 (Grade 9). The main objective of this study was to investigate how secondary school English and Shona teachers made sense of literacy instructional goals in a teaching learning context where over 95% of the students do not use the language of instruction outside the school context. Another major aim of the study was to identify the relationship between language teachers' conceptions of literacy and their classroom instructional practices.

Since the central focus of the study was on teachers' sense making processes of literacy goals and the resulting classroom practices, it is proper to describe teachers' general background in Zimbabwe. According to information available to the researcher when the study was conceived, slightly more than 50% of secondary

school teachers had recognized professional qualifications in 1991. Harare, the biggest city in the country and the capital, had the highest percentage of trained teachers, about 64% (Dorsey et al., 1991). Trained teachers are those teachers who have either a degree plus a teaching certificate or diploma, or those who have a high school (Ordinary Level) certificate plus a three year or four year teachers' certificate. Only trained teachers were the subjects of this study, partly because they were likely to stay in teaching for a long time having invested time, energy and resources to get their teaching diplomas. This is unlike temporary teachers who were hired on a term by term basis and some of them used teaching as a springboard for other occupations. The assumption was that qualified teachers had acquired a professional disposition and knowledge from teacher education exposure which enabled them to develop a personal philosophy about the subjects they teach. It was therefore thought that they were in a position to articulate and reflect on their conceptualizations of literacy and their classroom practices. Of all trained teachers at secondary school those who have degrees are less than 15%. This is mainly because there is only one university which offers degrees relevant to teaching in Zimbabwe, and also because some graduate teachers easily leave teaching for better paying jobs in other sectors of the economy.

This chapter provides a rationale and description of the research design and methodological procedures used to seek answers to the research questions and address research objectives. What follows is a description of the research design and development and implementation of the research instrument.

Research Design

In Zimbabwe education is provided by a number of agencies, including the state itself. The state's direct provision of secondary education, concentrated mostly

in urban centers accounts for about 20% of the total number of secondary schools. Church organizations, which have been historically the main providers of secondary education are still responsible for running schools which they opened during the colonial period. Local authorities, mostly in the rural areas, run secondary schools opened after 1980 to meet the demand for educational facilities. In addition to these, there are schools run by private foundations which are usually high fee-paying and tend to cater to children of the more affluent members of the community. There are also secondary schools run by mining companies and big commercial farms. School quality differs according to the type of authority running the school. On the one extreme, there are the high-fee paying schools already mentioned above, and on the other extreme there are local authority schools called district council schools which were opened after 1980. These are situated in rural areas which are generally the poorest communities in the whole country.

Although the central government is responsible for paying all teachers' salaries as well as a per capita grant for every child attending non-government schools, the various responsible authorities administering non-government schools have to use their own resources to meet the running cost for their schools as well as to provide other amenities for their staff. Because of the general shortage of qualified teachers in Zimbabwe, the poor, non-government school authorities find it difficult to attract the best teachers to their schools.

The researcher was cognizant of the diversity of school types and made every effort to include all school types and locations, urban and rural, state run schools, church run schools, district council schools, private schools, etc., in the study. A variety of research instruments were used to collect data to address the research questions and objectives. The researcher was aware that each type of method has its particular strengths as well as weaknesses, and that no single

research method can answer all types of questions. The next section describes the various instruments, the rationales and procedures used.

Research Instrument Development and Implementation

There were three major data gathering instruments used in this study. They were questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was considered appropriate and cost effective to solicit views and opinions of secondary school Shona and English teachers with diverse qualifications and working in diverse school types. Out of the nine administrative provinces in Zimbabwe, three were selected for the administration of the questionnaire instrument. These provinces were Harare, Mashonaland East, and Masvingo province. It was thought that Harare province plus another rural province in Shona speaking areas of Zimbabwe would adequately represent the national picture in terms of school types and the national population. Harare has suburban and city neighborhood schools (low and high density suburbs). It has also a number of private and church schools. Mashonaland East province was chosen because it adequately represents rural communities. Masvingo was originally selected to be a pilot testing ground for the questionnaire instrument because it has both urban and rural schools.

A questionnaire was used to reach as many Shona and English teachers as possible so as to learn about the general views and opinions related to literacy instruction held by these teachers. It was also considered cost effective in that the researcher could mail by post questionnaire forms to rural schools scattered in

rural areas. He could also personally deliver large quantities of questionnaire forms to big urban schools which are generally closer to each other than rural schools.

The questionnaire items themselves were developed by the researcher with the assistance of a member of the guidance committee to address issues of literacy instruction in secondary schools in Zimbabwe. There were 38 items covering these broad areas, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions towards English and Shona as media of communication; Shona and English syllabi; Zimbabwe Junior Certificate and Ordinary Level examinations, English and Shona textbooks; the instruction of reading and writing; general classroom instruction and conceptions about critical thinking in relation to English and Shona as dominant languages. The researcher discussed the questionnaire items with some members of the Department of Curriculum and Arts at the University of Zimbabwe in early January 1993 in order to get some possible feedback about ways of improving their quality from people who were closer to the research site .

Collection Procedures in Masvingo

The researcher went to Masvingo province and distributed questionnaires to nine secondary schools in and around Masvingo town. These schools consisted of three government urban schools, one of which was a former only white school, now referred to as Group A school, and the other two were situated in working class neighborhoods. The other schools were church administered schools except one which was a district council school.

The researcher personally took the questionnaires to each school and explained his reasons for being at the school to the head of the school or his assistant. He then requested that the questionnaires be distributed to all qualified English and Shona teachers, preferably through the heads of English and Shona

departments. A day and time was given when the researcher would return to collect the completed questionnaire forms. Usually it was the following day. On the whole, the researcher got excellent co-operation.

At one school which was a distance away with a bad road, the principal of the school instructed the targeted teachers to fill in the questionnaire forms the same day while the researcher went to a nearby school. When he returned, he was able to get most of the completed forms. In cases where some teachers had not turned in completed questionnaires, he left money to be used for mailing the remaining questionnaires as soon as they were available. When he arrived at the district council school most of the teachers had gone away for lunch, and so he requested one of the teachers who was around to either collect the questionnaires from the teachers and then mail them to the researcher or to ask the headmaster to do that. The researcher accordingly left some postage money but he never got any questionnaires from this school. This turned out to be the only school he did not recover questionnaires in Masvingo province. However it was a reminder to the researcher that he should not expect to get hundred percent return rate.

At one of the schools in Masvingo province, the researcher had the opportunity to talk to one teacher who had completed a questionnaire. The researcher asked the teacher to comment on how he found the questionnaire items and what he thought about them. The teacher said that he had found the questionnaire quite thought-provoking, and found them very relevant to everyday instructional practice. He said, however, he had some misgivings about revealing his identity, especially because of the last questionnaire item which asked teachers to evaluate the professional assistance they got from education officers responsible for English and Shona. He argued that he feared he might be victimized if he gave an unfavorable evaluation and then the questionnaire fell into the hands of

people who deal with schools. As for the other questionnaire items, the teacher said they were clear and straight forward in terms of the opinions they were soliciting. The researcher assured the teacher that he (the researcher) was not connected with the Ministry of Education in any way as the letter accompanying the questionnaire explained. The researcher assured the teacher that as soon as data from the questionnaire were entered into the researcher's personal computer, all personal data would be destroyed. The researcher further explained that the identity of the respondents was necessary because it would enable him to make a follow-up of the questionnaire data with some of the respondents whom the researcher might want to interview and arrange for classroom observation.

The researcher made a close analysis of the completed questionnaire forms from the nine schools in Masvingo province to identify areas which needed modifications. The researcher found out that all the thirty eight questionnaire items had been responded to in the manner they were intended. There was therefore no need to make any changes on any of the items. However, the researcher found he had not provided a space for the respondents to indicate the language they taught, whether it was English or Shona. Fortunately for the researcher, the completed questionnaire forms from Masvingo province had been placed in separate large envelopes marked either Shona or English or the respondents themselves had written the language they taught on the questionnaire. Also the covering letter attached to the questionnaire was revised so as to explain more clearly the necessity for the respondents to provide their identities. Finally the researcher added a request that the respondents answer all questionnaire items including those that related to the language a respondent was not teaching because he had noticed that a few respondents had not done so.

The researcher decided to use the questionnaire responses from Masvingo province schools as part of the overall questionnaire data because although a few changes were made on some parts of the questionnaire form, the actual thirty eight questionnaire items remained unchanged. It was felt that the views and opinions expressed by the respondents from Masvingo province on the questionnaire items would help in getting an even broader cross section of perspectives from teachers in different locations and settings.

Collection Procedures in Harare Province

The next move in the administration of the questionnaire forms took place in the first week of February when schools had been in session for three weeks at the beginning of the school year. The researcher accepted an invitation to attend a three day workshop for heads of English departments in Harare province schools. The researcher accepted this invitation because he saw it as a strategic site for learning what leaders of the instruction of literacy in the language of instruction in secondary schools were concerned about as well as an occasion to explain his research to these key representatives of the research subjects. The researcher was given about 30 minutes to talk about his research. He accordingly explained the purpose of the research and assured the teachers that the researcher was not in any way connected to the Ministry of Education who might be concerned with some of their views. He further assured the teachers that their confidentiality would be safeguarded in all possible ways. After reading through the questionnaire items some of the teachers expressed fears about giving their identities, especially when they had to respond to the last questionnaire item which required them to evaluate the professional assistance they got from the education officer. The researcher once again explained the need to make a follow-up study

which involved interviewing some of the respondents of the questionnaires as the main reason for requesting the identification of the respondents. In the end a compromise was made whereby those who continued to have misgivings about their personal security if they revealed their identities would leave that part of the questionnaire blank. These heads of departments were asked to convey this choice to the teachers in their own departments.

The teachers who attended the workshop for heads of English departments were 75, representing all schools in Harare province. The researcher was thus able to administer 75 questionnaires in one day. The occasion also helped to establish a direct link between the researcher and every secondary school in Harare in the form of the head of the English department. This linkage subsequently facilitated smooth conduct of the research in Harare schools in that whenever the researcher went to any school in the province, there was already somebody who knew him and the purpose of the research.

The first two weeks of March 1993 were devoted to the distribution of questionnaire forms to nearly 95% of the schools in Harare. As has been pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, Harare has the biggest number of suburban and urban schools in Zimbabwe. Suburban schools were formerly open to white students only before 1980 but are now multi-racial. These schools cater to mostly children from middle class homes. They are the best equipped type of government schools both in terms of learning materials and teaching staff. In Harare there are also city schools referred to as group B schools. They are again government schools but were formerly for African students. They are situated in working class areas called high density suburbs. They are very large schools with students enrolment of between 1500 and 2000. They operate on double shift basis called 'hot sitting'. This means half of the students attend school in the morning,

say from 7.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon and then leave, while another bunch of students and their teachers come in to use the same classrooms for the remainder of the day. Usually they take turns to attend school in the morning and afternoon, either on a monthly basis or half term basis.

The researcher personally distributed the questionnaires to Harare schools and later collected them. He normally allowed between five and seven days for the teachers to process the questionnaires. Generally, the process of distribution was much easier than that of collection. The researcher would go to a school, talk to the principal about his research and what was expected of English and Shona teachers. Usually the principal called either his/her deputy or heads of English and Shona departments to discuss the mechanics of administering and retrieving the questionnaires. The researcher and the deputy principal or heads of English and Shona departments would agree on the day the researcher would return to collect completed questionnaires from his/her office. Cooperation was very good generally in high density schools and generally satisfactory in low density schools, and rather unsatisfactory in private high-fee paying schools. Below are few cases of the problems the researcher encountered.

The worst was at a private school where the principal refused to let his teachers complete the questionnaires arguing that they had been inundated lately by researchers and that they were busy with their regular activities. At another school situated in a middle class neighborhood, four English teachers were reported to have refused to fill in the questionnaire forms arguing that this was a private business for which they were not paid to do. In two other cases again in middle class neighborhood schools the female principal instructed the teachers not to process the questionnaires until the researcher showed them a letter of approval from the Ministry of Education. After a phone call and furnishing copies of the

approval letter, some of the teachers completed the questionnaires. In a few cases the researcher had to make more than one trip to a school to recover more than 50% of the questionnaires. Again at another private school, the researcher never recovered any questionnaire form despite promises by the assistant principal that she would mail to the researcher any of the questionnaires she would get from the teachers. Despite these disappointing cases, the return rate of completed questionnaires in the whole of Harare province was about 85%.

Collection Procedures in Mashonaland East Province

While working on the delivery and collection of questionnaires in Harare, the researcher also mailed questionnaires to schools in Mashonaland East province. This province has many church schools and large numbers of district council schools, opened after 1980. Church schools are reasonably well supplied with basic infrastructures for teaching and learning. They are mostly boarding schools and highly selective in terms of the students they take. They have a reasonable supply of qualified teachers. Rural schools are small compared to government urban schools. Usually student population is between 500 and 800.

A covering letter addressed to the school principal was sent together with 7-10 questionnaire forms to most of the schools in Mashonaland East. Up to 10 questionnaires were sent to church administered schools which are usually bigger than district council administered schools. The covering letter (see appendix 12) explained the purpose of the research and requested the principal to cooperate with the researcher by ensuring the distribution and retrieval of completed questionnaires from the targeted English and Shona teachers.

On the whole the return rate of completed questionnaires was satisfactory. To begin with there was no way the researcher could know the actual number of

trained English and Shona teachers at each school in the rural areas. In the case of *urban* schools where he personally delivered questionnaires, the researcher *always* got information about the number of trained English and Shona teachers *from* the principal or the deputy principal. In some rural schools it was possible *that* there were no trained English or Shona teachers. Thus although more than 80 % of the schools where questionnaires were sent did return some completed *questionnaires* it was not possible to tell whether those schools which did not *return* any questionnaire did not have any of the targeted teachers or simply that *they* chose not to cooperate. In a few cases the envelopes containing the *questionnaires* were returned by the post office with a note that the addressee *could* not be found. This was rather strange and difficult to understand since the *school* addresses used had been supplied to the researcher by an official working in *the* Ministry of Education which keeps all records about schools. In a few *cases* teachers without the required teaching qualifications were made to complete *the* questionnaire items.

Summary

All in all about 1000 questionnaires were distributed in all the three *provinces* selected for the study and more than 820 were returned to the *researcher*. A few of these were either spoilt or the respondent did not indicate *his/her* teaching qualifications and researcher discarded all such questionnaires. A *total* of 811 questionnaires were processed for analysis.

Interviews

Interviews were considered an appropriate means of gaining an in depth *understanding* of a research subject's views and opinions about a given issue

because both the researcher as the interviewer and the respondent can ask further questions as probes or can reword a question in a bid to make sure that both parties are addressing the same issues. Interviews as a research method are compatible with social constructivist perspective in that the researcher and the interviewee are free to express their own perspectives about the issues before them. Both have equal opportunity to qualify, expand, rephrase and repeat whatever they want to put across to the other in a spirit of give and take which leads to an appreciation of each other's position and the development of shared understanding. It was appreciated that although the questionnaire could be used to reach a wide audience in a fairly cheap way, respondents could not qualify, expand or modify in an acceptable way their points of view about an issue. In this study clinical interviews were considered an appropriate means of gaining better insight and understanding of a smaller number of the research subjects' opinions and views about literacy.

The major objectives of the interviews were to provide an opportunity to probe the issues raised by the questionnaire data and to afford the respondents opportunity to articulate their understandings, beliefs, views, and opinions about literacy issues. To this end the researcher read repeatedly all the 38 questionnaire items to see what issues were addressed. The questionnaire items themselves had been presented in a random manner so that the respondents would not easily determine the broad issues the researcher was focusing on. This was to lessen any possibilities of teachers being able to give responses they thought the researcher wanted. (See appendix 3 for questionnaire items). In general the questionnaire items covered a wide spectrum of issues related to literacy goals and curriculum such as general classroom instruction, textbooks, examinations, policy issues, etc. After studying the questionnaire items, the researcher noted that the

various questions seemed to fall into categories. For instance, questionnaire items 8, 10, 12, 18, 28, and 30 all focused on probing teacher's views and perspectives about sources of curricular goals and content and their conceptions of student learning outcomes. Questionnaire items 5, 13, 15, 17, 31, and 35 focused on a different issue, namely examinations. The end result of studying questionnaire items and grouping them according to different issues they focused on gave rise to the six themes. The researcher then conceived interview questions around these six themes as a way of probing some of the research subjects more closely on important issues pertinent to literacy instruction at secondary school level. The following were the six themes.

Theme 1: Teachers' conceptions of curricular goals, content and what students should achieve.

Theme 2: Conceptions of examinations, what they test, what they do not test and their influence on how instruction is conducted.

Theme 3: Teachers' conceptions of critical thinking and problem-solving skills in relation to English/Shona literacy instruction.

Theme 4: Their conceptions of textbooks as sources of curricula content, how they are used, their strengths and weaknesses as perceived by teachers, and alternative and/or complementary sources of curricula content.

Theme 5: Reading comprehension, its meaning and goals as perceived by teachers.

Theme 6: Teachers' opinions and views about writing, its goals and instructional processes.

The researcher realized that it was impossible to select a sub sample for interviews on the basis of the teachers' patterns of responses on the questionnaire

data as had originally been decided because arranging suitable times for interviews with busy teachers scattered in different parts of two provinces was very difficult. The researcher then decided to select schools which represented the national picture of schools in terms of location, responsible authorities and type of students. Once a representative sample of schools was identified, the researcher interviewed as many teachers at each of these schools as time allowed. Fifty-one teachers were interviewed. The following is a breakdown of the number of teachers according to type. First, twenty eight teachers of English and Shona teaching in government schools were interviewed. Thirteen of these were teaching in group A schools (formerly for white students only) situated in middle class suburban areas; 11 were teaching in group B schools (formerly for African students only) situated in working class urban areas, and 4 were teaching at a government rural school. Second, thirteen teachers interviewed teaching in church run schools were interviewed. Four of the thirteen teachers were in schools situated in urban centers (two in a middle class church school and two at a working class church school). The remaining nine teachers were at church schools situated in rural areas. Third, four teachers were at a private special school located in an industrial area in Harare. Finally six teachers were interviewed at two different district council schools. Forty-nine of the fifty-one teachers interviewed had completed the questionnaire forms, and only two teachers had not participated because they had not joined teaching when the questionnaires were sent to schools.

The interview period lasted from the last week of May to the end of July 1993. The interview sessions themselves lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. The actual time was determined by the time available to the teacher for this activity. When the researcher went to a school he would talk to the principal about his

purpose for being at the school. In nearly all cases the principal still remembered the researcher's questionnaires which his/her teachers had completed. The principal usually asked the deputy principal to arrange the mechanics for the researcher to meet with the targeted teachers. The deputy principal would check the master timetable to find out when the various language teachers were free and also he/she would contact these teachers and inform them of the researcher's desire to talk to them. A suitable place was identified where the researcher could talk with the teachers. In most of the schools it was not possible to find a room/place quiet enough for the researcher to conduct the interview without some distractions or interruptions. On the whole the researcher got very good cooperation from school administrators and the targeted teachers.

Classroom observation was conducted with the aim of learning how these themes were enacted and operationalized in the daily lives and interactions between Shona and English teachers and secondary students over literacy instruction.

When the researcher met a teacher for the interview the researcher would try to put the teacher at ease by talking about general things, e.g., teaching, the weather and personal identification. In introducing himself the researcher always tried to emphasize his work as a teacher like them so as to dispel the impression or suspicion that he was a representative of the Ministry of Education out to evaluate teachers. Usually the researcher would have been introduced to the teacher by the assistant principal as a lecturer from the University of Zimbabwe interested to know how teachers were coping with their teaching activities.

At the beginning of the interview the researcher always explained how he wanted the interview to be conducted. He expressed a desire to use a tape recorder so as to free his attention from writing notes on the interview and that

tapes would enable the researcher to study the interview responses more closely to compare how a respondent had answered similar issues raised by the questionnaire and the interview. The researcher assured the interviewees of the confidentiality of the exercise by telling the interviewees that the tapes were given numbers as labels which matched those given on the completed questionnaire forms. This insured that no one besides the researcher could identify who the interviewees were. The researcher further told the interviewees to feel free to tell the researcher to turn off the audiotape if they felt that some part of the interview was too risky or embarrassing or personal to be recorded.

During the early interviews, the researcher gave the respondent his/her questionnaire and invited him/her to recall, wherever possible, the questions which he/she might have liked to get further clarification and to ask the researcher any questions he/she might have about the research. It turned out that most of the teachers had forgotten the contents of the questionnaire items and had therefore no serious questions or queries. A few of the teachers asked why the researcher was conducting the research. The researcher always explained that first and foremost the research was a necessary component of his studies and then added that the information obtained would help him revise his teacher education language curriculum at the University Zimbabwe where he was teaching. He added that the information might prove helpful to language curriculum development unit of the Ministry of Education if it were properly conducted and the findings were significant in some ways. In later interview sessions the researcher started with the actual interview questions first (see appendix 1) and only after interview questions did the researcher return to a preview and reflection of some of the questionnaire items.

On the whole the interview sessions went on very smoothly in terms of the interactions between the researcher and the interviewees. In many cases a number of teachers started off being a bit nervous and rather tense as if apprehensive of what they would be asked. As the interview progressed, however, many became relaxed and confident. At the end of the interview session many teachers said they found the interview questions thought-provoking and professionally very refreshing. In two or three cases the interviewees remained very nervous and could not express themselves intelligibly and fluently. They confessed to being nervous and said, perhaps it was because of the tape recorder. The researcher then turned off the recorder but there was not much improvement. In that situation the researcher avoided asking probing questions wherever this could be done without seriously affecting the quality of the information collected.

In addition to using audio-tapes to capture vividly the verbal interactions between the researcher and interviewees, the researcher always wrote field notes in the form of a diary in which he recorded each day's activity. The field notes included a narrative description of where he went, a complete summary of interview sessions with all the teachers interviewed on that day as well as subjective reflections of the researcher's evaluation of the teachers' articulation of their understanding of the issues raised during the interviews. These reflections were important supplementary data to the audio-taped data because some aspects of the interviewees' body communication could not be captured by the audio-tape.

These reflections helped the researcher to vividly recall the interview transactions and helped him to better interpret interview transcripts during the data analysis part of the research. On the whole the interviews provided the richest type of the research data.

In addition to interviewing 51 (23 Shona and 28 English) teachers as described earlier in this chapter, the researcher also interviewed the education officer in charge of Shona curriculum planning and development and the education officer for Shona in Harare province. These interviews were meant to enable the researcher to get some understanding of the official position as regards general policy and philosophy guiding curriculum and instruction in Shona.

Classroom Observation

Observation as research instrument is compatible with social constructivist perspective in the sense that the person being observed chooses what he/she wants to do and how to do it. The observer uses his/her knowledge and understanding of what he/she is observing as well as other personal perspectives to interpret the meaning of the episode being observed. The observer is free to ask questions to the person being observed for clarification on any part of the session which he/she may have found unclear or difficult to make sense of. Any discussion which may take place before or after the observation is meant to maximize the development of shared understanding between the observer and the person being observed.

One of the main aims of this study was to learn how Shona and English teachers' conceptualizations of literacy instructional goals were related to their classroom practices. In other words, the researcher was interested in knowing whether teachers' claims and verbal articulations about the nature, importance and functions of literacy for students' learning potentials in school and out of school settings had any relationship to the ways they planned and enacted literacy instructional programs in the classroom setting. It was decided that direct

observation of Shona and English teachers was the best way of explaining whether these teachers actually did what they said in questionnaires and interviews.

Classroom observations occurred from the second week of September to the end of October, 1993. A preliminary agreement between the researcher and the teacher about participation at the observation stage of the study was made during the interview stage of the study. After completing an interview with a teacher, the researcher would request that teacher for permission to observe him/her teach lessons related to literacy. In all cases the teachers agreed. It was not possible to have a random sub-sample of those teachers who had been interviewed to be subjects for classroom observation because teachers of forms two and four (Grades 9 and 11) were excluded from this exercise. These are the classes which write their public examinations between late October and the whole of November every year. Therefore the researcher excluded teachers conducting examination classes from the observation stage of the study.

Teachers usually devote a greater part of the second half of the academic year to preparing their students for examinations. Teaching usually takes the form of revision exercises, mock tests, drilling, etc. Since the researcher was interested in observing some teaching episodes not influenced by some external forces considered critical to the life chances of the students and the prestige of the teachers, it was decided that classroom observations would be conducted in forms one and three which were not going to write public examinations in the year of the study. It was hoped that non-examination class teachers would conduct their literacy instruction in ways that reflected their own conceptualizations of literacy and the goals of literacy instruction. It was also hoped that such instruction, if observed on a number of different occasions, would be fairly representative of the way they generally conduct literacy instruction.

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The researcher was interested in observing lessons focusing on reading, reading comprehension, reading and discussing literary works, writing and discussing of writing processes or strategies. The researcher was not interested in lessons devoted to grammar or language structure and usage, debate or oral instruction which was not directly related to reading and writing objectives.

Because of the difficulties involved in arranging suitable times for observation of lessons focussing on a literacy topic of interest to the researcher and the targeted teachers, it was decided to concentrate on urban and suburban schools for this stage of the study. Thus those teachers who had participated in the interviews and were teaching English or Shona in forms 1 and 3 in Harare schools were included in this part of the study. The schools which adequately met this selection criterion were two former group A and two former group B schools and one private special school. Altogether 16 teachers were observed on at least on four different occasions. One teacher was observed on five different occasions even though she was teaching an examination class. This teacher had assured the researcher that she would be teaching ordinary lessons on literacy to her form four class.

Originally the researcher had planned to use mostly an audio tape and occasionally a videotape to capture the observation data in addition to writing field notes. However he ended up not using both the audiotape and videotape because he realized that his presence in a classroom attracted the attention of many students who were perhaps wondering what the "stranger" was doing. This was more so where the teacher did not explain to the class who the researcher was and what he was doing whenever he joined their class. Most of the teachers did not tell their classes who the researcher was and what he was doing. It was most likely that the students thought the researcher was an official of the Ministry of

Education out evaluating some teachers. The researcher thought that the presence of recording gadgets would be even more distractive to many students in view of the limited number of occasions the researcher was going to observe each teacher. Since the purpose of the observation was not to record every minute detail of the classroom interaction, but rather to get a general understanding of how teachers enacted their literacy curriculum, it was decided that writing detailed narrative descriptions of the lessons would serve adequately the objective for classroom observations.

The decision to observe teachers who were not teaching examination classes reduced the pool of teachers to be selected for observation. Thus in the five schools where observations were to be conducted there were 11 teaching Shona and only 5 teaching English. This is not to argue that the sample of 16 teachers was not big enough to meet the objectives of the research, but rather it was not representative of the kind of teachers there are in terms of gender, qualifications and experience.

Although in some cases the researcher and some of the teachers tried to arrange times when the researcher would show up for the observation exercise, it was not always possible to adhere to any such prearranged time table. In practice the researcher visited schools to observe these teachers without them knowing the exact date and time. There were times the researcher visited a school and found a teacher planning to focus on language topics which he was not interested in, e. g., grammar or debate. In such cases the researcher would go to another school to try some other teachers. All the teachers did not mind being visited without prior arrangements except for one teacher who insisted that the researcher observe her on specific days and on specific times. Her reason for this insistence was that she had other duties at the school which often made her change her teaching

plans. She said she did not want the researcher to waste his time coming to observe her when she might not be in a position to teach according to the timetable or she might have planned to teach a topic not of interest to the researcher. It turned out that her teaching was comparatively better planned and better executed than the teaching of other teachers whom the researcher visited for observation purpose without their anticipating the researcher's visit. On the whole many of the teachers did not seem to mind whether the researcher was around or not. Their instruction of literacy tended to be uninfluenced by the presence of an outsider. There was in general, no attempt on the part of these teachers to make their instruction more innovative or out of the ordinary.

Summary

This chapter has provided a rationale and narrative description of the design and methodological procedures used to collect data for this study. A variety of instruments were used to collect data which addressed the research objectives and questions guiding this study. The main research instruments used for data collection were a questionnaire administered to about 1000 English and Shona teachers in three provinces of Harare, Mashonaland East and Masvingo. Interviews were conducted with 51 English and Shona teachers as well as two education officers for Shona. The purpose of using interviews was to get rich in depth information about the research subjects' considered opinions and views concerning literacy curriculum and instruction. In order to learn and understand whether there was any relationship between language teachers' verbal articulations of their conceptions of literacy instructional goals and their actual classroom practices, 16 language teachers were each observed teaching Shona or English at

least on four different occasions. The next chapter focuses on detailed analysis of the various data sources.

CHAPTER IV

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

The last chapter gave a description of the research design and its rationale. It also developed the procedure used to define the interview component of the study. This chapter presents the analysis procedures and the data collected through the questionnaires, the interviews and the classroom observations. Data from the three main sources were used to confirm the reliability of the data.

Questionnaire data were entered into the computer for examination of frequencies and percentages. Patterns emerging from the study of these frequencies and percentages were noted for comparison with data collected through interviews and classroom observations. (See appendix 4 for a summary of questionnaire data.)

Interview data, collected through audio-tapes, were transcribed and organized around the six themes similar to those covered by questionnaire items. The researcher read the responses to each interview question and developed a key for interpreting the responses to each question. The responses were converted to frequencies. Classroom observation data were collected through field notes and analyzed (See appendix 5 for a summary of observation data.)

Opting to use frequencies to interpret questionnaire and interview data in the process of data analysis for this study has meant sacrificing a lot of observational data. Observational data were not highlighted to the same extent as

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questionnaire and interview data because they could not be easily reduced to frequencies. Observational data were used to make broad interpretations to confirm or modify results of questionnaire and interview data.

The six themes drawn from the questionnaires, became a useful tool to organize the data analysis. Theme 1 is about teachers' perspectives about sources of literacy curricular goals and content and their understandings of what students should achieve as a result of their literacy instruction. The researcher considered this theme to be important in grounding the research subjects' overall conceptualization of literacy instruction because there are a number of forces which at times pull teachers' attention in different directions.

For instance, at the official level, there are the Shona and English syllabi which should give direction and guidance in terms of literacy instructional goals and content. Yet these documents only give skeleton information, mostly explaining examination formats of how English and Shona will be tested. (See appendices 7 & 13 for specimens of English and Shona syllabi at ordinary level.)

Examinations at Zimbabwe Junior Certificate (ZJC) level, Ordinary level (O level) and Advanced level (A level) exert a lot of influence on teachers and students in deciding what to focus on in their instructional and learning activities. This is because school achievement as indicated by examination results determine further educational advancement and employment opportunities of all secondary school graduates. Thus theme 2 is about examinations and their influence on literacy instruction. The main aim was to gain some insight into literacy teachers' perspectives about examinations, their strengths and weaknesses as well as their influence on their instructional activities.

Theme 3 is about teachers' conceptions of critical thinking and problem-solving skills in relation to literacy instructional goals. As was argued in

Chapter 1, school-acquired literacy does not necessarily promote problem-solving skills if it is acquired in a teaching environment which is oriented towards preparing children to recall information for national examinations (Eisemon, 1988).

Theme 4 is about textbooks, their availability, quality and impact on how teachers instruct literacy and how students learn it. In many educational settings textbooks determine what teachers teach and what students learn. They are thus a pervasive source of curricula goals and content, and the way teachers perceive and use them greatly determine what students learn from them.

Themes 5 and 6 relate directly to the issues of literacy which are central to this study. Theme 5 focuses on teachers' conceptions of reading comprehension, and theme 6 focuses on the teachers' perspectives of writing/composition instruction. The main objective was to understand how Shona and English teachers understood literacy, what meaning they gave to acts of reading and writing through what they said and through what they did in their classrooms. The following sections of this chapter relate the data related to the six themes as they were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observation.

It was a major assumption of this study that a thorough study of these themes as they were articulated by the Shona and English teachers through questionnaire items and interview questions as well as the way they were observed being enacted in these teachers' classrooms would be a valid and authentic way of understanding these teachers' conceptualizations of literacy instructional goals in the context of Zimbabwe's secondary schools.

Theme 1: Shona and English Teachers'
Perspectives of Sources of Literacy
Curricular Goals and Content

Questionnaires

Questionnaire items relating to theme 1 were mostly indirect except for questionnaire item 8. This section discusses data relating to theme 1 gathered through questionnaires. Item 8 was worded in this way:" Shona and English syllabuses do not give adequate guidance on the goals, depth and breadth of what should be covered at any given level." The responses were 317 (39.5%) agreed; 341 (42.5%) disagreed and 149 (18%) not sure. These figures are very significant in practical terms given the fact that the research sample was made up of only qualified graduate and non graduate teachers and some graduates without teaching qualifications. This sample represented Zimbabwe's most educated and qualified teachers in a situation where more than 50% of teachers especially in rural district council run schools have neither academic degrees nor teaching qualifications. Thus given this situation, the fact that about 40% of this sample representing the best category of teachers agree with the suggestion that Shona and English syllabi do not give adequate guidance on the goals, depth and breadth of what should be covered at any give level is significant. The question one might ask is: If 40% of the most educated and qualified teachers do not get sufficient guidance from national curriculum guides (syllabi) what more is the situation with the poorly educated and untrained teachers who were not part of this study but nevertheless constitute almost 50% of the teaching personnel especially in the rural schools?

Another angle from which to consider the significance of these data is to look at the teaching experience the research subjects had. Here we assume that practical experience in teaching gives one the ability to make sound interpretations of what is implied by non prescriptive curriculum materials like textbooks, syllabi

and examination questions. Of the 811 teachers who filled in questionnaire forms, 484 (59.8%) had teaching experience of five years and below, 155 (19.2%) had teaching experience of between six and ten years and only 116 (14.3%) teachers had teaching experience of over ten years. The researcher was informed by most of the principals of the urban schools he visited that all the temporary untrained teachers they had employed had been replaced by young newly qualified college trained teachers. From these data it would seem that a good number of the 484 (59.8%) teachers with less than five years teaching experience were in their first year of teaching after leaving teachers' colleges where they were trained.

It should also be observed that the number of teachers 144 (18%) indicated they were not sure or not committed to agree or disagree. This percentage is rather high and should be viewed as a cause for concern. The sample represented high calibre professionals in Zimbabwe, and for professionals to indicate they are not in a position to categorically say national curriculum guides give them sufficient guidance in the goals, depth and breadth of what they should cover is discomforting. It should be remembered that interview data on theme 1 showed that most teachers mentioned language syllabi as the commonest source for their curricular goals and content.

Five questionnaire items were related to theme 1 indirectly (about teachers' perceptions regarding sources of curricular goals and content and what students should achieve as a result of literacy instruction). In the context of formerly colonized countries, especially in Africa, formal education (schooling) has always been associated with the learning of a metropolitan European Language as the main means of gaining access to western ideas. This has often created doubts and at times resentment to the instruction of local languages. In the context of Zimbabwe valued literacy skills are often associated with English language by not

only students, and some teachers, but also by parents and the wider society at large. Shona is widely believed to be deficient in communicating Western scientific concepts. Since this study was concerned about secondary school Shona and English teachers' conceptions about literacy instructional goals, it was thought necessary to find out these teachers' views and opinions about the relative roles and functions of English and Shona as media of communication in post independence Zimbabwe. Questionnaire items 10, 12, 18, 28, and 30 were directed at this issue. (See appendix 4 for a summary of organizing themes for questionnaire data.) It was assumed that language teachers held better informed views about the functions and roles of a mother tongue and a second language in wider communication needs as well as the mastery of new concepts in the context of schooling.

Questionnaire item 10 was, "It is possible to develop Shona so that it can replace English in communicating scientific concepts." The responses were 161 (20%) agreed, 546 (67.8%) disagreed, and 98 (12.2%) not sure or not committed to one way or the other. Closely related to this was questionnaire item 30 which said, "All non-science subjects should be taught through the medium of Shona up to O'level." The responses were 91 (11.4%) agreed; 645 (80.5%) disagreed, and 65 (8.1%) not sure. Item 28 said, "For most students, Shona language captures the essence of their thinking and belief systems than English which is widely used in teaching school subjects ". The responses were 509 (64.4%) agreed; 123 (15.6%) disagreed; and 158 (20%) not sure. Item 18 said, "When it comes to success in life, English is more important than Shona because it is a world language." Responses were 594 (74.4%) agreed; 131 (16.4%) disagreed and 73 (9.1%) not sure.

These statistics are interesting in that an overwhelming majority of both Shona and English teachers do not believe that it is possible to develop Shona (spoken by over 75% of the population) in such a way as to replace English in communicating scientific concepts. The problem of communicating scientific concepts is the commonest explanation given as to why English has to be used as medium of instruction from grade 4 onwards. Yet a suggestion that non science subjects be taught through the medium of Shona is overwhelmingly rejected. At the same time the majority of these language teachers concede that Shona language captures the essence of the students' thinking and belief systems rather than English which is widely used to teach school subjects. What is even more interesting is the observation that these views were shared by many Shona teachers who are expected to help develop the Shona language to the highest level position--a language they chose to specialize in. (There were 426 (52.7%) teachers of English, 287 (35.5%) teachers of Shona and 38 (4.7%) teachers of both English and Shona. 57 (7%) did not indicate the language they were teaching of the 811 teachers who responded to the questionnaire data.) These data seem to be consistent with interview data concerning teachers' conceptions of what it is that students were required to learn as a result of Shona/English instruction. It was noted above that most Shona teachers mentioned imparting knowledge of Shona culture and cultural practices as the main objective of their Shona instruction. Most English teachers said effective communication skills was the main objective of their instruction. What constituted effective communication was not always clear.

Questionnaire item 12 said "It is more important for students to express their points of view in English than to worry about correct grammar." The responses were 317 (39.8%) agreed; 338 (42.4%) disagreed and 89 (11.1%) not sure. The majority of these teachers thus believe that they need to pay more

attention to grammatical correctness rather than to the essence of what students are trying to convey. Teachers' preoccupation with correctness of grammar in a second language learning context often inhibits students' willingness to participate in class discussion activities. Students will be taking two risks at the same time; one is providing answers which may turn out to be not the one expected by the teacher and the other is giving an answer in incorrect grammar and exposing his/her language shortcomings and thus inviting being corrected in public, which is often humiliating. Non participation in discussion is often the commonest way out of the problem. The researcher noted this phenomenon during classroom observation sessions. One head of English department at a rural school told the researcher during an interview session that students' inability to express themselves in English was the department greatest concern and wanted some help from the researcher about how to handle it.

Interviews

Interview questions la to le focused on this theme and they constituted the richest data source compared to questionnaire and classroom observation data. The interview questions relating to this theme were asked in a very direct manner and probes were used by the researcher to make sure that the respondents addressed the central issue. (See appendix 1 for a summary of interview questions).

Interview question l(a) was "Where do you derive your Shona/English curriculum goals and objectives?" The purpose of asking this question was to get the teachers' understanding of the various sources they consult or rely on to get a sense of what they were expected to teach. It was a major assumption of this study that people who express as many sound points or explanations as possible in

an argument are more cognizant of the existence of other perspectives about an issue under discussion than people who limit themselves to one or two points or explanations. Such people exhibit attributes of thinking compatible with a social constructivist perspective of reality than those who are satisfied with one or two explanations. It was hoped that what the teachers mentioned as sources were authentic sources which they used to guide their instructional decision making processes.

The following were the sources mentioned by the teachers interviewed. They are given in the order of the frequency each source was mentioned: (1) syllabus (curriculum guides) (2) examinations, (3) textbooks and (4) perceived needs of students and/or society in relation to English/Shona language.

Out of the 45 interview transcripts, 24 were for English teachers and 19 were for Shona teachers and 2 were for both English and Shona teachers.

Fifteen teachers (34.8%) mentioned only one out of the 4 possible sources of curricular goals and content. These were mostly the syllabi (curriculum guides). A total of 16 (37.2%) teachers mentioned 2 out of 4 possible sources. In the majority of cases the 2 commonly mentioned sources were syllabus and textbooks or syllabus and examinations. Only 5 teachers (11.6%) mentioned all possible 4 sources, and another 6 (13.9%) teachers mentioned 3 sources. This means 11 teachers (25.5%) of the teachers asked this question gave 3 or 4 sources of curricular goals and content. When the number of teachers were compared according to the language taught, it was found that more English teachers mentioned 3 or 4 sources than Shona teachers and more Shona teachers mentioned one source. One Shona teacher did not answer the question and instead talked about the negative attitudes displayed by many students and some other teachers towards Shona. This means that there was a wide range of

conceptualizations of literacy curricular sources expressed by not only all the interviewees, but also between the Shona and English teachers

Interview Question 1b asked the teachers to articulate in their own words what it is that they understood and/or thought students were required to be able to do as a result of studying English/Shona. The aim was to give these language teachers opportunity to synthesize information from the various sources at their disposal about the goals and objectives of English/Shona instruction and express them in the way they understood. As was pointed out above, the official Ministry of Education language syllabi do not provide an outline of the goals and objectives for language instruction. This is particularly the case with Shona Ordinary level (O level) syllabus. They merely state how the examinations will be written. It is perhaps assumed that teachers would interpret or infer the goals of language instruction from the way it is examined. See appendix 7 and 13 for specimens of English and Shona O level syllabi.

After reading all the transcripts, the researcher found 3 possible answers. One was to gain communication skills to use in various situations by various means. The second was to be critical and creative when using language. Three was to gain knowledge such as cultural knowledge, practices and norms. In general most Shona teachers mentioned culture and cultural practices pertaining to Shona people, and English teachers mentioned ability to communicate effectively and correctly in this second language. It is interesting to note that as many as 16 teachers (38.0%) mentioned only one objective and only one English teacher mentioned the three objectives for teaching English. Most of the answers given were brief, one short unelaborated sentence like "to enable students to communicate effectively" or "so that they know their culture". Critical and creative skills using language were rarely mentioned. Like these teachers' responses to

interview question 1(a), there was a wide range of conceptualizations of the goals for teaching English/Shona literacy with a significant percentage of them being satisfied with expressing one goal.

Interview question 1c was about how Shona and English teachers decided on depth and breadth of coverage of whatever aspect of language they focused on in their instruction. The researcher felt that it was important to understand how teachers decided that they have covered enough on any given unit in the absence of openly stated goals and objectives in the official syllabi. In some cases the same literature texts were set for ZJC and O'level classes and examinations. The researcher wanted to find out the extent to which language teachers used past examination questions to help them determine the required depth and breadth of content coverage. Only 21 of all the 45 teachers whose interview data were transcribed were asked this question because in many cases the information required for this question might have been supplied when the teachers were responding to another question related to theme one. Three points were decided on as representing possible answers. These were: 1, students' easiness when learning the targeted skills and concepts; 2, examination guidelines, that is, how past examination questions relating to the targeted skill or concept would have been asked; and 3, time constraints.

Again it is interesting to note that 9 teachers (42.8%) mentioned only one point out of three. The commonest response was examination guidelines. This means that the teachers would give a test mostly modeled on past exam questions and if students perform well on such tests, then they felt they have taught the unit to the required level. Only 2 teachers (9.5%) were unable to come up with a sound response. Here are two examples, one by a respondent who got 0 for her response to question 1c and another one who got one point.

> I am also facing the same problem because as I am teaching here. I am still new (to secondary teaching). I was a primary school teacher, so I find it difficult to come up with these objectives or goals.

This response got one point.

> We seem to rely on past exam question papers. The past exam papers sort of guide us to what sort of things to cover and how far we can go because they do not put much guidance in the syllabus.

It is also interesting to note that there were more Shona teachers with one or no points, and when it came to the number of teachers with more points the numbers of Shona teachers became smaller.

One of the official explanations why national language syllabi (curriculum guides) give skeleton information about goals and content of language instruction is that schools should use these documents merely as guidelines. Schools are required to produce their own syllabi which show developmental progression in the skills and concepts students need to acquire. The argument goes on to say since schools are quite diverse in many ways including the students they admit and the resources they enjoy, school syllabi must also reflect the diverse nature of students and resources. Schools in Zimbabwe are significantly different in settings, background of students they enroll and the responsible authorities financing and administering them. For instance, some schools are church administered and are highly selective of the students they admit, while other schools are state run and have open admission policies. Still other schools are private and boarding, making them very expensive, and others are rural day schools administered by local councils with very limited resources. The last mentioned group caters mostly for the poor rural communities.

Interview question 1d asked the research subjects the differences between the Shona/English national syllabi and the school syllabi. After reading all the

transcripts the researcher came up with two points; (1) school syllabus is more elaborate/detailed than the national syllabus, and (2) school syllabus is geared toward the specific circumstances of the school and its students' needs and background while the national syllabus is a guideline. Eight teachers out of 45 were not asked this question. Four teachers, all Shona teachers (10.8%) were unable to give an intelligent difference between school syllabus (Shona) and the national Shona syllabus. A couple of them said there was no difference between the two and maintained that the school syllabus was a mere reduplication of the national syllabus. One teacher who got no point for her answer said:

> The national syllabus is too wide and it's a bit difficult to follow.
> It is used to restructure the syllabus for the school and you will
> be taking some of the things and some of the things are left out.

On being probed further, she conceded that she had actually not seen the national syllabus and that what she had said was based on what she remembered being taught at college the previous year when she was a student teacher. This interview took place in July and the teacher had been teaching Shona as a qualified teacher from mid January.

Twenty-two teachers (59%) got one point. The commonest response was that the school syllabus was more detailed than the national syllabus. Only 11 teachers (29.7%) got two points about the differences between national syllabi and school syllabi. It may be recalled that in response to question 1a above, most teachers had asserted that they derived their English/Shona curricular goals and content from the syllabus. Information obtained through probing some of the teachers about syllabi and how they used them indicated that many schools did not have school syllabi in operation and that many teachers rarely consulted the national syllabi to learn what they suggest should be focused on in instruction. Many teachers relied very heavily on textbooks and past examination question

papers to derive their instructional goals and content. Classroom observation data confirmed this phenomenon, especially when it came to reading comprehension instruction. Everything taught, including comprehension questions, were taken from textbooks.

A few teachers (16) were asked interview question 1e which was, "To what extent can one deviate from the official syllabus? This question was asked directly to most of the teachers because the information solicited by this question was often obtained when many of the interview subjects responded to question 1c. This particular question was quite open-ended and all that was expected of a respondent was to give his/her considered opinion. The teachers that were interviewed felt that there was no limit to which one can deviate from the official syllabus as long as there was a balance in the attention paid to various language skills. The 3 teachers who received zero scores did not address the question and said something unrelated to it. The researcher did not ask probing questions here because he felt he had spent a lot of time on theme one and needed to move to the next theme.

Classroom observation data related to theme 1 were indirect and based on the researcher's interpretations of teachers' literacy instructional activities. The data suggested that textbooks were the major source of literacy content, and test taking skills were the implied goals for literacy instruction.

Before leaving theme 1, the following statements can be made on the basis of interview, questionnaire, and classroom observation data analyzed. Most of the teachers derive their English/Shona instructional goals and content from textbooks, past examination questions, syllabi and students' linguistic needs as they are revealed through tests. Although the syllabi were commonly cited as major sources of curricular goals and content, many teachers did not find them easy to

follow as sources of guidance. Most English teachers' major aim in English teaching was to facilitate students' proficiency in communication through English language. In practice this generally meant error-free, grammatical expression. For Shona teachers the main aim was to help students learn and value Shona culture and cultural practices. Most of these teachers did not think that Shona should be used as a medium of instruction even in non scientific subjects although they conceded that it better captured the essence of students' thinking and belief systems than English.

Theme 2:   Examinations

As was pointed out in Chapter I and the introduction to this chapter, public examinations are an important measure of educational achievement in Zimbabwe, both from the perspectives of official educational decision makers and school personnel, i.e., administrators, teachers and students. Historically secondary school examinations have been linked to British Examinations Boards, especially Universities of London and Cambridge. Currently steps to localize the examination system are at an advanced stage. Since students' pass rate in public examinations is used as a benchmark of educational quality, it was thought expedient to try to find out language teachers' perceptions of these examinations in relation to literacy instruction.

Questionnaire

The following section presents questionnaire data related to theme 2 about examinations. The purpose of the questionnaire statements was to solicit the teachers' views and opinions without making it obvious to the respondents that the statements were related to specific themes the researcher was investigating. The

researcher randomly ordered the questionnaire statements. It was hoped that this would reduce the likelihood of the respondents trying to express views and opinions they might think would be favorable to the researcher. The following questionnaire items focused on issues related to examinations in one way or another: 5, 13, 15, 17, 31, and 35.

Statement 5 was: " Using past exam questions is the best way to ensure that students are effectively prepared for their final examinations." Responses were 444 (55.1%) agreed; 211 (26.2%) disagreed; and 151 (18.7%) were not sure. In the absence of follow-up probes, it is difficult to precisely tell what each respondent had in mind when he/she gave a response. It is possible that some respondents were saying to themselves as they interacted with the above statement, "Yes, I agree because since in our system the main preoccupation of a secondary school teacher is to prepare students effectively so that they pass their exams." This interpretation is in line with the views expressed by most of the teachers interviewed about the influence of exams on their teaching. It may be recalled that many teachers said they used past examinations a lot as a way of preparing their students for final examinations. Another way of interpreting their thinking is to say, "Yes it's true as a statement of pragmatic teaching, but that does not mean most of my teaching is geared toward doing that." Again, this way of looking at the above statement was expressed by a few teachers during interview sessions. These few teachers argued that it was necessary to prepare students adequately to pass their public exams, but that should not exclude the instruction of non-examinable aspects of language skills. Whatever the interpretations given to the meaning of questionnaire item 5, it is significant that as many of 55% concurred with the statement as opposed to 26% who disagreed. The percentage of the not committed responses (19%) is also rather high.

Questionnaire item 13 was, "The teacher's primary aim should be to give students good education rather than to make them pass final examinations." Responses were 457 (57.1%) agreed; 198 (24.8%) disagreed; and 145 (18.1%) not sure. Judging from the way many teachers interviewed responded to interview question 2a about examinations being able to reflect good education, it is probably fair to say many teachers had problems in defining good education outside the context of examinations. In Zimbabwe the quality of education tends to be uncritically associated with student achievement in public examinations. Many teachers interviewed had problems in conceptualizing good education not taken from the perspective of student achievement. The position taken in this study is that good education is not necessarily reflected by student achievement, rather it is determined by what students actually learn and how they learn it irrespective of how examinations are set and processed. It is possible that the research subjects confounded their perceptions of good education with student achievement in public examinations.

The above comments about problematic nature of interpreting notions of good education and examination results equally apply to questionnaire statement 15 which said: "ZJC and O'level examinations do a good job of testing valuable knowledge and skills I value in English/Shona." The responses were 437 (55.1%) agreed; 149 (18.8%) disagreed; and 207 (26.1%) not sure. There is reason to believe that a good number of teachers did not fully have in place notions of valuable knowledge and skills outside the examination parameters. It may be recalled that 30% of the interviewees failed to address question 2a about the relationship between examination and good education despite the researcher's readiness to explain or clarify any part of the questions posed to the interviewees. Responses to the questionnaire statement 15 were in direct conflict with interview

responses which had only 9% of the teachers saying ZJC and O'level examinations were a good reflection of knowledge, skills, competencies and dispositions they associated with good education in Shona/English.

The lack of congruence between interview and questionnaire data over the same issue causes problems of reliability of some research instruments. However in this study the use of three major different data gathering instruments helps resolve the problem. In this case the interview data should be taken as more reliable than the questionnaire data partly because during an interview the researcher was always in a position to clarify misunderstandings and could rephrase the question, which could not be done with the questionnaire. Also in the case of this study the respondents' problem with the meaning of good education and examinations, as pointed out above, had been encountered during the interview sessions and steps had been taken to mitigate its effect. However this conflict in the data related to this theme should be kept in mind in the overall discussion of the data and their interpretation.

Questionnaire item 17 was about examinations and the specific area of writing. The statement was: "Writing activities for students should be mostly modeled on how they will be tested in final examinations." The responses were 540 (67.8%) agreed; 129 (16.2%) disagreed and 128 (16.1%) not sure. Writing is the focus of theme 6 and therefore more detailed discussion of the data related to writing will be given later when theme 6 comes up for analysis. At this point it is pertinent to point out that an overwhelming majority of the respondents agreed with the suggestion that writing activities should be modeled on how the students will be tested in final examinations. This view is consistent with the responses given to questionnaire item 5 about using past examination papers as the best way of preparing students for their final examinations. However, this conception of

writing curriculum and instruction is not compatible with current research findings on the writing process. The writing research reviewed in Chapter II stressed the development of writing skills which take into consideration the purpose for writing, the intended audience, and above all, empowering the writer. Empowerment means allowing the content of the writing activity to be an expression of the writer's voice rather than a mere reflection of what an outsider, like a teacher or examiner, would want the writer to convey. The view that effective writing is a constructive activity undertaken by the writer interacting with his/her experience, purpose for writing and intended audience is in conflict with writing activities subjected to restricted testing procedures where the real audience is the examiner or the evaluating teacher. This is one of those areas where the testing paradigm is in conflict with research based notions of good education.

Questionnaire statement 31 was also related to the theme of examinations. It said, "In my opinion the O'level examinations in English/Shona do not test for critical thinking. The responses were 343 (31%) agreed; 376 (47.9%) disagreed; and 166 (21.1%) not sure or committed. It was pointed out above when discussing interview data related to examinations and critical thinking that many teachers' responses suggested that they defined critical thinking rather loosely, generally to mean any kind of thinking where one is not relying on memory. This perhaps equally applies to the questionnaire respondents. This again makes it difficult to take these figures on their face value. A study of past examination questions in both Shona and English suggests that most of the questions test for simple recall skills. One or two questions in the composition and literature questions may lend themselves to some critical thinking, but since there is wide choice in the questions, a good number of test takers can completely avoid answering questions which demand critical thinking. Again where there is multiple

choice in the answers, not much critical thinking can be tested since the test taker has no opportunity to explain his/her thinking process while he/she is taking the test. This problem was also pointed out by some teachers during interviews for this study.

The statistics for the teachers' responses are interesting in that 31% agreed that O'level examinations did not test for critical thinking against 47.9% who disagreed. Even the percentage of teachers indicating non committal 21.1% is big. This is not a cause for comfort in the overall assessment and evaluation of what these examinations are testing or not testing. Questionnaire item 35 is related to items 5 and 17 which have been discussed above. It said: "Students' assignments should be derived from past public examinations or be closely modeled on those exams as a way of preparing students for their finals." It is interesting to note that the responses were identical with those for questionnaire 17, and were as follows: 548 (68.3%) agreed; 127 (15.8%) disagreed; and 127 (15.8%) were not sure. It thus appears that the examination paradigm greatly influences what students experience in the course of their schooling as well as how teachers conceptualize their roles and functions in their interactions with students and the content of their teaching.

Interview

As with data for theme 1, interview questions for theme 2, about examinations were more direct than questionnaire items. Interview question 2a was, " To what extent are the Zimbabwe Junior Certificate (ZJC) and Ordinary level (O'level) exams a good reflection of knowledge, skills, competencies and dispositions you associate with good education in English/Shona?" The aim of this question was to get language teachers' assessment and evaluation of two common

and critical public examinations at secondary level. It was hoped that teachers would take this question as an occasion to reflect on their understanding of what good education looks like and how these exams fitted in with their notions of good education.

It appears more than a quarter of the interviewees had problems in grasping the thrust of the question. Thirteen (30%) of these teachers did not address the question in their responses. A good number of these teachers did not appear to have some notions of "good education" with which to compare the skills, knowledge, competencies and dispositions reflected by public examinations at these two levels of secondary schooling. The researcher tried to simplify the question when he sensed that an interviewee did not grasp the demands of the question. At times this helped, but quite often some teachers just gave a response which did not address the question. The researcher was left wondering whether some of these teachers had never thought and reflected about the strengths and weaknesses of the exams which are a great concern of the education system or have not reflected on what good education might mean to them as individuals. Some, indeed, asked the researcher to explain what the question demanded of them, which the researcher always did. Here are two examples of responses given zero or off point in the coding scheme:

> To some extent yes. Because if we take, for example, essay, some
> of the skills tested in essays are how to think and construct good
> ideas, so they will be thinking and writing.

The other one is:

> When we look at O'level examination paper one, they look at
> descriptive type of composition where you look at a situation
> where you imagine what do you do in such a situation . I have no
> complaints about O'level examination.

The first response was made by a Shona teacher and the second one by an English teacher.

Most of the responses were generally brief and did not attempt to give examples which help to validate a position taken. In coding these responses, the researcher gave 1 point for an assertion without an explanation or an example to back it up, and two points for an assertion followed by a sound explanation and an illustrative example. Here again are two examples of responses coded one point and two points.

> From my own opinion exams are just there to screen pupils so that we have fewer people who are employed. When you teach these pupils one is going to understand this and the other one is going to understand a different aspect. So to say that the pupils who got their O'level are good is completely out. These exams are not a good reflection of good education. Exams only test on a few aspects (of what students learn) and leave out others.

This response was given one point because it did not give specific examples to support the assertion made. The following response was given two points.

> As I said earlier on that some of the objectives of teaching these students English is to communicate orally. That is one thing obviously which is not examined. I'm not suggesting that it be included, but some pupils are very good at communicating orally, and it is never tested in the final exams. They (students) know that if you give them exercises, e.g., debate or public speaking, they are not going to take it seriously as they would do with other subjects. Even if they are good because they know that this is not going to be tested at the end of the year. But because at the end, being able to speak helps somebody to able to write but not always.

Seven teachers (16%) said examinations only partially reflected their notions of good education in terms of knowledge, skills, competencies and dispositions in English/Shona. More than half of these supported their assertions with explanations and examples. Of the 30 teachers who addressed this question 19 (44%) indicated that examinations were not a good reflection of knowledge, skills, etc., they associated with good education in English/Shona. A total of 12 (40%) of these teachers got two points for their responses, indicating that they supported their responses with explanations and examples. Only 4 (9%) teachers asserted

that examinations were a good reflection of knowledge, skills, etc., which they associated with good education in Shona/English. All of these four teachers did not give a sound explanation or example why they thought way.

Interview question 2b was, "To what extent do ZJC and O'level exams test for critical thinking and problem-solve skills?" Perhaps this was one of the most direct questions in terms of issues related to the conceptual framework used in this study as was explained in chapter 2 above.

Like the case with interview question 2a, some teachers did not address the question up-front. Like the case with question 2a, coding for question 2b was, one point was given for a response which was a mere assertion without supporting explanation and/or examples, and two points were awarded for a response which gave an assertion plus a sound explanation and/or a suitable example.

A total of 13 (30%) teachers of the 43 teachers who responded to this question said exams only partially tested for critical thinking. Most of them, 10 (77%) did not give a sound explanation or illustrative examples. Here is an example of a response coded 'partially' and given one point.

> Sometimes to a great extent because, like in literature questions,
> . you find that they ask questions which require critical thinking.
> The answers are not definite, you have to think. For grammar it's
> more of recall rather than critical thinking. In composition some
> of the topics call for creativity and imagination.

Many teachers' responses suggested that they defined critical thinking quite loosely, generally to mean any kind of thinking where one is not relying on mere recall of a previous experience.

Altogether 16 (37%) teachers asserted that examinations did not test for critical thinking. Many of these teachers argued that most questions set in all sections of the language papers required simple recall skills. One Shona teacher asserted:

> Most of the work does not seem to develop critical thinking because critical thinking can only develop in literature. Most of the work, like in composition, does not encourage critical thinking, even grammar. I think it encourages cramming (rote learning) rather than critical thinking.

Another respondent said:

> I think to a very limited extent. In a composition you will find that they are just recalling what happened, or by chance, they are repeating a composition which they wrote during the course (of the term). It's mere reproduction. To a limited extent in literature questions where they have to give their own opinion of what happened.

Only 8 (18.6%) out of 43 teachers who responded to this question said examinations in English/Shona tested for critical thinking and problem solving skills. However, all their responses were mere assertions without sound explanation or examples to back their claims. Here is an example of such a response.

> I think they do, that is to a very great extent, especially at O'level. Maybe at ZJC there is not much of critical thinking and problem-solving, but at O'level I think the syllabus does that to a large extent.

This was a response given by a Shona teacher. Another example from a teacher of English was:

> In English I think critical thinking is well catered for although there is no poetry because in poetry that's where you get a lot of critical thinking. I am sure comprehension questions require critical thinking. But problem-solving in English, we have very little covered in that aspect.

A third interview question related to theme 2 about examinations asked teachers to comment on what influence, if any, examinations had on their instruction. The question was put in this way: "What influence do these exams have on what teachers do, believe to be important and how they teach?" A total of 41 teachers were asked this question and of these only one said examination had no influence. This is a question nearly all the respondents answered very

elaborately and in some cases quite passionately. The majority of the teachers, 32 (78%) argued that examinations had negative influence on their work. They said examinations sort of force them to rely on past exam questions as a way of preparing students to do well in their final exams. They pointed out that they were forced to concentrate on those aspects which regularly appear in examination questions at the expense of other equally important areas which are not examined, like oral skills, attitudes, and character development. One teacher said about 60% of his teaching came from past examination question papers. These teachers used terms like "restrictive," "drilling" etc., to capture some of the negative influences of examinations on their instruction. Here are two excerpts from the interview transcripts about teachers' views on the influence of examinations on their teaching:

> I think they (exams) influence teachers a lot because the main goal is to make students pass the exam. Mostly you make yourself teach what is in line with the exam to the extent that many teachers use the past examination papers. If you want to be very creative and you want to take students out for drama, people will think that you just want to bask in the sun, or if you are in class they think you are making noise. So you just confine yourself to making the kids pass the examination.

Another teacher had this to say about the same issue:

> We go back to the administration. When they announce the examination results they will say so many passed, and so many failed. In a way the whole blame goes to the teacher. The teacher is forced to be examination oriented. The teacher is there to teach for examinations, and in that way it creates problems because if you teach for the exam there is no way you can pay attention to everything. Most teachers concentrate on examination by using past exam papers. That is, if you are teaching on verbs you have to search through past examination papers and see how they have been setting the examination on verbs for the last five years.

Only 8 (19.5%) teachers asserted that examinations had positive influence on their work.

The following quotation captures well the essence of the 8 teachers' opinions about the positive influence of examinations on their work. One teacher put it this way.

> The questions that are given in examinations--help the teacher to be very effective in every aspect, so that when one is teaching one must see that what is required by the syllabi has been covered so that pupils may be able to answer the questions (in the exam). When the teacher looks at the (examination) results, if they are good results, they will encourage him/her to work even harder. If they (the exam results) are poor, they also encourage the teacher to change his/her way of teaching. If your results are poor you can check how you performed during the course of the year and you can tell where to change so that you can help the pupils to get good results.

Other teachers mentioned that fear of failing in examinations forces students to work hard and focus on important things. One teacher asserted that examinations had more influence on her teaching than the syllabus.

Observation data related to theme 2, examinations are consistent with data collected through interviews and questionnaires discussed in the preceding sections of this chapter. Reading comprehension lessons observed were taught in a manner greatly influenced by the testing paradigm. Usually passages selected for reading were read once or twice and then followed by students answering questions taken from the text book where the passage was taken. Students would answer these questions both orally and as written homework. Rarely were selected passages made the focus of group or class discussion with a view of making students compare what the passage was saying with what they already knew about the theme and subject matter of the passage. There were few, if any, instances when students were led to critique, evaluate, and reflect critically on the content of the reading passage. The main objective on the part of the teachers appeared to make students read and then be able to recall factual details of the passage as demonstrated by their ability to answer correctly the questions set by the textbook

writer. Theme 5 is about reading comprehension and more will be said when that comes up for discussion.

In conclusion to the discussion of theme 2 about exams, the following appear to be the highlights. For the majority of the research subjects examinations reflect valued knowledge only to a limited extent. Many teachers did not appear to have clear notions of what constitutes good knowledge and were unable to articulate such notions clearly. A few teachers saw positive effects of exams in that they motivate students to learn and help teachers to focus on important issues. However, the majority of the teachers said exams had many negative influences on their work--forcing them to teach to the test and ignore non testable aspects of knowledge. The majority of teachers said they rely on past exam papers to guide and prepare their students for finals. Most of the interviewees asserted that exams mainly focused on lower order thinking skills like ability to recall previously learned body of knowledge as opposed to creative and analytical skills and problem solving skills. Observation data revealed that many teachers modeled their literacy instruction on how students are tested in national examinations.

Theme 3: Conceptions of Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills in Relation to Literacy Instruction

It may be recalled that after reviewing pertinent literature for this study in chapter 2 it was concluded that the social constructivist perspective of literacy was compatible with research findings regarding current conceptions of education. It was noted that current conceptions of education stress that learning at all levels should be an active process in which learners construct and reconstruct knowledge as they engage in the process of interpreting, questioning, reflecting, critiquing and

problem-solving activities. The purpose of theme 3 was to try to learn Shona and English teachers' perspectives of critical thinking and problem-solving skills as they relate to literacy instruction.

Questionnaire

Questionnaire data related to critical thinking and problem solving skills and examinations have discussed above under theme two. For instance, questionnaire items 5, 17, and 35, suggested reliance on using past examination question papers and modeling writing activities and all students' assignments on past examination questions as the best ways of preparing students for their finals. It was noted that the overwhelming responses to these statements were in favor of using past examination papers. This, in essence, is in conflict with the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills since these are cognitive skills which are best promoted when applied to novel and original learning tasks rather than to over practiced ones.

The following section discusses additional questionnaire data related to theme 3 about conceptions of critical thinking and problem-solving skills with regard to Shona and English instruction. Questionnaire item 6 said, "It is not possible to teach students critical thinking skills in Shona." The responses were; 81 (10.3%) agreed; 624 (79.4%) disagreed; and 81 (10.3%) not sure or not committed to one way or the other.

Questionnaire item 11 said; "Most students cannot reason and think critically using English because of their poor command of the English language." The responses were 566 (70.6%) agreed; 147 (18.3%) disagreed; and 89 (11.1%) not sure or not committed to one view or the other. The responses to these two statements would appear unproblematic and logical on their face value since Shona

is the mother tongue for most of the students in the schools surveyed, and English is a second language. It thus makes sense for teachers to disagree with the suggestion that it is not possible to teach students critical thinking skills in Shona. It is also logical to expect these teachers to agree with the statement that most students cannot reason and think critically using English because of the students' poor command of the English language. This response is, perhaps, based on their experience in interacting with the students on a daily basis over some learning tasks. However, problems arise when it is recalled that an overwhelming majority of these same respondents disagreed with questionnaire items 10 and 30. Questionnaire item 10 discussed above in connection with theme 1 said "It is possible to develop Shona so that it can replace English in communicating scientific concepts." 546 (67.8%) of these teachers disagreed. Questionnaire item 30 said, "All non science subjects should be taught through the medium of Shona up to O'level. 645 (80.5%) again disagreed. If it is not possible to develop Shona so that it can replace English in communicating scientific concepts, and if Shona is not even good enough to be used to teach non science subjects up to O'level, how can it be used to teach critical thinking skills? If most of the students cannot reason and think critically using English because of their poor command of the English language, and at the same time English is the medium of instruction, how are these students to be taught so as to develop critical thinking skills? These are serious questions regarding the respondents' conceptualization of critical thinking skills in relation to English and Shona as dominant media of communication and education in Zimbabwe.

Questionnaire item 25 said, "It is more important to make students write on topics derived from current news items on radio, TV and newspapers than from past examination questions. Responses were; 385 (48.1%) agreed; 205 (25.6%)

disagreed; and 211 (26.3%) not sure or not committed to one view or the other. In the above statement the underlying assumption is that if students are made to write on topics derived from current news items they would develop reflective thinking and problem-solving skills. Current news items are usually interesting to many readers, and occasionally they are thought-provoking and problematic in many ways. If students use such materials for their writing activities it is likely that they may develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. This is in contrast to using past examination questions which may be far removed from students' interests and concerns, and are likely to encourage rote learning of what may be anticipated in final examinations. If this view is valid, one would expect nearly all language teachers to find it acceptable. However, if other considerations like drilling students in what they are likely to be tested in their finals are a major concern, then the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills through reflecting, evaluating and critiquing what is going on in society many not be considered very important writing skills. It is from this assumption about the relative importance of using current news items and past examination questions for writing activities that the responses to questionnaire item 25 may be looked at.

Interview

Interview data related to the theme of critical thinking and problem-solving skills were discussed as part of theme 2, about examinations above. It may be recalled that interview question 2b asked Shona and English teachers the extent to which ZJC and O'level examinations tested for critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Classroom observation data did not directly focus on theme 3, about conceptions of critical thinking and problem-solving skills in relation to the

teaching and learning of Shona and English. Most of the lessons observed focusing on reading and writing did not contain elements of critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

To conclude the discussion of theme 3 about conceptions of critical thinking and problem solving skills, the following can be said on the basis of the interview and questionnaire data discussed above. The notion of critical thinking and problem-solving skills as major concerns of language teaching and learning did not appear to be at a deliberate and conscious level of operation of many of the teachers interviewed, and perhaps those who responded to questionnaire data as well. Many of these teachers had quite loose definitions of critical thinking, to mean any thinking which is not directly dependent on immediate memory of the object of the thinking activity. The apparently pervasive influence of examinations and concern to prepare students to pass public examinations overshadow the opportunity to promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills in language teaching and learning. Responses to questionnaire item 31 about O'level examinations in English and Shona not testing for critical thinking and problem-solving skills showed a majority of the respondents disagreeing with the statement, i.e., 48% as opposed to 31% who agreed with the statement, and 21% expressing non committal to either view. However, interview responses to interview question 2b about the same issue were: 37% said examinations did not test for critical thinking and problem-solving skills against 18.6% who asserted that exams tested for these skills. Classroom observation data did not show any evidence of consciously planned and executed language lessons to promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Theme 4:   Textbooks

Research findings consistently show that textbooks greatly determine the curriculum most students experience during their formal schooling days.   This is so because many teachers greatly rely on textbooks for their instructional goals and content.

Textbook information is easy to use and can be used conveniently with large numbers of students who are working at the same pace.   However, textbooks have a number of short-comings and here are some of them.   Some textbooks may not be appropriate for students working at different paces.   Textbooks do not always provide material relevant and interesting to diverse learning and teaching contexts. Over-dependence on textbooks can inhibit teacher creativity which is crucial to individual students' needs.   Textbooks cannot keep pace with changes going on in society and educational research findings, hence over-dependence on them can be detrimental to the learning needs of students.   Textbooks reflect the strengths and weaknesses of their authors, hence they do not represent all perspectives on all issues.   Over dependence on textbooks is a reflection of positivist conceptions of knowledge and cognition rather than social constructivist perspectives because it suggests that knowledge is some where out there, perhaps in teachers' heads and textbooks.

Questionnaire

There were two questionnaire items focussing on theme 4, textbooks and how they are used.   The first of these statements was "Textbook comprehension questions focus mostly on recall and simple interpretation skills."   Out of 801 responses, the results were 54.6% of the teachers agreed; 25.2% disagreed and 20.2% said they were not sure.   If it is recalled that data from interview question

3b about the extent to which teachers relied on textbooks for their language instruction showed that more that 72% of the interviewees said they relied on textbooks most of the time, these figures become interesting. It has already been mentioned earlier that classroom observation of lessons on reading comprehension showed that nearly all the teachers observed asked students to respond to questions set by the textbook authors. Thus data from all the three instruments used in this study reveal that students are mostly exposed to simple recall and interpretation skills in their reading classes. The dominance of simple recall skills in reading is compounded by the need to model teaching to the way students are tested in public examinations which often creates the impression that there is always one correct answer to be searched for in the text.

Questionnaire item 19 was: "I get ideas of what I teach mostly from textbooks I use in Shona/English." Out of 803 responses, results were 41% agreed; 35.1% disagreed; and 23.9% were not sure. Again these statistics merely confirm the point already observed above that textbooks are a major source of curricular goals and content for Shona and English language teachers in Zimbabwe.

Interview

Since this study mainly focused on trying to understand how Shona and English teachers conceptualized literacy instructional goals, it was thought that asking these teachers a few questions about textbooks and how they used them might shed light on whether textbooks were a possible source of these teachers' conceptions of literacy instructional goals. Interview question 3a1 asked the teachers to describe the quantity of textbooks they had at their disposal for the classes they taught. One of the problems the Zimbabwe education system faced after making education accessible to all students of school-going age was the

shortage of teaching and learning materials. In this regard textbook supply was a new challenge especially to schools opened after 1980 in poor urban and rural communities. These new schools located in poor neighborhoods also face the problem of attracting better educated and qualified teachers.

Question 3a1 was: "How would you describe the quantity of textbooks you use for the classes you teach?" After studying all the audio-tape transcripts the responses were put into two categories, those who said there were enough textbooks and those who said there were not enough. In the case of the latter category, teachers' descriptions of the situations in which they operated and the problems they faced were at times quite shocking. One respondent said,

> We have a critical shortage of textbooks. The students share the books. We have six Form 11 classes (Grade 9) and you will find that we have only one book for all those classes. Some books we have, maybe 6 copies for the 6 classes, which means one book per class. We really have a serious shortage at this school.

Of the 38 teachers who were asked about the availability of textbooks, 55% said they did not have enough textbooks and 13 of these were Shona teachers. Only 44.7% said they had enough textbooks. Most of those who said they had enough textbooks were teachers of English. Observation visits to the schools in the study indicated that there was a serious shortage of textbooks mostly in government low-income neighborhood schools and district council schools. The situation was always more critical for Shona textbooks than was the case for English textbooks. The researcher observed many reading lessons where only the teacher had a copy of the book being read, and all the students had to listen the best they could from one of them reading for the whole class. The availability of textbooks, to a large extent, determined the instructional strategies teachers could use.

Interview question 3a2 asked teachers to describe the quality of textbooks they used in their classes. The responses were coded in the following manner. Two points were given to a response which described the quality of the textbooks and also gave illustrative examples of the qualities highlighted. One point was given for a mere description without a supporting example. Twenty-nine (70.7%) teachers were given two points for their responses, and of these only 8 (27.5%) were teachers of Shona. A total of 12 (29%) were given one point for their responses, and the majority of these were Shona teachers (70.8%).

Here are examples of responses given one point and those given two points. The following was said by a teacher of Shona.

> There are certain sections, e.g., in <u>Rurimi Rwaamai book 1</u> where there are simple numbers, e.g., 99, they ask pupils to put that figure in Shona. I don't think it's necessary. The passages are quite all right. What I would require are more 'tsumo nemadimikira' (proverbs and idiomatic expressions).

Another Shona teacher said "I don't have any criticism about the textbooks. I think they are quite OK." She got no point for her response.

One teacher of English who was also head of the English department had this to say:

> We are looking for books which actually are emphasizing on those errors, like I said before, that pupils are going to be examined on, so I was referring earlier on to the revised version of <u>Structures and Skills</u>. I find it quite useful, especially if you look at areas which pupils are going to be tested on. I have another one by Artwell. This is quite good, and we normally use it for our 'A' classes because the passages are quite challenging, the sort of passages that we normally get at 'O' level (exams). So we have tended to discuss some of the topics from <u>English For Zimbabwe</u> textbook because it has less challenging passages. It has passages that perhaps are based on the local situation in the country, but then, when it comes to the examination, we do not see any of these comprehension passages or any of these topics. So we have tended to actually make them (<u>English For Zimbabwe</u>) more of supplementary books rather than the main textbooks.

Another English teacher echoing the same subtle influence of examinations in some of the teachers' judgements of the quality of textbooks expressed by the above one said:

> We used to have English For Zimbabwe but looking at the questions set in examinations, we found that Structures and Skills is of more benefit to students, so we are switching more to it but we still use English For Zimbabwe. Especially in English (language exam paper) they added a section in paper two on communication. Structures and Skills better prepares students for examinations.

Interview question 3b asked English and Shona teachers the extent to which they used textbooks. They were asked to rate the way they used textbooks by saying either all the time, most of the time, 50% of the time, and less than 50% of the time. Twenty-two (66.6%) of the 33 teachers who were asked this question indicated that they used textbooks most of the time. More Shona teachers than English teachers used textbooks most of the time. Only 7 (21%) teachers said they used textbooks about 50% of the lesson time. Only two Shona teachers asserted that they used textbooks less than 50% of their teaching time.

Observation data confirmed the finding from interview data in that nearly all reading lessons observed were based on textbook materials. Only one Shona teacher, the one who insisted on being observed only on prearranged times, was observed using newspapers for a reading lesson.

Interview question 3c asked 30 of the 45 interview subjects to state other teaching/learning sources besides textbooks they normally use in teaching English/Shona. All the interview transcripts were studied closely to learn the range of sources these teachers mentioned. A big majority of the teachers mentioned one or two alternative sources to textbooks like personal resource file, past examination papers, newspapers and magazines. Here is one teacher's response.

> At 'O' level we use past exam papers, sometimes we use <u>Focus</u>
> <u>Study Aids</u> to prepare for exams. I could say the central thing is
> anything geared towards how exams come about.

It was one of those questions teachers took some time to think what to say, perhaps indicating that the sources finally mentioned were used once in a while. Only 6 (20%) teachers out of 30 who were asked this question mentioned at least three sources. The rest mentioned either one or two sources, especially personal resource file and newspapers and magazines.

Conclusion

Data discussed in this section showed that many schools, especially in poorer urban and rural communities, did not have enough textbooks for Shona and English. The situation was quite desperate in some schools where only the teacher had a copy of literature texts on which the students would be examined in their finals. Yet in spite of their inadequate supplies, textbooks were viewed and used as an essential source of curricular goals and content by most of the teachers surveyed in this study. There was no strong evidence that there were viable alternatives to textbooks, at least for the lessons observed.

A good number of teachers, especially Shona teachers, did not appear to be in the habit of evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the textbooks on which they based their instruction. Many teachers of English judged the strength and suitability of textbooks in terms of how they helped to prepare students for final examinations. For instance, many of them complained that <u>English for Zimbabwe</u> had passages and topics focusing on life in Zimbabwe after independence but unfortunately these were not the issues on which students were tested. <u>Structures and Skills</u> was always better rated than <u>English For Zimbabwe</u>.

The majority of teachers in this study asserted that textbook based comprehension questions mostly focused on recall and simple interpretation skills. These data were confirmed by observation data. All reading lessons observed did not lead students to reflect, critique, evaluate and question the author's perspective of the topic, his/her style and use of language.

Theme 5: Conceptions of Reading Comprehension

Theme 5 and 6 are central to this study because they focus more directly on issues related to reading and writing-literacy. The four themes discussed in the preceding sections of this chapter give a context in which literacy is conceived and enacted in secondary schools in Zimbabwe. The idea of separating the treatment of reading issues from writing issues is to facilitate an in depth treatment of each of the two aspects which make up literacy.

Questionnaire

The following section discusses questionnaire data related to theme 5 about teachers' conceptions of reading comprehension instruction. Questionnaire statements 2, 4, 7, 14, 20, 21, 33 and 37 relate to various aspects of the reading curriculum. Some of these statements have been discussed above in connection with their relationship with other themes already discussed. For instance, questionnaire statement 2 which said "Textbook comprehension questions focus mostly on recall and simple interpretation skills was discussed above in relation to theme 4 about textbooks. Of 801 responses, results were 54.6% agreed; 25.2% disagreed; and 20.2% not sure. Questionnaire statement 7 which said, "When answering comprehension questions, students should use their prior knowledge of topic to answer the questions" was responded to in this way: 26.3% agreed;

61.5% disagreed; and 12.3% not sure. Here it is arguable that the examination paradigm influenced the majority of these teachers to look at issues of comprehension from the perspective of exams rather than real life reading situations.

The researcher attended two conferences organized by the Harare Province education officers for English and Shona. Among other things discussed at these conferences, students' performance in examinations was quite a dominant issue. On the comprehension paper many participants (who were also examiners for Shona or English public examinations) pointed out that many students do not perform well when they encounter a passage taken from a book or theme they had read or were familiar with. It was argued that such students answered questions from the perspective of their prior knowledge of the theme of the comprehension passage rather than the specific demands of the questions. The general feeling among the conference participants, and indeed, teachers interviewed for this study was that students should be trained not to use their prior knowledge when answering comprehension questions.

While the problem of students not sticking to the parameters of the question asked is a real one, and can be encountered even in situations where students had no prior knowledge of the passage or theme of the passage in question, it is misleading students to advice them not to use their experience or prior knowledge when answering comprehension questions. Research findings on reading comprehension indicate strongly that the utilization of prior knowledge is crucial to a reader comprehending what he/she is reading (Anderson and Pearson 1984). Research findings also maintain that even mature or expert readers experience knowledge blanks if they read materials whose subject matter they have never encountered. Readers cannot make sense of any reading materials whose subject

matter they have never encountered. Readers cannot make sense of any reading material unless they can invoke what they already know so as to compare it with what they are reading . Comprehension occurs when there is some relationship between what the reader already knows and what he/she is reading. This relationship between the reader's prior knowledge and the material he/she is reading enables the reader to make interpretations, inferences and evaluations which are higher order comprehension skills.

Questionnaire item 20 said, "A good reader is more concerned with getting the real meaning of the text than worrying whether he/she agrees with it." Of 799 responses 68.2% agreed; 15.9% disagreed; and 15.9% were not sure. Here is another possible influence of the testing paradigm on the teachers' conceptualization of reading. Most comprehension questions given in examination situations have one answer against which the test taker's response has to be judged. Generally there is no room for the respondent to examination questions to qualify or explain the process of reasoning which led him/her to arrive at that response. Research on objective testing format has shown the weaknesses of multiple choice questions in not affording a test-taker to show the process of his/her thinking in arriving at a given answer. Examinations are a convenient way of determining accountability of students' learning, and because of the large numbers of students to be tested, cost-effective ways of testing have to be devised. Alvermann and Moore (1991) and Winograd and Johnston (1987) argue that the problem with accountability and reading comprehension are defining the goals and deciding how these will be measured. They further argue that emphasis is placed on literal information because the acquisition of facts seems to be easily accomplished and is more readily measured than other cognitive operations.

What is implied by questionnaire item 20 is that there is one undisputable meaning in any text and therefore the task of the reader is to search for and get that meaning. This is a view of reading which Scholes (1989) calls textual fundamentalism and is in conflict with critical literacy perspectives on reading. To quote Scholes (1989) again he asserts that:

> To read at all, we must read the book of ourselves in the texts in front of us, and we must bring the text home into our thought and lives, into our judgements and deeds. We cannot enter the texts we read, but they can enter us. . . . Such reading involves looking closely at the text; it also involves situating the text, to make the text our own in thought, word and deed.

Perhaps this is the view of reading the respondents to questionnaire item 20 were rejecting in favor of an assumed "real meaning" of the text. Since agreeing or disagreeing with a text is a result of interpretation, can it be concluded that there is no room for interpretation in reading texts as for as these respondents were concerned? Questionnaire item 33 addresses this issue.

Questionnaire statement 33 said, "Reading is mostly a matter of interpreting the text than getting the correct answer." Of 801 responses, 53.4% agreed; 25.8% disagreed; and 20.9% were not sure. These statistics show that a good majority believe that interpretation of texts, as a process of reading, is crucial, which was implied by some aspects of questionnaire item 20 as discussed above which most of them rejected. How is one to interpret this development? It is interesting to note that 25.8% of the questionnaire respondents rejected the statement which suggests that interpretation of texts is more important that getting the correct answer. Presumably these teachers seriously believe that all written texts have one meaning which cannot be mistaken for anything if properly searched for and hence no interpretation is necessary. In other words, all texts have literal meanings according to these respondents. It should be borne in mind that the questionnaire was administered to language teaching professionals only working at secondary

school level. This makes the figure of 25.8% disagreeing with the suggestion that reading is mostly a matter of interpreting the text than getting the correct answer rather significant. Equally significant on the same grounds are 20.9% of the respondents indicating not sure or non commitment to an agree or disagree response.

It should be pointed out that whenever time allowed, after interviewing the 51 teachers using pre-prepared questions, the researcher sought to review some of the questionnaire items with each interviewee. Of particular interest to the researcher were questionnaire items 7, 20, and 33, all relating to their conceptions of reading. In each case the researcher gave back an interviewee's questionnaire form and then asked him/her to read each of these questionnaire items and how he/she had responded to them. A discussion always followed when the interviewee tried to explain his/her response and the researcher tried to point out at the other angle which might have been considered when choosing a suitable response. These discussions revealed that many of these interviewees had defined reading comprehension in terms of examination situations only rather than daily real-life situations. For instance, on the issue of using prior knowledge in helping comprehension, many of them had reasoned that this was undesirable because it often made students fail to address the questions asked in an up-front manner. Yet when it came to reading newspapers, magazines and ordinary books students need to use their prior knowledge of whatever they are reading so as to be able to evaluate it and to make interpretations wherever necessary. A number of these teachers admitted that they had filled the questionnaire forms in a hurry and had not given sufficient thought to some of the statements and their implications.

Interview

Interview question 4a was, "What are the objectives for teaching reading skills in Shona/English? The purpose of this question was to give an opportunity to each interviewee to reflect and synthesize on the various sources for curriculum goals so that he/she could articulate the way he/she understood them. The transcripts of all the 41 teachers who were asked this question were scrutinized before a coding scheme was devised. As a result of gleaning through the transcripts the following coding scheme was decided on. A total of four points were given on the basis of the following answers given by the respondents: 1, to gain knowledge/information from a text; 2, to critique a text; 3, to overcome mechanical problems like fluency, pronunciation etc., and 4, enjoyment/entertainment. Usually probing or follow-up questions were used in cases where some respondents did not fully grasp the essence of the question. Only two English teachers gave all the four possible reasons for teaching reading skills thus getting 4 points. Again only 5 (12%) teachers gave three reasons and these were all teachers of English. The majority of teachers, 21 (51%) gave only two reasons for teaching reading skills. The commonest reasons given were to overcome mechanical problems like pronunciation, fluency and to gain knowledge etc. As many as 11 (26.8%) teachers, and the majority of them being Shona teachers, gave only one objective for teaching reading. Two Shona teachers were unable to give any answer to the question. Here are a few examples of the interactions between the researcher and a Shona teacher.

R. What are the major objectives for teaching reading in Shona?

T. Basically it's to teach them to read fluently. Most of our boys here have problems in reading Shona. They are very slow, they stammer here and there, so we encourage them to read fluently and to read and understand. Comprehensive reading, not just going through words without understanding.

R.   Can you elaborate on comprehensive reading? What does it involve?

T.   Comprehensive reading is reading and understanding.

R.   What kind of understanding are you talking about?

T.   Reading, answering questions, understanding and being able to relate.

Another Shona teacher's response to the question on her objectives for teaching reading was "It helps the children to enjoy more books in life and also the students would be able to read Bibles and so on."

A respondent whose response was coded O said "I only teach reading at ZJC (Zimbabwe Junior Certificate). It helps them when they are reading at home."

These examples represent responses on the extreme low end of the range of opinions expressed. It should be pointed out that generally those teachers whose responses gave one or two objectives for teaching reading were only slightly better than the examples given above in the way they responded to the question.

Interview question 4b asked teachers to define, in operational terms, what they understood by the term reading. The researcher told the interviewees, many of whom showed some surprise at being asked to define reading, that he was not expecting them to provide dictionary definition of the term reading, but that which guided them in their instruction of reading which they presumably did quite often as language teachers. The researcher told the teachers that responses might include their perceptions of students they would call good readers, average readers, poor readers and non readers.

The idea of asking Shona and English teachers for their personal operational definitions was not out of mere academic interest. It arose from a conviction that the ways people define things in operational terms are good indicators of the ways people conceptualize those things. Jones(1984) argues that both teachers and

learners hold particular and identifiable theoretical orientations about reading which in turn significantly affect expectancies, goals, behavior and outcomes at all levels of the reading process. He further argues that a teacher's overall concept of reading strongly influences his/her method of diagnosing reading difficulties and of teaching reading. Farr and Rosser (1979) maintain that "as you are guided toward your own definition of the reading process you will arrive at your own decisions about what to teach and how to teach it." (p 14.)

After studying the interview transcripts to see the pattern of responses given by 39 Shona and English teachers who were asked to define reading, the following coding scheme was adopted. 'A' stands for a definition of reading which suggests that it is a process of getting meaning from print. 'B' stands for a definition of reading which suggests that it is a process of interacting with print according to a predefined purpose. 'O' stands for no definition provided.

As indicated above, this question together with a similar question on writing, turned out to be the hardest for the interviewees. Many of the interviewees reacted to the question with a surprise, conveying the impression that they had not anticipated being asked such a question. This question caused some discomfort among some teachers interviewed at the beginning of the interviewing process and as a result the researcher decided to tell those interviewed about three quarters down the process to say "let's move on ", meaning I am not in a position to give a response to this question.

The majority of those interviewed gave a definition of reading which suggests that it is a process of getting meaning from print. Twenty (54%) teachers who were asked this question had responses coded A. Here are two examples of definitions which fall into this category.

> A good reader is able to read clearly and pronounce the words
> very well. After reading he/she is able to say what he/she read
> about. A bad reader is someone who cannot read fluently and
> cannot even answer the questions after reading the passage.

This was given by a teacher of English. One of the Shona teachers said,

> Reading in most cases is when you have a passage you go over it
> and try to find out what it is all about. You want to understand
> what is being said in the passage. That is how I define reading.

Only 6 (16%) teachers of those who were asked this question defined

reading in a manner that suggests that it is a process of interacting with print

according to predefined purpose. Here are two examples, the first one from a

teacher of English:

> I suppose it's understanding a given sentence or a section of a
> reading passage. It's not only understanding, but getting the
> meaning of words in the sentence. The student must be able to
> relate it to others; that means going back and reflecting upon what
> the person has read. So it's not just words on paper as such, it's
> bringing those words to life. The ability to imagine and create a
> reflection on what he has read.

A Shona teacher said,

> I think reading is to be able to understand and also after reading
> one must be able to come up with his own judgement about the
> passage. That means that the person has understood the passage.

A total of 11 (29.7%) of those who responded to interview question 4b had

their responses coded O, meaning that the definition was somehow unintelligible or

he/she said "lets move on." One example is:

> That's a difficult question. We have for each class a library
> period where we take students to the library and we assume that
> they would read but that is not always the case. I do not think
> that anyone ever ventures to teach children how to read and yet I
> feel there are quite a number of kids who don't know how to
> read.

This was a response given by a teacher of English who was head of the

English department at her school.

A Shona teacher said:

> In my case I just make everybody read with the hope that they
> will copy others who are reading well. This is the mechanics of
> reading. Normally I do that when teaching literature. I do not
> teach how to read. At times the way I take reading is either
> silent or loud reading. From my own perspective when teaching
> ZJC (Zimbabwe Junior Certificate, equivalent to grades 8 and 9) I
> will be concentrating on the mechanics of reading. At times we
> discuss after reading the passage. We discuss the passage and the
> characters.

The above examples represent a category of language teachers who did not

have operational definitions of an activity they engage in quite frequently in their

instructional programs. Their inability to articulate coherently what they

understood by reading did not necessarily mean that they did not teach it, but

rather that reading was not approached in a consciously planned manner. Is such

an approach to work expected of professionals in their fields of expertise?

Interview question 4c related to theme 5 about conceptions of reading

comprehension asked teachers to describe how they typically taught

reading/comprehension. The purpose of this question was to learn how the

interviewees linked in operational terms what they asserted were their main

objectives for reading instruction with their definitions of reading in their

instructional activities so as to achieve their goals. Interview transcripts were

closely studied so as to learn key ideas and patterns in the interviewees' responses

to question 4c. As a result of this procedure the following coding scheme was

adopted. A total of five activities were identified and here they are given the

order of the frequency these activities were mentioned: 1, focusing on mechanical

aspects, e.g., pronunciation, fluency etc.; 2,testing/evaluating students' reading

comprehension skills; 3, prereading activities; 4, directing students to salient

points/features in the reading text; and 5, soliciting students' personal responses to

the text.

Only one English teacher mentioned all the 5 activities. Six (15%) of the teachers consisting of 4 English teachers and 2 Shona teachers mentioned 3 out of the 5 activities. The majority of teachers, 19 (49%) mentioned only 2 of the 5 activities, and as indicated above, these usually were focusing on mechanical aspects of reading and testing or evaluating students' comprehension skills. A not insignificant number of teachers, 10 (26%) mentioned only one activity in their reading instruction. One teacher of both English and Shona provided a response to the question that could not be scored and hence his response was coded 0.

Here is an example of a response given by a Shona teacher which was coded two points.

> On comprehension when testing reading skills I can just appoint a student to read while the rest are listening. There will be two skills (being tested) at the same time, i.e., reading skills and listening skills. That's one of the ways; or else they will read silently and then I will ask some one to give a summary of what they have read about.

A Shona teacher's response coded one point was:

> When reading a comprehension (passage), I ask children to read quietly, then I give them some minutes to reread quietly, then I ask questions on what they have read.

Here is a response by a teacher of English which was coded four points.

> In my choice of the passage I usually like to choose those texts which pupils are familiar with, and after I have identified the text that I would like to deal with, I will try by all means to find a suitable way of introducing this text. First, before I even ask the students to open their textbooks, so that by the time they go on to the text, at least they are already informed. They have a background of some sort and then I usually enjoy letting my pupils read the text starting from the title. We might have interesting discussion when pupils try to guess what the text is all about and then picture it (in their minds). I find that to be very helpful and they generate a lot of discussion. After this they may be able to get the idea of the passage. So we usually have a nice time discussing the text before we really go to know (it), and I have found that sometimes they will be in a position even to answer some few oral questions. When I think now they have got

somewhere that is when I would tell them to do their silent reading. I usually pick new words and some phrases which we will explain together as a class after their silent reading. Then after that I may give them some questions to look at as homework.

It should be noted that data provided by interview question 4c about the interviewees' description of how they typically instruct reading are consistent with data provided by interview question 4a relating to their objectives for teaching reading as well as data provided by question 4b about their definition of reading. A majority of the interviewees mentioned 2 out of 4 objectives for teaching reading, mostly to overcome mechanical problems and acquisition of knowledge. Again the majority of these interviewees defined reading as a process of getting meaning from print. Now as has been shown above, most of the interviewees emphasized two out of five activities in their reading instruction, namely mechanical aspects of reading and testing or evaluating students' reading skills.

Interview question 4d asked the interviewees their opinions about the distinction, if any, between comprehension instruction and comprehension assessment. Durkin's (1978-1979) study of elementary school teachers found that teachers focused more on comprehension assessment rather than direct instruction and that the teachers' questions were an attempt to learn whether the children had comprehended a given reading selection. Durkin's study left her wondering whether comprehension skills were fostered through practicing answering comprehension questions or through direct instruction.

In Zimbabwe's education system comprehension skills in Shona and English are tested in language examination papers. Since comprehension testing is an important feature of language examinations it was considered necessary to find out whether language teachers' conceptions of comprehension instruction were influenced by the testing paradigm.

After studying 35 transcripts of the interview audio tapes of the teachers who were asked whether there was any distinction between comprehension instruction the following coding scheme was adopted. Response were categorized as yes or no. One point was awarded for a yes or no without providing sound explanation, and two points were awarded for a yes or no followed by a sound explanation. Twenty-two (63%) of those 35 who responded to this question indicated that there were distinctions between comprehension testing and comprehension instruction. Fourteen (40%) of them were awarded two points for their responses. On the other hand 11 (31%) of the interviewees' responses indicated that there was no distinction between comprehension testing and comprehension instruction. Seven (64%) of these 11 were teachers of Shona.

Here are some examples of responses coded yes and given two points.

The distinction is clear to me in that you must lead on to the passage when you are teaching. Lead onto it through discussions of experiences that are related to the passage. Capitalize as much as possible on the students' experiences which are developed in greater detail in the passage in question. It should be important all the time to start off by talking about related experience, and then lead onto the experience on the passage and then after that extend and come back to the links that have now resulted from a merge in experience before, experience after the passage and extensions of the passage which are not necessarily related to the questions themselves. Highlight the outstanding interconnections with reality.

This was said by one of the most experienced and better qualified teachers in the interview sample.

Here is a response which was coded "no" indicating that there is no distinction in the interviewee's conception of comprehension assessment and comprehension instruction.

I think it's both, because you are teaching and then at the same time you are testing to see if the pupils have understood what is being said in the passage. Pupils have to practice in order to

have that skill. After reading I give them something to write.
That's when you can see who is getting or who is not getting what
is being said, and then that way, you can help them.

Another interviewee's response was the following.

Teaching reading is testing the skills and testing is how the student
applies the skills. As we are explaining now there is difference,
but when it comes to the actual thing, there is no distinction. It's
all done at the same time.

It is interesting to note that although 63% of the teachers who responded to

this question about the distinction between comprehension assessment and

comprehension instruction asserted that there was some distinction, classroom

observation of a sub-sample of these teachers showed that the way they conducted

comprehension lessons was more oriented towards testing than teaching

comprehension skills. The dominant approach followed consisted of a brief

introduction, generally meant to activate students' knowledge of the subject matter

of the reading passage and then followed by actual reading punctuated by the

teachers asking some questions to check students' ability to recall details of what

they were reading. When the whole passage was read the teacher fired more

questions, again of a recall nature, and lastly more questions were set for

homework, usually taken from the textbook.

It is possible that many of the interviewees asserted that there was some

distinction between comprehension instruction and comprehension testing because

they sensed that the interviewer believed that there was a distinction since he was

raising that question, and therefore the best answer was to concur with his

perceived position even though their routine approaches to comprehension lessons

did not reflect that orientation.

Conclusion on Data on Theme 5

Data presented in this section suggest a positivist conception of reading which privileges all texts with determinate meaning which transcends all times and contexts. This is the opposite of a constructivist perspective which views reading as a construction of meaning by the reader as he/she interacts with a text influenced by his/her purpose for reading, his/her existing knowledge of the subject matter of the text and other contextual variables.

The data discussed relating to teachers' conceptions of reading comprehension suggest that there appeared to be an absence of a literacy teaching discourse which helps teachers to reflect on the meaning, goals and instructional strategies which can be used to promote reading skills beyond the need to prepare students for public examinations. Reading appears to be perceived in narrow mechanical terms like fluency, pronunciation, punctuation etc. and the ability to recall literal information from print. Whatever other conceptions of reading teachers may have, these seem to be overshadowed by the examination paradigm which seems to privilege texts with one meaning which transcends time and other contexts. Classroom observation data indicated an unquestioned assumption that reading comprehension skills are acquired by learners through a process of practicing answering comprehension questions.

Theme 6: Conceptions about Writing/Composition

The last theme is about English and Shona teachers conceptualization of the writing curriculum. Reading and writing are closely related cognitive activities which complement each other. They complement each other in the sense that writers write for an audience who are the readers. Successful writers, therefore have a conscious sense of their intended readers (audience). They try to meet

their readers' interests, capacities, and sense of purpose. Writers make assumptions about the interests, purposes for reading, abilities of the readers and the context in which what they write will be read.

Questionnaire

There were a number of questionnaire items focussing on the writing curriculum. Some of these have been discussed above with reference to themes already discussed. They include questionnaire item 17 which said, "Writing activities for students should be mostly modeled on how they will be tested in final exams." As was shown above in connection with theme 2, out of 797 responses, 67.8% agreed; 16.2% disagreed; and 16% were not sure. Questionnaire item 25 which said, "It is more important to make students write on topics derived from current news items on radio, T.V. and newspapers than from past examination papers" was also discussed in connection with theme 3. As was pointed out above, the responses were 48.1% agreed; 25.6% disagreed; and 26.3% were not sure. No additional comments need be made about these responses in connection with theme 6, about conceptions related to the writing curriculum.

Questionnaire statement 21 said "students learn reading and writing skills best from the teacher's demonstrations and explanations." Out of 802 responses, 64.3% agreed, 18.2% disagreed, and 17.5 were not sure. This questionnaire item is subject to two or so possible valid interpretations in connection with literacy instruction. On the one hand it can be argued that students learn more effectively reading and writing skills when their teachers provide appropriate models of the targeted reading and writing skills. Such teacher modeling will be in the form of scaffolding according to Bruner (1983) or the teacher's guidance for a student who is in the zone of proximal development according to Vygotsky

(1978). If students are not provided this kind of guidance by an expert, their learning can be unsystematic and ineffective because it will be based on trial and error. From this perspective teacher demonstration and explanation are key components of guided learning essential for students' mastery of literacy skills. The question is, at what point should the teacher withdraw his/her guidance? If teacher guidance is not withdrawn at the right time, this might lead to students becoming too dependent on the teacher, and thus compromise the development of their own independent thinking capacity. The problem of teachers being tempted to maintain their role beyond what may be regarded as a necessary point is particularly prevalent in the so-called writing conferences. Writing conferences have been criticized by some researchers who found them to be occasions when teachers were more inclined to push their preconceived schema of how the text should be written than to listen to students' problems and needs (Florio-Ruane, 1991; Freedman, 1985).

If these two positions are born in mind then it becomes a question of which value a respondent has taken between valuing student independence in expressing what he/she wants to express in writing regardless of the sense of what is correct according to the teacher. Those who value teacher modeling and scaffolding students' learning may respond to item 21 differently. Perhaps on hind sight this was an inappropriate questionnaire item since its strength depends on the reasoning a respondent gives, which cannot be done on a questionnaire.

Questionnaire item 32 said, "Writing activities should focus more on the use of correct grammar, good expression and presentation of ideas rather than revealing the writer's thinking process." Out of 795 responses, 51.2% agreed; 27.3% disagreed; and 21.5% were not sure. This questionnaire item touched on an issue of great concern in a situation where the language of instruction is not

the mother tongue of over 95% of the students. Students' English language problems were highlighted to the researcher during interviews with many English teachers in rural and poor urban schools. Poor command of English often was the cause of poor student participation in lessons which required oral communication. This was mentioned by many English teachers and the researcher saw it first hand during class observation visits to schools. It may be recalled that in response to questionnaire item 11 which said, "Most students cannot think critically using English because of their poor command of the English," the responses were 71% agreed and only 18% disagreed with statement. (See discussion on theme 3 above for more details)

Given this second language context, it is perhaps understandable that over 51% of the respondents to questionnaire statement 32 agreed that writing activities should focus more on the use of correct grammar, good expression and presentation of ideas rather than revealing the writer's thinking process. In other words one would argue that these respondents put a premium on mechanical aspects of writing rather than on the cognitive aspects of writing. If a student's written composition work is returned full of red marks made by the teacher and the accompanying comments highlight problems of expression rather than the quality of the written text, such a student is unlikely to pay great attention to the content of what he/she writes in future. Such a teaching-learning situation cannot effectively foster the development of critical or independent thinking and problem-solving skills through writing activities.

Questionnaire statement 37 said, "It is not a good teaching practice to present students with frequent choices over what they read or write." Out of 793 responses, 39.2% agreed; 39% disagreed; 21.8% were not sure. What is interesting is the almost tie between those agreeing and those disagreeing and a

rather high percentage of those indicating non committal to the issue. The main educational argument in favor of allowing students choice is that students would choose what they are interested in and therefore they will engage in it with more attention and energy. The argument also implies that knowledge is socially constructed as people interact with each other in worthwhile activities to their lives. Since students are human beings, they are therefore capable of contributing to the social construction of knowledge. What they choose to write about is important to them and helps them to reflect on their realities. On the other hand those who believe that knowledge is objective and concrete assume that there are people who have more knowledge than others. It is therefore the responsibility of those who have more knowledge to impart it to those who do not have it. Since students do not have knowledge or valued knowledge, it is not appropriate to allow them to choose what they should write on. After all, so the argument goes, examinations test for worthwhile knowledge, therefore it may be in the students' interest to be exposed to the kind of knowledge they may be tested on. Teachers are in a better position than students to tell what knowledge is worthwhile focussing their attention on. Perhaps this is a view of knowledge fostered by the testing paradigm discussed under theme 2 above.

<u>Interview</u>

Interview questions focusing on teachers' views and opinions about the writing curriculum were similar to those discussed above in connection with the reading curriculum. The questions focused on the teachers' understanding of the goals of writing, their definition of writing and how they typically instructed writing or composition.

Interview question 5a was: "What are the objectives of the writing curriculum for the level you teach as you understand them?" The aim of the question was to get from each interviewee his/her own understanding of the goals of the writing curriculum based on his/her interpretation of various curricular sources, e.g., syllabi textbooks, examinations and his/her perception of students' needs in terms of writing skills. After studying all the audio tape transcripts relating to this question, the following coding scheme was adopted.

The objectives mentioned were: 1, effective communication of ideas/experience; 2, to foster creative thinking and problem solving skills; 3, to overcome mechanical problems like spelling, punctuation etc.; 4, prepare students for examination; and 5, to promote the use of appropriate style/register. Only 6 (17%) of the interviewees gave three writing objectives. Most of the teachers were content with only one objective. Altogether 17 (49%) of the 35 interviewees who were asked this question gave one objective for the writing curriculum. A total of only 10 (29%) gave two objectives. Here are some examples of the responses given.

> The objectives for teaching writing mainly are to prepare them (students) for examinations so that when they write the examinations they will not have problems of punctuation, grammar mistakes or tenses. They will be able to write a good composition. I will be teaching them to construct good sentences. Good word division.

Another Shona teacher responded in this way.

> So that they (students) will be able to write letters, write books. Writing is putting the knowledge you have in mind on paper. I think all the work I give them teaches writing.

One teacher of English gave this response.

> To express your own mind on issues so that people should know what you are thinking. The other objective is to teach students to be creative when writing. Can they write creatively, and interestingly? Not only interestingly, but can they relate to their own self and others?

Another teacher of English responded in this way.

> I suppose by writing you will be concentrating on the areas like composition. At ZJC or O'level the students should be able to write continuous piece of writing on a given topic. That piece of writing should make sense; like sentence construction, being able to use the mechanical aspects of the language correctly.

An interview as a research instrument puts the interviewee on the spot and he/she has to give a response on the spur of the moment to a question or an issue the researcher has had time to think about. As the researcher in this study listened to the teachers responding to this question, or even listening to the audiotapes playing back the interview sessions he felt a sense of struggle on the part of these interviewees to try to come up with an intelligible response. Unfortunately that sense of struggle partly expressed by facial expression and repetition, or incoherence in speech, cannot be accurately captured by interview transcripts, let alone a random selection of examples given above. On the whole the interviewees as a group were less confident and less articulate as they responded to questions relating to reading and writing curriculum. It may be a case where one has the knowledge based on experience and intuition but one does not have the words with which to express that practical experience. The majority of the interviewees talked about one or two objectives for the writing curriculum out of five identified in the transcripts of their interview responses. Perhaps even those interviewees who gave only one objective would have accepted the other four they did not mention if the full list of objectives was later presented to them. Since this was the last set of questions to be asked, there were fewer probing questions by the researcher as he was always running out of time. Actually a good number of the total 51 teachers interviewed were not asked some questions on reading and writing due to shortage of time.

Interview question 5b was, "How is writing defined at this school? Is this your own view of what writing is or should be?" As with all interview questions, the aim of this question was to make the respondent articulate his/her own understanding of the process of writing, synthesizing wherever applicable, knowledge derived from various sources at his/her disposal. As with the case of reading, the definition of writing was more of the operational one which guided the individual teacher in his/her enactment of writing curriculum rather than dictionary definition.

After studying the interview transcripts of the interviewees' responses, the following coding scheme was adopted. Responses were put in three categories in this way: 'A' for those responses whose definition indicated that writing is a process of communicating ideas and experiences through print or putting ideas on paper; 'B' was for the category of definitions which indicated that writing is a process of creating ideas or thoughts and organizing them for social interaction; 'O' was for responses whose definition of writing was intelligible. As with the case of reading, some interviewees said "let's move on", meaning that he/she cannot comfortably say anything about this question. This approach was adopted as a way of avoiding embarrassing the interviewee by making him/her say something about an issue he/she has not thought about intelligently.

As many as 24 interviewees were not asked to define writing mainly because time to conduct the interviews with some teachers was running out. In such cases the researcher decided to omit this question in preference to interview question 5c about writing instruction. Of all the interviewees who responded to this question only one teacher defined writing as a process of creating ideas or thoughts and organizing them for social interaction. The rest, 18 (86%) defined writing as a

process of communicating ideas or experience through print. Here is what the only teacher who conceptualized writing as creative process said:

> I would define writing as a process of creating meaning by committing your ideas on paper. It goes beyond merely giving someone, e.g., a report; there is that element at a lower level, but at a higher level I would look at it as a creative process. A writer is really creative, putting together ideas. Piecing together, as it were, personal experience, personal reflection so as to create meaning. If you tie it with reading, again I would see also reading as a creative process, as an attempt to create meaning by interacting with the text.

Unfortunately this well thought out and well articulated view of writing was expressed by only one person out of 21 who were asked to define writing. The rest said something like this: "I think it's putting what you are thinking on paper." Or:

> Writing is about writing a composition, writing a comprehension or answering questions. To look at the question and think about it critically and organize the information and then write.

Still another one said, "Writing is putting ideas on a piece of paper and organizing them according to the purpose." Most of the definitions emphasized communication processes. What was not touched on is the development of personal voice by the writer as he/she reflects on life experiences. Actually many of the responses were very brief, usually one sentence responses. Saying more was probably taken as risky in that one might go on to say something considered "wrong" by the interviewer. In some cases too short answers reflected lack of confidence in what one was saying.

The last interview question, 5c, asked teachers to describe how they typically instructed writing skills. The aim of the question was to learn how these interviewees linked the objectives for writing they had talked about earlier on with their instructional strategies in a coherent manner. After studying the interview transcripts of the interviewees' responses, the following coding scheme was adopted.

Four activities related to writing were identified which were: 1, prewriting

activities, e.g., understanding topic, generating ideas, etc.; 2, directing students'

attention to salient points, e.g., audience and purpose; 3, focusing on organizational

and mechanical aspects, e.g., paragraphing, spelling, punctuation, etc.; and 4,

evaluating written work.

Twenty-eight teachers were asked this question and only 7% English teachers

mentioned all the four writing activities for their writing instruction. Another 17%

teachers, again mostly English teachers, mentioned three out of these four writing

instructional activities. The majority of the interviewees mentioned only two or

one writing activity. Forty-six percent of teachers mentioned only two activities,

and 21% of the teachers mentioned only one activity relating to writing instruction.

Seven percent teachers had responses coded 0 indicating that their responses were

not intelligible to the interviewer or the assistant who transcribed the interview

audio-tapes.

Here are some samples of the responses given. First a response which was

coded 0:

> You cannot say now I am teaching writing but you just make sure
> every time you are teaching there must be a writing exercise.
> After every topic there should be a written exercise to show that
> the pupils have understood. In writing you can't use (not clear)
> like in talking; that is why writing has to be regular.

This was a response given by a teacher of Shona. Another response given by a

Shona teacher and coded one point out of four is this one.

> I give them the basic of what is supposed to be in that type of a
> composition. I tell them how the introduction is written, then the
> main body of the composition, then the conclusion. I give them
> the skeleton of the composition. After that the pupils can ask me
> some questions on what they are not clear. Then after that I give
> them another topic to work on.

Nearly all the responses given by Shona teachers were of similar quality as

those given above. As can be seen, they rather poorly reflect the points given in

the coding scheme. Many of the responses concentrated on mechanical aspects of composing, especially the division of written texts into introduction, body, and conclusion.

Here are two samples of the responses by English teachers. The first one was given 4 out of 4 points.

> If it is a composition and I am teaching form ones (grade 8) what I could do is I will bring the topic to them. What we want to do is to plan the narrative essay, word for word, step by step. " This is how we write a narrative essay. I want you to plan the essay on the board in your notebooks." I will move around looking at the plans and see if they are reasonable plans (outlines). If they are not I ask the students to change. After that they have to write a rough draft. From the rough draft the next stage is a fair copy (final version). I believe writing should go into many stages, you cannot start to write in the note-book the first stage.

> If is testing, I simply write the topic on the board and then I ask them to write a composition. After writing I would mark (grade) the notebooks. After marking I would pick the essays that I think are the best and read them to the class so that they should appreciate them. We would analyze the essay. "Any problems? Any mistakes you have seen? What do you think about the essay?"

> If it's a discursive composition, they will go and research on the topic and after researching we will come and plan as above, etc.

The following is a response given by a head of English department of a school situated in the rural areas and catering for students with limited English exposure outside the classroom.

> We have resorted to some remedial classes so that if there is a pupil in a particular class who cannot write a good sentence in English we have some remedial exercise for them on Fridays. We tell the teacher who is on duty for remedial exercises. The pupils are taught how to construct a sentence, words like the verbs, nouns, etc. After a month we assess the pupils and see what progress has been made.

> Interviewer: "How do you handle the composition part of it?"

> When I have instructed the pupils to write even a very short composition instead of writing 400 words I say why not write 100 words because I know he has a problem on writing English, so it is better to mark (grade) 100 words of good work than mark 400

words of bad work. I will say before you write the full
composition you need to write the introduction only then I mark
that introduction. If it is something good then they can proceed to
the next paragraph. So you will find out that by the end of two,
three weeks they are still writing one composition while the others
have embarked on a fresh topic. So I have said (to the students)
you cannot write a paragraph until you can write a good
sentence, and you cannot write the next paragraph until you can
write a good introduction. etc.

Lastly, another English teacher responded in this way:

It varies with the topic. At times I try to get a well written
passage and just use that. Discuss with the students, get them to
think why I say it's a well written passage or any ideas that I can
get on the topic. We then try and use those ideas now to see
how we can plan on how to write a piece of written work.

In general responses by teachers of English emphasized correct language and
organizational aspects of writing, aspects of language which are difficult for second
language learners. To this end planning (making outlines) of the work to be
written about featured quite prominently in their responses.

Classroom observation of English and Shona lessons revealed that writing of
essays and compositions was less frequent than answering comprehension questions.
Out of the four or so lessons the researcher observed each of the 16 teachers
teaching only one was on writing, and generally at the request of the researcher.
Most of those lessons were focused on giving students theoretical knowledge about
how to organize a composition into three parts consisting of an introduction, body,
and conclusion. A good number of these lessons were too theoretical to invoke
students' interests. Most of the skills emphasized in the lessons on writing
observed were those emphasized in examinations so that one got the impression
that writing was mainly important for examination purposes.

In conclusion to the discussion of data relating to theme 6 concerning Shona
and English teachers views and opinions, the following emerged as the major
patterns. First although as a group the research subjects mentioned five objectives

for the writing curriculum which were, 1, to develop effective communication skills; 2, to foster creative thinking or problem-solving skills; 3, to overcome mechanical problems in writing, e.g., spelling, word division, punctuation, etc.; 4, to prepare students for examinations in which writing skills are tested; and 5, to make students develop the habit of using appropriate style or register. However the individual responses of those interviewed mentioned one or two objectives for the writing curriculum. The overwhelming majority of the teachers interviewed defined writing in a manner which suggests that it is a process of communicating ideas and experiences through print. Again, as a group, the interviewees mentioned four instructional activities they typically use to teach writing. These are 1, prewriting activities, e.g., understanding the topic, generating ideas, etc.; 2, directing students' attention to salient points, e.g., intended audience and purpose for writing; 3, focusing on organizational and mechanical aspects, e.g., paragraphing, spelling, punctuation, etc.; and 4, evaluating written work. The individual responses of the majority of these interviewees mentioned one or two writing activities. Most of the responses were brief, usually one or two sentences. It appeared that most of the interviewees rarely talked or reflected on the issues being raised by the research questions and that their enactment of the writing curriculum was guided by intuition and the need to prepare students for public examinations. There is a great concern with correct grammar, expression and arrangement of ideas than the quality of the writer's thinking process.

The overall conclusions arising from the data presented and discussed in this chapter will be discussed in chapter 5 which is the next chapter. Chapter 5 will also discuss how the data discussed in chapter 4 addressed both the research

objectives and the research questions using the social constuctivist conceptual framework used to guide this study. Chapter 5 will also discuss implications of the findings as well as areas in literacy education which need further research.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study was guided by the following research questions: (1) How do Shona and English teachers at secondary school conceptualize the outcomes of literacy instruction? (2) How do these literacy teachers make instructional decisions about what to focus on? (3) What literacy skills do these teachers focus on in their language instruction? and (4) What factors influence language teachers' conceptions and decision-making processes as regards literacy instruction? Data addressing the above questions were presented and analyzed in the preceding chapter organized around six themes. The six themes are (1) literacy teachers' perspectives of the sources of literacy curricular goals and content and their understanding of what students should achieve from their literacy instruction; (2) Shona and English teachers' views and opinions regarding examinations, especially their strengths and weaknesses as well as their influence on literacy instruction; (3) Shona and English teachers' conceptions of critical thinking and problem-solving skills in relation to literacy instructional goals; (4) language teachers' views and opinions regarding textbooks, especially their quantity and quality as well as the extent of these teachers' dependence on textbooks as sources of literacy instructional goals and content. Themes 5 and 6 relate directly to these teachers' conceptions of reading and writing, especially their understanding of the goals of reading, and writing and their enactment of reading and writing instruction so as to achieve their perceived goals.

The study was conceived on the assumption that teachers play a critical role in what students experience in their literacy classes through the teachers' decisions concerning what to focus on and what not to focus on, as well as the teachers' understandings of the nature and purposes of literacy instruction. The study was further conceived on the assumption that it is possible to learn what teachers understand, and believe to be the goals and purposes of what they do through asking them relevant questions related to what they do, and why they do what they do. It was a central assumption of this study that listening to what teachers said in response to questions, and observing what they did in their classrooms was an effective way of understanding how they conceptualized issues related to literacy and the contexts of the instruction.

The overall finding of this study is that the social constructivist conceptual framework in which this study was grounded seems not to be in place to guide teachers' conceptualizations of literacy instructional goals and their classroom practices. Social constructivist perspectives of teaching and learning places a premium on students' active engagement in their own learning through critical reflection, questioning, critiquing, and inquiry. Throughout this process students make use of their own existing knowledge and experience so as to make sense of what is presented to them. Social constructivist approaches value multiple perspectives on all issues under consideration.

It would appear that both English and Shona teachers' conceptualizations of literacy instruction are framed by the realities of their situations. The major features of their teaching situations which shape their conceptions of literacy instruction are the centralized curricular structures which are examination driven and bureaucratically organized. Additional features of their work situations are large classes, inadequate teaching and learning materials, and the use of a

language of instruction which is a second language to over 95% of the students. These situations are more complex in that the first language of the majority of the students has been marginalize for many years and is now under-utilized in its written form.

These realities of the Shona and English teachers' working world put them in a situation where they have to devise coping mechanisms and develop conceptions of literacy instruction which are different from those the researchers are advocating. Like teachers the world over, English and Shona teachers devise ways of managing the dilemmas they face on a daily basis as well as ways of meeting some of the expectations of their constituencies. Social constructivist perspectives may be appealing to researchers and other scholars, but they may not be the best means of managing many teaching dilemmas and meeting the expectations of different constituencies, like administrators, parents, students, employers and researchers. Thus, Shona and English teachers in the study sample exhibited conceptualizations of literacy instructional goals and practices dictated by their perceptions of the demands of their tasks in the circumstances of their working experiences.

Data collected through interviews, questionnaires and classroom observation suggest that Shona and English teachers conceptualize the goals of their literacy instruction through the lenses of public examinations set at ZJC (Zimbabwe Junior Certificate) and O'level (Ordinary Certificate), which is the terminal point for most students who do not aspire for higher education. Examinations seem to have a strong pervasive influence on teachers to the extent of determining most of the activities they engage on in their instruction.

Data relating to theme 1 about Shona and English teachers' perspectives about sources of literacy curricular goals and content showed that examinations,

especially past examination questions, influenced what they taught and the breadth and depth of content coverage even though a good number of teachers mentioned syllabi as their main source of curricular guidance. Those aspects of literacy which did not come often in public examinations, such as debates and other oral communication skills were rarely emphasized in their literacy instruction. Not only did many teachers believe that using past examinations questions is the best way to prepare students for their finals, but also many English teachers evaluated the quality of textbooks in terms of how best they helped them prepare students for examinations. Past examination questions overshadow national syllabi as sources of curricular goals because only 42.5% of the teachers surveyed indicated that Shona and English syllabi give adequate guidance on the goals, depth and breadth of what they should cover. The rest did not find these syllabi easy to use mainly because they provided only details of how examinations would be set rather than details of the expected outcomes of language teaching.

Data related to theme 2, examinations influencing instruction, showed that the majority of the teachers acknowledged that examinations had a negative effect on their instruction by setting limitations on their focus. For instance, many teachers asserted that written activities are given more attention than oral ones because examinations are set only on reading and writing. What seems to be even more serious are the limitations imposed on their conceptualization of reading and writing by the examination paradigm itself. Reading appeared generally to be a process of getting meaning from print. Texts were assumed to have meanings which transcend contexts under which they were produced. Students were discouraged from using their prior knowledge to make sense of a written text for fear of misreading questions that might be asked about the text. The search for literal meaning in written texts appeared to be the major purpose

for all reading activities. In an extended interview session with one of the teachers focusing on the issue of reading, the researcher was told by this teacher that students should give answers they know to be false in a comprehension test as long as that is the answer suggested by the text. She gave an example of a passage in which the author wrote that Great Zimbabwe was in Malawi even though the students' existing knowledge knows that Great Zimbabwe is in Zimbabwe. According to this teacher if a comprehension question , "Where is great Zimbabwe?" were to be asked; the answer should be," It is in Malawi."

The example itself is may be an over simplification but it highlights the problem created by applying examination standards to real life situations. In real life situations literate people know that texts are created by authors who have their own perspectives as well as strengths and weaknesses which often find their way into what they write. Those who read these texts likewise have their own perspectives of that they read. Therefore, it is the responsibility of readers to be aware of their perspectives so that they can compare and contrast them with those portrayed in the text.

Data related to theme one showed that many teachers had a narrow range of reading objectives, mostly confined to the process of getting meaning from printed texts and training students to overcome mechanical problems like pronunciation, fluency, intonation, etc. Objectives these tend to make readers passive recipients of written texts. Classroom observation data confirmed teachers' preoccupation with a desire to train students to look for literal meaning and to pay attention to mechanical problems of reading. There was little evidence that the majority of the teachers considered it necessary to help students reflect critically on the subject matter of what they were reading. Only a few teachers asked open ended questions after reading a literature text as a way of encouraging

students to appreciate the development of the plot in the text. Although the majority of the interviewees asserted that there was a difference between comprehension testing and comprehension instruction, classroom observation data showed little or no difference. What was tested was what was taught.

Data related to theme five and six, reading and writing, showed that most of the interview teachers found it difficult to give an operational definition of reading and writing. Several teachers claimed that they did not have time to teach reading. A few teachers could not say anything about the definition of reading. All in all these teachers' responses to the question of what is reading suggest that there is no academic or professional discourse going on in schools about the meanings and processes of reading and writing. The existence of such a discourse would help teachers reflect on various perspectives or definitions of reading and enable them create their own individual understandings of reading and writing which would then guide their instruction. Many teachers gave a common sense definition of reading which tended to restrict reading to the mouthing of printed words or getting meaning from print. Most of the teachers did not seem to have memories of professional definitions of reading and writing that might have been received from colleges of education during their professional training. These findings raise disturbing questions about content area teachers also have students read and write. If teachers who specialized in language instruction have problems in articulating what they teach on a daily basis, then content teachers who did not specialize in language instruction may have greater problems.

According to data related to themes two and three, examinations and critical thinking and problem-solving skills, most of the teachers asserted that examinations did not generally test for critical thinking and problem-solving skills since most of the questions focused on simple recall skills. However, there were some teachers

who had rather loose definitions of critical thinking which took it to mean any thinking which was not based on direct memory. Such teachers asserted that some comprehension and composition questions in examinations required critical thinking on the part of students to answer them correctly. Their responses suggest that critical thinking and problem solving skills are not a major concern of the Shona and English teachers since they can not be fostered through English because of students' poor command of that language. Because English is the language of instruction this appears to limit critical thinking and problem-solving skills. At the same time Shona is unacceptable as a language of instruction although it is the main medium through which students can be taught these skills. It is perhaps fair to conclude that the notion of critical thinking and problem-solving skills as central issues in literacy instruction does not appear to be at a deliberate and conscious level of operation for most of the teachers in this study sample. Classroom observation did not provide any evidence of consciously planned and executed English or Shona lessons to foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Data related to theme five, reading, did not provide evidence that teachers / in the study sample conceptualized literacy as a way of making meaning through interpreting, reflecting, questioning and problem solving through print. The data did not provide evidence that reading is defined as a process of constructing meaning through the dynamic interaction among the reader's existing knowledge, the information suggested by the written text, and the context of the reading situation. There was no evidence of the existence of critical literacy discourse. The study did not find evidence of the existence of notions of literacy which, as McLaren (1988) argues, link language competency to the acquisition of public discourse in which empowered individuals are capable of critically engaging the

social, political and ethical dimensions of everyday life. Rather there was ample evidence that we need to take heed of Eisemon's (1988) warning that school acquired literacy does not necessarily promote-problem solving skills if it is acquired in a teaching environment which is oriented towards preparing students to recall information for national examinations.

Data related to theme two, examinations, provided evidence that the examination paradigm has forced teachers to solve the problem of defining the goals of reading as those which are measured on large-scale tests. As Alvermann and Moore (1991) and Winograd and Johnston (1987) argue, emphasis on literal information becomes the norm because the acquisition of facts seems to be easily accomplished and is more readily measured than critical thinking and problem-solving skills. This study confirms Winograd's and Johnston's (1987) observation that researchers may view comprehension as an interactive process, or believe that strategic reading is important, or feel the need to address both meaning and sense. Practitioners, however, are still held accountable for how well their children perform on tests of isolated sub-skills.

Data related to theme four, textbooks confirmed a common research finding that teachers rely very heavily on textbooks for their instructional goals and content. This is a disturbing finding because there is a critical shortage of textbooks in government and district council schools serving poor communities in both rural and urban centers. The researcher often observed lessons where there were only two copies of the textbook, one for the teacher, and another one for a student who read aloud for the whole class. The shortage of textbooks was always more critical in the case of Shona books. At one school where the textbook situation was very serious, the teachers complained that the school

expected them to do miracles and produce good results when the students did not even have basic textbooks.

Another discomforting finding was the inability of many teachers in the interview sample to critically evaluate both the examinations they worried so much about and the textbooks they depended on so heavily for their language instruction. In some cases this was perhaps due to the newness of some of these teachers to the teaching profession, the majority of them having been teaching for less than five years. However, there was evidence to suggest that many of those unable to give a well thought out evaluation of either textbooks or examinations were not in the habit of questioning what they are told to do. They gave the impression that they were powerless to do anything about these issues and therefore to point out their strengths and weaknesses would not make any difference in the way they have to put up with them. Many teachers wondered why the researcher was asking them such questions.

The discussion about the findings of this study, like all large sample studies, has highlighted general trends and patterns of Shona and English teachers conceptions of literacy instructional goals and classroom practices. It should be remembered that there were a number of individuals in extreme positions whose conceptions of literacy and classroom practices were not captured in this discussion. Indeed, there were some individual Shona and English teachers whose views and opinions and classroom practices were exceptionally enlightened, well thought out and well presented. For example the Shona teacher who was observed teaching reading using newspapers and the English teacher who likened the strengths and weaknesses of textbooks to those of an individual teacher and went on lament the general tendency among many school administrators to allocate only one textbook for each subject. Other examples have been given under the

discussion of teaching reading. The researcher regrets that he was unable to capture their articulation of their conceptions of literacy and their enactment of literacy instruction with a video camera for reasons given in chapter 3.

Implications of the Study

This study has provided data that give insights into the thinking, beliefs and understandings of English and Shona teachers about issues related to literacy instruction. The study also described the context in which literacy instruction is carried out in Zimbabwe. The findings of the study touch on a number of areas which may be of interest to those attempting to address the question of quality of the education which is being provided to Zimbabwe's youths at great financial costs. It was argued in Chapter I that literacy skills determine the quality of students' learning progress in school and workers' adaptability in work place settings in an increasingly print mediated world.

A second implication of this study relates to the need for the Ministry of Education and Culture to come up with a national literacy policy for both primary and secondary schools. Such a policy statement should be based on relevant research findings for Zimbabwe and should address issues relating to definitions, nature and processes of reading and writing as well as their instruction. It may be necessary for the Ministry of Education and Culture to study literacy related issues throughout the education system so as to identify needs, problems, and possible solutions before coming up with a national literacy policy statement. This study has shown that Zimbabwe students may not be receiving the literacy education they need to be productive members of a world society. There is an apparent assumption that language teachers, either through their training or

practical knowledge of language instruction have adequate literacy expertise for their instructional needs. Such an assumption seems to be unfounded.

Closely related to the above is the third implication for the need to revise current national Shona and English syllabi for secondary schools with a view to providing them with clear guidelines as to the goals of language instruction. In a system where around 50% of the practicing teachers do not have degrees, let alone full professional training, it is necessary to provide clear guidance for literacy instruction. Such guidance will provide minimum requirements, leaving room for creative teachers to extend the guidelines as they see fit. This is particularly needed for Shona O'level syllabus which is presently no more than an examination guideline. There appeared to be an impression among many Shona teachers that were interviewed that there is not much to teach in Shona besides cultural issues.

The fourth implication relates to conceptions of the role of English and Shona in schools. Shona and English teachers displayed fairly distinct characteristics in their conceptualizations of literacy in the two languages. It is arguable that these distinct characteristics are a product of the colonial legacy which has remained a noticeable feature of the Zimbabwean education system. The majority of English teachers were preoccupied with a felt need to help students acquire a communicative competence in this second language which almost determines students' up-ward mobility in further education and in the employment world. This communicative competence is evaluated in terms of students' ability to express themselves in correct grammar, spelling, pronunciation, fluency in speech, etc., and, ability to comprehend surface meaning in texts. These have become markers of good language usage irrespective of the content of one's communication. Faulty grammar on the part of any speaker often invites open

ridicule. This situation tends divert teachers' attention from substantive issues of communication.

On the other hand, Shona language has had a history of negative images typical of the status of languages of colonized people. Shona is generally associated with "uneducated" common people and is thus perceived as having very little to offer to the "educated elites" since it is not used to communicate western scientific concepts. Moreover all Shona speaking children go to school already fluent in the language, and thus creating the impression that there is nothing more to learn in Shona apart from mechanical aspects of literacy and cultural practices.
In schools the official use of Shona is restricted to the first three grades of primary education, and only in areas where the majority of the students come from Shona-speaking homes.

Generally, in many schools, Shona departments are the most understaffed and experience the most acute shortage of textbooks even though they are usually the cheapest books on the market. Very few, if any, employment organizations specifically require a pass in Shona as a condition for recruitment.

These negative factors surrounding the instruction of Shona are part of most Shona teachers' working experience, and inevitably, lead to loss of confidence and the development of self-questioning attitudes among some teachers. These are real forces pressing on the Shona teachers as they are confronted by an outsider firing questions about their conceptions of Shona literacy instructional goals. It is most likely that these pressures make them appear unsure of what it is that they want their students to learn.

One important implication of the findings of this study relates to public examinations at various stages of secondary education. There is no doubt that examinations are an essential component of the education system, especially in

their role as indicators of the quality of student achievement, and in turn, the quality of the education students get. The advantages derived from a system of public examinations should be considered alongside their inherent limitations and possible negative influences. This study has provided data which show strong evidence that examinations are exerting great influence on how literacy teachers conceptualize literacy instructional goals and practices. It is perhaps necessary for the Examinations Branch and the Curriculum Development Unit of the Ministry of Education and Culture to review current examination practices and their influence on what goes on in the classrooms. Such a joint review should identify subtle negative influences of examinations as they are currently administered. There is strong evidence that examinations, rather than curriculum guides or syllabi, drive the curriculum which students experience in their secondary school experiences.

This study did not cover teachers' colleges to learn how literacy is conceptualized and enacted in teacher education programs. This is an area where the present researcher wants to pay his attention in the future. However, it is fair to assume that colleges of education have the major responsibility of providing teachers with both the content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge that teachers need in order to function effectively. To what extent did these teachers' responses reflect the knowledge base of literacy issues imparted by colleges of education? What strengths or weaknesses did these teachers reveal which might be related to colleges of education? In the light of these findings what changes do teachers' colleges need to make in their literacy programs for their language teachers?

Readers of this study in affluent societies may find it a bit difficult to believe that teaching and learning materials may be totally lacking in some schools. At the same time readers familiar with this problem may ask what new ideas are

for solving the problem. In short, the shortage or non-existence of basic teaching and learning materials has been a common feature of Zimbabwean schools opened after 1980, particularly serving the poor in both rural and urban centers. In Zimbabwe this problem was at one time highlighted in the media but it still persists in one form or another. Even in the not-quite-poor schools, it is a common practice that students are issued one textbook per subject even if there are other textbooks by different authors available on the market. It is rarely acknowledged, as one interviewee put it, that textbooks, like their authors, have their own strengths and weaknesses, and therefore students need to be exposed to as many different textbooks as possible. In some of the most serious cases only the teacher had a copy of the textbook to be used for literacy instruction. The bottom line is that if teachers are dependent on textbooks for literacy instruction, and such textbooks are either not available or are in serious short supply, students cannot even begin to acquire the needed knowledge and skills. In this case either the responsible authority running the school should accept its responsibility of providing basic teaching and learning materials, or parents should be educated to shoulder this responsibility for the sake of their children's education. It is not difficult to understand the feelings of teachers who are expected to operate without basic resources for themselves and their students.

Zimbabwe continues to spend disproportionately large sums of the national revenue on education out of a desire and commitment to develop its human resources. Financial resources spent on quantitative expansion of the education system will have been wasted if what goes on in the classrooms is seriously different from what public rhetoric leads the public to believe is going on. It is a sincere hope of the present writer that this study has provided some data that can

contribute to the generation of debate on the quality of education in general and literacy education in particular in Zimbabwe.

<u>Limitations of the Study and</u>
<u>Directions for Further Research Endeavors</u>

It is readily acknowledged that no single study carried out by one person can do justice to issues of such importance and controversy as literacy instruction and learning. Some of the limitations of this study were imposed by financial and time constraints on the part of the researcher. The study used questionnaires administered to mostly two provinces and part of a third province. This means that teachers in six provinces were totally excluded from the study. There was also a bias in favor of urban schools in that the researcher personally delivered questionnaire forms and also personally collected the processed forms. This ensured a return rate of over 95%. This could not be done with rural schools which are generally widely scattered across provinces. Mailed questionnaires were used, and as was expected, the return rate was much lower than in the case of urban schools. Thus the responses from rural schools was 24.470 and the responses from urban schools was 74%. Since district council schools, which are the majority of schools opened after 1980, are situated exclusively in rural areas, this means teachers from district council schools were under represented in the questionnaire sample.

Also interviews and classroom observations were mostly concentrated in urban schools because of time and financial constraints. Classroom observation sessions were carried out mostly in urban schools except for three rural schools observed on a one day visit basis to each of them.

The study also excluded all non-graduate unqualified teachers, who constitute over 50% of teachers working in rural secondary schools. In a way the study

sample was made up of teachers who were either graduates or fully qualified teachers working in more favorable environments compared to those excluded from the study. Thus, the findings of this study should be generalized only to schools and teachers whose circumstances are comparable to those of schools and teachers in the study sample. It is a firm belief of the writer that problems associated with conceptualization of literacy instruction and its enactment are probably worse among teachers excluded in this study than those highlighted in this study.

In view of the limitations of this study outlined above, it is necessary that similar research be carried out focusing mostly on district council and church administered schools. There is also a great need to study conceptualizations of literacy and its instructional enactment in colleges of education so as to understand the literacy knowledge base prospective teachers are exposed to during their teacher education programs.

It is also necessary to carry out a similar study directed at primary school teachers since they have the primary responsibility of laying the foundation of literacy skills on students before they move up to secondary schools. We would want to know and understand the continuities and discontinuities of the kinds of literacy skills students are introduced to in their primary grades and those they are exposed to in secondary school.

Last, but not least, we need to study both primary and secondary school students' conceptualizations of literacy as they go through various stages of their education. Students are at the receiving end of the educational enterprise and quite often their own perception of what they are exposed to help to shape what they learn. We need to know whether students' conceptions of literacy instructional goals are influenced by those of their teachers or/and by other forces.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE STUDY OF SHONA AND ENGLISH
LANGUAGE TEACHERS' CONCEPTIONS OF LITERACY
AND HOW THEY RELATE TO CLASSROOM PRACTICES

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INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE STUDY OF SHONA AND ENGLISH
LANGUAGE TEACHERS' CONCEPTIONS OF LITERACY
AND HOW THEY RELATE TO CLASSROOM PRACTICES

Let's begin our discussion with a review of the questionnaire questions you asked between February and March 1993. The questionnaire items covered these areas; attitudes beliefs and perceptions towards English and Shona as media of communication in a non traditional society; Zimbabwean Shona and English syllabi, ZJC and Ordinary level examinations, English and Shona textbooks, the instruction of reading and writing; General classroom instruction and conceptions of critical thinking in relation to English and Shona as dominant languages.

Are there any questions you would want to raise about any of the items raised in the questionnaire, either statements or questions which were vague or where you needed to quality or elaborate the response you gave? Let's spend a few minutes reviewing such questionnaire items.

The purpose of our discussion today is to elaborate on some of the issues raised by the questionnaire items as well as focus on other issues related to literacy instruction which were not covered by the questionnaire.

1. (a) Let's start by focussing on the Shona/English curriculum you teach. Where do you derive your Shona/English curriculum goals and objectives? (Probe with follow up questions if necessary)

   (b) In your opinion what is it that students are required to be able to do as a result of studying Shona/English at the level you teach?

   (c) How do you decide on the scope of what you cover i.e. breadth and depth of content coverage?

   (d) I understand schools are required to produce school syllabuses for the use by teachers. What difference do you see between the National syllabus and the school syllabus for Shona/English for the classes you teach?

   (e) To what extent can you as a teacher deviate from these official syllabuses?

2. (a) To what extent are the ZJC and O'level exams a good reflection of knowledge, skills, competencies and dispositions you associate with good education in Shona/English as a major medium of communication.

   (b) To what extent do ZJC and O'level Shona/English exams test for critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

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(c)   What influence do these exams have on what teachers do, believe to be important and how they teach? (Probe with follow-up questions if necessary).

3.   (a)   How would you describe the quality and quantity of Shona/English textbooks you use for the classes you teach. (Probe the teacher to talk about the strengths and weaknesses of these curriculum materials).

    (b)   To what extent do you use these textbooks? e.g. all the time, most of the time, 50% of the time etc.

    (c)   If you don't use Shona/English language textbooks all the time, what other sources do you use? List them. What are their perceived advantages?

4.   (a)   What are the major objectives for teaching reading skills in Shona/English? (Probe with appropriate questions)

    (b)   Where are these objectives given so that interested people can gain easy access to them if necessary?

    (c)   How is reading defined at this school? How does this conception of reading coincide or differ from your own?

    (d)   Please talk about essential reading processes or behavior you associate with effective reading.

    (e)   Describe how you typically teach reading (e.g. selection of reading materials, the actual conduct of the reading session, the role of the teacher vis-a-vis the roles of students, and how the reading outcome is evaluated).

    (f)   What reading skills, abilities and disposition do you emphasize in your reading instruction?

    (g)   How do you distinguish comprehension instruction from comprehension assessment?

5.   (a)   What are the major objectives of the writing curriculum for the level you teach as they are spelled out by the national and school syllabuses?

    (b)   How is writing defined at this school? Is this your own view of what writing is or should be?

    (c)   Talk about essential writing processes you associate with the development of effective writing skills.

    (d)   Describe how you typically teach writing (e.g., where do you derive the topics students write about? Which writing processes do you emphasize and how do you teach them? How often do students engage in writing activities? How are the writing activities assessed? etc.

6.   How is the instruction of reading and writing programs influenced by examinations students write at this level at various time? (Make appropriate probes)

7.   Do you think Shona/English can be used to foster the development of higher order thinking skills to students at the level you teach? If so, can you describe how reading and writing can be taught in such a way as to achieve these skills.

8. What problems/constraints do you experience in trying to teach Shona/English in such a way as to foster the development of critical thinking and problem solving skills in your students?

9. What aspects of your job as a language teacher do you think your professional training did a good job of preparing you? Which ones do you think you need more help?

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APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS WITH LANGUAGE E.O.s
LANGUAGE POLICY

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEWS QUESTIONS WITH LANGUAGE E.Os
LANGUAGE POLICY

1. What are the broad policy guidelines in place at the moment directing the instruction of Shona/English in secondary schools? Probe with more questions.

2. What differences are there between the policies which were in place before 1980 and the existing policies.

3. What are the major aims and objectives for Shona/English teaching at secondary school level? How are these aims and objectives communicated t classroom teachers?

4. Syllabi: What changes since 1980 have taken place in the Shona/English syllabi at secondary school level?

5. How clear are these syllabi to the teacher who have to use them from your observation of teachers' language curriculum plans?

6. What are the aims and objectives of Shona/English teaching as communicated by the National Syllabi.

7. What problems if any, do teachers encounter in using the syllabi?

8. What are the strength of English/Shona instruction you notice in schools? What are the major weaknesses? How can these be rectified?

9. What skills, competencies and dispositions do the ZJC and O'level exams test? Are there other skills which are worth fostering but these exams aren't or can't test?

10. What influences do these exams have on how Shona/English in taught? How strong is the influence and what form does it take?

11. How is reading conceptualized by MOE and how is this conceptualization of reading translate in reality in terms of everyday classroom instruction by teachers?

12. Similarly how is writing conceptualized and instructed?

13. What reading and writing skills seem to be satisfactorily developed by the current English/Shona curriculum and which ones are not satisfactorily developed?

14. What are the major shortcomings of English/Shona language curriculum and instruction you notice as you carry out you duties in schools? How about successes.

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SHONA AND ENGLISH TEACHERS

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SHONA AND ENGLISH TEACHERS

The purpose of this study is to understand secondary school Shona and English teachers' opinions and views about Shona and English as major school subjects as well as dominant media of communication in Zimbabwe. As one of the teachers teaching one of these languages, your honest opinions will greatly help in making this study a success. There are no right or wrong responses as far as this study is concerned. I would simply like you to take time to share your views on some aspects of English and Shona as major languages in Zimbabwe.

All responses are confidential. No reference to individuals or their schools will be reported in the final study. Completed questionnaires will not be available for review by officials of your school or the Ministry of Education and Culture. It is necessary for you to provide your name and that of your school for purposes of conducting some interviews with some of the respondents of the questionnaires. A stamped addressed envelope is provided for the return of completed questionnaire forms.

Directions: Read the following statements and circle one of the responses that will indicate the relationship of the statement to your feelings about Shona and English languages and their instruction.

Select ONE best answer that reflects the strength of agreement (SA) or disagreement (SD).

$$\underline{1 \quad 2 \quad 3 \quad 4 \quad 5}$$
SA   SD

SA means strongly Agree
SD means strongly Disagree

1. Teaching the class as a whole ensures that the teacher covers all important points in his lesson plan.

$$\underline{1 \quad 2 \quad 3 \quad 4 \quad 5}$$
SA   SD

2. Textbook comprehension questions focus mostly on recall and simple interpretation skills.

$$\underline{1 \quad 2 \quad 3 \quad 4 \quad 5}$$
SA   SD

3. When students work in small groups they often make mistakes which make group work less effective.

$$\underline{1 \quad 2 \quad 3 \quad 4 \quad 5}$$
SA   SD

4. The most effective way of teaching comprehension is to make students practice answering comprehension questions.

1 2 3 4 5
SA   SD

5. Using past exam questions is the best way to ensure that students are effectively prepared for their final examinations.

1 2 3 4 5
SA   SD

6. It is not possible to teach students critical thinking skills in Shona.

1 2 3 4 5
SA   SD

7. When answering comprehension questions, students should use their prior knowledge of the topic to answer the questions.

1 2 3 4 5
SA   SD

8. Shona and English syllabi do not give adequate guidance on the goals, depth and breadth of what should be covered at any given level.

1 2 3 4 5
SA   SD

9. Since Shona is a mother tongue of most students, there is really nothing to teach students except grammar.

1 2 3 4 5
SA   SD

10. It is possible to develop Shona so that it can replace English in communicating scientific concepts.

1 2 3 4 5
SA   SD

11. Most students cannot reason and think critically using English because of their poor command of the English language.

1 2 3 4 5
SA   SD

12. It is more important for students to express their points of view in English than to worry about correct grammar.

1 2 3 4 5
SA   SD

13. The teacher's primary aim should be to give students good education rather than to make them pass final exams.

1 2 3 4 5
SA   SD

14. Students' interpretations of literature texts they read should be accepted even if they differ from those of the teacher.

1 2 3 4 5
SA   SD

15. Z.J.C. and O'Level examinations do a good job of testing valuable knowledge and skills I value in English and Shona.

1 2 3 4 5
SA   SD

16. Being a good teacher means that an individual can provide clear directions and provide good models that lead to correct answers.

1 2 3 4 5
SA   SD

17. Writing activities for students should be mostly
    modeled on how they will be tested in final
    examinations.

    1 2 3 4 5
    SA   SD

18. When it comes to success in life, English is more
    important than Shona because it is a world
    language.

    1 2 3 4 5
    SA   SD

19. I get ideas of what I teach mostly from textbooks
    I use in Shona/English.

    1 2 3 4 5
    SA   SD

20. A good reader is more concerned with getting the
    the real meaning of the text than worrying
    whether he/she agrees with it.

    1 2 3 4 5
    SA   SD

21. Students learn reading and writing skills best
    from the teachers' demonstrations and
    explanations.

    1 2 3 4 5
    SA   SD

22. It is more important for the teacher to talk
    than for the students to talk during lesson
    time.

    1 2 3 4 5
    SA   SD

23. Students often do not provide good models to
    each other of how to think about issues, so it
    is not a good practice to call them frequently
    in discussion unless there has been sufficient
    teacher modeling and demonstrating.

    1 2 3 4 5
    SA   SD

24. Students do better on assignments that allow them
    to respond to teacher structured tasks rather
    than to ask their own questions.

    1 2 3 4 5
    SA   SD

25. It is more important to make students write on
    topics derived from current news items on radio,
    T.V. and newspapers, than from past exam questions.

    1 2 3 4 5
    SA   SD

26. It is more important to show students how to reach
    a solution than to allow students to make
    guesses and speculations.

    1 2 3 4 5
    SA   SD

27. Students learn best from teacher explanations
    rather than from students' explanations and
    discussions.

    1 2 3 4 5
    SA   SD

28. For most students, Shona language captures the
    essence of their thinking and belief systems
    than English which is more widely used in
    teaching school subjects.

    1 2 3 4 5
    SA   SD

29. Most students take Shona at O'Level because it
is easy to pass rather than because of its
perceived value in their lives.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

30. All non-Science subjects should be taught through
the medium of Shona up to O'Level.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

31. In my opinion the O'Level examinations in Shona
and English do not test for critical thinking.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

32. Writing activities should focus more on the use
of correct grammar, good expression and
presentation of ideas rather than revealing the
writer's thinking process.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

33. Reading is mostly a matter of interpreting the
text than getting the correct answer.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

34. The goal of instruction is primarily for students
to remember what they have read or been told.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

35. Students' assignments should be derived from
past public examinations or be closely modeled
on those examinations as a way of preparing
students for their finals.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

36. The teacher should always grade all students'
writing assignments.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

37. It is not a good teaching practice to present
students with frequent choices over what they
read or write.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

38. English and Shona education officers are very
helpful sources of ideas and advice for teaching
language imaginatively and creatively.

1	2	3	4	5
SA				SD

1. Name: _____

2. Gender: M_____ F_____

3. Name of School: _____

4. School location:
    Rural_____   Urban_____

5. Responsible Authority administering School:
    Government____ Church____ District Council_____
    Private Foundation _____   Any other_____

6. Grades being taught: F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6

7. Highest Academic qualifications:
    O'Level____ A'Level____ B.Ed____ B.A____ M.A.____ Any other____

8. Highest Professional qualifications:
    T1____ T2____ Secondary Teachers' Certificate
    Grad. C.E____ B.Ed.____ Any other_____

9. Teaching Experience:
    1-5 years_____ 5-10 years_____ Over 10 years_____

APPENDIX D

ORGANIZING THEMES FOR THE QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

APPENDIX D

ORGANIZING THEMES FOR THE QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

1. Theme one: Sources of curriculum goals, content and conceptions of what
    students should achieve Questions 8, 10, 12, 18, 28, 30

        Questions 8: Shona and English syllabi do not give adequate guidance
    on the goals, depth and breadth of what should be covered at any given
    level. Responses were 39% agree, 42% disagree, and 18% not sure.

        Question 10: It is possible to develop Shona so that it can replace
    English in communicating scientific concepts. Responses were 20% agree,
    68% disagree, 12% not sure.

        Question 28: For most students Shona language capture the essence of
    their thinking and belief systems than English which is more widely used in
    teaching school subjects. Responses were 64% agree, 16% disagree, and
    20% not sure.

        Question 30: All non-Science subjects should be taught through the
    medium of Shona up to O'level. Responses were 11% agree, 81% disagree,
    and 8% not sure.

        Question 18: When it comes to success in life, English is more
    important than Shona because it is a world language. Responses were 74%
    agree, 16% disagree, and 9% not sure.

        Question 12: It is more important for students to express their points
    of view in English than to worry about correct grammar. Responses were
    40% agree, 42% disagree, and 18% not sure.

2. Theme two: Examinations, what they test and their influence on what is
    taught Questions 5, 13, 15, 17, 25, 31, and 35

        Question 5. Using past exam questions is the best way to ensure that
    students are effectively prepared for their final examinations. Responses
    were 55% agree, 26% disagree, and 19% not sure.

Question 13: The teacher's primary aim should be to give students good education rather than to make them pass final exams. Responses were 57% agree, 25% disagree, and 18% not sure.

Question 15: Z.J.C. and O'level examinations do a good job of testing valuable knowledge and skills I value in English and Shona. Responses were 55% agree, 19% disagree, and 26% not sure.

Question 17: Writing activities for students should be mostly modeled on how they will be tested in final examinations. Responses were 68% agree, 16% disagree, 16% not sure.

Question 25: It is more important to make students write on topics derived from current news items on radio, T.V. and newspapers, than from past exam questions. Responses were 48% agree, 26% disagree, and 26% not sure.

Question 31: In my opinion the O'level examinations in English and Shona do not test for critical thinking. Responses were 31% agree, 48% disagree, and 21% not sure.

Question 35: Students' assignments should be derived from past public examinations or be closely modeled on those examinations as a way of preparing students for their finals. Responses were 68% agree, 16% disagree, and 16% not sure.

3. Theme three: Conceptions of critical thinking in relation to English and Shona literacy curriculum and instruction Questions 6, 11, 14, 23, 25, 26, 27, 31

Question 6: It is not possible to teach students critical thinking skills in Shona. Responses were 10% agree, 79% disagree, and 10% not sure.

Question 11: Most students cannot reason and think critically using English because of their poor command of the English Language. Responses were 71% agree, 18% disagree, and 11% not sure.

Question 14: Students' interpretation of literature texts they read should be accepted even if they differ from those of the teacher. Responses were 75% agree, 11% disagree, and 14% not sure.

Question 23: Students often do not provide good models to each other of how to think about issues, so it is not a good practice to call them frequently in discussion unless there has been sufficient teacher modeling and demonstration. Responses were 21% agree, 60% disagree, and 19% not sure.

Question 26: It is more important to show students how to reach a solution than to allow students to make guesses and speculations. Responses were 74% agree, 16% disagree, and 11% not sure.

Question 27: Students learn best from teacher explanations rather than from students' explanations and discussions. Responses were 20% agree, 50% disagree, and 30% not sure.

Question 25: It is more important to make students write on topics derived from current news items on radio, T.V., and newspapers, than from past exam questions. Responses were 48% agree, 26% disagree, and 26% not sure.

Question 31: In my opinion the O'level exams in Shona and English do not test for critical thinking. Responses were 31% agree, 48% disagree, and 21% not sure.

Question 34: The goal of instruction is primarily for students to remember what they have read or been bold. Responses were 54% agree, 28% disagree, and 18% not sure.

4. Theme Four: Teachers' conceptions of textbooks.

There were only two questionnaire items focusing on this theme, namely items 2 and 19.

Item 2 said, "Textbook comprehension questions focus mostly on recall and simple interpretation skills." Responses were 437 (54.6%) agreed; 202 (25.2%) disagreed, and 162 (20.2%) not sure.

Item 19 said; " I get ideas of what I teach mostly from textbooks I use in Shona/English." Responses were 329 (41%) agreed; 282 (35.1)disagreed, and 192 (23.9) not sure.

5. Theme Five: Views and opinions about meaning, goals, and instruction of reading/comprehension Questions 2, 4, 7, 14, 20, 21, 33, 37

Question 2: Textbook comprehension questions focus mostly on recall and simple interpretation skills. Responses were 55% agree, 25% disagree, and 20% not sure.

Question 4: The most effective way of teaching comprehension is to make students practice answering comprehension questions. Responses were 61% agree, 24% disagree, and 16% not sure.

Question 7: When answering comprehension questions, students should use their prior knowledge of the topic to answer the questions. Responses were 26% agree, 62% disagree, and 12% not sure.

Question 14: Students' interpretation of literature texts they read should be accepted even if they differ from those of the teacher. Responses were 75% agree, 11% disagree, and 14% not sure.

Question 20: A good reader is more concerned with getting the real meaning of the text than worrying whether he agrees with it. Responses were 68% agree, 16% disagree, and 16% not sure.

Question 21: Students learn reading and writing skills best from the teachers' demonstration and explanation. Responses were 64% agree, 18% disagree, and 18% not sure.

Question 33: Reading is mostly a matter of interpreting the text than getting the correct answer. Responses were 53% agree, 26% disagree, and 21% not sure.

6. Theme Six: Views, opinions and beliefs about meaning, goals and instruction of writing/composition Questions 17, 21, 25, 32, 37

Question 17: Writing activities for students should be mostly modeled on how they will be tested in final exams. Responses were 68% agree, 16% disagree, and 16% not sure.

Question 21: Students learn reading and writing skills best from the teachers' demonstrations and explanations. Responses were 64% agree, 18% disagree, and 18% not sure.

Question 25: It is more important to make students write on topics derived from current news items on radio, T.V. and newspapers than from past exam questions. Responses were 48% agree, 26% disagree, and 26% not sure.

Question 32: Writing activities should focus more on the use of correct grammar, good expression and presentation of ideas rather than revealing the author's thinking process. Responses were 51% agree, 27% disagree, and 22% not sure.

Question 37: It is not a good teaching practice to present students with frequent choices over what they read or write. Responses were 39% agree, 39% disagree, and 22% not sure.

APPENDIX E

SUMMARY AND COMMENTS ON
SHONA/ENGLISH CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

APPENDIX E

SUMMARY AND COMMENTS ON
SHONA/ENGLISH CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

<u>Ms. Mbodzwa: English</u>

<u>Comprehension</u>. The teacher tried to provide appropriate introductions to the lessons which helped to activate students' prior knowledge of the content of the reading passage. She also tried to make students use the SQ3R reading technique. Questions asked of students' reading comprehension skills were always taken from the textbook and were mostly of simple recall nature. The teacher put more emphasis on students' ability to answer questions asked by the textbook author, and by extension, by an examiner. This appeared to be a direct influence of the examination system on teachers' conceptualization of reading comprehension. Students were not made to interact with the text in a manner that would make them compare the text and their own experiences. The text was not made a subject of critiquing of evaluating.

<u>Composition/letter writing</u> were taught in a manner which put more emphasis on structural/mechanical and organizational aspects of writing. More class time was spent on things like parts of composition or a letter. Some textbook models were ineffectively used, for example, students made to write appropriate ending to a story about a mother who had left her child in scourging sun while working on her plot. What was missing in this teacher's composition lessons was

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how students went about generating ideas to write about which appropriate to the purpose of the writing exercise. Students' work showed problems of what to write about.

Ms. Muyamuri: English

Comprehension was taught in a way which suggested that the teacher believed in using specific techniques for students to comprehend a text. With the regular class the SQ3R technique was used. The teacher also tried to activate students' prior knowledge and experience of the content of the reading passage. She led students through questions to discuss the education system prior the colonization, during colonization and after colonization in Zimbabwe arising from a reading passage on Education in Zimbabwe.

On both occasions comprehension instruction followed a comprehension testing model. Students were given a topic to write as homework and when their work was returned teaching would follow, paying special attention to areas not done satisfactorily by students. Discussion centered on the theme of the reading text-human sense of sight was poor because the students did not have enough background knowledge on the topic and copies of the textbook were not enough for all the students to read for themselves effectively . This teacher also taught special education students. She did not teach a writing lesson for the researcher to observe. Summarizing skills were stressed as part of comprehension instruction.

Ms. Masungeni: Shona

Comprehension. Ms. Masungeni often tried to engage students in pre-reading activities meant to activate students prior knowledge about the subject matter of the reading passage. Reading itself was done both silently and aloud

although silent reading at times was difficult for students who had only 4 copies of the textbook. When the material was taken from <u>Rurimi Rwaamai</u> not much attention was given to discussing the content of the text because of the length of the passages. A general weakness of the comprehension instruction noted was inadequate and uncritical discussion of the content of the reading passages, for example," Mabasa en'anga". Much attention was paid to reading the passage and answer simple recall questions given at the end of the reading passage. This teacher taught a lesson on proverbs in which students were asked to narrate a short story and then give an appropriate proverb to summarize it. Or the teacher would write an incomplete proverb and then asked students to complete it. This appeared to have been dictated by ZJC and O level exams which often test students' knowledge of proverbs rather than from teacher's conviction that it was a worthwhile lesson to teach. This teacher did not teach writing lesson during the times the researcher went to the school to observe her.

<u>Makunumure: Shona</u>

<u>Reading/Comprehension</u>. Two lessons were taught on reading. In both cases the teacher introduced the lessons by asking questions meant to activate students' prior knowledge of the subject matter to be read and to put students in the right frame of mind for reading. In both lessons there was some attempt to delve into salient issues raised by the reading passages. In the first passage the effects of beer drinking were discussed. The teacher asked a few questions meant to make students make interpretations of some salient issues encountered in the reading. However she could not resist the temptation to impose her own interpretations and to ask leading questions. Over all one got the impression that this teacher believed in drawing inferences from what students read but then she did not

encourage students to explain and defend their own perspectives. She quickly imposed her own perspective. One is tempted to link this up with a view of reading promoted by examinations.

This teacher taught two compositions lessons, one on letter writing and another on discursive composition. The main focus of both lessons were organizational issues e.q. types of letters, the different formats between a friendly letter and a business letter, types of compositions, parts of compositions. No attention was paid to substantive issues like generating appropriate ideas to suit the purpose and audience for the writing process. Students were assumed to have no problems in coming up with appropriate ideas to write about.

Ms. Gwedebu : Shona

Comprehension/Reading.   Reading comprehension was the main focus of all lessons I observed in this teacher's class. Usually students took turns to read a paragraph or two and the teacher constantly posed questions to check on students' ability to comprehend what was being read and to raise or draw students' attention to points the teacher regarded as important, like idiomatic expressions or cultural practices. Usually this teacher did not give her lessons any formal introductions, for example questions meant to activate students' prior knowledge of the theme of the passage to be read. She did not encourage student to student interactions. When reading literature material great emphasis was put on interpretations, e.g., the title of the book Makunun'unu Maodzamwoyo. This teacher had no training in teaching and therefore tended to teach in the way she was taught at the University. She dominated her literature lessons by giving her own interpretations of events highlighted in the passage read, and not much was done in the way of making students react to the issues being raised by the text.

For homework students were assigned the task of answering some questions set at the end of the passage.

Mrs. Chindere: Shona

Comprehension/Reading. Reading was always preceded by some prereading activities, mostly students answered questions posed by the teacher meant to activate their prior knowledge of the theme of the reading passage. When it came to reading the chosen passage students took turns to read a paragraph or so, while the rest of the class followed in their textbooks. The teacher asked questions as the reading progressed meant to check on students' comprehension of salient issues met in the passage, e.g., idiomatic expressions, interesting points, and difficult points which needed interpretation, etc. When the actual reading was completed, students were asked questions meant to get their reactions to some of the issues read as well as to check on their overall comprehension. This teacher did not depend on textbook questions, rather she formulated her own which suited her own objectives of reading. Even the reading materials were not restricted to textbook passages. Newspapers were used and students were asked to identify what they wanted to read. They would then explain to the class what they found interesting, significant or educative. Students were asked to write what they would do if they were in the situation of the characters depicted in the reading.

Writing Composition. Before students were set work to write they got a lot of help through class discussion of the issues to be written about, including unpacking the title itself. The students were made to brainstorm what they would write about and the teacher also gave an example on which the students could model their own writing. The class paid attention to vocabulary and arrangement.

Appropriateness of content and language were also central to the writing skills students were being taught.

Ms. Kasanje: Shona

Reading Comprehension. The teacher can be described as average and slightly above average in her instructional competence. Reading lessons were always introduced by the teacher asking some questions to activate students' prior knowledge of the theme of the reading passage. Then the teacher would read one or two paragraphs to model what she wanted students to do. As students took turns to read aloud the teacher would interrupt the reading to ask questions meant to check students' comprehension as well as to draw their attention to some salient points met in the reading, like new expressions, difficult points which need interpretation as well as interesting points. When the reading was completed, This teacher would ask mostly simple recall questions taken from the textbook. Some of these questions would be answered as sit work in class or as homework. One or two questions which need interpretation or inference would be asked. What was conspicuously missing is a systematic attempt to make students critically interact with the text to express their own reactions to what the passage was about in terms of both content and form, i.e. language and organization. Reading was taught the way it is tested in exams--students answer textbook questions and that is it. What can we infer from this about the teacher's definition of reading?

Composition. This area of literacy was slightly better handled than reading. The lesson taught began with the teacher asking to students to give examples of one word composition titles. This led to the mentioning of "Nzozi" and "Barika" etc. The class then discussed "Barika" as a possible composition title. Through questions the teacher led the class to discuss the organization of a composition of

this type into introduction, body and conclusion and the kind of ideas which can be discussed in each part. However the teacher led discussion was shallow in that it focused on surface issues like the experience of students of polygamy. Critical issues like historical origins of " Barika" and its future in a fast changing social and economic environment were not discussed. The teacher's perspective of " Barika" was unambiguously conveyed to the students rather uncritically. Nor were students assisted in taking a critical look at their own perspectives of "Barika". Structurally, Mrs. Kasanga's lesson was satisfactory but it failed to be an occasion for critical reflection, and problem-solving skills using literacy.

Mrs. Madude: English

Reading Comprehension. This teacher's instruction of reading was openly influenced by the context of her teaching English as a second language. Emphasis was put on students' ability to comprehend what they read, i.e. ability to remember or recall skills. Hence the passages were read more than once and follow up questions were all meant to check on students' ability to recall information they encountered in the reading passage. In another lesson several students read a dialogue involving several characters, each reader representing one character in the passage. In another lesson the emphasis of the instruction was on making students master reading technique SQ3R. Reading in all cases was a means of gaining knowledge-information but not creating meaning nor critiquing the text by the reader. The question is, do second language learners have the linguistic skills which can make them interact with the text so as to evaluate it, draw conclusions based on their experience and make interpretations?. At the level of Form 2 or 3 it is fair to say students should be able to react to what is contained in the text rather than simply concentrate on understanding what the

text is saying. Should the two aspects be separated just because the learners are second language learners? I would say no. This teacher's reading instruction did not make students interact with the text as active readers, rather it concentrated on making them absorb what is in the text rather passively.

<u>Composition Writing</u>. The writing lesson I observed this teacher teaching was situational composition, a kind of composition which requires students to develop some ideas given about a specific situation. Students were presented a situation where by a neighbor's house catches fire and were required to write about this situation. Students were led to brainstorm the ideas they would write about in groups and then they would report this to the class. The rest of the class was required to comment on each other's reports, for example, ideas, arrangement of ideas, and the language used. Students got a lot of assistance through a model found in the reading passage and the teacher's comments as well as each other's comments.

This teacher's literacy instruction appeared to be greatly influences by exam requirements, e.g., the special <u>ZJC English Practice Book</u> she often used as a textbook is written specifically to drill on specific linguistic skills. Emphasis was on correctness rather than on creativity, interaction, reflection and problem-solving skills.

Mr. Hindumurwa: Shona

All the five lessons taught while I observed this teacher's classroom practice were on reading literature set <u>Wakandigoma Wena</u>. On one or two occasions the teacher began the lesson by asking students a few recall questions meant to link the lesson with previous lessons on the subject of literature. On the other occasions 3\4 of the time was spent on the actual reading. In all cases one or two

good student readers would read for the whole class which did not have copies of the set book. Only the teacher had a copy of his own and he would give the other copy to a student to read aloud to the whole class. Occasionally the teacher would ask a few recall questions at the end of a chapter. The overall aim was to read as many chapters as possible in one lesson. This meant that very little time was spent on discussing characters, events and conflicts. Thus the questions asked were meant to check on students' recall skills rather than to critique aspects of the plot, the theme and characters. Only in the last lesson were students given sit work to answer a question on the appropriateness of the book's title Wakadigona Wena in relation to the conflicts dealt with in the book. When students were asked to read what they had written it was clear that they had problems in answering the question. From my point of view this was not surprising given the fact that students had no copies of the text to read\study closely on their own, and also given the speed at which the reading was done without any meaningful follow-up discussion. What is the definition of reading portrayed by this kind of instructional process? At best it is a mere mouthing of the words printed in a text hoping that such a process can help a listener to remember what he\she has heard. This teacher's teaching represented one of the worst cases I had ever experienced in that one could not infer any well throughout objectives in what he was doing. He was quite cynical about whole situation. Admittedly the absence of textbooks for this subject was very serious problem for this teacher, but then a lot more could have been done in the circumstances than what he did.

He did not teach any writing for me to observe other than the seatwork students were asked to do answering a literature question. It was only for about 10 minutes and it was more of a test than a lesson meant to teach students the skills of writing.

Mr. Ganhirai: Shona

Reading Comprehension. One lesson was focused on poetry reading/study and the other one was focused on reading a novel, a literature set text. The poetry reading lesson covered such aspects classification of poems according to thematic frames, stylistic devices used in the poem, for example, repetition, alliteration, use of similes, proverbs, and idiomatic expressions. The teacher used questions to lead students to identify these stylistic devices. Students were also given chance to identify these stylistic devices in the poems they read. Students were also given chance to ask the teacher questions about the poem or what he was trying to make them learn. In this lesson the main preoccupation was to equip students with skills needed to study poetry--ability to identify stylistic devices and their effects. This is the format used in public examination questions at this level. Students were not asked or made to say out their own reaction to the poem "Ndimi here nhai vanasikana." There was no attempt to evaluate the poem in terms of its theme or language, etc. The focus was on what the poet presented. The aim of the lesson appeared to be reading as many chapters as possible in the 35 minutes session. The teacher asked very few questions meant to check on students' ability to remember what they had just read, but not to react to the reading by bringing their own perspectives based on their experiences. Where interpretations were necessary the teacher himself did that, e.g., the practice of" Kutizira" when a girl fell pregnant before marriage. All together four chapters of the set book were read in this one lesson.

Composition Writing. The lesson was taught at my request a day or two before it was taught. The lesson focussed mainly on mechanical aspects, e.g., introduction, body and conclusion, and the types of compositions students knew.

Two or so composition topics were used to illustrate these aspects. These were topics used "Ndambakuudzwa akaonekwa ava nembonje pahuma" and "Matambudziko akasanganikwa nawo pamusana pekusanaya mvuru gore rakapera." These were typical topics set in O'level exams. The teacher was mostly interested in teaching students how to write an effective introduction. There was no discussion of what makes a good introduction followed by brainstorming to give students chance to practice writing effective introductions. When students were asked to write suitable introductions for the two composition topics, they were unable to do this effectively showing that they had not been effectively helped to master this skill. For homework students were asked to choose a topic of their liking and then write a five lines composition concentrating on introduction. On the whole this was a poor lesson which displayed poor/or inadequate conceptualization of its objectives and appropriate strategies to be used to achieve them.

Ms. Tarirako: Shona

Reading Comprehension. Two lessons on literature reading were observed being taught by this teacher, one poetry and another novel, Makunun'unu Maodzamwoyo. The poetry lesson emphasized knowledge of and ability to identify stylistic devices in a poem. Students were not asked to react to the poem so as to reflect on the theme, message and other aspects in terms of their own experiences. They were not asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the poet's stylistic devices. The way poetry is examined in final public exams is the way it is taught -students have to demonstrate their knowledge of poetic devices rather than their perspectives of the text in terms of its theme and subject matter. The reading of the novel was quick paced, two chapters were covered in 35 minutes by using one

or two very fluent readers to read for the whole class which did not have copies of the text anyway. At strategic points the teacher would interrupt the reading to ask one or two recall questions and to comment on interesting events. If there was any interpretation to be made it was done by the teacher who did not appear to have identified salient points in the reading passages for close analysis. Again the text was not made a subject of close analysis through student reaction, questioning and evaluating what was being read.

Composition Writing. The topic was "Mutsauko wavepo pakuwanana kwakare nekwamazuvano". First the teacher drew students' attention to the three main parts of a composition, i.e., introduction, body and conclusion. Using this title the class was led to discuss what would be covered in each part. The class discussed the various types of marriage practices followed before colonial period and during colonial period as well as what is now being followed. This gave the material/content of the composition. Throughout the discussion the teacher gave students the information which they did not have. Some more knowledgeable students also participated effectively to give the required knowledge about different marriage practices. This was a well handled lesson although student participation could have been increased by using cooperative groups to discuss various types of marriage practices among the Shona people.

Ms. Madavaenzi: Shona

Reading Comprehension. This was done in the context of very limited if not non existent supply of textbooks. The two lessons observed focusing on reading comprehension were more of review/revision lessons following students' rather poor performance on work set as homework. For the first lesson students had not done well a summary exercise. So the passage was read again and later the students were asked to identify topic sentences in every paragraph as a strategy to use

when doing a summary exercise. A few students who had performed better than others were asked to read their work as a way to help others see what was expected of them. On the whole the lesson was more on testing reading comprehension than teaching it. The teaching which followed the testing focused mostly on rectifying identified weaknesses in students' written work.

After this part of the lesson the teacher introduction another reading exercise although there were only about 7 minutes before the lesson was due to end. When the passage was read students were set questions to answer as homework. The questions were taken from the textbook. Once again emphasis was on testing reading comprehension. The other reading lesson observed was structured more or less as the one described above, i.e. review of written work followed by loud reading and answering comprehension questions as homework. There was no discussion of salient points and characters met in the reading. Students were not made to react to the passage other than through answering comprehension questions. Questions asked of the students were taken from the textbook.

Composition Writing. The lesson on composition was the second part of a lesson which had started as a reading comprehension lesson. In other words there was no conceptual relationship between the two parts. Thus both parts did not get adequate time. Students were given a choice of composition topics to write on. Either "Vakomana nevasikana vanofanira kuita mabasa akafanana" or " Muimbi or Mutambi webhora or Mudzidzisi or Mutungamiriri wenyika wandinofarira". This was to be written as homework. Students were required to write a plan for the composition before actually writing the composition. There was no teaching component in this part of the lesson , rather there were testing procedures. The "teaching" of literacy by this teacher is mostly restricted to giving assignments and

tests rather than to give students direct instruction of skills they need to develop competence in literacy. She is an example of the teachers D. Durkin found testing and asking questions rather than getting involved in direct teaching of literacy skills. What is the definition of reading and writing implied by this kind of teaching?

Mrs. Mhemhede: English

Reading Comprehension. Four lessons focusing on reading comprehension were observed including poetry reading. Basically the teacher followed a thematic approach to her reading instruction. This means that the teacher would study closely the theme of the passage to be read in class and then base her instruction on trying to make students understand this theme through her closely focused and well thought out questions. Mrs. Mhende always aimed at fundamental issues rather than surface meaning. The lessons would be introduced with the teacher leading the students through questions to talk about the subject matter of the reading passage, e.g., prison life (poem), writing drama, one's hobbies. This was a way of making students use their experience in making sense of the reading passage. . . . In addition to this key vocabulary related to the theme of the reading passage would be introduced for discussion. The passage would be read and the teacher would take note of salient points for further discussion. This teacher's main aim was to make students understand the essential points in the reading passage and to show this understanding by being able to talk about them, and reflect on their meaning in students' own experience. Students would work in small groups or as individuals focusing on one aspect of the passage and would be asked to read their thoughts or findings to the whole class which was expected to comment and critique these group or individual reports. She displayed a good mastery of literature and

language perhaps due to her being a trained graduate teacher. Unfortunately the students, because of their poor command of the English language, were not forthcoming in expressing their feelings and thoughts despite the teacher's close probings. In the end she did more talking than she would have liked to do, and fortunately she was aware of this problem.

Composition Writing. Like the reading lessons, the writing lesson had been thoroughly prepared for before it was taught. The teacher thought through the theme of the writing exercise--presenting an argument and how to make students understand and apply the skills and techniques of argumentation. The lesson was introduced by the teacher leading students through questions to discuss the term "argue" and what is involved in making an argument. The term was broadly defined and the process of argumentation was exemplified. The teacher read a summary of techniques to follow when making an argument from a book. She then displayed a chart summarizing the process of expressing opinions where some people agree and others disagree and yet still others appear neutral. Students were then put into small groups of 5 and each group was given a controversial issue around which the group was required to make a stand. A number of these controversial issues, appropriate for the class' age group, were written on the board. Later groups were given chance to report to the class their written summaries, and the class, in turn, commented on the reports. Finally, a topic about decontrolling the price if cornflour, the national staple food, was given. This issue was current news in the country. Students were to write this as homework.

<u>Ms. Hombarume: English</u>

<u>Reading Comprehension</u>. There was evidence that this teacher did a lot to prepare for her lessons, for example collecting newspapers and identifying sources which dealt with the theme of the reading passage. In other words reading comprehension instruction was organized around a definite theme, e.g., causality, economic hardships, murder, etc. The students had been asked to look for and collect newspaper articles. Two newspaper articles dealing with murder were read and discussed in class. The teacher led the class to speculate on the possible causes of the murder. The class turned to a similar theme in a textbook passage. The class was asked to use the survey method, first looking at the heading, pictures in the text, and reading the first paragraph to predict what the theme of the passage might be. The teacher fired questions which were meant to direct students' attention on specific issues. The students worked in cooperative groups to answer some questions. Towards the end of the lesson the students were asked to put themselves in the position of some of the characters they read about and say what they would have done in those situations. This was meant to make students not just understand the passage but come to grips with human conflicts and dilemmas, and hence think critically of problems people meet in life. Another reading lesson was focused on making a summary, and to this end the teacher concentrated on teaching students strategies to be followed when attempting to make a summary. This teacher's instruction of reading was consistent with her conceptualization and definition of reading which emphasized both moral and cognitive development.

<u>Composition Writing</u>. Again a lot of thought was put into the preparation for this lesson as was shown by the manner in which it was executed. The teacher asked students to look for "stop-press" summaries in newspapers and then compare

them with fully developed stories. She wanted her students to appreciate the differences, similarities and relationships between stop-press stories and full stories. To this end real newspaper stop-press examples were used, for example, the class read a passage on the bombing of Hiroshima and made a stop-press summary. In groups students worked on two stop-presses which they were to develop into full stories. They were to discuss or brainstorm the ideas needed to make a full story out of each summary. The stop-presses were; a bus accident following attempts to cross a flooded river and the resulting death and injuries of some passengers, and a fire which guttered a block of apartments. After working in groups to write appropriate or suitable stories out of these summaries, students were to read their stories to the whole class which in turn was to comment and critique on the group stories pointing out strengths and weaknesses and awarding an appropriate grade or mark for the report.

Ms. Mhemberero: Shona

Reading Comprehension. Reading lessons for this teacher, like other Shona teachers in many government schools are made less effective through lack of books in addition to the teacher's weaknesses. This teacher always introduced her reading lessons with a brief discussion of some of the aspects of theme of the reading passage, a way of preparing students for comprehension by activating their prior knowledge. Reading is done aloud by one or two pupils taking turns followed by the teacher asking recall questions to check students' comprehension as well as meanings of proverbs and idiomatic expressions. When the reading was completed a few more simple recall questions were asked and then students were set homework which required them to answer five or so more recall questions taken from the textbook. There was no attempt to generate students' reflection

and/or evaluation of what was read, what they found interesting, unusual, disagreeable, etc. There seemed be a belief that the text can not be questioned by the students, all they need to do is to understand what it is all about.

Composition Writing. A double period lesson was used to teach both reading comprehension and composition. The passage read for comprehension entitled Makwikwi Munhandare Yebhora was used as a model for a composition lesson. Students were given a composition topic" Makwikwi ekuimba ezvikoro zviri mudunhu medu andakaona." Using the reading comprehension passage as a model for composition writing is a good idea, but it can stifle creativity on the part of many students who may think there is only one way to write a descriptive composition of that type. Apart from this, the teacher did not assist students in creating ideas to write about, perhaps under the assumption that students will transfer or apply what was done in the reading passage on to the composition task. What was emphasized was the division of the composition into introduction, body and conclusion. The teacher emphasized the need for students to write effective introductions. To this end students were asked to review the way the reading passage was introduced.

Ms. Gwedebu: Shona

Comprehension/Reading. Reading comprehension was the main focus of all the lessons I observed Ms. Gwete teaching. Usually students took turns to do a paragraph or two and the teacher constantly posed questions to check on students' ability to comprehend what was being read and to raise or draw students' attention to points the teacher regarded as important like idiomatic expressions or cultural practices. Usually Gwete did not give her lessons any forma introduction, e.g., activate students prior knowledge of the theme of the passage to be read.

She did not encourage students to student interactions. When reading literature material great emphasis was put on interpretations, e.g., the title of the book **Makunun'una Maodzamwoyo.** Mrs. Gwete has no training in teaching and therefore tended to teach in the way she was taught at the university. She dominated her literature lesson by giving her own interpretations of events highlighted in the passage read and reduced students to the role of mere listeners. The lessons on reading comprehension on "botso" was spent on loud reading and not much was done in the way of making students react to the issues being raised by the text. For homework students were assigned the task of answering some questions set at the end of the passage.

APPENDIX F

ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW DATA WITH
45 LANGUAGE TEACHERS

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45 LANGUAGE TEACHERS

Question 1a.

Representing out of Four

Where do you derive your English/Shona Curriculum	Four	Three	Two	One	Zero	Not Asked
English Teachers	4	4	9.5	6.5	0	1
Shona Teachers	1	2	6.5	8.5	1	1
Total	5	6	16	15	1	2

Key: 1-Syllabus; 2-Textbooks; 3-Examinations; 4-Perceived needs of students or society

Question 1b.

Representing out of Three

What is that student are required to be able to do as a result of studying English/Shona at the level you teach?	Three	Two	One	Zero	Not Asked
English Teachers	1	12	10	0	2
Shona Teachers	0	13	6	0	1
Total	3	25	13	0	3

Key: 3-Communication skills in various situations by various means; 2-To be critical and creative in and when using language; 3-Gain knowledge e.g. culture.

Question ic.

Representing out of Three

How do you decide on the scope of content coverage when teaching?	Three	Two	One	Zero	Not Asked
English Teachers	1	5	3.5	.5	15
Shona Teachers	1	3	5.5	1.5	9
Total	2	8	9	2	24

Key: 3-Students' easiness when acquiring target skills; 2-Time constraints; 1-examinations guidelines

Question id.

Representing out of Three

That are the differences between the school syllabus and the national syllabus?	Two	One	Zero	Not Asked
English Teachers	6	14	0	5
Shona Teachers	5	8	4	3
Total	11	22	4	8

Key: 2-School syllabus is more elaborate or detailed; 2-The school syllabus is geared toward the specific circumstances of the school and its students.

Question 1c.

Representing out of One

To what extent can one deviate from the syllabus?	One	Zero	Not Asked
English Teachers	5.5	3	16.5
Shona Teachers	7.5	0	12.5
Total	13	3	29

Key: There is no limit as long as there is a balance in the attention
paid to various language skills.

Question 2a.

To what extent are the ZJC and O'Level exams a good reflection of knowledge, skills, competencies and dispositions you associate with good education in Shona	Yes		No		partially		Off Topic	Not Asked
	1	2	1	2	1	2		
English Teachers	1	0	2	9	1	3	6	2
Shona Teachers	3	0	5	3	2	1	6	0
Total	4		19		7		13	2

Key: 1-point mere yes
2-points yes, plus good explanation

Question 2b.

To what extent do ZJC and O'Level exams test for critical thinking and problem-solving skills.	Yes		No		partially		Off Topic	Not Asked
	1	2	1	2	1	2		
English Teachers	4	0	1	6	7	2	3	2
Shona Teachers	4	0	5	4	3	1	3	0
Total	8		16		13		6	2

Key: 1-point mere yes
     2-points yes, plus good explanation

Question 2c.

What influence do these exams have on what teachers do, believe to be important and how they teach?	Yes		No		partially	Not Asked
	1	2	1	2		
English Teachers	0	3	5	12.5		
Shona Teachers	4	1	3	11.5		6
Total	8		32		1	13

Key: 1-point mere yes
     2-points yes, plus good explanation

Question 3a1.

How would you describe the quality of textbooks you use for classes you teach?	Enough	Not Enough	Not Asked
English Teachers	11.5	8	3.5
Shona Teachers	5.5	13	3.5
Total	17	21	7

Question 3a2.

Representing out of Three

Quality of texts you use.	Two	One	Zero	Not Asked
English Teachers	21	3.5	0	1
Shona Teachers	8	8.5	1	2
Total	29	12	1	3

Key: 2-Description plus example; 1-Mere description;
0-Inadequate description

Question 3b.

Representing out of Four

To what extent do you use textbooks?	A	B	C	D	Not Asked
English Teachers	1	9.5	5	0	9.5
Shona Teachers	1	12.5	2	2	2.5
Total	2	22	7	2	12

Key: A-all the time; books; B-Most of the time; C-50% of the time
D-less than 50%.

Question 3c.

Representing out of Four

What other sources besides textbooks do you use to teach English/Shona?	A	B	C	Unintell -igible	Not Asked
English Teachers	4.5	6	4	0	8.5
Shona Teachers	6.5	4	2	1	6.5
Total	11	12	6	1	15

Key: A-1 type of source; B-2 types of sources; C-3 types of sources

Question 4a.

Representing out of Four

What are the major objectives for the reading curriculum?	Four	Three	Two	One	Zero	Not Asked
English Teachers	2	5	11.5	3.5	0	3
Shona Teachers	0	0	9.5	7.5	2	1
Total	2	5	21	11	2	4

Key: Objectives of reading; 1-To gain knowledge or information; 2-Critique a text; 3-To overcome mechanical problems e.g. fluency, pronunciation etc; 4-enjoyment or pleasure

Question 4b.

Representing out of Three

How do you define reading?	A	B	0	Not Asked
English Teachers	12.5	4	4.5	4
Shona Teachers	7.5	2	7.5	2
Total	20	6	12.5	6

Key: A-a process of getting meaning from print; B-a process of interacting with print according to a predefined purpose; 0-no definition.

Question 4c.

Representing out of Five

How do you typically teach reading?	Five	Four	Three	Two	One	Zero	Not Asked
English Teachers	1	1	4	11.5	5	.5	3
Shona Teachers	0	1	2	7.5	5	.5	3
Total	1	2	6	19	10	1	6

Key: 1-Prereading activities; 2-Directing students to salient points and features; 3-Student's personal response to the text; 4-Focusing on mechanical aspects e.g. pronunciation, fluency, punctuation, etc; 5-Testing or evaluating

Question 4d

How do you distinguish comprehension instruction from comprehension assessment?	Yes		No		Unintell-igible	Not Asked
	1	2	1	2		
English Teachers	5	7	4.5	0	1	5.5
Shona Teachers	2	5	8.5	1	1	5.5
Total	19		13		2	11

Key: Distinction between comprehension testing and teaching Yes or no plus plausible explanation

Question 5c.

Representing out of Five

What are the major Objectives of the writing curriculum	Five	Four	Three	Two	One	Zero	Not Asked
English Teachers	0	1	4	7	5.5	1	6.5
Shona Teachers	0	0	2	3	11.5	0	3.5
Total	0	1	6	10	17	1	10

Key: 1-Effective communication; 2-Creative thinking or problem-solving activities; 3-Overcome mechanical problems; 4-Prepare students for exams; 5-Use of appropriate idiom or style/register.

Question 5b.

Representing out of Three

How is writing defined?	A	B	0	Not Asked
English Teachers	8	1	2	15
Shona Teachers	10	0	1	9
Total	18	1	3	24

Key: A-a process of communicating ideas and experiences through print or putting ideas on paper; B-a process creating ideas or thoughts and organizing them for social interaction.

Question 5c.

Representing out of Four

How do you typically teach writing?	Four	Three	Two	One	Zero	Not Asked
English Teachers	2	4	9	1.5	.5	8
Shona Teachers	0	1	4	4.5	1.5	9
Total	2	5	13	6	2	17

Key: 1-Prewriting activities e.g. understanding topic, generating ideas, etc
2-Directing students to salient points e.g. audience and purpose;
3-Focusing on organizational and mechanical aspects e.g paragraphing,
spelling, punctuation etc. 4-Evaluating written work.

APPENDIX G

ENGLISH O'LEVEL SYLLABUS

APPENDIX G

ENGLISH O'LEVEL SYLLABUS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE
IMPORTANT NOTE

Candidates for *English Language* MUST enter as follows:

(a) Candidates in the **Caribbean area** *must* enter for Subject 1115:

(b) Candidates in **Singapore** and **Brunei** *must* enter for Subject 1120:

(c) Candidates in **Zambia** *must* enter for Subject 1121(*):

(d) Candidates in **Seychelles** *must* enter for Subject 1124:

(e) Candidates in **Mauritius** *must* enter for Subject 1125 *or* 1126:

(f) Candidates elsewhere *must* enter for Subject 1123.

No candidate may enter for more than one English Language subject.

GCE (O) Subject 1115

(Available at Caribbean centres only).

Three compulsory papers (Papers 1115/1-3) will be set as follows:

1115/1 (1 hr.)
1115/2 (1½ hrs.)
1115/3 (1 hr.)

PAPERS 1115/1 and 1115/3 will both contain a choice of alternative subjects for continuous composition. In both papers candidates will write one composition. A similar choice of subjects will be set in both papers.

The Chief Examiner does not wish to encourage candidates to indulge in time-wasting word counts but suggests that about 500 words is an appropriate length. Work that is much shorter will tend not to deal adequately with the topic, while greater length tends to produce an abundance of error from all but the ablest.

PAPER 1115/2 will consist of a passage or passages of prose upon which questions will be set to test the candidates' ability to understand the content and argument of the given text and to infer information and meanings from it. Questions to test the ability to summarize may be included.

What the examiners reward in the summary is precise detailed material, a mark being given for each relevant point, the maximum number of points available being greater than the total mark for this section (i.e. a candidate can score full marks for the section without mentioning all the points). About a quarter of the marks in this question are allocated for correct writing, a ½ mark being deducted from that allocation for each error.

GCE (O) Subjects 1120, 1123, 1124, 1125

IMPORTANT. *These subjects are available only as stated in Notes (b), (d), (e) and (f) above*

Two compulsory papers will be set in all three subjects as follows:
Paper 1 (composition) (1½ hrs.) (50 marks)
Paper 2 (comprehension) (1½ hrs.) (50 marks)

A third compulsory paper (oral test) is set for candidates in Singapore (Paper 1120/3) and Brunei (Paper 1120/4): the oral test is optional for candidates in Seychelles (Paper 1124/3).

PAPER 1 will contain:
(a) A composition on one of a number of alternative subjects.
(b) A composition based on a situation described in detail. The situation may be described in words or pictures.

PAPER 2 will consist of a passage or passages of prose upon which questions will be set to test the candidates' ability to understand the content and argument of the given text and to infer information and meanings from it. Questions to test the ability to summarize will be included. See also comments about summary in 1115/2 above.

* The syllabus for Subject 1121 is obtainable from the Local Secretary in Zambia.

ENGLISH LITERATURE

Note: The editions of Chaucer and Shakespeare which will be used by the examiners at both Ordinary and Advanced levels will be those of Robinson (O.U.P.) and of Alexander (Collins) respectively, unless otherwise stated. It is not intended, however, that these should be regarded as prescribed editions; candidates may use any edition for study, unless otherwise stated.

GCE (O) Subject 2000

(Available at **Caribbean** *centres only)* [May not be taken with Subject 9000]

One paper (Paper 2000/1) of 2 hours 40 minutes will be set.

Candidates will be required to answer five questions as follows: one context question and one further question in Section A on either Shakespeare or another major English writer, and three essay questions in Section B on at least two other texts.

The context questions may require candidates to explain words and phrases, to re-write passages in modern English, or to relate an extract to the work as a whole. There will be one context, one text-based and one essay question on each of the texts set in Section A. There will be one text-based and two essay questions on each of the texts set in Section B.

The prescribed texts* are:

Section A

'Shakespeare *The Merchant of Venice*
Charlotte Bronte *Jane Eyre*
Charles Dickens *Great Expectations*

Section B

'Chinua Achebe *No Longer at Ease*
'Mildred Taylor *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*
Singapore Short Stories ed. R. Yeo (Heinemann)
Graham Greene *Brighton Rock*
Jack Hydes *Touched With Fire (Section C)*
J. B. Priestley *An Inspector Calls*
John Steinbeck *Of Mice and Men*

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

GCE (O) Subject 2010

(Not *available at* **Caribbean** centres) [May not be taken with Subjects 9002, 9003]

The format of and texts for this examination are as for Subject 2000 English Literature (above).

(Note *In June 1993, questions for Subject 2010 will be set on the texts prescribed in the syllabus for November 1992.)*

GCE (AO) Subjects 8014 and 8015/8016

(Not *available at* **Caribbean** *centres.)*

Principal subject papers 9002, 9003/1 or 7 may be offered as a subsidiary subject.

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* See note on editions above.
' Set also for 1994.

APPENDIX H

SPECIMEN SHONA EXAM QUESTIONS
PAPER 1

APPENDIX H

SPECIMEN SHONA EXAM QUESTIONS
PAPER 1

3159/1   O   NOV
SHONA
PAPER 1

Monday   **22 OCTOBER 1990**   2 hours

(No additional materials required)

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE LOCAL EXAMINATIONS SYNDICATE

in collaboration with

THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE, ZIMBABWE

General Certificate of Education
Ordinary Level

Instructions to candidates:

Mibvunzo yose inofanira kupindurwa neCHISHONA chete.

Pindura mibvunzo YOSE.

Chikamu I: Rondedzero

(Zvichakubatsira kuti upedze AWA IMWE CHETE pachikamu chino.)

1   Sarudza musoro MUMWE CHETE kubva pane inotevera. Zvino chinyora neChishona chakanaka rondedzero, kana hurukuro, kana tsamba ina mapeji anokwana matatu chete.

(a) Dzinza rangu.

(b) Nyora rungano runenge ruchisanganisa vanhu ava mukati marwo: amai, mwanakomana wavo, matsotsi, mapurisa.

(c) Nyora hurukuro pakati pomukomana nomusikana. Mukomana ari kuramba musikana waakakanganisa asi musikana ari kuti unondiroora chete.

(d) Hope.

(e) Nyora tsamba kuhama yenyu yakatama mudunhu menyu kare kare uchiiudza kusanduka kwaita dunhu rokwenyu kubva muna 1980 patakawana kuzvitonga kuzere.
                                                                                      [50]

Chikamu II: Zvirungamutauro

2   Tipe tsumo dzeChishona dzinowirirana netsananguro dziri pano. Sarudza tsananguro SHANU chete.

(a) Mwana wokumba huru kunyange ari muduku zvakadii, anowana rukudzo kubva kuvakuru.

(b) Kana ishe akapara mhosva, haazvitongi; anototongwa navamwe. ˊ

(c) Kana matambudziko akawira vose mubatsiri nomubatsirwi zvinopa nhamo yakakomba.

(d) Musi wenyatwa vanhu vanotaridza rudo nemutsa kune uya anenge awirwa nenjodzi.

(e) Kuona munhu mupfumi otambura zvokuti anopemha zvinenge zvichireva kuti pava nenhamo huru.

(f) Muupenyu hwavanhu hazviwanzi kuitika kuti musikana akanaka agoroorana nemukomana akanaka.

(g) Kana munhu achiita chinhu ngaakurumidze nacho nokuti kunonoka kungangokonzera zvinhu zvizhinji zvingamutadzisa kuchipedzisa.

(h) Nyangwe kune chinhu chisingakodzeri kuonekwa, meso anongoerekana atarisa.

3 Nyora zvakare ndima inotevera asi uchiisa zviito zvakakodzera panzvimbo yenyaudzosingwi dzakanyorwa namavara matete (italics)

Godzi akati ndichibaya nepfumo, Jekanyika ndokuti parutivi *svetu*, pfumo raGodzi ndokuti muuswa *rimbwa rimbwa*. Jekanyika ndokuriti *dzuku dzuku dzuku, tibu* ndokuriti kwakadaro *kwinin'wini*.

Godzi akagoti nduni yaive muchiuno make yaive nomusoro unenge chikate chemvura *wee*; Jekanyika ndokuzvuvawo yake; vose ndokudziti mumaoko *dzvi, dzvi*. Vakagonyahwairirana vakatarisana. Ndidopunza musoro waJekanyika netsvimbo, gomana ndokuti zvaro pakadaro *dau*; tsvimbo yaGodzi ndokusvotoka mumaoko yoti kwakadaro *vhii*, iye muridzi oitevera ndokuti muuswa *tsurundundu* nomusoro. [10]

Chikamu III: Nzwisiso nepfupikiso

4 Nyatsoverenga nyaya iyi ugopindura neChishona mibvunzo inotevera:

Rimwe zuva Mandigona akange ari mumba make achingofunga nezvenhamo dzake. Pfungwa dzakamukunda ndokubva arega kuruka kwaaiita. Akapfugama ndokuisa maoko ake pachigaro ndokuita somunhu aida kunamata. Akange obvunda nehasha. Akavamba kutaura. "Nhai vari kumatenga, ndakapara mhosvai isingaripwi *zvondoparangwa ropa reyandisingazivi kwayakadyiwa*? Zvondorumwa nemago andisina kudenha nhende yawo, zvaita sei? Hamusimi here munoti garwe haridyi chemupfupi nekureva? Muchitizve charo *chinoza* neronga? Nhai vari kumatenga ndianiko anondikanda jecha kumeso?" Misodzi yakabva yavamba kubuda, icho chifundi choita sechuma kumeso kwake. "Musha wapinda *mhunzamusha*; mhuri yapera!" Akambomira ndokupukuta misodzi nakachira. "Makandipa mapudzi akawanda chaizvo, ndikakuomberai nemufaro mukuru. Zvamanditorera mapudzi angu matatu asati aguta mvura, munoti nditi *midzimu yadzvova* here? Dangwe rangu makaritora rava *dununu*. Mwanasikana wanguzve ndiye wamakatora asati obvira kuvigwa pachuru. NdiMariga here akati adye nenhete? Inga ndinoita zvamunoda zvekuti kana kuchinge kwanaya mukombe uyo, ndichiti mupotewo muchidzivirira mhuri *mhepo*, dzokei imi *mopa mhuri yenyu makotsi*. Hamunzwiwo here zvinorehwa nemucheche wenyu? Inonaya inosiya numera; ko iyi ndeyepi yokukura ivhu rese?" Akambonyarara kwakanguva kadiki ndokuzorusimudzirazve. "Iye murume wangu pane zvaanoziva. Ndakamuti kugata akatyorera zvimiti munzeve. Munhu ari ega here iyeye? Zvichida ndiye akabura nyuchi dzisina moto. Dei akaramba kunzwa zvandakareva ndaingoti kundishora. Babamunini vake vakamuti kugata vakaona kuri kumakata. Njere dziya dzaisifashukira dzakamutiza. Nhasi tsime rakapwa. Kumba kwangu ongokuuya kana kune urwere. Nguva zhinji opedzera kumukadzi mudiki. Asi pane chavanorangana vari vaviri? Ihwo *hwenda* hwavo hwabvepi vanhu vanga *voita hwenhungo dzedenga*? Ndaimboti chamusi bere kutamba nembwa; asi nhasi chisepe chavo chava cheruva nenyuchi."

(*Kurumwa nechokuchera* by G. T. Runyowa)

(*a*) Mandigona akanga achiita chii asati atanga kutaura mazwi ari mundima umu? [1]

(*b*) Chii chinonzi mhunzamusha? [1]

(*c*) "Mwanasikana wanguzve ndiye wamakatora asati obvira kuvigwa pachuru." Ko patsika yechivanhu mwana uyu akavigwa pai? [1]

(*d*) Ndaapi mazwi aMandigona anoratidza kuti iye anopira midzimu yake? [1]

(*e*) "NdiMariga here akati adye nenhete?" Mashoko aya anotaridzei nokufunga kunoita Mandigona patsika yechivanhu? [1]

(*f*) Ipa chikonzero chakaita kuti Mandigona ati, "Munhu ari ega here iyeye?" [1]

(*g*) Tipe madimikira ari mundima umu anoreva zvimwe chetezvo namazwi aya:
   (i) chinhu chisingawanzoitika
   (ii) kuita kuti mumwe munhu apinde mumatambudziko.

[2]

(*h*) Paizwi rimwe nerimwe reanotevera, ipa rimwe izwi *rimwe chete* rinoreva zvimwe chetezvo sokushandiswa kwarakaitwa mundima umu:
   (i) chinoza
   (ii) dununu
   (iii) hwenda
   (iv) mhepo

[4]

(*i*) Tsanangura zvirevo izvi sokushandiswa kwazvakaitwa mundima umu:
   (i) zvondoparangwa ropa reyandisingazivi kwayadyiwa
   (ii) midzimu yadzvova
   (iii) mopa mhuri yenyu makotsi
   (iv) voita hwenhungo dzedenga

[8]

(*j*) Nyora ndima imwe chete isingadariki mazwi makumi mashanu uchirondedzera namazwi ako pachezvako zvinonetsa Mandigona. [10]

[30]

APPENDIX 1

SPECIMEN SHONA EXAM QUESTIONS
PAPER 2

APPENDIX I

SPECIMEN SHONA EXAM QUESTIONS
PAPER 2

3159/2   O NOV

SHONA
PAPER 2

Thursday   **25 OCTOBER 1990**   2 hours

(No additional materials required)

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE LOCAL EXAMINATIONS SYNDICATE

in collaboration with

THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE, ZIMBABWE

General Certificate of Education
Ordinary Level

Instructions to candidates:

Yose pamwe chete unofanira Kupindura mibvunzo MISHANU chete.

.

Chikamu I

Pindura mibvunzo MIVIRI CHETE muchikamu chino.

1 Mazwi anotevera anodaidzwa kunzi zvidudziramazita (Qualificatives) Nyatsoaongorora ugoita izvi:

(a) tipe rudzi (mhando) rwedudzirazita racho.

(b) mupanda kana mipanda yemazita anodudzirwa acho seizvi;

Dudzirazita	Rudzi	Mupanda
yekudya	chirevamwene	4,9
wake	—	—
umu	—	—
rimwe	—	—
machena	—	—
vaChipo	—	—
uko	—	—

[12½]

2 Nyatsoongorora zvirevo zvinotevera ugotipa *mood* yechiito chakanyorwa nemavara matete (italics).

(a) Kuti tikasire kusvika kuchikoro *ngatifambisei*.

(b) Akaenda kumunda ndokusiya vana *vachichema* nenzara.

(c) Iwe mukomana mukuru *mhanya* unodaidza vasara kumunda.

(d) Akarohwa *akawira* pasi.

(e) Ndipei mazwi *anodudzira* mazita maviri.

(f) *Anowanza kuuya* kuno mazuva ose.

[12½]

3 Chimwe nechimwe chezvirevo zvinotevera chine chiito chakavandurirwa.

(a) Nyora chiito chacho.

(b) Tipe rudzi rwechivanduriro chacho.

(i) Penzura yangu hainyatsobatika.

(ii) Misikanzwa yake ndiyo inoita kuti arohwe.

(iii) Zino irema rinosekera warisingadi.

(iv) Sekuru vaenda kumunda kunodyarurura nzungu dzisina kumera zvakanaka.

(v) Mhepo ndiyo yakapfurunura denga remba yekuchikoro.

(vi) Unotofanira kushingirira kana uchida kupfuma.

(vii) Zvokugara muchitukana hazvina unhu.

(viii) Bhuku iri rine ngano dzinosetsa.

[12½]

4 Nyatsoongorora mazwi aya wozopindura mibvunzo inoatevera:

Iyi,	chena,	icho,	chino
avo,	iri,	badza,	vedu
mumwe,	mai,	kure,	mberi

Umba *copulative* kubva pane rimwe nerimwe rawo. Usadzokorora kushandisa sungawirirano yawamboshandisa. [12½]

Chikamu II

Chikwata A:

Pindura mubvunzo UMWE CHETE muchikwata chino.

5 Sarudza nhetembo imwe chete yaunofarira kubva mune dzawakanzi uverenge. Zvino chitsanangura zvainoreva uye mashandisirwo omutauro sokuti;

dzokororo

mashandisirwo emazwi

wirirano kumagumo emitsetse, nezvimwe

6 Kubva munhetembo dzawakanzi uverenge, sarudza ina dzinotaura nezveimwe nzira yokurarama nayo muupenyu hwevatema vekare ugotaura zvaiitwa zvacho munhetembo imwe neimwe. [25]

7 Sarudza nyanduri umwe chete ane nhetembo dzawakanzi uverenge ugotaridza zvaanenge anonyanyofarira uchishandisa nhetembo dzake nhatu kutsigira zvaunofunga.
[25]

Chikwata B:

Pindura mubvunzo UMWE CHETE muchikwata chino.

8 Sarudza munhu mumwe chete waunoti ndiye mutambi mukuru murungano rwuri muna *Kumuzinda Hakuna Woko* ugotsanangura kuti ndezvipi zvinoitwa nemunhu uyu zvinoita kuti uti ndiye mutambi mukuru. [25]

9 Tsanangura chidzidzo chaunowana kubva muupenyu hwemumwe nemumwe wevanhu vana vari muna *Rurima Inyoka*. [25]

10 Mashoko anotevera akatapurwa kubva muna *Rurimi Inyoka*. Zvino iwe titaurire kuti;

(*a*) akataurwa nani

(*b*) kuna ani

(*c*) chii chakanga chabva kuitika kana kuti kutaurwa

    (i) "Chimbobikira vamwene, vamwene vambozorora. Imba, imba, unoidii mwana muduku?"

    (ii) "Ehe-e zvino ungatevedzere zvezichapa iro rine shanje yokurambwa kwarakaitwa?"

    (iii) "Ko, basa rangu haurizivi? Ndanga ndazvitaridzwa mubhodyera rangu."

    (iv) "Munoti muroora muroora chii? Makamboona amai chaivo vanoti kana mwana wavo asipo vosara vopfimbira mukadzi wake mumwe mwana?"

    (v) "Chatingangoita ndechekuti iwe worega kuenda kumba kwehanzvadzi yako nhasi. Unoswera zvako pano pamba, ini ndiri kubasa."

    (vi) "Chokwadi? Rega ndidaidze Mai Mashumba. Izvozvi tanga tichingotaura nhasi chaiye."

    (vii) "Honguka, asi akaramba zvake. Ko, munhu anomanikidzwa here chaasingadi ... Anodanana nomudzimai wake."

    (viii) Ndingagoita sei? Chii chimwe chandingaite? Ndinoroora. Usatye zvako."

                                                       [25]

Chikwata C:

Pindura mubvunzo UMWE CHETE muchikwata chino.

11 Tsanangura matanho akatevedzwa naSajeni Chimedza kusvikira abudirira mukufeya-feya mhosva iri muna *Sajeni Chimedza*. [25]

12 Joe Rugare angangonzi ndiye honzeri yematambudziko anowira vanhu murungano rwuri muna *Pafunge*. Unobvumirana nazvo here? Tsigira kufunga kwako neumbowo hunobva mubhuku iri. [25]

13 Tsanangura zvinhu zvina zviri muna *Pafunge* zvinoita kuti ufunge kuti upenyu hwevatema mudhorobha reGweru hwaisayemurika. [25]

APPENDIX J

SPECIMEN ENGLISH EXAM QUESTIONS
PAPER 1

APPENDIX J

SPECIMEN ENGLISH EXAM QUESTIONS
PAPER 1

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE LOCAL EXAMINATIONS SYNDICATE
in collaboration with
THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE, ZIMBABWE
General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level
ENGLISH LANGUAGE 1122/1
PAPER 1

Monday 6 JUNE 1994 Morning 1 hour 30 minutes

Additional materials:
Answer paper

TIME 1 hour 30 minutes

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Write your name, Centre number and candidate number in the spaces provided on the answer paper/answer booklet.

Answer **two** questions.

Answer **one** question from Section A and the **one** from Section B.

Read the paper carefully before answering the questions.

Write your answers on the separate answer paper provided.

If you use more than one sheet of paper, fasten the sheets together.

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

The number of marks is given in brackets [ ] at the end of each question or part question.

You should spend 50 minutes on Section A and 40 minutes on Section B.

Section A

Answer **one** *question from this section. Write a composition on* **one** *of the following topics. Your answer should be about 350-450 words in length.*

1   Describe what happens at your school on the last day of term and your feelings on such a day.   [30]

2   Write a story based on **one** of the following statements:

Either   **(a)** It was only then that everybody realised that the villagers had been tricked. [30]

Or   **(b)** It was then that I began to regret having told anyone about what had happened.
[30]

N.B. YOU WILL BE PENALIZED IF YOU REPEAT A STORY WHICH YOU HAVE ENCOUNTERED ELSEWHERE.

3   An ungrateful relative.   [30]

4   Would you agree that at school sport is just as important as attending lessons in class?   [30]

5   The long wait.   [30]

6   Discuss the pleasures of **one** of the following: fishing, photography or swimming.   · [30]

7   Describe some places of interest that you think a visitor to your district would like to see and learn more about.   [30]

Section B

Answer the following question. Begin your answer on a fresh page. You should spend not more than 40 minutes on this section.

8   Using the statistical data provided below, write a report for your local newspaper on the number of road traffic accidents in Zimbabwe.

Your report should deal with the main reasons for the number of accidents and analyse their trend since 1981. You should also suggest possible ways of reducing the number of accidents.

Road Traffic Accidents and their Causes: 1981 – 1993				
CAUSES	YEAR AND NUMBER OF ACCIDENTS			
	1981	1985	1989	1993
Drunken Driving	500	540	596	650
Speeding	860	872	880	995
Faulty Vehicles	700	750	786	860
Unlicensed Drivers	150	165	180	200
Negligent Driving	850	935	985	1086
TOTALS	3060	3262	3427	3791

[20]

APPENDIX K

SPECIMEN ENGLISH EXAM QUESTIONS
PAPER 2

APPENDIX K

SPECIMEN ENGLISH EXAM QUESTIONS
PAPER 2

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

PAPER 2

Wednesday   **27 OCTOBER 1993**   2 hours

Additional materials:
    Answer paper

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE LOCAL EXAMINATIONS SYNDICATE

in collaboration with

THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE, ZIMBABWE

General Certificate of Education
Ordinary Level

Instructions to candidates:

*Answer **all** the questions. You should spend not less than one and a half hours on Section A and not less than 30 minutes on Section B.*

The intended marks for questions or parts of questions are given in brackets [ ].

Leave a space of ONE line between your answers to EACH PART of a question, e.g. between 1 (b) and 1 (c).

Leave a space of at least THREE lines after your completed answer to each WHOLE question.

Mistakes in spelling, punctuation and grammar may be penalised in any part of the paper.

Section A *(40 marks)*

Read the following passage carefully before you attempt any questions.

Answer all the questions. You are recommended to answer them in the order set.

Mistakes in spelling, punctuation and grammar may be penalised in any part of the paper.

(The author, along with Martin Nace, Paul Osborne and their team, is attempting to climb to the top of a peak in the Himalayas, where this story is set.)

1   Day after day we crept on and upwards through the desolate valley towards the mountain towering above us, but never appearing to get any nearer. It felt like being trapped at the bottom of a deep well, for all the progress we were making. Soon we were thinking of the ascent of the mountain not only as an end in itself but as an escape. After what seemed to be an eternity, we reached the foot of the mountain, established camp and plunged into the arduous task of preparing for the ascent. Our food and equipment were unpacked, inspected and sorted, then repacked into lighter loads for transportation to higher camps. Hours on end were spent poring over maps and charts and laying out possible routes for the actual ascent. Then began the task of moving up supplies and establishing advance stations.

2   For more than three weeks the weather held perfectly while we toiled onwards and upwards, but on our first night after leaving the main camp we had a taste of the supernatural fury of a high Himalayan snowstorm. There was no sleep for us for thirty-six hours as the storm, accompanied by howling winds, raged on. When at last it was over, we were confronted with a world transformed – a world with no single landmark remaining as it had been before.

3   Several days passed, but we continued to wait, for to have ventured so much as one step into that wilderness before the new fallen snow had frozen tight would have been suicidal; we would have sunk down into its powdery mass. However, as time dragged on, an unpleasant air of restlessness and tension hung over the camp. At last it was safe to move on, and, with the first paling of the sky, a single file of men, roped together and bent almost double beneath the heavy loads of supplies, began slowly to climb the icy slope. In accordance with prearranged plans, we proceeded in relays. We were also under the strictest orders that any man who suffered illness or injury should be brought down immediately.

4   It is during ordeals such as mountain climbing that the true character of a man is laid bare. Paul was magnificent. His energy was inexhaustible, and his speed, both on rock and ice, almost twice that of any other man in the team. In contrast, Martin was slow, methodical and patient, cutting his footholds in the ice with deliberate care. The axe he carried with him was given to him by his friend John Furness who had died when they were on a similar expedition together. So, day by day, foot by foot, we ascended.

5   Once we had reached an altitude of about eight thousand metres, climbing became a real labouring process. The surface of the mountain was bare, offering no protection from the wind that lashed us day and night. Worse than this, the atmosphere had become so rarified it could scarcely support life. Even breathing itself was a major physical effort and our progress consisted of two or three painful steps followed by long periods of rest. Each of us carried a small cylinder of oxygen, but we only dared use it in emergencies. The greatest struggle, though, was now mental rather than physical. The lack of air induced a lethargy of mind and spirit causing powers of thought and confidence to wane. The mountain, to all of us, seemed no longer a mere giant of rock and ice; it had become a living thing, an enemy watching us, waiting, ready to attack.

6   On the fifteenth day of our climb, the summit seemed within arm's reach, victory securely in our grasp. Then the blow fell. With fiendish timing, the mountain hurled at us its last line of defence. It snowed! For a day and a night the snow drove down upon us. Then suddenly it stopped. In spite of that, we still had to wait until the snow either froze or was blown away by the wind. By the third nightfall our nerves were at breaking-point. We scarcely moved or spoke to each other. I knew that one way or the other, the end had come. Our meagre food supply was running out, and even with careful rationing there was enough left for only two more days. It was at this low ebb in our morale that Martin stirred in his sleeping bag and sat up. "We'll have to go down tomorrow," he said quietly.

7   For a moment there was silence in the tent. Then Paul struggled to a sitting position and faced him. "No," he said firmly. The following morning we found Paul had gone. Martin seized his ice axe and we started after him. Our progress was slow and there seemed to be literally no air at all to breathe. After almost every step we were forced to rest. We had no sense of height or fear; all our awareness, purpose and will were concentrated on putting one foot after another, and so we struggled on.

8   Then we sighted Paul not far off, on an unsupported platform of snow projecting from the side of the mountain. I felt Martin's body tense up. "Paul," he cried out. "Come back!"

9   Paul hesitated, then took a downward step, but he never took the next! For in the same instant the snow directly in front of him disappeared. I shut my eyes, but only for a second, and when I reopened them Paul was still, miraculously, standing there! Martin was shouting to him, "Don't move! Don't move an inch!" as he cautiously, but with astonishing rapidity, edged along a rocky ledge close to where Paul was. When he was close enough he extended his axe. Paul grabbed it and jumped to where Martin was, accidentally pushing Martin off the ledge.

10   Martin, still holding the axe, simply disappeared soundlessly. I neither thought nor felt: my body and mind alike were enveloped in a suffocating numbness. Then I heard Paul speak. "I am going to try to make it to the top," he said tonelessly. I merely stared at him, too numb to protest. He turned and began to climb again. I stayed where I was. After several hours he returned, his clothes in tatters, and announced, "I couldn't make it." We roped together silently and began the descent to the camp.

11   The following summer a combined English-Swiss team successfully stormed the mountain, only to find that an axe stood at its summit. Its handle had been embedded in a cleft in the rock and was covered in ice. On the handle were engraved the words: "TO MARTIN FROM JOHN".

Adapted from 'TOPMAN' by James Ramsey Ullman.

Answer all the questions.

You are recommended to answer them in the order set.

From paragraph 1:

1 (a) (I) What does the phrase 'we crept on' (line 1) tell you about the way they were moving?   [1]

      (II) State the **immediate** reason why they were determined to get out of the valley. [1]

      (III) Write down **one** word from this paragraph which shows that the men thought the journey to the foot of the mountain took a long time.   [1]

   (b) Give **different** reasons to explain why they had to 'inspect':

      (I) their food

      (II) their equipment.   [2]

   (c) 'poring over maps and charts' (lines 8-9).

      (I) What were they doing?

      (II) Why were they doing this?   [2]

From paragraph 2:

   (d) What evidence in this paragraph shows that the world of the mountaineers had changed greatly after the snowstorm?   [1]

From paragraph 4:

   (e) The author describes Martin as 'slow, methodical and patient'.

      What action of his later in the story contradicts this description?   [1]

[Total: 9 marks]

From paragraph 9:

2 (a) 'Paul was still, miraculously, standing there!' Explain what was 'miraculous'. [1]

From paragraph 10:

(b) **In your own words** state how the author reacted to Martin's sudden fall and disappearance. [2]

From paragraph 11:

(c) Give a reason to explain why the English-Swiss team could still have been disappointed, in spite of successfully storming the mountain. [1]

(d) The story ends on a mysterious note. What is the mystery? [2]

(e) Choose **five** of the following words or phrases. For each of them give **one** word or short phrase (of not more than **seven** words) which has the same meaning as the word used passage.

1.	desolate (line 1)	5.	laid bare (line 27)
2.	established (line 6)	6.	inexhaustible (line 27)
3.	arduous (line 6)	7.	scarcely (line 36)
4.	dragged on (line 20)	8.	astonishing (line 66)

[5]

[Total: 11 marks]

3 The passage describes an attempt by three men and their team to climb to the top of a peak in the Himalaya mountains.

Imagine you are the author writing a report after the expedition. Write an account of the problems you and your companions faced as you climbed the mountain, and the precautions you took, up to the time Paul went ahead by himself.

USE ONLY THE MATERIAL FROM LINE 17 TO LINE 58.

Your account, which should be in continuous writing, must not be longer than **160 words**, including the **ten** words given below.

Begin your account as follows:

We dared not proceed before the snow had frozen because......

[Total: 20 marks]

Section B *(10 marks)*

Answer all the following questions. You should spend not less than 30 minutes on this section.

4   Listed below are **five** situations, which are described briefly. Read the description of each situation carefully, and then answer the questions which follow, **briefly**.

(a) As you are walking down the street, an old man knocks into you. He falls down. You say to him:

(I)   "Why don't you look where you are going?"

(II)   "Sorry, Sir, I hope you are not hurt."

In each case what will the old man think about your manner?   Number your answers separately, (I) and (II).   [2]

(b) The teacher is introducing a new topic to your class.   You do not understand his explanation. You say:

(I)   "Excuse me, Sir, I did not get what you said."

(II)   "Repeat what you said."

What will the teacher's reaction be to each of these statements?   Number your answers separately, (I) and (II).   [2]

(c) A friend borrowed some money from you, but does not return it as promised. You need the money and ask for it. He says:

(I)   "I haven't got it. You'll just have to wait."

(II)   "I'm sorry, I completely forgot. Here it is."

What does each of the statements tell you about your friend's character?   Number your answers separately, (I) and (II).   [2]

(d) Your teacher is trying to lift something heavy, but with little success. You stand watching him. He says:

"Can't you help?"

Give two different reasons why your teacher should say this. Number your answers separately, (I) and (II).   [2]

(e)   A friend of yours is in tears because he failed English in his recent examination.

Listed below are eight possible remarks that you could make to him:

"I will lend you my notes if you like."

"You got what you deserve."

"I am sure you tried your very best."

"But I always thought you were good at English."

"Poor you, what a shame!"

"It's not the end of the world."

"I did not have any problems with the paper."

Choose **four** statements from the list above which most appropriately show that you are:

(I)   sympathetic

(II)   surprised

(III)   unconcerned

(Iv)   encouraging your friend to keep trying.

Write down **only** the four numbers above and against each of them write out **one** appropriate statement **in full** from the four statements you have chosen.

N.B.   YOU WILL BE WRITING DOWN FOUR NUMBERS AND ONE STATEMENT FOR EACH NUMBER.

DO NOT USE ANY OF THE STATEMENTS TWICE.   [2]

[Total: 10 marks]

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