

COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING
AND LEARNER PARTICIPATION:
A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS
IN BLANTYRE

M.A. (APPLIED LINGUISTICS) THESIS

LUCIANO VENANSIO NDALAMA

CHANCELLOR COLLEGE

MARCH 2005



UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

**COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING
AND LEARNER PARTICIPATION: A CASE
STUDY OF SELECTED SECONDARY
SCHOOLS IN BLANTYRE**

BY



LUCIANO VENANSIO NDALAMA
B.ED (MW)

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CHANCELLOR COLLEGE
MARCH 2005

DEDICATION

To my wife Mary for her rare patience and understanding. To the children Nandi,
Emma and Lucious.



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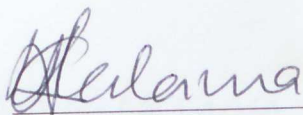
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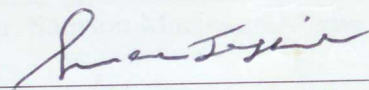


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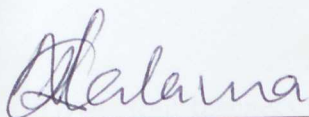


Dr. Samson Macjessie-Mbewe

Date: 23rd September, 2005.

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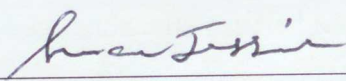
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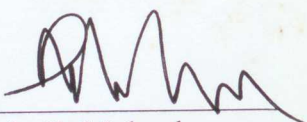
Main Supervisor
Dr. Samson Macjessie-Mbewe

Date: 23rd September, 2005



Supervisor
Mrs Catherine Moleni

Date: 23rd Sept., 2005



Head, Department of English
Mr. B. Molande

Date: 23 - 9 - 05

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated learner participation in the language classroom in four secondary schools in Blantyre district two years after the implementation of the CLT syllabus. The data revealed that the interaction patterns in these classes were still dominated by teacher talk. Although the new syllabus emphasized learner involvement through pair and group discussion, among the prescribed textbooks there was only one textbook—*Senior Secondary Integrated English Book 3* which would have promoted such interaction if used effectively. However, most of the teachers were using the other prescribed text, *Step Ahead: New Secondary English Book 3* which in effect promoted teacher talk. Those who used *Integrated English Book 3* were selective in their choice of the activities. In addition, there was no enough time for the learners to participate interactively. The pressure to finish the syllabus in order to prepare the learners for the national examination led to the dominance of lecturing. During the lessons, the teachers mostly asked closed questions, which drew short responses but when the teachers asked open-ended questions, the discussions either ran out of time or resulted in a lot of noise. The teachers and the learners agreed that the approach was affected by a number of problems, including less participation, noise, poor English and time constraints. Despite these shortfalls, effective learner participation in the language classroom could be achieved if the teachers were qualified enough to adopt the flexibility in the teaching required in this approach. The time for the language teaching has to be increased too to meet the demands of the activities.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skill
CALP	Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
FIAC	Flanders' Interaction Analysis Categories.
L1	First Language.
L1, L2, L3	In the examples these stand for first learner, second learner and so on.
L2	Second Language
LL	Denotes a group of learners
MANEB	Malawi National Examination Board
PBL	Problem-Based Learning
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
T	Teacher
UDF	United Democratic Front
VICS	Verbal Interaction Category System

CHAPTER 1

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter traces the developments in the teaching of English in Malawi. It shows that initially, the teaching was based on the audiolingual approach which was later changed due to the dissatisfaction with the performance of the learners who passed the examinations but were unable to use the language, in their communication. The new approach [the communicative language teaching (CLT)] was implemented in secondary schools in 2002. It was expected that effective implementation of the CLT approach would result in interactive learner participation in classroom discourse. The interaction would in turn enable the learners to use the language in their communication. However, the new approach was implemented in an education system with a lot of challenges which are discussed in this chapter. The challenges in the education system provide a point of departure for this study on the extent of learner participation in the implementation of the CLT approach.

1.2 BACKGROUND

In Malawi, English is a second language used for all official communication and as a medium of instruction in schools and colleges. Consequently, effective use of the language is essential to a student's success both in school and at work. The learning of English starts in standard one as a subject, but from standard five to secondary school and colleges, it is learned as a subject and used as a medium of instruction. The centrality of English in Malawi's education system is reflected in the curriculum, where it is a passing subject for all examinations in which a certificate is awarded.

Despite the importance of English in the curriculum, there were observations about primary school graduates who had achieved low levels of comprehension and were unable to communicate effectively in English (Khomani, 1996). The failure of the learners to use the language was blamed on the structural approach to language teaching, hence the need for change. The Education Development Plan (1985) spelt out the need for change in the teaching methods from pure structural approach in the old

primary school English curriculum to the development of basic effective communication skills through the communicative approach (Khomani, 1996). These recommendations led to the introduction of the new primary school English language syllabus in 1992, which was learner centred. (The terms Curriculum and syllabus will be used interchangeably). This impetus for the revision of the English language syllabus led to similar changes in the secondary school syllabus. The new syllabus, which was based on the CLT approach was implemented in secondary schools in 2002. In addition to the developments in language teaching in Malawi, the revision of the primary and the secondary school syllabuses should also be considered in the context of global changes in the views on language teaching which started among American linguists and influenced the work of British linguists, who later developed the CLT approach. Crystal (1986) has termed the development as a widespread reaction that started in the 1970s against methods which stressed the teaching of grammatical forms without paying attention to the use of the target language.

The old syllabus was based on the structural view of language, which according to Richards and Rodgers (1988) considers language as a system of structurally related elements in terms of phonological units, grammatical units, grammatical operations and lexical items. When teaching these aspects, classroom interaction was mostly teacher centred with very minimal learner participation.

However, the new secondary school syllabus emphasizes the integration of the four language skills, namely: listening, speaking, reading and writing. These skills were to be taught through learner interactive participation in classroom discourse. Consequently, it was anticipated that the interaction patterns in the classroom would reflect a reduction of the traditional teacher talk to create leeway for learner interactive participation. Learner involvement in the classroom is aimed at developing what Hymes (1972) called 'communicative competence,' which refers to the underlying systems of knowledge and skill required for communication. This knowledge is in the form of grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic and strategic competence. Therefore, the introduction of the CLT approach required realigning the roles of both the teacher and the learners in the classroom.

According to Richards and Rodgers (1988), in the audiolingual approach, language learners are looked at as individuals who can be trained to produce correct

responses in the target language. Due to the influence of the behaviourist learning theory, the interest is on how the learner uses the target language, not the internal processing. The teacher is seen as the model of the target language whose role is to control and direct the pace of learning.

However, in the CLT approach, the teacher's role is more as a facilitator of learning than a provider of knowledge. According to Breen and Candlin (1980) cited in Richards and Rodgers (1988), in the communicative classroom, the teacher has three main roles. The first is to act as a facilitator of the communication process, the second as a participant and the third as an observer and learner, while the students are expected to participate actively in all the activities in the classroom. This would in turn promote the knowledge of the language system through controlled performance (Widdowson, 1981). The approach emphasizes that when learners use the target language in their interaction in the classroom, opportunities for language learning are increased. As Allwright (1988) has pointed out, the process of classroom interaction determines what language learning opportunities are available for the learner. Therefore, the implementation of the new language syllabus in secondary schools in Malawi in 2002 necessitated an adjustment of the interaction patterns in the language classroom. Learner interaction is aimed at developing the learners' ability to listen, speak, read and write through involvement in classroom discourse in the form of pair, group and class discussions. Consequently, this would mean a reduction of the traditional teacher talk, which is mostly associated with the teaching of the structures of the language.

The implementation of the CLT approach in secondary schools in Malawi has implications for the teacher, who has to play various roles according to the nature of the learning tasks assigned to the learners. As the learners are required to interact in pair and group discussions, the teacher's role is expected to shift from an authority to a facilitator of learning. Nevertheless, Khomani (1996) forecast a problem among the teachers in Malawi when he pointed out that the generation of teachers currently teaching in schools was taught through the methods and materials of the old curriculum. In fact, citing Mchazime (1993), Khomani alluded to the possibility of resistance to the implementation of the new syllabus was likely to encounter among practicing teachers when he argued that the teachers saw themselves as examples of

the success of the methodology and the materials in the old syllabus. Although Khomani was referring to primary school teachers, the same problem applies to those in secondary schools. These teachers, who were taught using the old method and had been teaching using the same method were expected all of a sudden (most of them without induction) to adopt the methods in the new curriculum, where the teaching was to be learner-centred.

The abilities of both the teachers and the learners were another challenge facing effective implementation of the CLT approach in secondary schools in Malawi. It should be appreciated that these changes were being implemented in an education system where most of the students were not proficient in English and some of the teachers did not have the prerequisite qualifications to teach effectively. The former could be inferred from the Chief Examiner's report, which stated that most of the candidates' scripts were full of mistakes of grammar, poor vocabulary, incomprehensible sentences with mother tongue interference and so on (MANEB 2001). As Yordanova (2000) has rightly noted, in the CLT approach, students are required to use language that they have imperfectly mastered to negotiate meaning. The learners' inability to use the L2 effectively would negatively affect their contributions to classroom activities. It can be argued therefore that such learners would make a lot of errors in their interaction. These errors would constitute detrimental input to the other learners and consequently limit the contribution of such learner involvement to effective language learning.

On the other hand, research had revealed that the low performance of students in schools in Malawi was partly due to the unqualified teachers teaching in most of the schools (Malunga et. al 2000; Kuthemba-Mwale, 2000). These teachers therefore would have problems adopting the flexibility in teaching required in the CLT approach. It appeared very unlikely that the teachers would let the learners interact in pairs or groups and also accommodate the learners' opinions on the content without undermining their own self-confidence.

In situations where the teachers had the necessary qualifications and experience, their teaching was constrained by the need to prepare the students for the external assessments (Kholowa, 1999). In fact, the education system in Malawi measures the effectiveness of the teacher depending on how well the students pass the government

examination. However, learner involvement in the classroom requires a lot of time if the learners are to do a good job. As a result, the teachers would view the interaction as a waste of the time available to finish the syllabus and prepare the learners for the examination. In addition to these constraints, the absence of an oral element in the examinations mean that the learners are not compelled to develop effective use of the language, and the teachers do not see their duty as developing the learners' speaking skills but rather the reading and writing skills on which the learners' success or failure is measured.

The learners themselves are not motivated enough to appreciate the importance of using English in their interaction in the classroom. The education system is such that English is used in the classroom but the learners are not compelled to use it in their social interactions. This shows that the education system in Malawi emphasizes the instrumental rather than integrative function in the teaching and learning of English. As Ellis (1987:117) has pointed out, instrumental motivation occurs when the learner's goals for learning the L2 are functional. 'For instance, learning directed at passing an examination....' Since English is a passing subject in all the examinations for which a certificate is awarded, it means that both the learners and the teachers consider it as vital only as key to passing the examinations. According to Gardner (1979), cited in Ellis (1987), motivation is the primary determinant of L2 proficiency; those who have high motivation attain high proficiency in the language. Motivation is also central in *Accommodation Theory* (Giles and Byrne, 1982, cited in Ellis, 1987) where it is stated that high motivation results in a high level of proficiency. Unfortunately, in Malawi, the learning of English is associated with the instrumental motivation since most of the students are geared towards passing English as a subject, but not acquiring the skills to use it in their speech.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The circumstances surrounding the implementation of the CLT approach in secondary schools in Malawi posed a threat to the achievement of interactive learner involvement in classroom discourse, which is a key determiner of effectiveness in the implementation of the approach. In fact, Mchazime (2001:75-76) aptly stated the

problem created by the promotion of learner participation in the implementation of the communicative language teaching approach when he says that:

The new curriculum represents a major paradigm shift for the practicing teachers in Malawi. It is known that whenever paradigms shift, ...there is a seeming loss of self-confidence, authority and power in the classroom. This is because the long experience that teachers may have gained over many years of teaching is challenged and perhaps even shaken... The transition from the structural approach to communicative language teaching has...been too swift for many teachers to internalise...CLT may be viewed by many as too demanding...Some of them might be falling back on their old practices while using the new communicative materials.

Mchazime's (2001) observations present some of the threats facing the effective implementation of the CLT approach in the classroom. It was against these challenges that the study was meant to investigate the extent to which the implementation of the CLT approach had promoted learner interactive participation in classroom discourse and to find out the problems which both the teachers and the learners were facing in the implementation of the approach.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research analysed the interaction patterns in the language classroom to find answers to the following questions:

1. What interaction patterns are teachers using in the language classroom?
2. To what extent are the learners participating in classroom discourse?
3. What problems do teachers and learners face in the implementation of the CLT approach?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study was important as an evaluation of learner participation in the language classroom, a prerequisite to the effective implementation of the CLT approach. As Murphy (1993) has rightly noted, sometimes innovations in English language teaching have not produced the expected results. He argues that a theoretical proposal based on principles from a relevant field is not a guarantee of operational success in language education. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate what is going on in order to make the

necessary adjustments. This study, therefore, is meant to provide some information on how the new approach was being implemented by analysing learner participation in four form three classrooms in Blantyre district. The information is vital to educational planners as a prototype to be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of the new approach. The results will also provide the momentum to other researchers to find out if similar results could be found in other areas not covered in this study. These collective results will be very important to educational planners as an evaluation of how the approach is working in the classroom. Such information will be used to determine the necessity of introducing interventions where pitfalls in the approach will be highlighted.

1.6 LIMITATIONS

One of the limitations in this study was the use of classroom observation and recordings. During the first few days, the presence of the researcher in the classroom made both the teachers and the learners' w sensitive to what they were saying. The recording of the interaction in the classroom compounded the teachers' and the learners' sensitivity. In fact, in the first lessons there were some learners who were whispering when answering questions. Fortunately, the recorder was very sensitive and it picked up such utterances. However, in the subsequent lessons both the teachers and the learners got used to the observations. The use of the questionnaires also provided the researcher with some information beyond what was observed. The resources in some of the schools in the study constituted another limitation. In one of the schools, the three form three classes were using the same set of textbooks. Therefore, when the lessons in two of the classes followed each other, the teacher had to wait for the textbooks to be brought, thus reducing the time for the lesson. In another school, three learners were assigned one textbook. Therefore, it was difficult for some of them to read properly. Both of these situations were beyond the researcher's control but they had very little effect on the results because the teachers' plans to involve the learners were apparent, regardless of these limitations.

One of the key words used in the study was 'participation.' However, the word was used in a narrow sense to refer to the learners' involvement in the lesson in terms

of interaction. The covert forms of involvement like silent reading, writing an exercise and so on were left out.

1.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has shown that the decision to introduce the CLT approach in secondary school in Malawi, although viewed as a panacea to English language teaching and learning by policymakers might not have been producing the anticipated results due to the prevailing circumstances. Therefore, this study was aimed at investigating learner participation as a way of determining the effectiveness in the implementation of the approach.

1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Accuracy:	The correct use of the target language.
Approach:	A manner/method of doing something.
Audiolingual method:	The teaching of the formal systems of the target language in terms of grammar, phonology and lexis through listening and speaking practices.
Automatic processing:	Ability to use a [second] language without active control or attention.
Code switching:	Refers to alternation between one or more languages, dialects or language register in the course of discourse between people who have more than one language in common.
Comprehensible input:	The input which the learner can understand.
Competence:	Learner's mental knowledge of the rules of the target language.
Communicative Competence:	The learner's knowledge of the rules of the language including when, where, and with whom to use them.
Curriculum:	Content of what students learn, how they learn it, and how teachers help them learn, using particular supporting materials.
Controlled processing:	When the learner pays active attention to what is said and the number of features used is limited.
Declarative knowledge:	The learners' knowledge of the rules of the L2.
Error:	Learner language which deviates from the rules of the target language.
Feedback:	The response to the learner's communication efforts. It can be acknowledgement or correction.
Fluency:	The ability to speak in the target language and be understood by speakers of the language.

Hypothesis:	The learner's internalised rule that is used in L2 communication.
Input:	The language to which the learner is exposed. It can be written or spoken. Input serves as the data which the learner must use to determine the rules of the target language.
Interaction analysis:	A research procedure used to investigate classroom communication. It involves the use of a system of categories to record and analyse the different ways in which teachers and students use language.
Instrumental motivation:	Occurs when the learners' goals for learning the L2 are functional.
Integrative motivation:	Occurs when the learner uses the L2 to socialise and identify with the L2 speech community.
Interlanguage:	It is the term which refers to the systematic knowledge of a second language which is independent of both the learner's first language and the target language.
Language acquisition:	Picking up a language through exposure.
Language learning:	The conscious study of a [second] language.
Language proficiency:	The learner's knowledge of the target language measured in relation to native speaker proficiency.
Learning:	The internalisation of rules and formulas which are used to communicate in the L2.
Likert scales:	The set of responses in a questionnaire.
Method:	A way of doing something, especially according to a defined plan.
Output:	The language produced by the learner.
Participation:	The act of taking part or sharing in something.
Performance:	It consists of the production of language.

Procedural knowledge:	Learner's knowledge of how to use the L2.
Target language:	The language that the learner is attempting to learn.
Reliability:	The dependability of the information. Sampling: A represent sample of the target population.
Second language:	An additional language which the learner acquires after acquiring the mother tongue.
Second language acquisition:	The subconscious or conscious process by which a language other than the mother tongue is learnt in a natural or untutored setting.
Tally:	A score recorded when counting sets of the utterances in the lessons.

CHAPTER 2

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter starts by tracing developments in linguistic theory and their impact on language teaching as a background to the initiation of the CLT approach which was later introduced in Malawian schools. The developments provide the necessary context to the CLT approach, which emphasizes learner participation in the classroom. The language acquisition theories are presented in light of the tenets of the CLT approach.

2.2 THE AUDIOLINGUAL METHOD

According to Stern (1984), the audiolingual method was a result of the work of American structural linguists in the early 1940s. The need for army officers to learn different languages very quickly led to the need for the analysis of different languages in order to develop effective language teaching methods. As a result, linguists responded by developing teaching manuals in different languages to be used for teaching army officers to prepare them for service in different countries. In light of these developments, Bloomfield (1942), cited in Stern (1984), criticised the language teaching methods used in schools and colleges at that time and instead he suggested that native speakers should be the ones to teach languages. Bloomfield criticized the teaching of English that involved comparing the system of the target language to the classics. He stressed that non-native speakers were not providing the learners enough information about the language and in some instances some teachers were incompetent. Bloomfield (1942) is quoted in Stern (1984) as arguing that the learners' failure to use the language was due to the teachers' incompetence. However, the teachers might not have been wholly to blame for the learners' failures, considering the translation methods used to teach foreign languages at that time. The translation method could have had very little impact on language learning. It was during this same period that the audiolingual method was developed from the work of Charles Fries, (Stern, 1984). Charles Fries proposed language teaching based on the structure or the grammar of the target language.

The audiolingual theorists based their learning theory on the view that language was a 'system of structurally related elements being phonemes, morphemes, words, structures and sentence types' (Richards and Rodgers, 1988:49). As a result, language teaching involved teaching the structures of the language mostly disregarding both meaning and context. According to Mchazime (2001:64), 'In Malawi, the audiolingual method was in use for over 30 years.' He further states that the aim of the English course was to ensure that 'pupils could understand and produce the basic sentence patterns of the English language.' Although the teaching was based on the structures of the English language, the learners developed proficiency in the language. This was mostly due to the high quality of the teachers who were teaching the language at the time. These acted as models for the learners who were also motivated to use English in their social interactions. However, the problem arose from the unqualified and under-qualified teachers who entered the system as the government responded to the need for more teachers in the schools.

2.3 THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

In the 1960 and 1970s, there was a change in the nature of the demand for language teaching in Europe. This was mostly due to the change of emphasis by British applied linguists from the teaching of structures of the language to the teaching of communicative proficiency. According to Tudor (2001), the demand coincided with a change in perspective on the nature of language itself and Hymes' (1972) *Theory of communicative competence* influenced the thinking of linguists at the time. The theory played an important role in introducing a new perspective on language which also influenced language teaching. The main criticism was that language teaching led to what Cummins (1979, 1980) calls cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALP). The learner only knows the structures of the target language as is mostly required for academic purposes, but is unable to use it in social interactions. CALP refers to the aspects of proficiency in which the learner reflects on the surface features of the language but not the interpersonal abilities. This scenario was blamed on the audiolingual approach to language teaching. Hence, there was a need to adopt an alternative approach to language teaching. The approach came to be known as

communicative language teaching. CLT developed from the work of a British linguist Wilkins and the Council of Europe. From the 1970s, CLT became the approach to language teaching aimed at making communicative competence the goal of language teaching. The goal was to develop procedures for the teaching of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. The approach focuses on the learners' knowledge of the functions of language and their ability to use it. As for language proficiency, it leads to what Cummins (1979, 1980) calls Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS).

At the centre of CLT is a theory of language as communication, and the goal of language teaching is to develop 'communicative competence'. According to Hymes (1972), communicative competence refers to what a speaker needs to know in order to be communicatively competent in a speech community. On the other hand, Halliday's theory of communication is based on the functional account of language use (Halliday, 1970). As regards the theory of learning, there is very little that has been written, but some elements of the approach can be discerned from the CLT practices. According to Johnson (1982), the learning is based on three principles: communication, task and meaningfulness. In another analysis, Johnson (1984) considers the acquisition of communicative competence as skill development, which is both cognitive and behavioural. Hence, communicative language teaching involves using activities through which the learners are expected to communicate by sharing information, negotiating meaning and interacting. In the new syllabus these activities mainly involve pair and group work. When the learners are engaged in the tasks assigned to them, the teacher is expected to be a facilitator. For this reason, classroom learning is aimed at creating conditions for genuine communication among the students. Tudor (2001) has rightly noted that students' learning depends on the teacher's choice of the samples of the target language and the learning activities in which the students engage.

However, the emphasis which the CLT approach places on 'genuine interactions' in the language classroom has not gone without criticism. Widdowson (1981) has argued that it is not possible to link learning activities directly to the target uses of language. Tudor (2001) has also pointed out that it is difficult to set up conditions that fully replicate the realities of communication in particular situations. Van Lier (1998) also says that although the CLT approach emphasizes interaction in the classroom, it should be appreciated that part of the time there may be private and covert activities

such as reading a text, writing an exercise and so on. In fact, the study of learner participation in this research centred only on the overt aspects of participation in the form of learner talk.

Despite the elusive nature of some forms of learner participation, CLT has remained an approach, which stresses students' overt participation in classroom discourse. Widdowson (1981) stresses that the assumption in the approach is that learning a language involves associating the formal elements of the language with their physical realization. Despite the high prospects of learner language use created by the CLT approach, it was still debatable whether such approach contributed to effective language learning in secondary schools in Malawi.

2.4 LANGUAGE TEACHING IN MALAWI

Chimombo (2003) has presented a comprehensive picture of the developments in the teaching of English since the inception of formal education during the colonial period through Banda's 30-year rule up to the first five-year term of the new multiparty regime in 1994. Citing Alpers (1972), S. Chimombo (1980) and Matiki (1991) M. Chimombo (2003) has pointed out that the teaching of English was not a priority in the koranic schools established by Arabs in Yao speaking areas. The aim of the koranic schools was the promotion of literacy in Arabic in order to read the koran.

On the other hand, the mission schools in the northern region were using Chitumbuka as a medium of instruction. Chimombo (2003) citing Kayambazinthu (1995:61) says that the mission schools 'had a substantial English language component.' The Henry Henderson Institute, founded by the Established Church of Scotland in Blantyre, southern Malawi, in the late 19th century started with Chinyanja as a medium of instruction and moved on to English as a medium of instruction (K. Ross 1997, personal communication cited in Chimombo, 2003). Citing Vail and White (1989) Chimombo (2003) has summarised the missionaries' position on the teaching of English by saying that in central Malawi, the French-speaking Roman Catholics and Africaans-speaking members of South Africa's Dutch Reformed Church were both committed to policies that de-emphasised the use of English.

The differing mission/religious language policies had an impact on the value accorded to the English language. According to Chimombo (2003:42) ... 'the late President Banda insisted that English must be taught from standard 1, not as was recommended by the Ministry of Education's Primary Curriculum Review English Syllabus Committee in 1988, from Standard 3. On the other hand, the UDF government eased the ban of vernacular languages other than Chinyanja in primary education early 1996. Therefore, the promotion of learner participation in the implementation of the CLT approach should be seen in the context of the unstable language policies in Malawi's education system.

Since the inception of formal education in Malawi, the English language syllabus was based on the audiolingual method. However, the need for a change of the syllabus was spelt out in the Education Development Plan (1985-1995). The plan emphasized a new approach to language teaching in Malawi. In fact, one of the goals articulated in the plan stressed the acquisition and development of permanent language literacy (Ministry of Education, 1985). The plan was used as the basis for the review of the primary school language curriculum which was implemented in 1992. This was followed by similar changes in the secondary school English syllabus as the then Principal Secretary for education pointed out in the foreword to the new syllabus. The Secretary said: 'The review of the primary education curriculum has also made the review of the secondary education necessary' (Language syllabus, 2002:i). The CLT curriculum was implemented in secondary school in 2002. The need for the achievement of interactive learner participation as required in the CLT approach should be seen in the light of the dithering language policy in Malawi.

2.5 THEORETICAL CONTEXT

2.5.1 Language Teaching and Learning Theories

In order to understand learner participation in the implementation of the CLT approach, it is necessary to look at language theories and how they relate to language teaching and learning. In fact, English language teaching methods have an implication on the role of both teachers and learners in the language classroom. As Chimombo (1984:1) has put it, 'Language teachers need to know what they consider language to

be, because their view will affect how they teach language and...how their students learn it.' Despite Chimombo's (1984) theoretical view of language teaching, it should be appreciated that in practice, language teaching is determined by the motivation behind it. Kholowa (1999) has rightly stated, the teaching of English in Malawi is aimed at preparing the learners for the national examinations. Therefore, the requirements of the examination (s) determine the areas of focus in the teaching and learning of the English language in Malawi.

Chimombo (1984) has stated that the relationship between language theories and language learning theories can be properly analysed by using Mackey's framework. Chimombo's (1984) adapted version of Mackey's framework is presented in figure 2.1 below.

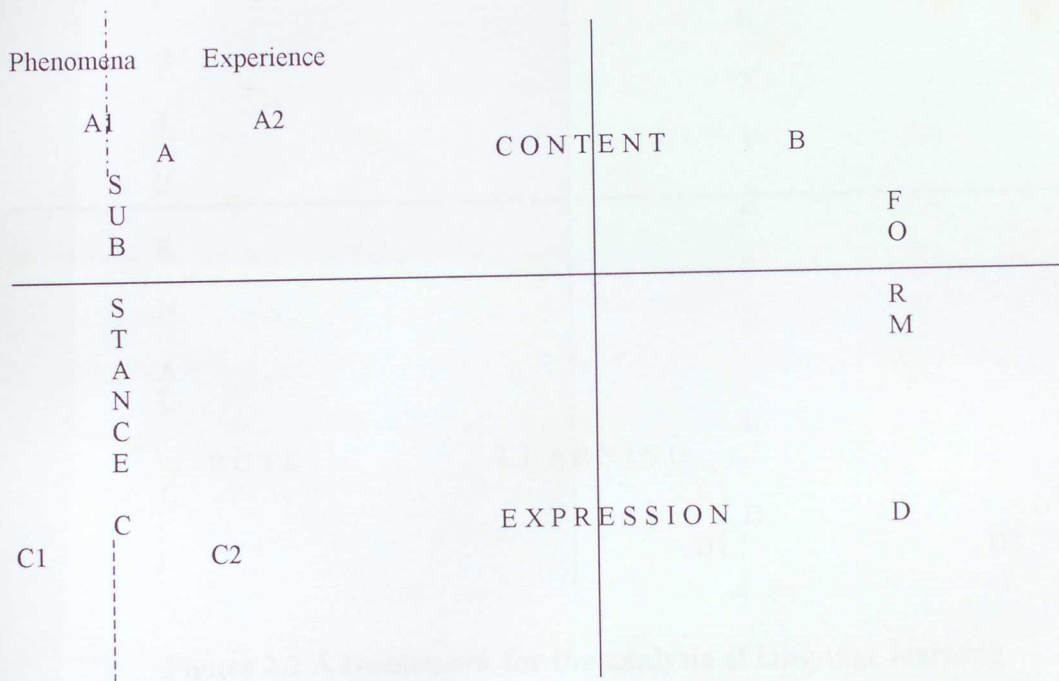


Figure 2.1 A framework for the analysis of linguistic theories
(Adapted from Mackey 1976: 8-10 by Chimombo, 1984:2)

According to Chimombo, (1984) the framework in figure 2.1 gives a comprehensive definition of language (Brown 1980:5 cited in Chimombo 1984:2). In the definition, language is an essentially human form of behaviour (A2, Experience-Content) which makes use of a system (BD, Form) of communication (AB, Content, and probably CD, Expression, too) consisting of arbitrary symbols, both

vocal and visual (C, Expression–Substance), which have been assigned meaning (BD, Form) by a speech community (A1, Phenomena–Content).

However, in order to understand the implications of the different language theories for language learning, it is necessary to discuss the language theories in relation to the language learning theories. The language learning theories are presented in figure 2.2 below.

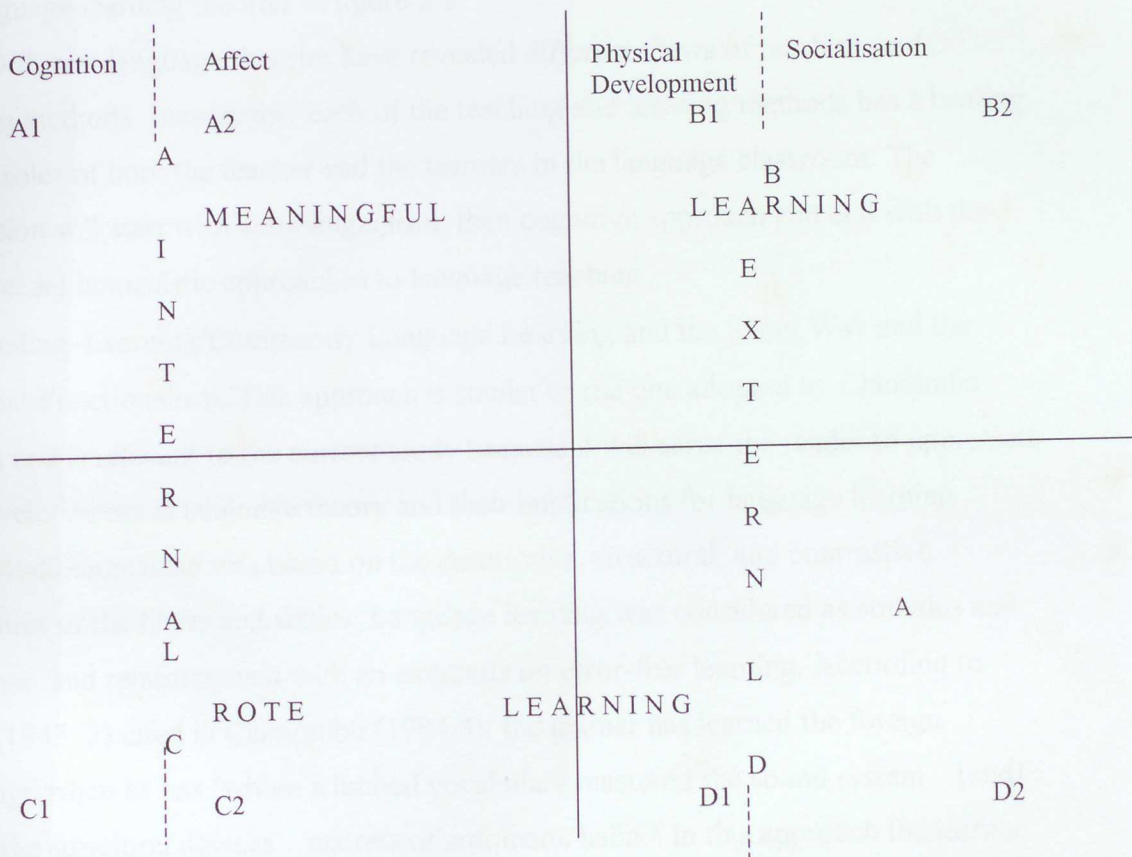


Figure 2.2 A framework for the analysis of language learning theories (Chimombo 1984:7)

Chimombo (1984) has said that the framework in figure 2.2 relates to learning theories in the following way: Area A1 (Cognitive–Internal–Meaningful) is that area of learning which is seen as purely mental and it reflects the rationalist’s view of learning or the cognitive view which advocates the role of the innate Language Acquisition Device. The Gestalt view covers Areas A and B (Meaningful–Learning). Area D1 (Physical–Learning–Rote) is the area of learning which is seen as observable like the stimulus–response or empiricist’s (classical behaviourist’s) view of learning.

The neo-behaviourists have attempted to add Areas C1 and C2 (Cognitive–Internal Rote + Affective–Internal–Rote) and D2 (Social–External–Rote) to D1 in order to account for language learning and the role of motivation in learning. The humanist psychologist's view of learning embraces all areas of the framework, cognitive, physical, and social.

The next section presents a synthesis of the language theories in figure 2.1 and the language learning theories in figure 2.2.

Different language theories have revealed different views of teaching and learning methods. Inescapably each of the teaching and learning methods has a bearing on the roles of both the teacher and the learners in the language classroom. The discussion will start with audiolingualism, then cognitive approach and end with the more recent humanistic approaches to language teaching, Counselling–Learning/Community Language Learning and the Silent Way and the Notional-Functionalism. This approach is similar to the one adopted by Chimombo (1984) and is relevant to the current study because it will assist the reader to appreciate the developments in language theory and their implications for language learning.

Audiolingualism was based on the descriptive, structural, and contrastive linguistics of the fifties and sixties. Language learning was considered as stimulus and response, and reinforcement with an emphasis on error-free learning. According to Fries (1945: 3) cited in Chimombo (1984:3), the learner has learned the foreign language when he has 'within a limited vocabulary mastered the sound system...[and] made the structural devices...matters of automatic habit.' In this approach the learner learns the language and not about the language. As Chimombo (1984) has noted, the audiolingual view of language belongs in Mackey's area D, Expression–Form (Figure 2.1). Audiolingualism does not pay attention to Expression area C, D, because that is not directly observable in the system of the language. As a result, the learning in the audiolingualism belongs in Area D (the behaviourist view of learning). It involves rote learning, Area C2, D1, in figure 2.2. The learning is mechanical since it involves repetition and imitation and the students do not have to understand what they are learning. The mechanical nature of the learning diminishes the role of the teacher in the lesson. As a result, a tape in a language laboratory could easily replace the teacher.

The learner 'learns' the target language passively by merely responding correctly to the stimulus.

The cognitive approach developed as a reaction to audiolingualism's emphasis on teaching the structures of the target language. Therefore, the cognitive approach emphasizes the teaching of the rules of the target language. The learner is required to use the rules of the language to analyse and understand the sentences s/he is presented with. Consequently, the cognitive approach is based on meaningful learning Area A, B. Chimombo (1984) has cited Chastain (1976) and Ausubel (1968) as distinguishing between rote and meaningful learning and reception and discovery learning. Meaningful learning involves the integration of new material into the learner's cognitive structure, covering Areas A and B (Meaningful learning) figure 2.2. Unlike in the audiolingualism, in the cognitive approach learners are required to understand what they are required to do. The learners apply rules they have been taught and the learning moves from competence to performance. Learner errors constitute the developmental process of language learning. Nevertheless, the cognitive approach emphasizes skill-getting activities in which the learning is still at cognitive level in Areas A1 and C1 in figure 2.2. Such learning results in learning in which the learner passes examinations but is unable to use the language in social interaction. The problem is that the learner has not yet moved to skill-using activities, which require genuine social interaction, Areas B2 and D2 in figure 2.2.

The humanistic approaches. Counselling-Learning/Community Language Learning and the Silent Way emphasize the development of the learner's abilities through the use of the target language. During language learning, the system of the language emerges spontaneously through the use of the target language. According to Chimombo (1984) Curran's view of language presented in Counselling-Learning/Community Language Learning covers Mackey's Areas A and B, Content and probably Areas C and D, Expression in figure 2.1. In terms of language learning, the two theories give the learner control over the learning. Chimombo (1984) has cited Gattegno (1972) as emphasising the need for the learner to develop his own 'inner criteria,' thus covering Areas A and C, Internal learning in figure 2.2. In addition, by emphasizing the learner's use of the target language, the two approaches pay attention to the affective aspect of language learning found in Areas A2 and C2.

Finally, notional-functionalism emphasizes the learner's communicative competence. The notional-functional view of language covers Areas A and B (Content) and areas C and D (Expression) because it is concerned with total language behaviour and not the structures of the language. Therefore, notional-functional is concerned with all the four areas in figure 2.1; namely areas A, B, C, and D; Area A represents the situation, Area B the context, Area C the material sign, and Area D the formal sign. Areas A and C (Substance) thus represent use, and Areas B and D (Form) usage.

However, the notional-functionalism has no clear view of learning due the overriding concern with language. The teaching is expected to respond to the communicative needs of the learners. Language learning is viewed as socialization covering areas B2 and C2 in figure 2.2.

The foregoing discussion of the language theories and the learning theories has revealed variations in the role of the teacher and the learners. Audiolingualism concerns itself with Area D of both the language framework and learning framework. In the teaching and learning the teacher is the provider of information while the learner is the recipient of the content which s/he repeats without understanding. The cognitive approach's view of language covers Area D, but its view of learning covers Area A1 and C1. Due to its concern with communicative competence, it also covers Area B of the language framework and Areas B2 and D2 of the learning framework. In the classroom, the teacher assists the learner to understand the rules of the target language. Therefore, the approach focuses on meaningful learning. The view of language in Community Language Learning covers Areas A and B (Content), it also extends to areas C and D (Expression), while the view of learning covers all the four areas of the learning framework. For this reason, the teacher has to assist the learner to know how to use the target language while the learner has to use the language in his/her communication. The Silent Way's view of language matches that of audiolingualism, but its view of learning is similar to that of Community Language Learning. Then, it means that while the teacher is expected to provide the learner with information about the language, the learner is expected to use the language in his/her communication. Notional-functionalism covers all the areas of the framework like Community Language Learning but its view of learning is similar to that of the cognitive approach.

Although the teaching focuses on the functions of language, the learner is expected to know the rules of the language without any emphasis on the use of the language. In CLT approach, both the views of language and learning conform to those of the Community Language Learning.

2.5.2 Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

Interaction in the language classroom is aimed at language teaching on the part of the teacher and L2 learning for the learner. According to Ellis, (1987) 'second language acquisition' (SLA) refers to the subconscious or conscious process by which a language other than the mother tongue is learnt in a natural or untutored setting. The study of SLA is directed at accounting for the learner's competence by investigating how a learner performs when he/she uses a second language. In this research the interest was to explore how the implementation of the CLT approach promoted learner participation in classroom discourse in the cases in question. Second language acquisition is sometimes contrasted with second language learning (Ellis, 1987). The term 'acquisition' is used to refer to picking up a second language through exposure, while the term 'learning' is used to refer to the conscious study of a second language.

Chimombo (2003) has said that second language learning can be explained using a contextual framework adapted from Mackey (1967) by Chimombo (1986). Figure 2.3 below presents Mackey's framework adapted by Chimombo (2003) as the framework for the analysis of learning and contextual theories.

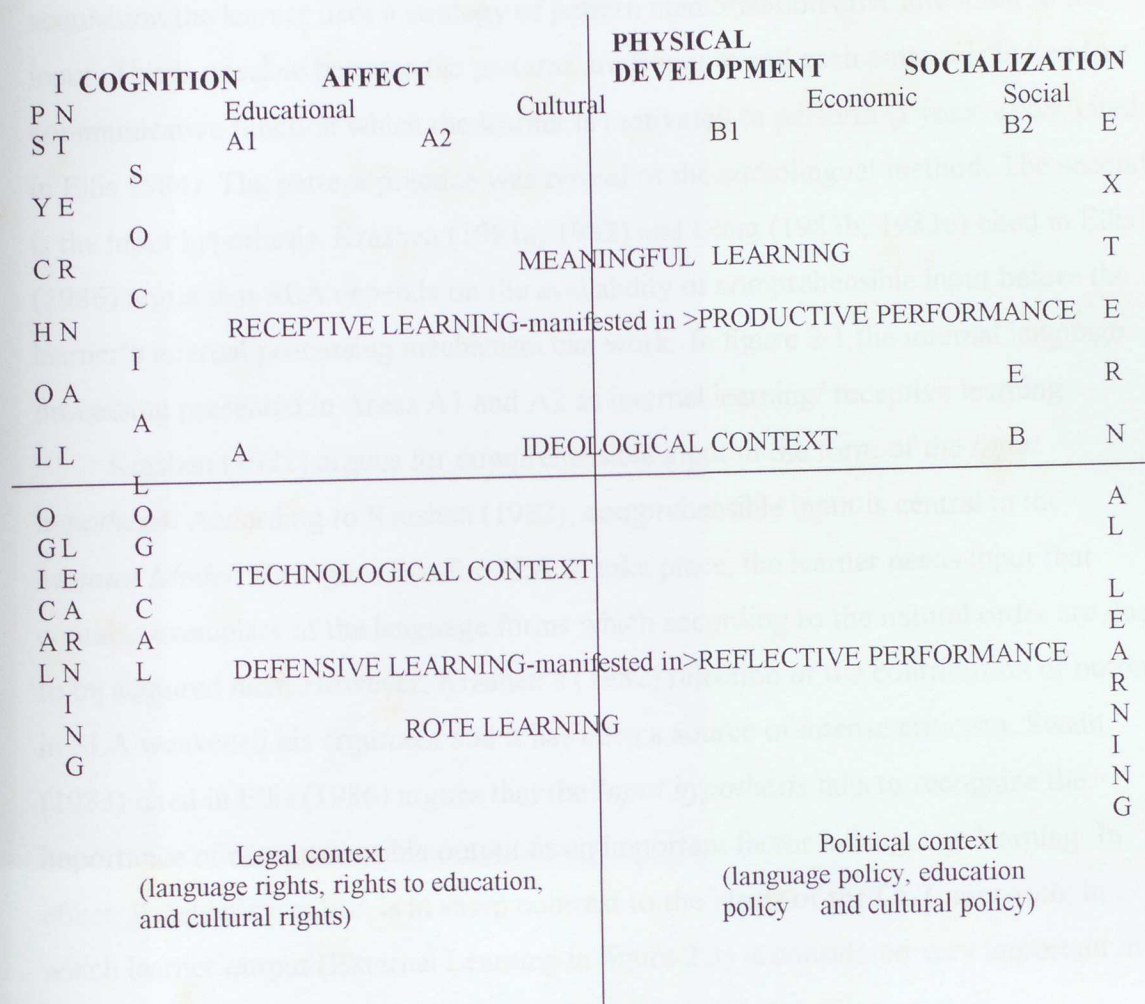


Figure 2.3 A Synthesis of the frameworks for the Analysis of Learning and Contextual Theories

The framework in figure 2.3 has implications for the learning theories that have been discussed below.

2.5.3 Reception Based Theories

There are two hypotheses which account for language acquisition based on the input to which the learner is exposed. In the first place, input refers to the target samples to which the learner is exposed and it contains the raw data which the learner has to work on in the process of language construction (Ellis, 1990). The first hypothesis states that the learner acquires those structures to which the learner is exposed frequently. Among these are formulaic expressions. These consist of ‘expressions which are learned as unanalysable wholes’ and employed on particular occasions, for instance greetings and their responses. In the early stages of language

acquisition the learner uses a strategy of pattern memorization after attending to the input. This is possible because the patterns are frequent and each pattern is linked to a communicative function which the learner is motivated to perform (Lyons, 1968, cited in Ellis 1984). The pattern practice was typical of the audiolingual method. The second is the input hypothesis. Krashen (1981a; 1982) and Long (1983b; 1983c) cited in Ellis (1986) argue that SLA depends on the availability of comprehensible input before the learner's internal processing mechanism can work. In figure 2.1 the internal language processing presented in Areas A1 and A2 as internal learning/ receptive learning.

Krashen (1982) argues for comprehensible input in the form of the *Input hypothesis*. According to Krashen (1982), comprehensible input is central in the *Monitor Model*. He argues that for SLA to take place, the learner needs input that contains exemplars of the language forms which according to the natural order are due to be acquired next. However, Krashen's (1982) rejection of the contribution of output in SLA weakened his argument and it has been a source of intense criticism. Swain (1983) cited in Ellis (1986) argues that the *Input hypothesis* fails to recognize the importance of comprehensible output as an important factor in language learning. In effect, Krashen's position is in sharp contrast to the ideals of the CLT approach, in which learner output (External Learning in figure 2.3) is considered very important in language learning.

On the other hand, Long (1983a cited in Ellis, 1986) argues in favour of the *Monitor Model*. The argument is presented from three standpoints: firstly, access to comprehensible input is characteristic of all cases of successful language acquisition; secondly, greater quantities of comprehensible input result in better acquisition; and thirdly, lack of access to comprehensible input results in little or no acquisition. Research has shown that the quantity of the input contributes to learning. Nells (1979), quoted in Ellis (1986), in a study of L2 acquisition, found that the amount of adult speech addressed to the learner helped rapid learning. However, in the classroom this depends on availability of comprehensible input. Another important aspect in language learning is the quality of the input. Therefore, the language addressed to the learner should be a model of the target language. Nevertheless, the low linguistic performance of most of the learners would compromise the input during group discussions. Another factor which contributes to the use of the input for acquisition is the need to

communicate. Unlike the L1 learner who needs to communicate in order to understand his or her environment, the L2 learner's need to socialize in the target language is reduced due to the availability of the L1. However, in situations where the target language serves as the medium of communication and the target instruction, there is a strong need to communicate for transactional purposes, and this facilitates L2 acquisition. The use of the target language for socialization is found in area B2 in the framework presented in figure 2.3. The use of the target language is, according to the framework, an external manifestation of learning. Unfortunately, in most secondary schools in Malawi, English is used in the classroom only while the learners use the L1 in all their social interactions outside the classroom. This diminishes the need to socialize in the target language and impedes effective language learning.

2.5.4 Production Based Theories

The proponents of the output hypothesis consider learner utterances as an important factor in the acquisition of the L2. In figure 2.3 learner output is presented in area B1, B2 as productive performance which is an external manifestation of learning. Learner output is the theory on which the CLT approach is based. Swain (1985), cited in Ellis (1990), argues that the learner needs the opportunity for meaningful use of her linguistic resources. In this connection, Swain (1985) outlines three roles of output: The first is that the need to speak in a precise, coherent and appropriate manner encourages the learner to develop the necessary grammatical resources. Secondly, output provides the learner with the opportunity to try out hypotheses to see if they work. This view supports learner strategies in L2 acquisition (Ellis, 1986). Ellis has presented hypothesis testing as manifested through learner performance. The process of hypothesis testing begins when the learner attends to L2 input and compares it with his own hypothesis. Then the learner produces L2 utterances containing rules representing the hypothesis he has formed and assesses their correctness in terms of the feedback received. This shows the importance of error correction in the language classroom, which is done by the teacher, but is not encouraged in the CLT approach due to the need for the learners to use the target language in their communication without interruption.

Secondly, through interaction, the learner elicits a repair from his interlocutors by either confirming or rejecting an initial hypothesis. So, the revision of the language rule is a result of the learner responding to evidence that requires modification of the hypothesis. Swain (1985) also says that production may help to force the learner to move from semantic processing to syntactic processing. As Hatch (1978b: 404) quoted in Ellis (1990:93) has put it: 'One learns how to do conversations, one learns how to interact verbally, and out of this interaction syntactic structures are developed.' Swain (1985) has exemplified the argument on the output hypothesis by referring to the study of the Development of Bilingual Proficiency Project (Swain et al., 1989, quoted in Ellis, 1990) where French-L2 immersion students failed to achieve native speaker grammatical competence, not because they lacked comprehensible input, but because they had limited opportunities for speaking in the classroom and were not pushed in the output. The conclusion drawn from this argument is that production will aid acquisition only when the learner is pushed—opportunities to speak in themselves may not be sufficient. However, the assumption in the implementation of the CLT approach is that the pair and group discussions used create the opportunity for 'all' the learners to participate in classroom interaction. But it remains to be proved if the learners are pushed to participate in the discussions.

2.5.5 Cognitive Theory and Second Language Acquisition

While the input and output hypotheses consider the language data available to the learner and the learner's utterances respectively, the cognitive theory attempts to explain how information is processed and retrieved in the mind of the language learner. (Area A1 Cognition, Internal learning in figure 2.3). The theory has three basic principles, which explain language learning. The first is the representation of new knowledge. According to Weinstein and Mayer (1986), in Ellis (1990), new language is acquired in two stages. When exposed to the target language, the learner selects which features to pay attention to and transfers this information into the short-term memory. However, this depends on the availability of comprehensible input. Then, the learner acquires some or all of these features by transferring the information into long-term memory for permanent storage. Still, it can be argued that this depends on whether the information is new or not. On this point, Ellis (1991) says that this stage is

aided by the availability of 'models' in the target language. At this point, it is arguable whether the learner interaction during pair or group discussion promoted in the CLT approach provides the learner with the right models.

The second principle of cognitive theory involves developing the ability to use the knowledge. The information transferred into long-term memory is not available for use in all performance conditions. This is due to two factors. The first is the distinction between controlled and automatised processing. Learning involves automatising of memory nodes so that information which is available through controlled processing can be handled spontaneously. Automatising is the ease with which the learner uses the L2 and it happens when the learner has internalised the rules of the target language. So, unless automatising has been achieved, the learner will depend on controlled processing to use his/her knowledge of the language. The learners who have not reached the automatised stage will not participate effectively during group discussions since they will not be fluent in the language.

The second factor involves declarative and procedural knowledge. According to Anderson (1980; 1983; 1985, cited in Ellis, 1990) declarative knowledge involves 'knowing that'—and it consists of information like definitions of words, facts, rules and so on. On the other hand, procedural knowledge involves 'knowing how'—and is represented in memory in terms of 'production systems' consisting of a condition and an action. In this case, the learner's ability to use the language effectively depends on the knowledge of the language system and how to use the rules effectively. Anderson (1985) identifies three stages in the learning process in line with the cognitive theory. The first is the cognitive stage where the learner makes use of a conscious activity to acquire the L2. As such, the learner can describe the knowledge verbally. This is followed by the associative stage where errors in the original declarative knowledge are detected, corrected and the knowledge is proceduralized. In the autonomous stage, performance becomes totally automatic and errors disappear.

The third principle is the integration of the knowledge. Karmiloff-Smith (1986) cited in McLaughlin (1987) describes how the acquisition of new information leads to a restructuring of the learner's knowledge system. The organization of the content learnt is achieved as the learner attempts to simplify, unify and gain control over the internalised knowledge. The third stage is when the learner has achieved balance

between the environment and the mentalist influences without threatening the knowledge system. This could be when the interlanguage rules are independent of input. It is also at this point that corrective feedback will not have any effect on the learner's language. According to Ellis (1987) this is when the interlanguage has reached the fossilization stage. Therefore, it is imperative that the learners should be provided with input of the right quality which might not be available during group discussion as most of the learners struggle to express themselves in the target language. Hence the learner's language could reach the fossilization stage before s/he has internalised the rules of the language.

The preceding theories challenge the contribution of learner participation in classroom discourse. All of them emphasize the role of the linguistic input available to the language learner for language acquisition and the learner's performance shows his/her ability in the target language. The teacher's contribution is central in providing the input and feedback on the learner's performance. Therefore, the emphasis the CLT approach places on learner participation in pairs and groups plays down the contribution of the teacher in the development of the learners' competence and performance.

2.5.6 Studies Based on Interaction Analysis Categories

This study used the adapted version of Flanders' (1970) interaction Analysis Categories. According to Newman (2001) Flanders' Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC) consist of 10 categories of communication, which include all communication possibilities. These are broadly divided into 'Teacher talk' with seven categories, 'Pupil talk' with two categories and 'silence or confusion.' However, these categories were too broad for the purpose of the current study. An adapted version of Flanders' system (1970) used by Rost (2000) was the one readapted for this particular study.

It is worthy noting that there are a number of studies which have been carried out using Flanders' Interaction Analysis Categories, but in each case, the categories had to be adapted for the particular study. According to Rozycki (1999) the adaptation of the system depends on the aims of the research, the research questions and the theoretical framework of the study. Daud (1994:1) proved the need for adaptation of the system by showing that the system in its original state ... may not be adequate for the purpose

of observing teachers who are using computers as an aid in teaching' Therefore there was a need to add some categories to incorporate the computer.

Rost (2000) adapted the Flanders' Interaction Analysis Categories and called it the Verbal Interaction Categories System (VICS) and used it to analyse teacher learner interaction in Satellite-Delivered Extension Educational Presentations. The aim was to find out if the distance between the instructor and the students led to a reduction of instructor-student interaction. According to Rost (2000) the distance had no effect on the interaction interactions as he says that: 'The findings show that the interaction levels of a distance-delivered Extension Service educational class session can approximate the interaction levels of a traditionally delivered class' Rost (2000:6).

The system was also used in the study of differences between expert and non-expert problem based learning (PBL) tutors at the University of Michigan medical school, (Davis et al., 1992) where it generated information which proved that although the curriculum was learner centred, the teaching was teacher/tutor centred.

2.5.7 Analysis of Classroom Discourse

Discourse analysis aims to discover speech rules and to describe the conversation structures that the speech rules generate. Coulthard (1985), cited in Griffiths (2002) emphasizes that discourse analysis is also concerned about the relationship between the discourse and the speakers and hearers by and for whom it is produced. The interest in discourse analysis is to examine how speakers take and relinquish the role of speaker, how social roles affect who speaks when and what they talk about, how non-verbal signalling works and the form of utterances is conditioned by the social relationship between the participants. These forms of discourse can be applied to the classroom situation and can provide information on the interaction patterns in the classroom. In this study the aim was to determine the extent of learner involvement in classroom discourse.

According to Chimombo and Roseberry (1998) classroom discourse is a form of education discourse which takes place in a school context. An analysis of classroom discourse reveals the inequality in the power relations between the teacher and the student. Chimombo and Roseberry (1998) have discussed a number of factors to be considered in the analysis of the interaction patterns between the teacher and the

students in the classroom. Some of the factors which are relevant to this study are discussed briefly in the following section. In the classroom, the teacher and the students are the discourse participants. Although the teacher can be said to be the producer of the lesson, he is not the sole producer because he/she uses various textbooks which were written by other people, the authors are co-producers of the lesson. On the other hand, the students are the interpreters of education discourse. Chimombo and Roseberry (1998) have quoted Hechman (1987:66) as pointing out that many teachers still perceive students as passive recipients of the knowledge which the teachers impart. However Hehman (1987) reported on a study of a school system where there was a major shift in perception of students. The shift in the role of the students has to do with learner active involvement in the classroom as is required in CLT approach.

People's perception of the teaching-learning process is two dimensional. Some people see the teacher as all-powerful and controlling all the knowledge imparted to the learner, such a view is the one in the audiolingual approach to language teaching. The other view of the teaching-learning process considers the students as active participants in the construction of knowledge as is the case in CLT approach. Purpose and intent are other aspects reflected in classroom discourse. In the classroom, the purpose and intent of the lesson are communicated through structuring moves. Bellack et al. (1966), cited in Chimombo and Roseberry (1988) identified four specific moves used by teachers in the classroom, namely: structure, solicit, respond and react.

Some studies of classroom discourse have focused on move structures. Griffiths (2002) has said that Sacks studied question and answer sequences in the classroom and discovered that the pattern of exchange between the teacher [T] and pupil [P] was not T-P, T-P, T-P as initially believed, but rather T-P-T, -P-T, T-P-T. Griffiths (2002) citing Coulthard (1985) has said that the T-P-T pattern explains the fact that teachers talk for an average of 75% of the talking time within the frame of typical classroom discourse.

According to Sinclair and Coulthard cited in Griffiths (2002) the interaction in the classroom can be divided into initiation options [*informative, directive and elicitation*] and the appropriate pupil responses [*acknowledge, react, and reply*] with further opinions to be expressed where required [*accept, evaluate and comment*].

Another aspect of classroom discourse is turn-taking, where teachers may *nominate* a child to answer a particular question, or a child may *bid* for the chance to answer the question by raising his/her hand and/or shouting 'Sir/Miss.'

Galton et al. (1980) cited in Tann (1991:16) and recited in Griffiths (2002:5) revealed the precise nature of teacher-talk by providing a detailed analysis of the ORACLE Project. They state that the discourse is mostly task-oriented, such as giving *information* (generally to the whole class), *instruction* (usually to a group) and *feedback* (most often on an individual basis). The project found that 44.7% of teacher utterances were statements of which 15.4% were information giving 28% were task directions or instructions, while 14.5% related to classroom routines.

The foregoing discussion has shown that in an attempt to understand the interaction between the teacher and the learners, researchers have focused on different aspects of classroom discourse. As for this study, the focus was on the extent of learner participation in classroom discourse.

2.6 PARTICIPATION

One of the key terms in this study was 'participation,' the term is also found in the title. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1984:780) defines participation as 'the act of taking part or having a share in an activity or event.' And the Thesaurus: English (U.S.) *on line* defines it as contribution and it is similar to 'chipping in', 'input' 'involvement', and 'share'. When taken to the classroom, the 'activity' or 'event' is classroom interaction in which the teacher and the learners take part. According to Van Lier (1988:92) 'when observing the behaviour of those present in the L2 classroom, one of the salient characteristics is the participation in the interaction that goes on there.' However, participation in language classroom can either be covert or overt. Despite this evasiveness ... 'it is useful to describe active participation in the classroom, since it is a prerequisite for interaction and hence communication...' (Van Lier, 1988:93).

Learner participation in classroom interaction is central to the CLT approach. According to Johnson (1982) learning in CLT approach is based on communication, task and meaningfulness. In this case the learning activities in the CLT approach are

expected to... 'engage learners in communication, require the use of such communicative processes as information sharing, negotiation of meaning and interaction' (Richards and Rodgers, 1988:76).

In this study, therefore, participation was taken to mean learner talk in the classroom, the other activities which did not involve speaking (e.g. writing an exercise, silent reading) were not considered as 'learner participation' simply because they did not involve the production of utterances which were the basis for quantifying learner participation in the classroom. Nevertheless it was felt that the other covert forms of participation could be analysed outside this study by focusing on time as a factor rather than utterances. However, due to the nature of classroom interaction, learner talk cannot be discussed in isolation because of the presence of the teacher who plans and controls classroom interaction. Therefore, learner talk is discussed in relation to teacher talk.

2.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The foregoing literature review has put learner participation in classroom discourse in the context of language teaching and learning. The theories have shown that learner participation in the language classroom is the learner's physical linguistic manifestation of the L2 knowledge. Prior to this, the learner requires input to activate the language processing mechanism. In the language classroom, the teachers play a central role in shaping the learners' L2 knowledge. Therefore, such a role cannot be transferred to the learners as purported in the CLT approach.

CHAPTER 3

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter outlines the methodology used in this study including the data collection methods. The study was based on a multiple case approach and the data was collected from four form three classrooms in secondary schools in Blantyre district. The case study approach was used in this study with full knowledge of the weaknesses, but it was ideal due to its strengths. The data was both qualitative and quantitative.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study used a multiple case study approach to investigate whether the implementation of the CLT approach has led to increased learner interactive participation in the language classroom and find out the problems both the teachers and the learners were facing in the implementation of the approach. The use of the case study approach was due to the need for data gathered in a real-life context, in this case, the language classroom. As Yin (1984) puts it, the case study research method is an empirical inquiry that investigates contemporary phenomena within the real-life context and uses multiple sources of evidence to gather data. The emphasis is on the contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships. Therefore, in order to obtain a comprehensive picture of the interaction patterns in the language classroom, a multiple case approach was ideal for the study. The data gathered from the classrooms in the four cases provided information for a comparative analysis on the implementation of the approach in the cases in question. The classroom observations and recording of the lessons provided in-depth information on the actual interaction between the teachers the learners during the lesson.

However, the case study as a research design has been criticized from a number of viewpoints, one of them being that the dependence on a single case renders it incapable of providing conclusions which can be generalized. Gidden's view presented by Yin (1993) is that case methodology is 'microscopic' because it lacks a sufficient

number of cases. But Hamel (Hamel et al., 1993) and Yin (1993; 1994) have argued forcefully that the relative size of the sample whether 2, 10 or 100 cases are used, does not transform a multiple case study into a macroscopic study, but the goal should be to establish the parameters which should be applied for interpreting similar cases. Consequently, even a single case is acceptable. Therefore this study used the multiple case approach (4 classes taught by 4 teachers) to get a picture of effectiveness of the implementation of the CLT approach. The case study has also been criticized for lacking reliability as different researchers might come to different conclusions. In addition, the critics have argued that it is difficult to check the observer's analysis.

Despite these and other criticisms, researchers have used the case study research method for many years across a variety of disciplines. This derives from the strengths of the case study research regardless of the criticisms. In fact, Anderson (1999) argues that the criticisms are not true, because the case study method is valid and rigorous. This position is similar to what Yin (1989a) states that the applicability of the results is due to the set of methodological qualities of the case and the rigor in the construction. In this study, lessons were recorded using a portable tape recorder, and field notes were taken to capture all aspects of interaction during the lessons. Questionnaires were also administered to get information on different aspects of classroom interaction. The use of multiple methods in the data collection was meant to gather detailed information required in the study. In a nutshell, the case study approach was appropriate because of the need to gather data in the classroom in order to analyse the extent of learner participation in the implementation of the CLT approach.

3.3 SAMPLING

In the data collection the researcher used purposeful sampling and the sample which was used is what Palton (1990), quoted in Anderson (1999), calls 'convenience sample.' This is a sample, which is accessible to the researcher and has the required characteristics. In this study, the interest was on form three classes. So, secondary schools in Blantyre district were convenient and had the characteristics sought in the study. Out of the ten government and grant-aided secondary schools in Blantyre, four

were chosen randomly as a sample for the study, three from the urban and one from the rural area. Table 3.1 presents the profile of the teachers in the study.

Table 3.1 Profile of the teachers in the study

Case No.	Textbooks used	Nature of school	Sex & Age	Qualifications	Experience		Subjects	No. of periods per wk.
					Primary	Sec.		
One	<i>Step Ahead Integrated English</i>	Government (Urban)	Male, 34	Diploma–Domasi 2002	8years	4 years	Chichewa & English	23
Two	<i>Integrated English</i>	Government (Rural)	Male, 32	Diploma–Domasi 2003	15 yrs	1 year	Chichewa & English	23
Three	<i>Step Ahead</i>	Grant-aided (Urban)	Female, 46	Diploma–Domasi 2003	19yrs	1 year	Chichewa & English	22
Four	<i>Integrated English</i>	Grant-aided (Urban)	Female, 41	Diploma–Domasi 2001	17yrs	3 years	Chichewa & English	24

In table 3.1 the reader will notice that out of the four schools used in the study, three were from the urban and one from the rural area. There were four teachers, two were male and two female and their age ranged between 34-46 years. All the teachers were initially teaching in primary school before they went for a three-year diploma course and started teaching in secondary.

The choice of form three classes was due to three reasons: firstly, it was felt that being a senior class, the learners would probably be receptive to participation in the language classroom. Secondly, since it was a senior class, it would create a picture of how the learners were being prepared for effective communication in tertiary education and employment opportunities. The other reason was that in this class there is little pressure of national examination, so the probability of using non-traditional teaching methods, in this case, the CLT approach would be higher. Table 3.2 presents the profile of the learners in the classrooms in question.

Table 3.2 Profile of the learners in the study

Case No.	Nature of school	Number of students	Age range
One	Government (Urban)	The enrolment was 54 but attendance ranged between 38-43 pupils.	16-21 years
Two	Government (Rural)	The enrolment was 43 but 41 pupils were present.	16-22 years
Three	Grant-aided (Urban)	The enrolment was 46 and all were present.	15-20 years
Four	Grant-aided (Urban)	The enrolment was 48 but 45 pupils were present.	15-21 years

In figure 3.2 the reader will see that the enrolment ranged between 43-54 pupils per class. During the observations most of the pupils were present. The age range of the pupils was 15-22 years.

3.4 PILOT STUDY

Before embarking on the study, the research instruments were first piloted to test their efficacy in revealing the aspects being sought. Although the researcher administered the questionnaire for the learners, it was discovered that most of the learners had some problems understanding some of the items, especially responding to those questions that required explanations. As a result, in the actual study, there was only one item which required the learners to give the problems they face when they held discussions in pairs and groups.

As for the recordings, there was a technical problem at one of the schools where it was piloted. The lesson had not been recorded because the microphone was not inserted properly into the tape recorder. When this was done, the next lesson was recorded clearly. After transcribing the lesson it was noted that the framework adopted for the coding of the utterances, could not cater for all the interactions. This was the original version of the Flanders' Interaction Analysis Categories (Flanders, 1970). Then the researcher had to explore other analysis categories, which were exhaustive, hence, the re-adaptation of Rost's (2000) adapted version. The adapted version of the Flanders' system is presented in table 3.3.

Table 3.3 FIAC adapted by Rost, (2003: 3)

Teacher talk	1. Lecturing—presenting information;
	2. Giving instructions;
	3. Asking a question;
	4. Responding by accepting an idea from a student;
	5. Responding by rejecting an idea from a student.
Learner talk	6. Learner initiates talk with teacher;
	7. Learner initiates talk with another learner;
	8. Learner responds to question or comment from the teacher;
	9. Learner responds to question or comment from another learner;
Silence	10. Silence—no talking in the classroom;
	11. Confusion—everyone talking at once.

The categories in table 3.3 were readapted to include some aspects, which emerged from the data and were important in the analysis. The readapted version is presented in table 3.4 below.

Table 3.4 Flanders' (1970) Interaction Analysis Categories Adapted for the study.

TEACHER-LEARNER INTERACTION	1. Lecturing : where the teacher provided information to the learners aimed at language teaching.
	2. Teacher questions : all the questions the teacher asked during the lesson.
	3. Learner responses
	4 Learner language errors : the learners' utterances which deviated from the rules of the target language.
	5. Learner code-switching : where the learner used L1 in his/her utterances.
	6. Correcting learner language errors : the teacher's feedback aimed at correcting the learners' errors.
	7. Learner initiates talk with teacher : where the learner asked a question to the teacher or 'commented' on what the teacher had said.
LEARNER-LEARNER INTERACTION	1. Learner initiates talk with another learner : Where the learner asked a question to another learner
	2. Learner responds to question from another learner .
	3. Regulated talk : where the learners were giving each other chances to speak-controlled turn taking.
	4. Disorderly talk : where 2 or more learners were speaking at once.
	5. Language errors : the learners' utterances which deviated from the rules of the target language.
	6. Code switching : where the learner used L1 in his/her utterances.

However, the adapted version in table 3.4 shows that the last two categories viz. silence and confusion/noise were left out because they were beyond the scope of this study although they can be a subject for further research to investigate what preceded and followed the silence. And for the confusion or noise, one would be interested to investigate the causes and how normalcy was restored.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

As Yin (1984) has said that a case study uses multiple sources of evidence to gather the data, the current study used four techniques of data collection. This was done to ensure triangulation in the data collection. Cohen and Manion (1998: 233) have defined triangulation as “the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour”. In this study, considering the effect the presence of the researcher might have had on both the teachers’ and the learners’ behaviour, it was necessary to triangulate the data collection methods. In fact Cohen and Manion (1998) have stressed that the complex nature of human behaviour and interaction necessitate the use of multiple sources of data in research which deals with any of these phenomena. For this reason the data collected was both qualitative and quantitative.

3.5.1 Access and Acceptance

Before going into the classroom to collect the data, the researcher first sought permission from the Regional Education Office for the South West Division where an acceptance letter was obtained (Refer to Appendix 1). This was in keeping with what Cohen and Manion (1994: 354) call the principle of informed consent which is important in the initial stages of the research project where ‘access to the institution organisation where the research is to be conducted should be accepted by those whose permission one needs before embarking on the task.’ On arrival at the schools, the researcher met the head teacher who then introduced the researcher to the head of languages. After knowing what the researcher was looking for, the head called the teacher whose lessons were later observed. The discussion with the teacher in question was meant to ensure that there was informed consent, which Diener and Crandall

(1978, cited in Cohen and Manion, 1994:350) have defined as ‘the procedures in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation or not after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions.’

Although the teachers were told what the researcher was looking for and assured of the confidentiality of the information, one teacher got suspicious and wanted to see the researcher’s notes. When the researcher showed the teacher the notes in questions, s/he even appeared fascinated to discover that in addition to writing what both the teacher and the learners were saying, the researcher was also attempting the exercises the learners were doing. After this incident, there was no other problem.

3.5.2 Collecting Qualitative Data

3.5.2.1 Recording of Lessons and Field notes

The data for this study were collected in the month of June 2004. At that time, the schools were in the second term (the middle of the school year) of the school calendar. The specific dates for the visits to the schools are presented in table 3.5 below.

Table 3.5 Details of the Lesson Observations and Recordings.

CASE ONE	DATES	Length of lessons	Number of observations & recordings
	Wednesday 9th June 2004	40 minutes	Five observations and five recordings.
	Thursday 10th June 2004	80 minutes	
	Friday 11th June 2004	40 minutes	
	Wednesday 16th June 2004	40 minutes	
	Thursday 17th June 2004	80 minutes	
	Friday 18th June 2004	40 minutes	
CASE TWO	Wednesday 9th June 2004	80 minutes	Four observations and four recordings
	Monday 21st June 2004	40 minutes	
	Tuesday 22nd June 2004	40 minutes	
	Wednesday 23rd June 2004	80 minutes	
CASE THREE	Monday 7th June 2004	40 minutes	Four observations and four recordings
	Wednesday 9th June 2004	40 minutes	
	Friday 11th June 2004	40 minutes	
	Tuesday 22nd June 2004	40 minutes	
CASE FOUR	Monday 7th June 2004	35 minutes	Five observations and five recordings
	Tuesday 8th June 2004	35 minutes	
	Wednesday 9th June 2004	35 minutes	
	Thursday 10th June 2004	70 minutes	
	Friday 11th June 2004	70 minutes	

In table 3.5 it should be noted that the length of the lesson did not translate into a similar length of recording because when the teacher was writing on the board, when the learners were reading silently or doing an exercise and so on the tape was put on pause. In other words whenever there was an activity which did not involve speaking, the tape was put on pause.

During lesson observations in the classroom, the researcher had a portable tape recorder, which was used to record the lesson. The recorded lesson was later transcribed. The aim of the recording was to capture all the utterances by both the teacher and the learners. These recordings were important considering that people speak much faster than the normal writing speed. So, the recordings provided the researcher the opportunity to record all the interactions in the lesson, which would otherwise have been impossible to write in the notes. During the observations, the researcher was also taking notes. The notes included the aspects which were important in the interactions but could not have been captured in the recording like the items which the teacher wrote on the chalkboard; the number of learners in the classroom and how many were active; the number of groups formed during group discussions and the number of those groups which presented their answers to the whole class and those that did not. During the data collection, the researcher used a non-participant approach by sitting at the back of the classroom without saying anything throughout the lesson, but taking notes on the interaction and attempting all the exercises during the lesson while ensuring that the tape recorder was working.

3.5.2.2 Collecting Quantitative Data

The quantitative data in the study was collected through the use of questionnaires. This method was chosen bearing in mind the advantages, regardless of the disadvantages. According to Anderson (1999) questionnaires are efficient for data collection with a large number of respondents, as was the case in this study. The other advantage is that the data can be analysed quantitatively using statistical methods which are reliable because they are not susceptible to bias. They also enable the researcher to ask a large number of questions. This characteristic was important in this study as a way of collecting information on a number of aspects in relation to learner participation in the classroom.

However, questionnaires have weaknesses (Anderson, 1999). Where the questionnaire has many questions some people do not respond to all of them due to 'questionnaire fatigue.' Bearing this in mind, the questions were limited to the essential aspects of the study. The other problem is that the reliability of questionnaires depends on planning and pre-testing. The former was taken care of by considering the comments made by the supervisor while the latter was sorted out during the pilot study. Then the 'danger' of respondents not understanding the questions meant that the researcher had to administer the questionnaires in the classroom by going around assisting those who had some problems.

3.5.2.3 Questionnaires

There were two sets of questionnaires, one for the teachers and the main one for the learners. The items in the questionnaires were set in three main areas: the textbooks being used, the teacher behaviour, which either promoted or limited learner participation, the learner behaviour when given an opportunity to interact, and the problems which both teachers and the learners were facing in the implementation of the CLT approach.

Since the questionnaires were to be administered to students in secondary school, it was appreciated that their level of language might not be high enough to understand complex expressions, so, the statements were simplified. Of course, some adjustments were made after noting the problems the respondents had in the pilot phase. Furthermore, the number of items where the respondents were required to write sentences was deliberately limited. (Refer to Appendix 2).

The statements in the questionnaire were phrased bearing in mind how the results would be interpreted and presented. Therefore, the Likert scales were the most appropriate as they render the results easy to code, interpret and present (Bell, 1999). In fact, Anderson (1999) confirms the usefulness of the Likert scales when he says that the Likert scale is one of the most useful question form which provide an excellent means of gathering opinions and attitudes in a short period of time and they lend themselves to simple and effective analysis.

The researcher used twenty questionnaires per school. Among the learners in the classroom ten girls and ten boys were chosen randomly to complete the questionnaire.

The students' questionnaire was backed up by the one for the teachers which each of the four teachers completed (Refer to Appendix 3). The questions in the two questionnaires were similar, but the only difference was that they were asked from two different perspectives in order to capture the views of each of the two parties on learner participation in the classroom. The questionnaires were administered on the last day of the observation. This was meant to act as a conclusion and to avoid influencing the interactions had the teachers and the learners known in advance what was being sought.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

The responses in the questionnaires were physically counted for each of the items and the quantities presented in a graph using Excel spreadsheet. The data from the transcribed lessons were analysed using the classifications in the adapted version of the Flanders' (1970) Interaction Analysis Categories system (Refer to table 3.4).

According to the proponents of the Flanders' Interaction Analysis categories (1970) (FIAC), the system involves assigning a number (code/tally) to every 3 second span i.e. 1 min. will have 20 tallies/scores. (Newman, 2001). Rozyki (1999) says that since all the behaviour occurs in real-time, then, there is a need to sample through time i.e. to account for the interaction every three seconds throughout the lesson. He suggests that the researcher should aim at coding 10-20 scorings per minute. Daud (1994) says that the coding for every three seconds gives how much time is spent on teaching language.

This study therefore adapted the coding of the tallies, instead of coding every 3 seconds, the researcher decided that in order to focus on the actual utterances which gave a clear picture of the nature of participation being sought, the emphasis should be on the number of words uttered per minute by both the teachers and the learners. After a number of trials, the researcher discovered that the number of words ranged between 54-79 per minute. This depended on the amount of silence between the utterances. Then, considering Rozycki's (1999:2) suggestion to 'try for a constant coding of 10-20 scoring per minute' the researcher decided to use every three words to represent 1 score/tally. Two words were counted as a score, but not one word, however, when the learner code-switched, each word was counted as a tally/score to avoid mixing the

utterances in the L2 and those in the L1. The latter were usually 1-2 words. Such code switching was still considered as participation since it was the learner's strategy where the L1 word was more readily accessible than the L2.

3.7 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Although critics have attacked case study research for low validity, Cohen and Manion (1998:241) have indicated that triangulation is important in a case study to ensure the validity of the findings. They write 'triangulation can be a useful technique where a researcher is engaged in a case study ... of complex phenomena.' In this study, the validity of the findings arose from the four sources of data used, namely: recordings of lessons, field notes, teacher questionnaire and learner questionnaire. The face validity of the questionnaires arose from the pilot test and the revision of the questions.

On the other hand, the findings are reliable due to the methods of data collection and analysis employed. According to Anderson (1999:165) 'straight-forward multiple-choice questions are answered consistently.' These were the ones, which were used in this study. The recorded data were analysed using one of the classical models for interaction analysis. Flanders' Interaction Analysis Categories (1960/1970) has been used by a number of researchers due to the reliability of the results generated. In fact Bell (1999) has referred to the FIAC as one of the best methods of classifying classroom behaviour. The set of responses in the questionnaires was constructed using the Likert scales. Hence, the scoring was objective. Therefore, the reader is assured that the findings of this research are both valid and reliable. On the other hand, the coding was valid because the words were counted for at least three times in order to verify the correctness of the coding.

3.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has shown that multiple case study approach was used in the data collection. The reliability and validity of the data was basically in the triangulation used in the collection of the data. The multiple sources of information were important

considering the effect the presence of the researcher in the classroom might have had on both the learners and the teachers during the observations.

CHAPTER 4

4 DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The study analysed learner participation in classroom discourse in four language classrooms in four secondary schools in Blantyre district following the implementation of the communicative language teaching approach in 2002. The investigation centred on the following three questions:

1. What interaction patterns are teachers using in the language classroom?
2. To what extent are learners participating in classroom discourse?
3. What problems do teachers and learners face in the implementation of the CLT approach?

The discussion of the findings is divided into the following sections: the syllabus; the textbooks used; teacher-learner interaction; learner-learner interaction (group activities); and the problems that both the teachers and the learners face in the implementation of the CLT approach.

4.2 BACKGROUND OF THE CASES

The data for this study were collected from four third form classes in government-funded and grant-aided secondary schools. All of them were in Blantyre district, three in the urban and one in the rural area. Among them were two full boarding secondary schools, while one was semi-boarding (some learners were in the boarding while others were day scholars) and the last a day secondary school. The minimum number of learners in the classrooms was forty-three and the highest was fifty-eight. (Refer to table 3.2). All the teachers had diplomas obtained from Domasi College of Education. (Refer to table 3.1). However, this was a mere coincidence because the study targeted Form Three classes in all the schools regardless of the qualifications of the teachers.

4.3 THE NEW FORM THREE SYLLABUS

The Form Three syllabus is divided into two sections. The first is the scope and sequence chart which outlines the general content areas to be covered under each of the four language skills namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. The sequence chart reveals that in each of the nine content areas, the teacher has to focus on all the four language skills. Table 4:1 shows an example of the presentation of a particular topic, (Identification of the main idea(s) in an exposition or argument) under each of the four language skills.

Table 4.1 An extract from the scope and sequence chart for English for form 3 (English Language Syllabus Form 3 and 4, 2002:8)

Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
Identify the central idea from the title, the beginning, the middle, or the end of an oral exposition or argument	Stating orally the central idea from the title, the beginning, the middle, or the end of an oral or written exposition or argument	Identifying the central idea from the title, the beginning, the middle, or the end of a written exposition or argument	Noting in writing the central idea from the title, or the end of an oral or written exposition or argument, using an appropriate note-taking/summary format

In table 4.1 it can be noted that in the language classroom the learners are required to practice each of the four skills: namely listening, speaking, reading and writing using the same topic.

The second part of the new Form Three syllabus is the teaching syllabus and (it) is divided into seven sections as illustrated in table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2 An extract from the Senior Secondary Teaching Syllabus for Form 3 (English Language Syllabus Form 3 and 4, 2002:9)

Language skill	Objective(s) Students should be able to:	Content	Grammatical focus	Suggested teaching/learning activities & experience	Suggested teaching/learning resources	Suggested mode of assessment
Listening	Predict the content of an oral exposition from the title, the first or last paragraph	Oral exposition	- Present and past simple tenses - Reference ties - Signalling devices - Stress and intonation	- Analysing titles - Careful listening to the first or last paragraph of an oral exposition - Discussing in pairs/groups the role of grammatical features in predicting the content of an oral exposition	titles, the first and last paragraphs of oral expository texts, e.g. radio/TV	- answering multiple choice or true-false questions on predictions - matching students' predictions with the content of oral exposition

In table 4.2 the teaching syllabus presents various ways of achieving the stated language skill. Such an arrangement gives the teacher most of the required information starting from the preparation in terms of the objective (s) and the resources, the grammatical focus, the teaching/learning activities and experiences during the delivery of the lesson and the mode of assessment. These details would assist the teacher to focus properly on the skill in question. In fact, one can be right to say that the arrangement of the various aspects of the language skill is like a scheme of work which can be handy to the teacher.

The fifth column in table 4.2 gives an indication of how the learners should be involved during the lesson. Throughout the syllabus this column has a lot of activities which have to be done in pairs or groups. For instance there are a total of 29 activities to be done in pairs or groups out of a total of 77 activities set for the second term. This was the period when the research was conducted. It meant that 37.7% of the total interaction in the classroom was supposed to involve the learners in pair or group discussions. In the other activities (62.3%), the onus was on the teachers to decide how to involve the learners. Nonetheless, this decision was not open-ended because the activities in the textbooks also determined the extent of learner involvement in the classroom.

4.4 THE TEXTBOOKS

Since interaction in the language classroom is a form of institutional talk based on textbooks, then the choice of these textbooks and the activity structures determined the interaction patterns in the classroom.

Although there were four recommended textbooks in Form Three, the observations revealed that in all the four cases in this study, the teachers were only using two of them. The textbooks which were used were *Senior Secondary Integrated English Book 3* and *Step Ahead: New Secondary English Students' Book 3*. Table 4.3 below presents activities from units 6 and 7 of *Integrated English*, and table 4.4 presents the ways through which the learners are to be involved when teaching the activities in unit 6 of the same textbook. Table 4.5 presents the activities from units 7,

8 and 9 of *Step Ahead*. Some of the lessons during the observations came from these units

Table 4.3 Activities in units 6 and 7 of Senior Secondary Integrated English Book 3

Unit & Theme	Listening	Reading	Oral/Aural Work	Improving your writing	Grammar
6 Cooperation		1. Cartoons 2. *Excerpts from play: Our Survival 3. Excerpts: The Concubine, God's Bits of Wood, Things Fall Apart	Game: Name this character Role play: Theme from Our Survival Dramatise scene from Our Survival Read aloud speech from play	Write a character study Write about a theme	Language of drama: Similes, metaphors, personification; use of proverbs; emotional language
7. Choosing a career	*TV interview: calling the youth	1. Job advertisements 2. Matching jobs with applicants 3. More job advertisements 4. Excerpt: The interview 5. Excerpt: Interviews 6. Excerpt: 'Unemployment' from Eyes of the night	Poems: Vocation, Turn-boy, Thonga, Chichewa, and Chilomwe songs Sentence stress	Write a job advertisement Write a letter of application and Order specifics Prepare a questionnaire Write a song Summarise a story	Idioms

* Activity done by the class during the observation period in Case Four

Table 4.4 Nature of the activities in units 6 and 7 of Senior Secondary English Book 3

Unit 6	Individual exercise	Pair work	Group work	Class discussion	Unit 7	Individual exercise	Pair work	Group work	Class discussion
Comprehension	2 *1	2	4	6		2	5	4	2
Composition	1		3	1		4	2	2	4
Grammar	1			1		2	1	1	1
Summary		1	1			*1			
Note taking	1					9	8	7	7
Totals	5	3	7	8					

* Activity done by the class during the observation period in Case Four

Table 4.5 The activities in units 7 and 8 of *Step Ahead New Secondary English students' Book 3*

Unit 7	Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking	Grammar
	*Who killed Kangamiti Developing sensitivity to style Reading practice	Summary writing Guided writing Note-taking practice		Looking for diction Telephone practice *Discussion points Expressing opinion	Transformation Using 'if' and 'might' Punctuation Word formation Subject: verb agreement Writing better sentences
Unit 8	Scanning for specific Information *Felida: Cat family Literature Desiderata	Summary writing-writing tabulated notes Comparing and contrasting Composition Describing a well-known animal Types of school in Zimbabwe	The dangers of DDT	The proposed mime	Expressing frequency Joining sentences 'If' sentences Spelling Word formation -Adjectives -A word game Confusing words Writing better sentences
Unit 9	Magazine article-Heads I Win (And You Lose \$ 1) Newspaper article ***'And then along came my sugar'	Answering comprehension questions **Summary writing practice Composition-A humorous article Guided writing Giving instructions	Listening practice	Discussion Proverbs-discussion	Rewriting sentences Completing sentences 'If' sentences **Punctuation Word formation **A word game Writing better sentences Transitive and intransitive verbs

* Activity done by the class during the observation period in Case One
 ** Activity done by the class during the observation period in Case Three

In tables 4.3 and 4.5 the contents of the units in both textbooks are organised along the language skills. However, in *Integrated English* there is an indication of how the learners are to be involved during the lesson (Refer to table 4.4). For instance the activities in unit 6 presented in table 4.4 show that there are five activities in which learners are expected to work individually, three for pair work, seven for group work and eight for a class discussion. Such an arrangement is in line with the suggested teaching and learning activities proposed in the syllabus (Refer to column 5 in table 4.2). Therefore, the use of the activities in *Integrated English* will promote learner interactive participation in the classroom as required in CLT approach. However, the activities in *Step Ahead* are mostly designed for individual exercises and class discussion. As a result, the activities in this text can promote teacher talk typical of the audiolingual approach.

The first objective in the study was to analyse the interaction patterns the teachers were using in the language classroom. For this reason, the first question in the questionnaire asked both the learners and the teachers to indicate the frequency in the use of each of the four prescribed textbooks. The learners' responses in all the four cases are presented in figure 4.1 below.

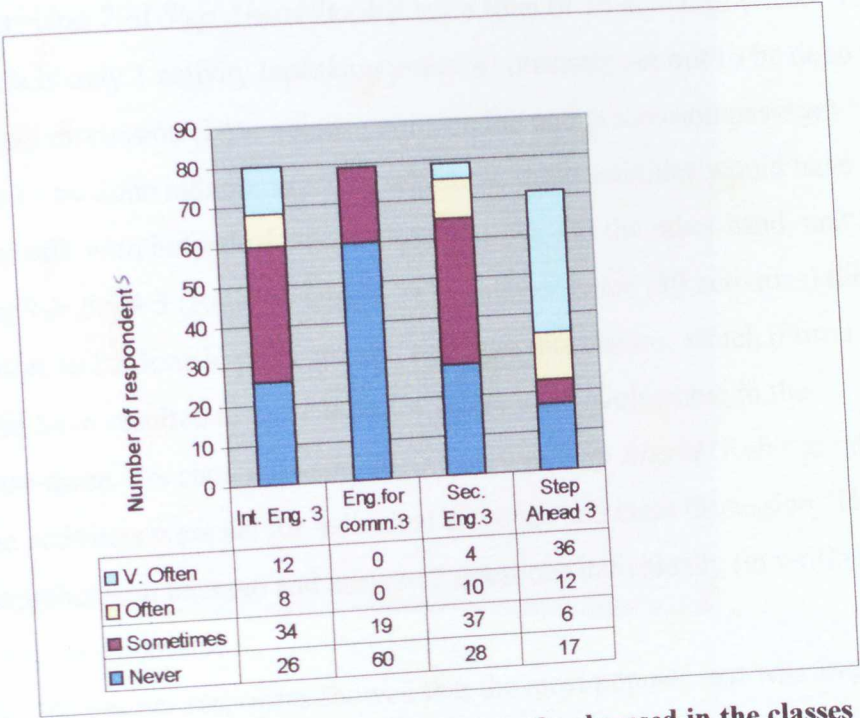


Figure 4.1 Learners' responses on the textbooks used in the classes

The learners' responses in the chart rank the frequency in the use of the prescribed textbooks in the following descending order: *Step Ahead: New Secondary English Students' Book 3* used very often; *Senior Secondary Integrated English Students' Book 3* used often; *Secondary English Book 3* used sometimes; and *English for Communication Book 3*, rarely used

4.4.1 Teachers' Responses on the Use of Textbooks

In the questionnaire, the teachers' responses in three of the cases were similar to those of most of the learners who said they used *Step Ahead* very often, but sometimes they used *Integrated English*. However, one teacher indicated the other way round.

Although some of the learners indicated that they sometimes used the other two textbooks, the teachers' responses showed that none of them used those textbooks.

During the two-week observation period, some of the lessons in case one came from units 7 and 8 of *Step Ahead* but others came from sources outside the prescribed textbooks. However, these were outside this discussion because they varied from one teacher to another. Unit 7 of *Step Ahead Book 3* has a total of 16 activities (Refer to table 4.5) but there is only 1 activity (speaking practice) precisely set out to be done in pairs and for a class discussion (Discussions points on the comprehension passage) while the rest are to be done individually. Consequently, these activities would have promoted teacher talk with individual learner contributions. On the other hand, unit 7 in *Integrated English Book 3* (Refer to table 4.3) has almost twice (30 activities) this number of activities to be done in pairs, groups and class discussions, which if used effectively, would have resulted in more learners' interactive involvement in the classroom. In case three, the class did activities in unit 9 of *Step Ahead* (Refer to table 4.5) in which the activities were set for individual exercises and class discussion. The class read a comprehension passage and answered questions individually (in writing) later there was a class discussion.

In case two the learner responses showed that the most popular text was *Step Ahead: New Secondary English Book 3*, but, during the two-week observation period, the teacher used *Integrated English Book 3*. Three of the six lessons came from this text, two from unit six and one from unit seven. Although unit six has a total of twenty-two activities (Refer to table 4.4) the class did one of them only as a class discussion and the teacher used the same passage for a group discussion. Nevertheless, the class did not do the other exercises in the unit designed for group work. The other lesson came from the next unit, an exercise done individually. On the other hand, in case four, the learners indicated that the most frequently used textbook was also *Integrated English Book 3* and the teacher used the same textbook during the observations. As in case two, the teacher also chose only those activities in which the learners were involved individually.

The learner responses showed that in addition to these two textbooks, they also used *Secondary English Book 3*. Nonetheless, the textbook had been used even before the syllabus was reviewed, so the continued use of such a textbook indicated that the

'new syllabus' was being taught using a textbook prescribed for the old syllabus.

However, none of the teachers used it during the observations.

At this point, it can be said that the teachers were using the prescribed textbooks selectively. Two of them were using *Step Ahead*, in which the activities had to be done individually and class discussions. In the other two cases where the teachers used *Senior Secondary Integrated English* the activities done were only those set for individual tasks (Refer to tables 4.3 and 4.4) and as class discussions, none of the teachers used those activities designed for group activities. In fact both teachers designed their own questions for group activities. Although there was nothing wrong with such a set up, the only setback was that such questions were less challenging than those provided in the textbook. Therefore, it can be stated that the popularity of *Step Ahead* in two of the cases and the selective use of *Integrated English* in the other two cases showed that communicative language teaching in terms of effective learner participation was not effectively implemented in the cases studied. The choice of textbooks and the activity structures did not promote effective learner participation. As Littlejohn and Windeatt (1989:165) have rightly pointed out: 'the construction of teaching material is a deliberate attempt to bring about certain kinds of interaction in the classroom. 'it is important to consider materials in terms of what they may suggest for...classroom roles.' Therefore, these teachers were choosing those textbooks and activities which gave them full control of the classroom discourse.

4.4.2 Summary on the Use of Textbooks

From the preceding discussion the following have been noted:

- Although there were four prescribed textbooks, not all of them were being used in the cases studied.
- Most of the teachers were using *Step Ahead: New Secondary English Students' Book 3* because it put them at the centre of the interaction in the classroom.
- Those teachers who were using *Senior Secondary Integrated English Book 3* were selective in their choice of the activities such that they chose those activities which promoted teacher talk.
- The choice of textbooks and the activity structures among the teachers in the four

cases studied did not promote effective learner participation in the classroom discourse because the activities promoted teacher centred interactions.

4.5 TEACHER-LEARNER INTERACTION

The extent of learner participation in classroom discourse (as expressed in the second question in the study which read ‘*To what extent are learners participating in classroom discourse?*’) was determined by analysing the interaction patterns in the four cases in question using the adapted model of the Flanders’ (1970) Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC) (Refer to table 3.4). In the language classroom, interaction is aimed at language teaching and learning. Hence, it involves the teacher on one hand and the learners on the other. In this study, the interaction between the teacher and the learners was called **teacher-learner interaction** while that among the learners was **learner-learner interaction**.

Figure 4.2 and table 4.6 present teacher-learner interactions in all the lessons observed in each of the four classrooms.

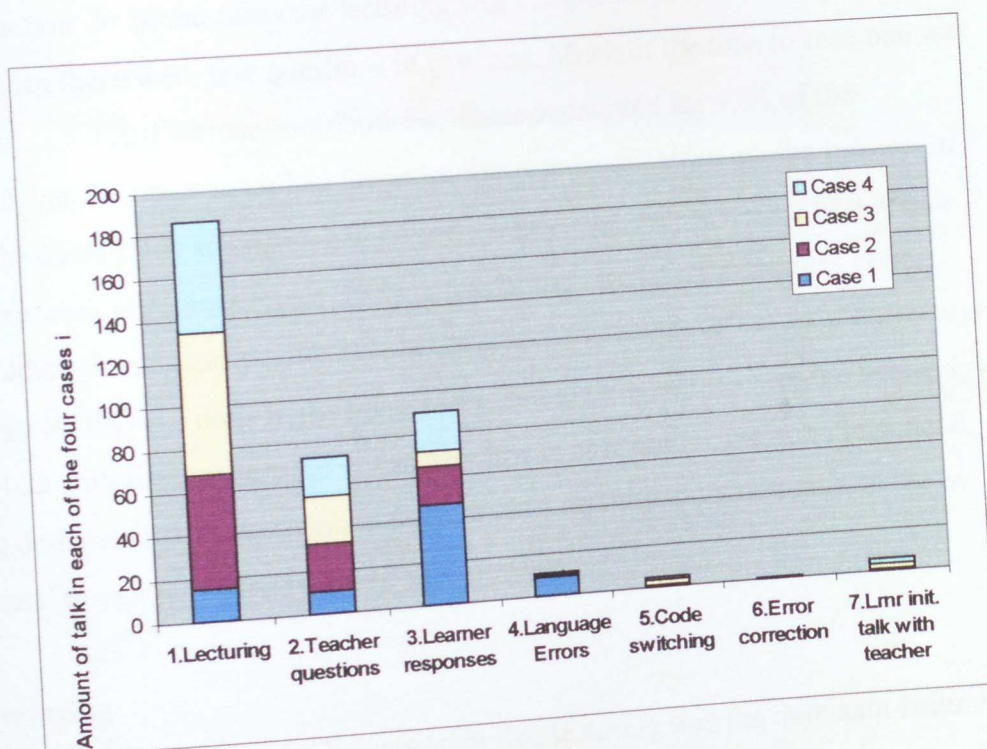


Figure 4.2 Teacher-learner interaction

Table 4.6 Amount of talk in teacher-learner interaction

	Amount of talk as a % of the talk in each of the cases				
	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4	Average
1. Lecturing	15	53.4	66	51.6	46.5
2. Teacher questions	10	22	22	18	18
3. Learner responses	47	18	7	18	22.5
4. Learner language errors	8.7	1.05	.8	0	2.6
5. Learner code switching	1	0	2	0	0.8
6. Error correction	0	0.3	0	0	0.08
7. Learner initiate talk with teacher	0.7	0	2.2	3.04	1.5
Totals*	82.4	94.7	100	90.6	91.9

*** In cases one, two and four the other utterances appear in figure 4.4 and 4.5 under learner-learner interaction. (Group activities).**

The following can be deduced from figure 4.2 and table 4.6: Time spent on lecturing was greater in all the cases except in case one, where it was only 15 % of the total interaction. In all the cases the lecturing was complemented by the teachers' questions, but there were few questions in case one. Much of the time in case one was taken up by individual learner contributions. These accounted for 47% of the interaction, but the other cases had fewer learner responses. Although the learners in three of the cases made some language errors, in case one, where the learners spoke more, there were also more errors. Only in two of the cases did the learners code switch. Although not clearly noticeable in the graph, there were a few error corrections in case two (0.3%) but none in the other cases; and in three of the cases the learners initiated talk with the teachers but it was very low in case one: 0.7% only. In general, lecturing dominated the interaction in three of the cases and it was complemented by the learners' responses to the teachers' questions.

4.5.1 Lecturing

In figure 4.2 and table 4.6 it is apparent that lecturing was the dominant features of the teacher talk in three of the cases. The extent to which the teacher maintained the floor during lecturing determined the level of learner involvement in the classroom. As Ellis (1984) has rightly noted, the roles that the student and the teacher adopt control the nature of the linguistic environment in the classroom. The data from the transcribed lessons showed that much of the lecturing was in the form of elaborations after the

learner responses. This is the teacher evaluation/elaboration, which is part of what Lemke (1993) calls the 'triadic dialogue' involving teacher *question*, student *answer*, and teacher *evaluation/elaboration*. So, the elaboration offered the teachers further opportunity to make knowledge public by linking various concepts or reformulating knowledge. The interactions in extracts 1, 2 and 3 show how the teachers elicited learner responses in order to explain some particular points.

Extract: 1 (Case one)

- T: Let's go to line 93, 'my inside collapsed' what does it mean? Yes!
- L: It means that person was afraid.
- T: Yes. You know, sometimes when you catch a thief and you are taking him to the police, the moment he sees the police, he can wet his trousers. That is an example of collapsing inside

Extract: 2 (Case one)

- T: What do we mean when we say that their habitat is being destroyed?
- L: Their habitat is being destroyed by people who cut trees.
- T: Yes. In places where these animals live trees are being cut and sometimes people set the bush on fire.

Extract: 3 (Case three)

- T: Today we are going to look at the use of commas. What are commas used for?
- L: When you want to join sentences.
- T: To join sentences, to separate sentences. If you have two or more sentences in a... If you have two or more sentences in a row. If you have two or more sentences you use a comma to separate them, especially in a compound sentence, yes that's true.

In extracts 1, 2 and 3 it was apparent that the teachers were using the questions to draw out responses aimed at developing the lesson. Although in case three the teacher started with an explanation, still, questions were employed to develop the lesson as illustrated in extract 4.

Extract: 4 (Case three)

- T: Today we are going to read, '*Then along came my sugar.*'" This passage just looking at the topic is like one of the passages that we have read in our newspapers. In our local newspapers we have got such articles in our newspapers. Articles which when we read them we just laugh.
- T: Articles like which ones?
- L: *Zabweka*.
- T: Yes. What else?
- L: *Dobadoba*.

In extracts 1, 2, 3 and 4 the teachers elaborated the learners' responses by providing more information in the form of lecturing. As a result, it can be said that the lecturing was not providing 'new information' but building on ideas solicited from the learners. These examples conform to the general interaction patterns in most language classrooms as described by Burton (1981), cited in Ellis (1986), who says that the interaction in most language classrooms is characterized by 'informatives, elicitations and directives' which he has termed the 'ritualised structure.' Although it is practically impossible to avoid such moves in the classroom, the problem arises when they become the predominant feature of the discourse. Therefore, the prevalence of this 'ritualised structure' in the observed lessons signalled that communicative language teaching had not been effectively implemented to promote interactive learner participation.

The observations showed that in case three, the teacher did much of the talking than the other cases. However, lecturing was the least in case one in which it constituted only 12% of all the talk in the lessons observed. Nevertheless, one would not be correct to conclude that this minimal lecturing denoted more learner interactive participation because the teacher asked a lot of questions that sought individual responses. These responses were 47% of the total utterances. Therefore these learner responses did not connote the learners' interactive participation in the classroom discourse. As a matter of fact, in addition to the teacher questions there were two debate sessions where one of the learners was in control and in a way assumed the role of the teacher. In spite of this, the talk of the learner in question appeared under '*learner initiating talk with another learner*'. So, these factors explained the amount of lecturing, which though small, did not signify that the learners were involved through group discussions. Therefore, lecturing was one of the dominant features of the classroom discourse in all the four cases in the study. This scenario shows that the CLT approach was not effectively implemented in terms of minimizing traditional teacher talk in order to increase learner interactive participation in the classroom.

In short, the lecturing in the study showed that the teachers assumed a certain amount of shared knowledge with the learners. For this reason, after brief explanations they started asking the learners some questions and used the responses to develop the lessons. As such, learner participation was determined not by the amount of lecturing

but the learner responses, whether short answers or explanations. The short answers resulted in minimal learner talk while the explanations enhanced learner involvement.

2.5.2 Teachers' Questions and Learners' Responses

Asking questions was the other dominant feature of the teacher talk in these lessons. In fact, the teachers were using the questions to draw out particular responses, which were in their plans for the development of the lessons. Apparently, this is the reality of learner talk in the language classroom. Interactions of this nature provide the teachers with a way to develop the lesson through the learners' answers and in some cases it assists the teachers to discover what the learners do not know in order to provide the information. According to Tann (1991) cited in Griffiths (2002:13) 'questions account for a considerable amount of teacher talk, especially the use of closed questions—i.e. questions with only one possible answer—to check for understanding, testing knowledge and gaining attention.' Although, the interactions resulting from such questions are criticized in the CLT approach as not resulting in 'genuine communication' since the learners provide the information already known by the teachers, these questions are unavoidable in the classroom as a way of testing the learners' current knowledge before providing new information. Such questions are presented in extracts 5 and 6. However, the mention of the teachers' questions cannot be complete without considering the learners' responses to the questions. It should be noted that the type of question the teachers asked shaped the learner's response. Therefore, the closed ones led to short responses which were not creative in nature.

Extract: 5 (Case two)

T: Who can give us the meaning of superstition?

L1: It is a traditional belief.

T: What else?

L2: It is a belief about ancestral spirits.

T: Who can give examples of cats?

L1: Lion.

Extract: 6 (Case two)

T: Who can spell the word "down"?

L1: D-o-w-n.

T: What can be the title of passage?
L: Forms of lightning.

T: What are these words?
L1: Verbs.

The closed questions in extracts 5 and 6 limited learner responses hence they did not promote creative use of the target language. This type of communication did not fill the information gap, which Larsen-Freeman (1986) says is a prerequisite for true communication in the CLT approach. The learners were giving responses already known by the teachers.

In addition to the closed questions, the teachers in all the other cases except in case two asked open questions which sought creative responses in the form of the learners' opinions or their personal understanding of the issue(s). However, as different learners gave their answers the discussions either ran out of time or resulted in noise as some of the learners shouted in disagreement. For instance in extract 7 the discussion ran out of time as most of the learners wanted to express their opinions, while on the other hand, in extract 8 the discussion degenerated into chaos.

Extract: 7 (Case one)

T: Should we have land reserved for wild animals when most Malawians do not have land? Should we have land for the elephants when our parents do not have land?

L2: Sir we can't be lying suffering for land while animals are being somewhere. So the best way I think is just remove the animals, send them maybe to another country or transfer them to places which cannot be cultivated like mountains maybe close to the tip of that mountain, (pointing at a mountain) somewhere constructing a reserved land so that people should be happy, should be cultivating freely rather than giving more space to the animals. That's my point.

T: Okay. Who says we should have the land no matter what?

L2: They must have a spare land for these animals, because if we just leave them roaming around while entertaining our grandfathers or grand people to have land for cultivation these animals, these same animals can be going around vandalising the crops and may be killing the people. So we have at least to have a place to be keeping these a- a reserved land to be keeping the animals.

Extract: 8 (Case three)

- T: You have read the book, you have read with me and you-what the story is about, but what is the writer exactly saying? What is he exactly explaining?
- L1: He is not the only one who likes sugar his boss.... (The rest was just a summary of the passage)
- T: Yes. Someone else?
- L2: At the age of six he wished he were in a house made of bread... [This one too gave a summary not the meaning]

In extracts 7 and 8 the learners were expressing their opinions. Such interactions are the ones encouraged in the CLT approach since they promote creative use of the target language. However, in extract 8 most of those learners who did not agree with what their colleagues were saying protested loudly. This created a noisy atmosphere so the teacher had to appeal for silence several times. The chaos was a sign of the learners' unwillingness to listen to opposing views. If such behaviour continued, then those who would be afraid of being booed would be discouraged to participate in the discussions.

4.5.3 Learner Language Errors and Corrective Feedback

Learner involvement in the language classroom results in learner output for which the learner requires feedback, which could be acceptance of the utterances or disapproval followed by correction. Error correction is the teachers' feedback on the learners' language that deviates from the rule(s) of the target language. So, the correction is meant to provide guidance to the learner on correct usage. As a result, error correction contributes to the revision of the learner's interlanguage rules. However, despite the numerous errors that the learners made (Refer to figures 4.2 and 4.3) the teachers in two of the cases (one and three) did not correct any of them, but there were some corrections in case two. Extract 9 shows how the teacher in case two corrected some of the learners' errors. Unfortunately, in the example the teacher repeated the errors in the course of correcting them.

Extract: 9 (Case two)

- L1: They *separate.
- T: They separated not they *separate, but they separated.
- L2: *Man caused fire.
- T: Man made, not 'caused' man made fire.

The error correction in extract 9 was not effective since the errors were repeated. The repetition of the errors had the weakness of making the errors becoming input to the other learners. On the whole, the teacher's attempt to correct the learners' errors was the necessary feedback for the learners to review their interlanguage rules but the problem was in the approach. Nevertheless, the rest of the errors remained uncorrected, whether by design or default. This scenario was in line with the CLT approach in which the teacher is expected to exercise restraint towards learner errors in order to promote communication among the learners. It is worth noting however that in case four, the learners did not make any errors in their interaction with the teacher, but they made errors during group discussions. On the other hand, the learners in all the other cases made numerous errors some of which are presented in extracts 10 and 11.

Extract: 10 (Case one)

- L1: So what can you tell *to those teams who are preparing *themselves to play against you?
- L2: In the story, almost everybody who was involved in the snake was feeling *something in *the body, *to my point of view it is a frightening story.... *That to my point of view...

Extract: 11 (Case one)

- L1: Ask parents the reason why children *does not go to school.
- L2: ...as you know Malawi *is very-very poor country, one thing that we can do in order for us to improve is to send our children to school. Education is very important, *us as *the parents, we have a responsibility to take our *childrens to *the schools so that they should have good education and as result they also look after ...
- L3 ...when they are working, there will be *tax removed on their money...

The learner errors presented in extracts 10 and 11 should be considered in the context of the transitional nature of the learners' knowledge of the target language. Although the emphasis the CLT approach places on communication among the learners leads to the tolerance of errors in favour of uninterrupted communication among the learners and not fluency, the teachers should have had an interest in these errors as a way of knowing the learners' linguistic performance which would have created a picture of the learners' competence level along the language learning continuum. This information was very important in determining the teachers' feedback on the learners' performance. The teachers should have provided corrective feedback in situations where they spoke soon after an error had been made. For example in

feedback in situations where they spoke soon after an error had been made. For example in extracts 10 and 11 the teacher appeared to have been interested in getting the correct response, therefore he/she did not say anything about the errors made.

Extract: 12 (Case one)

- T: What is the difference between these two sentences?
L: The first sentence *is meaning to say they played and they stopped, while the second sentence *is meaning they always-they plays.
T: Anyone with a different suggestion?

Extract: 13 (Case one)

- T: Okay. Who says we should have land (Game Reserves) no matter what?
L: I think ...the tourists *came and see how and see those cats they pay money to the government and those money...
T: Yes. You have a different view? (Pointing at another learner)

Ellis (1991) has emphasized the value of error correction when he points out that error correction is very important for the revision of the learners' language rules. Ellis (1986) has also stressed the need for the teachers' error correction when he says that error correction is very important for the learners' hypothesis testing. Actually error correction supports the output theory of language learning in which according to Ellis (1986) the learner produces the L2 utterances containing rules representing the hypothesis he has formed and assesses their correctness in terms of the feedback received. For these reasons, the absence of error correction could have been construed to mean an approval of the learners' utterances which unfortunately might have constituted input to the other learners. On the other hand, it seemed that some of the teachers were not paying attention to the errors in the learners' utterances. In one situation, the teacher in case one repeated the learner's error in his/her own utterance. In extract 14, at a point when the least one would have expected was where the error was ignored, the teacher himself/herself endorsed the error by repeating it.

Extract: 14 (Case one)

- T: What do you think?
L: The land should be spared for the animals. People should *minimise the number of children they are having.
T: Okay. She has brought in another topic saying '*the people should minimise the number of children they are having'. Do you agree?

The situation presented in extract 14 showed that the teacher did not realise that the learner had made an error. Therefore it can be said that the error, which the teacher repeated, could constitute input to the other learners. This state of affairs raised doubts as to how this particular teacher could assist in shaping the learners' interlanguage skills. In fact, it was noted that even when s/he was summarising the learners' activities after role-plays and debates s/he never mentioned any of the errors made. The absence of error correction therefore was a sign of the teachers' failure to assist the learners by providing them with the much-needed corrective feedback. There have been in situations where the teacher spoke soon after the learner who had made an error. This then would have involved correcting the error. The indirect feedback would have been those corrections the teachers would have made when summarising learner activities like debates or role-plays. These two approaches to learner error correction would not have had any negative effect on the learners' participation in the classroom. In actual fact Seliger (1977), cited in Ellis (1984), has shown the contribution of error correction to language learning as follows: 'Corrective feedback ... can help to overcome the essential attributes of the new linguistic forms.' However, in some situations feedback which is vital to enable the learner to decide which hypothesis to accept as the correct use of the target language, was absent in most of the cases.

4.5.4 Code switching

Code switching was another aspect in the analysis of learner talk in the classroom. Learner participation in the language classroom requires the learners' use of the target language in their interaction. Since the learners use the L2 when their L1 is already well developed, then code switching is inevitable. Some of the L1 expressions the learners used in their interaction with the teachers are presented in extract 15.

Extract: 15 (Case one)

L1: *Akuti it is a funny story...
L2: Then we meet tomorrow *eti?

L1: I have got my own *mfundo.

LL: *Akunama (chorus)

LL: *Aaa *Talimbika.

The most notable in extract 15 was that the L1 expressions were limited to short expressions while the other expressions were in English. At one point in one of the lessons one of the learners told fellow learners 'This is English time, it's not time for Chichewa.' This was an indication that even the learners themselves knew that speaking the L1 was out of order in the English language classroom. At this point, it can be inferred that without such checks the discussions could easily have degenerated into the L1 instead of the target language. In case three, some of the L1 expressions which the learners used are presented in extracts 16 and 17.

Extract: 16 (Case three)

LL: *Palibe. (Chorus)

L1: *Mwalembanso yolakwa

L2: *Apo pali i mmodzi

L3: *Mwalemba ma i *awiri

L4: Madam*ndiye yambiraninso tiwonetu

Extract: 17 (Case three)

L: *Ayi palibe chimene wapanga

L2: *Iyo

L3: *Iyonso madam

L4: Photocopy* imeneyo madam

In extract 16 the learners were reacting to the teacher's wrong answers in a spelling exercise. In extract 17 the learners were commenting on the responses, which other learners had written on the board. The common feature in both of these was that the learners were using the L1 when making general comments, not where they were responding to the teacher's questions.

However, in cases two and four, the learners did not code switch in their interaction with the teacher. In both cases the learners used their linguistic repertoire in the L2 without using the L1. Although code switching was not desirable, in case two

this status quo was likely due to the length of the learners' responses which did not strain their linguistic competence. In fact most of the responses were between 1-3 words long. (Refer to extract 6 under closed questions). In case four, most of the teacher's questions were directed at a few learners, which created an impression that those few were the bright ones.

4.5.5 Learners Initiating Talk with the Teachers

In the CLT approach learners are expected not only to respond to the teachers initiating moves, but also to initiate talk with the teacher. Traditionally, the learners initiate talk with the teacher through questions, but effective learner participation in the CLT approach involves the learners not only asking questions but also expressing their opinions on what the teacher has taught. Nevertheless, the teachers' perceived intellectual superiority in the classroom reduces the learners to mere respondents who only ask where they do not understand and abide by the teachers' wish on what they are required to do in the classroom. Moreover the social and cultural dictates in the classroom also place the learners on the receiving end in classroom discourse. In addition, the promotion of learner initiation in the classroom should be viewed in the context of what Gremm et al. (1978), cited in Ellis (1990), call the teachers' rights to control all the transactions in the language classroom. The teachers' powers limit the learners' liberty to initiate talk in the classroom. The differences in the status and roles of the teachers and the learners explain the few learner-initiating moves in this study. During the observations, in three of the cases, the learners initiated talk with the teacher once in each case. In case one there was only one initiative when one learner asked about the conduct of a debate session as expressed in extract 18.

Extract: 18 (Case one)

L: Can we just give our points or should we use the procedures in a debate?"

In extract 18 the learner in question was designated to chair a debate session, therefore s/he wanted to be sure about the teacher's expectations since the debate was being conducted during one of the English lessons.

In case three, one learner also initiated talk with the teacher. Although the learner wanted to express an opinion, the teacher appeared to have been expecting a question. The teacher's expectations were not surprising considering what Van Lier (1988) describes as the characteristic of classroom interaction where the teacher is the 'instructor' and the learner is the 'instructed.' The conversation between the teacher and the learner in question presented in extract 19 shows how the teacher was caught off guard by the learner's opinion.

Extract: 19 (Case three)

- T: Yes. You have a question.
L: I want to say that somehow I feel that the sentences are not correct because it's not complete because the sentence is much talking about his usage of sugar so have not included it there.
T: We have not included what? (Looking surprised)

The interaction in extract 19 went on for quite sometime between the teacher and the learner and when the other learners came in to support their colleague, who apparently was right, the teacher did not want to admit it. So, s/he merely ended the interaction by saying that there were many ways of summarising the ideas in question. The teacher's reaction is presented in extract 20.

Extract: 20 (Case three)

- T: Thus why I say we are seventy [not true, they were forty-three] so we can come up with seventy different sentences.
L: But I just want to say that addition is giving a proper meaning than usage.
T: So it does not matter I have said that because we are many, we are different. We think differently so we can come up with seventy different sentences and all those sentences can be correct. We are not restricted to come up with only one sentence.

In extracts 19 and 20 the teacher did not want to accept that the learner's point was correct and s/he ended up giving an incorrect response when s/he said that it was possible to generate seventy correct sentences as a summary of the ideas in the long sentence in question. This appeared to be the fate of learner initiative in classroom discourse where the teacher would feel that the learners were challenging him/her intellectually when they expressed their opinions.

In case four one learner initiated talk with the teacher twice. The first was when the learner in question and another one had copied their answers on a summary exercise on the board. So, this particular learner was arguing that her/his colleague did not summarise the passage correctly. The argument between the teacher and the learner is presented in extract 21.

Extract: 21 (Case four)

- L: On the qualifications she says that you must have a good command of written and spoken English; *I do not think that she is correct.*
- T: Mmmh [Did not say anything, looking rather uneasy as she looked at the two passages on the board]
- L: Only that she is saying a good grade in communication but it does not say about his command of written and spoken language.
- T: Mmmh [Still her eyes fixed on the board]
- L: So there ... (Pointing at the line, the teacher cut her short)
- T: Good communication skills. (Making a general statement)
- L: Yes.

In extract 21 it was clear that the teacher was at a loss and the interaction ended when s/he admitted that the learner was right. However, the teacher was a bit hesitant because s/he was not sure what to say. The teacher's predicament was apparent in that s/he did not give a direct response to the learner. Normally one would have expected her/him to have stated the idea precisely rather than waiting for the learner's confirmation.

The same learner stood up again to point out that there was a wrong spelling in her/his colleague's answer. Unfortunately, the teacher could not spell it correctly either. The word was 'pursue' and was spelt as 'persue.' When the other learners laughed at the teacher's dilemma s/he just ended the talk abruptly by asking the learners how many marks they would have awarded to such answers.

Although communicative language teaching encourages learners to express their opinions on what they have learnt, it could be argued that the status, the role differences and the intellectual disparity between the learner and the teacher make such interactions unfeasible. The learners' sense of respect and the teachers' lack of confidence to deal with such challenges hinder learner initiative in the sense of the CLT approach. The preceding discussion has shown that there were some problems associated with learner initiation as required in the CLT approach because the learners

asked few questions and expressed few opinions. The few questions asked could have meant that the teachers had explained everything thoroughly, but it could also have been that the learners were not sure what to ask. The learners might also not have been sure how to phrase the questions considering their language problems discussed in other sections of this study. Another reason could have been that most of the learners were too scared to take the lead for fear of being booed, as was the situation when some of them disagreed with their colleagues. As a matter of fact, the few learners who initiated talk with the teachers were the extroverts. Of course, the teachers themselves never invited questions from the learners. Therefore, by not initiating talk with the teacher, most of the learners did not fulfil their participative role in the classroom as required in the CLT approach. In actual fact, Ellis (1984:29), discussing the value of learner initiation, says 'Only if the learner has the chance to initiate as well as respond in communicative exchanges will he be able to perform a full range of illocutionary meanings.' This argument shows that both the teachers and the learners have to appreciate the need for the latter to initiate talk with the teachers for them to benefit more from the interaction in the classroom. However, learners' initiating moves can succeed only if the teachers are also ready to accommodate such initiatives.

4.5.6 Summary of Teacher-Learner Interaction

From the foregoing discussion the following have been noted:

- In three of the cases, lecturing was a predominant feature of the teacher-learner interaction.
- Most teachers' questions were the closed type aimed at developing the lessons. Hence learners' responses were short. When the teachers asked open questions, there was hardly enough time to accommodate all the views and the learners' divergent views resulted in noisy disagreements.
- In their responses to the teachers' questions, the learners made a lot of errors, most of which were not corrected and in addition to the errors most of the learners' utterances had L1 expressions.
- The teachers were not ready to accommodate learner initiations, especially where they appeared to challenge their intellectual authority during the lesson. Some of

the teachers appeared to have low language competence and this limited their ability to give the right answers without dithering.

- Whatever were the reasons, the learners did not ask questions on what the teachers had taught and there were few instances when the learners expressed their opinions on the content.

In short, the analysis of the teacher-learner interaction proved that effective learner participation in classroom discourse had not yet been achieved in the cases in question.

4.6 LEARNER TALK DURING GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The CLT approach stresses the need for learner interaction in the classroom. Group discussions enhance such interactions. These discussions promote the three fundamental principles of the CLT approach namely communication, task and meaningfulness. The learner-learner interactions in the four Form Three classrooms in this study have been presented in Figure 4.3 and Table 4.2.

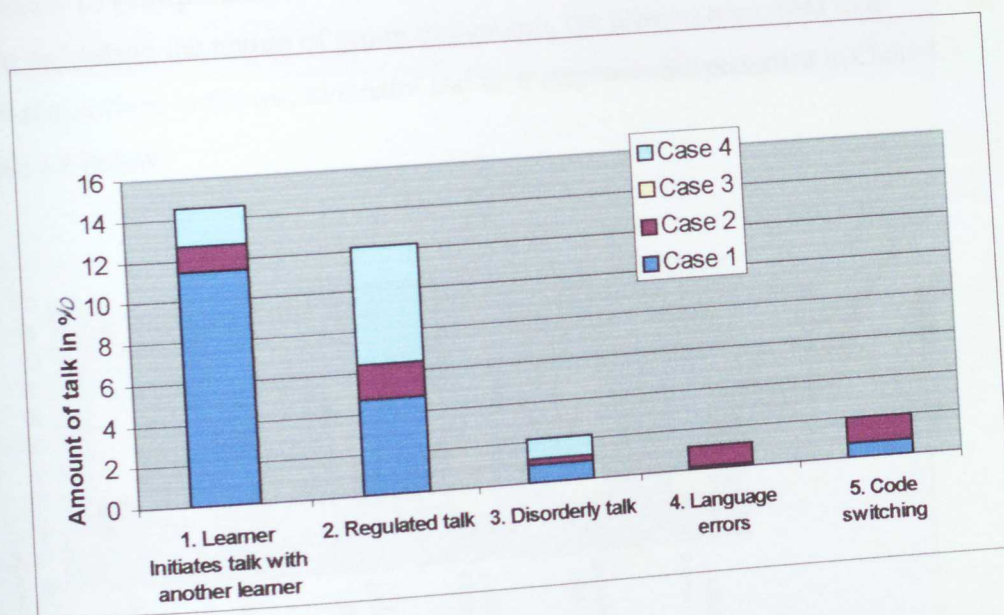


Figure 4.3 Learner-learner interaction (Group activities)

Table 4.7 Amount of talk in learner-learner interaction (Group activities)

	Amount of talk as % of all talk in each case				
	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4	Average
1. Learner initiates talk with another learner	11.	1.2	0	2	3.7
2. Regulated talk	4.5	1.7	0	6	3
3. Disorderly talk	0.9	0.3	0	1.4	0.7
4. Language error	0.1	0.98	0	0	0.27
5. Code switching	0.7	1.2	0	0	0.5
Totals*	17.6	5.3	0**	9.4	8.17

* In cases one, two and four the other percentages are in figure 4.2 and table 4.3.

** There was no group activity in case three.

The data in figure 4.3 and table 4.7 show that: In all of the cases except case three there were group discussions. The learners in case one had more group discussions than the other two. In the three cases there was a mixture of organised (regulated talk) and disorganised (disorderly) talk; in three of the cases the learners code switched, and in two of them they also made some language errors.

4.6.1 Nature of group discussions

To understand the nature of group discussions, the learners responded to a number of questions in the questionnaire and their responses are presented in Chart 4.3 and table 4.8 below.

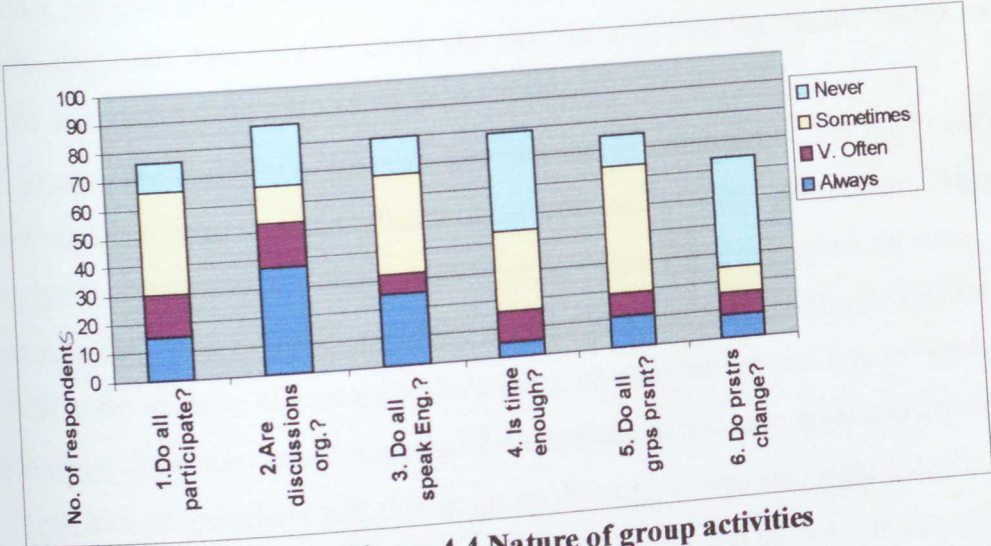


Figure 4.4 Nature of group activities

Table 4.8 Nature of group activities

	Always	V. Often	Sometimes	Never
1. Do all learners participate in the discussions?	15	15	36	10
2. Are discussions organised?	37	16	13	21
3. Do all learners speak in English?	25	7	35	13
4. Is there enough time for discussions?	5	11	28	35
5. Do all groups present their answers?	11	8	45	35
6. Do group representatives change?	8	8	9	39

Learner responses to the question which read: '*During group discussion do you give each other turns to speak?*' In their responses to this question the learners in cases one and two indicated that the discussions were very often well organised while those in cases three and four said that the discussions were never well organised. In general the learner responses in the four cases gave the impression that the group discussions were always/very often organized (Refer to item 2 in figure 4.4 and table 4.8). In figure 4.3 and table 4.7 the organized talk was termed regulated talk. However, during the observations, there were no group discussions in case three against which the learner responses could be measured. In spite of this, the teacher also indicated that the learners were very often organised during group discussions. On the other hand, in case four, the only group discussion which was conducted was a mixture of orderly and disorderly talk. The conduct of the discussions confirmed the teacher's response that the discussions were only sometimes organised.

In cases one and two it was also clear during the observations that the discussions were a mixture of organised and disorganised talk. In actual fact the teachers in both of these cases had said that the discussions were sometimes well organised. In these discussions the vocal ones out spoke the others and dominated the group. This set-up was due to the absence of leaders in the groups, so each learner was free to speak at any time and those who could not stand the competition just kept quiet and listened.

The idea of disorderly talk during group discussions was also highlighted in one of the problems of group activities presented in figure 4.3 and table 4.9 in the next section. The learners in two of the cases gave arguments as the problems encountered during group discussions. Essentially this should not be seen as a problem as the learners put it, rather as a sine qua non of group discussion due to the divergence of

opinions and understanding. Consequently, it was more likely that the vocal learners were the ones whose ideas took centre stage.

4.6.2 Learner Initiating Talk with another Learner

When learners interacted in pairs or groups it was expected that they would both initiate talk as well as respond. This made a learner initiating talk with another learner an important dimension of CLT sought in the study. In figure 4.3 and table 4.7 one notices that although there were group discussions in three of the cases, there was more learner initiative in case one. The learner initiative depended on the interactive nature of the topic (s) set for the group discussions. For instance in case one there were group discussions when the learners had to prepare for a debate session and plan a group stand, and such an activity promoted creative learner talk as required in the CLT approach. The learners were seeking contributions from colleagues and checking the points given as shown in extract 22. The other activity was a role-play where 'a sports reporter' was interviewing 'a football coach'. This too promoted learner creativity in the initiation of the talk as exemplified in extract 23.

Extract: 22 (Case one)

- L1: Okay. So how do we see... *how will it be our points to oppose the other group?
L2: The question is are we to blame that our standard is going low because and...are we supposed to be blamed or not?
L3: So are you ready to argue with them?
L4: So we have to back up that point. What is the other point?
L5: It's our time for discussion *eti. Any other sentence?
L6: And the second question, what is our conclusion now on the second question?

Extract: 23 (Case one)

- L1: *Your team has grabbed the cup what did d-i-d-y-o-u-r plans about *eei W-h-a-t your plans. How did you prepare to win this *ee cup?
L2: Do you think that medicine helped you during the match?
L3: I had a *commission in my mind that your substitution, your substitution a was very vital indeed. So, what was your plan about the substitution?

Extract 22 shows how the learners were initiating talk with other learners in a group activity in case one. Notwithstanding the language errors, the other learners were responding to the questions, showing that they understood what was asked. On the other hand, the questions set for group discussions in case two did not promote

creative learner participation because they were of the closed type. For instance, in one activity the learners had to answer questions from a reading passage. These questions were based on 'who and what' so they had only one right answer. Therefore the learners were initiating talk with each other by merely repeating the teacher's questions as shown in extract 24. In the other activity, the learners were asked to pick verbs in the simple past tense from a passage which they had read. So, they were initiating talk by seeking approval of the verbs they had picked as illustrated in extract 25.

Extract: 24 (Case two)

- L1: Who?
- L2: *Chiuta
- L3: The creator
- L4: Lived *eti
- L5: Chiuta *eti?
- L6: *Ee
- L7: What can be seen there?
- L8: The footprints.

Extract: 25 (Case two)

- L1: What about would?
- L3: Would *eee.
- L4: *Tamulembe.
- L5: *Kodi came *bwa?
- L6: *Camenso umulembe.

Although this discussion did not intend to undermine the interaction resulting from questions such as those in extracts 24 and 25, but it was obvious that these questions limited the extent to which the learners initiated talk among themselves. These closed questions sought clear-cut responses. For this reason, they limited learner participation during group discussions. The result of such interaction was that when the learners were reporting to the class some groups had nothing to say, as exemplified in extract 26.

Extract: 26 (Case two)

- T: Yes, let's have answers from this group.
- LL: [Silence]
- T: Your answers?
- L: They have all been said.
- T: So, you do not have any?

The status quo illustrated in extract 26 was due to the nature of the questions set out for the discussion. Consequently, it can be argued that closed questions contributed very little to learner participation during discussions. Hence, regardless of the group sessions in case two, the learners did not interact creatively, which is a requisite of the CLT approach.

4.6.3 Summary of Learner-Learner Interaction

The discussion in the preceding section has highlighted the following points:

- The group discussions were a mixture of orderly and disorderly talk.
- In all the cases the learners initiated talk with each other in relation to the questions assigned to them. Open-ended questions promoted creative learner participation as required in the CLT approach but when the questions were closed which merely required the learners to pick out a specific word, then, the learners just repeated the questions to seek responses from their colleagues.

4.7 PROBLEMS AFFECTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CLT APPROACH

The third and last question in the study was on the problems affecting the implementation of the CLT approach. It read: *'What problems do the teachers and the learners face in the implementation of the CLT approach?'* In the questionnaire, the information on the problems was sought from both the teachers and the learners. The learners were asked the following question: *'What problems are there (if any) when you do activities in pairs or groups?'* On the other hand, the teachers' question read: *'What problems are there (if any) when you involve the learners in pairs or groups?'* The learners' responses to this question are presented in figure 4.5 and table 4.9. Although there were 79 respondents, the total responses were 92 because some learners in cases one, two and four gave more than one response. However, in case three, one of the learners did not respond.

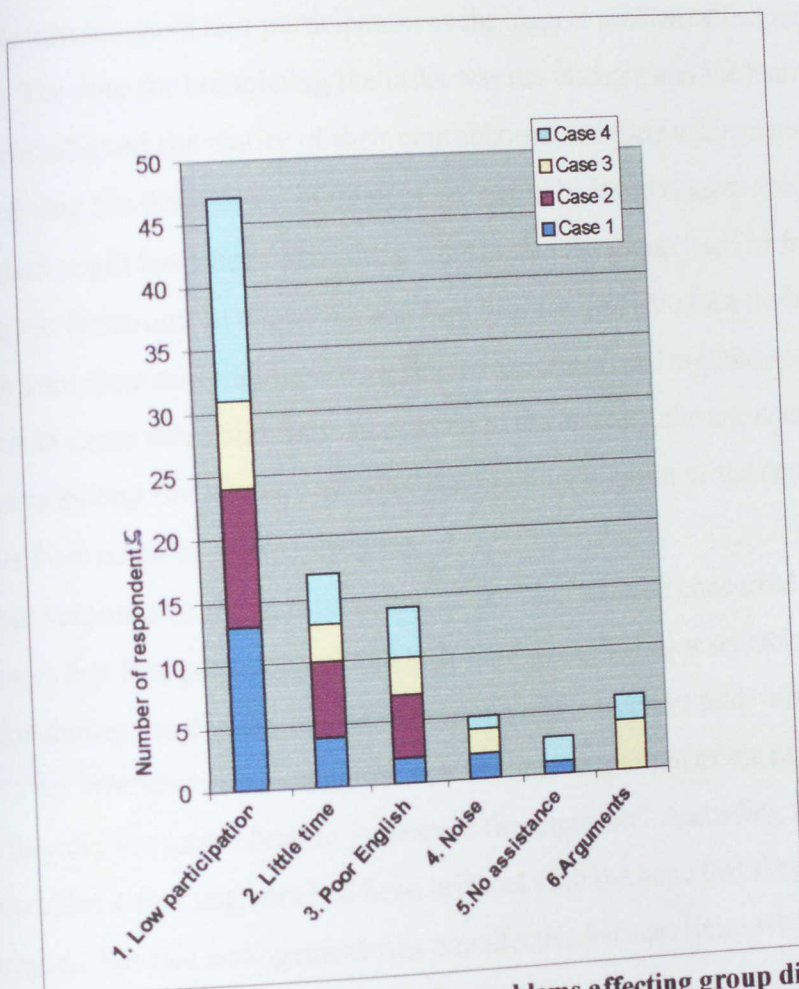


Figure 4.5 Number of respondents on the problems affecting group discussions

Table 4.9 Number of respondents on the problems affecting group discussions

	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4	Totals	%
1. Low participation	13	11	7	16	47	51.1
2. Little time	4	6	3	4	17	18.5
3. Poor English	2	5	3	4	14	15.2
4. Noise	2	0	2	1	5	5.4
5. No assistance	2	0	0	2	3	3.3
6. Arguments	1	0	0	2	6	6.5
Totals	0	0	4	2	6	6.5
	22	22	19	29	92	100

The learner responses presented in figures 4.5 and table 4.9 show that their participation during group discussions was hampered by the following problems: In all

the cases the learners gave low participation as the biggest problem affecting group discussions. The time for completing the tasks was not enough; and the learners' language level affected the clarity of their contributions and their willingness to participate during the discussion. In three of the cases the learners gave noise as a problem which might have been emanating from within the group itself or from the other groups in the room. In cases one and four, learners felt left alone during the discussions since they said that there was lack of assistance; and arguments were given as a problem in cases three and four. According to the learners, the arguments were the disagreements among the learners on what the question(s) meant or the correctness of the answers from some of their colleagues.

In their response to the questionnaire, all the four teachers concurred with most of the learners that low participation and little time were the major setbacks to learner participation during the discussions. However one of the teachers said: 'most of the teachers do not attend *orientation courses* on the implementation of the new approach, therefore they did not know how to implement the approach'. According to this particular teacher a few teachers had been oriented with the hope that they would assist their colleagues, but this arrangement was not effective because those who had been oriented did not themselves understand what was covered so they were unable to assist those who had not attended the course.

4.7.1 Participation during Group Discussions

Group discussions were aimed at promoting learner participation in classroom discourse. However, the learner responses to the question '*Do all the members of the group participate in the discussion?*' showed that in all the cases few learners participated in the discussions (Refer to item 1 in figure 4.4 and table 4.8). The basic problem was that the groups had no leaders. So, the few vocal ones controlled the discussion while the others listened. In fact, in one of the cases, when the groups were presenting their answers the teacher stopped a representative of one of the groups because he had dominated the group during the discussions. In their responses to the questionnaire, both the learners and the teachers in all the cases gave low participation as one of the major constraints affecting learner participation during group discussion. This meant that very few learners took part in the discussions. This was also confirmed

both the teachers' and learners' responses to the item which asked whether the learners 'rotated in representing the groups.' The teachers' and the learners' responses proved that the same learners represented the groups (Refer to item 6 in figure 4.4 and table 4.8). During the observation it was apparent that a few individuals dominated the groups. Therefore the conduct of group discussions meant that not all learners had a chance to participate in the interaction. Of course, it should be acknowledged that the group discussions increased the number of those who spoke but this was still not enough to conclude that the learners were participating effectively in classroom interaction as required in the CLT approach.

4.7.2 Time Constraint

In an attempt to find out the problems affecting the implementation of the CLT approach, the study sought whether there was enough time for the pair or group discussions and presentation of the answers to the classes. However, before looking at the responses to this question, the reader needs to know that the lessons in these classes were forty minutes long. When asked, the teachers said that English was taught for three periods per week. Then these periods should be considered in relation to the areas to be covered in the teaching of the English language, which were: comprehension, composition, grammar, note taking and summary skills.

Another aspect related to the time factor was the number of learners in the classroom. The smallest number of learners among the classes used in the study was forty-three and the highest was fifty-eight (Refer to table 3.2). The groups had 8-10 members. These numbers made it difficult for the teachers to involve all of them effectively within the forty-minute lesson. The other factor was the structure of the lessons. Prior to the discussions, the teacher spent some time explaining the task. Then, when forming the groups, some time was spent as the learners moved around to be close to each other so that they could start discussing. Given a period of forty minutes it was incredible that the groups would have enough time (say 7-10 minutes) to finish the discussion and then report to the class. Consequently, it was clear from both the learners' and the teachers' responses that there was hardly enough time for the learners to complete the group activities. During the observations, in one of the cases the learners were asked to make oral presentations in form of role-plays, unfortunately

there was time for three pairs only to demonstrate what they had prepared. In their responses to the question in the questionnaire on whether all the groups had the time to present their answers to the class, most of the learners gave 'sometimes' (Refer to item 5 in figure 4.4 and table 4.8). Such a development could frustrate the other learners and this could affect their commitment to similar activities unless the teacher systematically called different pairs in subsequent lessons.

Both the learners and the teachers gave unavailability of time as one of the constraints of learner activities. Since the learners did not hear contributions from all the participants in the group, the ideas presented by the groups came from a few participants. Such a situation did not do any good to most of the learners whose ideas were not heard. For this reason, it can be argued that group discussions per se did not constitute effective learner participation, but the number of learners who contributed to the discussion. In one of the sessions, the teacher asked the learners to make presentations after discussing for less than five minutes. And when some learners murmured in disagreement, the teacher told them to present whatever they had at that point in time. It was not surprising therefore that in the questionnaire; in response to the question which said '*Is there enough time for the group discussions?*' the learners said that there was never enough time for the discussions (Refer to item 4 in figure 4.4 and table 4.8). Due to the time constraint, it was not feasible for the teachers to involve the learners meaningfully.

4.7.3 Language Problems

In the questionnaire the learners gave poor English as one of the problems which hindered their active involvement in the discussions. Poor English was looked at from two perspectives: firstly, the utterances were in such poor English that they were not clear. Secondly, most of the learners were unable to make effective contributions due to their (ungrammatical utterances) poor English. Although the group interactions were meant to contribute to language learning, the learners' linguistic competence affected their performance during group discussions. So, participation favoured those learners whose linguistic repertoire was developed enough to enable them to be understood by their colleagues. As a result, one could say that for the learners' interactive participation to contribute to effective language learning, the learners

should be able to use their limited linguistic competence to contribute to the discussions. The learners' linguistic problems during group discussions were also reflected in the lessons observed. During the observations the learners in all the cases made some errors and also code-switched when interacting during group discussions. In the questionnaire the learners indicated that 'sometimes' the learners did not speak in English (Refer to item 3 in figure 4.4 and table 4.8). On the other hand, extracts 27 and 28 illustrate the learners' language errors and code switching during the observations.

Extract: 27 (Case one)

- L1: ...so on the *point, students are to blame *on the lowering of education standards,
 L2: ...How will *it our points to *oppose the other group?
 L3: The question is, are we to blame that *our standard is *going low because and...
 L4: *That will be our points.
 L5: *So, these are our points which we are about to argue with our friends, not so?
 L6: ...*teachers are not coming and they just say that students *should into* the library and borrow books, students need guidance they may end up *go into the library borrow the books and read anywhere, so may be ...
 L7: *I think um when there is um a relationship between a teacher and a student um a teacher *made pregnant the girl...

- L1: * In the importance of the difference.
 L2: Why is it *importance, the difference?

Extract: 28 (Case one)

- L1: *Ineyo I should be included in the members of the press.
 L2: I will be *ujeni Gary Chirwa.
 L3: I will be Friday I am meaning *kuti a reporter.
 L4: *Ifeyo ndiye we will be part of the *ujeni...
 L5: Ooh! *chabwino *ineyo I will be part of the audience.

- L1: *Ineyo I think we are not supposed to be blamed.
 L2: No *aise you want to...
 L3: *Aaa tell me my friend *eee...
 L4: I have got my own *mfundo
 LL5: Akunama
 L5: ... *sono before we wind up...

In extracts 27 and 28 it was obvious that most of the learners' utterances during group discussions had errors and L1 expressions. Comparatively, the learners made more errors and used more L1 expressions during group discussions than when

addressing the teachers. For this reason, if the group activities encouraged in the CLT approach are not properly monitored, then, instead of promoting effective language learning, they are detrimental because most of the interaction would be in the L1. This state of affairs, if not checked, would make learner participation retrogressive in language learning. Another observation worth noting was that when addressing the whole class the learners code switched less but made a lot of errors in the target language. This showed that the learners were trying their best to use the target language in most of their utterances addressed to the class unlike during group discussions. Although Ellis (1987) has argued that in language learning code switching is inevitable as a compensatory strategy where the learner uses a form in the non-L2, the prevalence of code switching during these group activities challenged the contribution of learner involvement in pairs or groups to effective language learning.

4.7.4 Noise and Other Setbacks

The group discussions were characterised by noise. This noise was due to a number of factors. The group discussions meant that there were many speakers in the classroom, which was usually small, compared to the number of students. For instance, if there were six groups, it meant that a minimum of six people would be speaking within the same room; this explained the hubbub. As a result, group discussions generated a lot of noise, which was a sign of either progress or disorder. The noise could also have been due to the presence of a number of people in the group, all of them wanted to present their ideas at the same time. Therefore, there were instances when the learners were competing for turns. Sometimes those who were not participating formed subgroups thereby increasing the number of speakers within the groups. The other source of noise was argument among those who had diverse ideas. When the learners disagreed on the correct answer, each one of them wanted to convince the other, hence the arguments.

The other impediment was lack of assistance, but this one was as elusive as the noise. However, it could be viewed as lack of guidance since the learners were working 'alone'. It appeared that the learners lacked confidence when doing a task on their own due to their picture of the omnipotence of the teachers in classroom discourse. While this was an undisputable fact, it can hinder the contribution of group

discussions to effective language learning. This was so because the learners looked at the teachers as the providers of knowledge, hence they underplayed their own contributions.

During the observations, there were two problems which came out of learner involvement in the classroom. The teachers were not confident enough to accommodate learner opinions. Where the learners expressed opinions in situations where the teachers were apparently in the wrong, the teachers were at pains to accept that the learner in question was right. Such a situation should be understood from the teachers' position in the classroom. The teachers saw themselves as omniscient; hence anything to the contrary was unpalatable. For this reason when the learners initiated talk with the teachers to say that something was not correct the teachers either tried their best to defend themselves or ended the discussion inconclusively. On the other hand, in situations where the learners were presenting answers from the group discussion those who had *different ideas booed the presenters*. Such behaviour would discourage the introverts to represent the groups; hence it would stifle active learner involvement in the classroom.

4.7.5 Summary of the Problems Affecting the Implementation on the CLT

Approach

The above discussion has shown that learner interactive participation in the classroom was constrained by:

- Low participation among the learners during group discussions, the available time, the learners' low language level and so on.
- The teachers themselves had no confidence to accommodate the challenges of the approach.

4.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has discussed the findings from the study which set out to analyse learner participation in the language classroom in order to determine how effectively the CLT approach had been implemented in four cases in four secondary schools in Blantyre district. The discussion has shown that although learner involvement was

spelt out in the Form Three syllabus, there was only one textbook which supported it. However, some of the teachers did not use the text in question in their teaching. Those who did were so selective that the activities they used promoted teacher centred interactions. When the learners were involved through group discussions, the questions used did not promote creativity. The major problems affecting effective learner participation in the language classroom were unavailability of time and the participation of few learners in the discussions.

CHAPTER 5

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The purpose of this study was to determine how effectively the communicative language teaching approach was implemented in four classrooms in four secondary schools in Blantyre, by analysing learner participation in classroom discourse. The study was done two years after the implementation of the new English syllabus. To this effect, the following questions guided both the data collection and the analysis:

1. What interaction patterns are the teachers using in the language classroom?
2. To what extent are learners participating in classroom discourse?
3. What problems do teachers and learners face in the implementation of the CLT approach?

The study showed that there was more to be done in order to have effective learner involvement in the classroom as prescribed in the new syllabus. The findings in this discussion were in five main areas, namely: the syllabus, the textbooks used, teacher-learner interaction, learner-learner interaction and the problems which both the teachers and the learners were facing in the implementation of the CLT approach.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

It has been noted that CLT approach originated in Europe where the learners' L1 is English, therefore the promotion of learner participation in the classroom could not have been problematic. On the other hand, in the Malawian context English is an L2 as result, most learners are not fluent in English hence their participation in classroom discourse would be constrained.

In the study, the collection of data from the language classrooms was affected by resource constraints in the schools in question. For instance, in one school two classes were using the same set of textbooks. Therefore in situations where the lessons in the two classes followed each other, some time was spent waiting for the textbooks to be brought. In that way the time for the lesson was reduced. In another school, there were few textbooks so most of the learners found it difficult to read from the book. These

constraints might have had a negative impact on learner involvement in the cases concerned. However, these limitations had little effect on the results because the teacher's plans for the lesson were clear despite the constraints. In addition to this, after observing a number of lessons, the trend of the lessons became clear.

In addition, in some situations, there was a wide gap between the data collected from the three sources. The disparity between some of the responses in the questionnaires and the information collected from the observations created a state where it was difficult to know which was the real situation. In some instances there was also a big difference between the learners' and the teachers' responses rendering it difficult to understand the situation clearly.

When answering the first question in the study on the interaction patterns which the teachers were using in the classroom, it was noted that despite the emphasis the new Form Three syllabus placed on learner involvement in terms of participation in pairs or groups, the time in which the syllabus was to be completed in readiness for the final examination was the same as it was when the teachers were using the old syllabus. In addition to this, the areas the teachers had to prepare the learners for the examination were unchanged; consequently, the teachers used the teaching method which enabled them to finish the syllabus in the available time. Unfortunately, this was an incomplete and inadequate blend of the old and the new approaches. Moreover, an analysis of the prescribed textbooks showed that it was erroneous to say that there were four recommended texts for the implementation of the CLT approach simply because there was only one text, *Senior Secondary Integrated English Book 3* which would have effectively enforced learner participation in the classroom as set out in the syllabus. Therefore, by saying that there were four recommended texts, it appeared as if all of them were ideal for the approach. In the end, most of the teachers were using *Step Ahead New Secondary English Book 3*, which, though among the prescribed texts, does not promote learner involvement as is required in the effective implementation on the CLT approach. The teachers were using this text because most of the activities promoted teacher talk which gave them control over the lesson. The resulting interaction put the teachers at the centre of the classroom discourse. On the other hand, *Senior Secondary Integrated English Book 3* has far too many activities, which if adhered to faithfully, will place too much control of the classroom discourse on the

learners. In addition, these activities also appear to have been designed with the assumption that the learner's competence was developed enough to follow the instructions and do what was required without input in the form of lecturing. In fact, using all the activities in this text would necessitate a high level of patience and confidence in the teachers because the activities would generate divergent views. Inexorably though, these activities would require that the learners should have a lot of time to complete them effectively. Therefore, in the prevailing circumstances, the teachers were justified to use this text sparingly.

Unfortunately, none of the teachers used the activities set for group discussions in the prescribed textbook (*Integrated English*) which if used effectively would have generated a lot of talk among the learners. In the two cases where the teachers used this text, they set their own questions for the group activity. Nevertheless, in situations where the teachers set open questions, the learners' active participation was constrained by time.

In short, it was obvious that the teaching and learning of English were based on instrumental motivation due to the emphasis on passing English in the final examinations; hence the teachers were using the *Step Ahead* in which the teachers were in control of the classroom discourse.

The analytical framework for the recorded lessons did not accommodate other aspects of the lessons in which there was no talking. Despite the adaptation of Flanders' (1970) Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC), some forms of learner involvement like writing exercises and silent reading were left out. Furthermore, the physical counting of words to determine learner participation rendered some situations difficult to capture properly. For instance it proved problematic to come up with a category in which to place learner contributions in a debate. It was noted that such contributions were on a 'wider' topic and in some cases in response to the opposing views from the other party. Due to the lack of a clear category, such talk was considered loosely and placed under 'learner responses' on the understanding that the learners were responding to the motion in question. However, this was a precarious categorization that left some questions unanswered. For instance, what about those learners who were trying to clarify what their colleague had said and those who were specifically challenging the other party's contributions and so on?

The answers to the second question on the extent of learner participation in classroom discourse revealed that teacher talk was still the predominant feature of the classroom interaction due to the choice of the textbooks and the activity structures. In the classroom, the teachers mostly asked closed questions which restricted learner responses to short answers. When the teachers asked open-ended questions, the interaction ran out of time as more learners wanted to contribute. These questions also raised some disagreements among the learners, which though desirable to encourage learner participation, created mayhem as some learners booed their colleagues. Consequently, it was only when the teachers were prepared to handle such turbulence calmly that the learners would be encouraged to participate in the interaction.

It was also noted that as learners participated actively in the language classroom, they made a lot of errors which were not corrected. Some of these errors would become detrimental input to other learners. Although CLT encourages learners to initiate talk by expressing their opinions, the study revealed that the teachers did not welcome such moves. Such learner initiatives appeared to promote what would be termed learner rebellion in the classroom. This was due to the status, the role difference and intellectual disparity between the teachers and the learners.

Furthermore the study showed that learner involvement required in the implementation of CLT required a high level of creativity and confidence on the part of the teachers. However, most of the teachers in the study were not qualified enough to convince the intelligent learners in situations where there was an argument. When the learners expressed their opinions, the teachers in question were caught unawares, so they were not sure how to convince the learners or have the confidence to accept that the learners were right. Therefore, with such teachers, this form of learner initiative was a non-starter.

Although group discussions were meant to allow most of the learners to participate interactively in the lesson, in some of the cases the group discussions did not generate much talk among the learners because the questions set for the activities had clear-cut answers.

As for the last question on the problems which both the teachers and the learners were facing in the implementation of the CLT approach, it was discovered that learner interactive involvement in the classroom was constrained by a number of setbacks.

Firstly, the number of learners in the classroom resulted in big groups in which just a few participated. It was noted that in all the cases the number of learners in the classroom was very big. Consequently, it was difficult to involve the learners effectively without prior planning. Secondly, the very nature of group discussions generated a lot of noise which not only affected the interaction among the other groups but also lessons in adjacent classrooms. Thirdly, the amount of time available was not enough for the teachers to involve the learners meaningfully and still finish the syllabus. Lastly, the learners themselves had problems participating effectively due to their low linguistic competence which was a constraint on their performance.

Nevertheless, learner participation had a number of salutary results. The first was that when the learners were involved during group discussions there was a new dimension in language teaching, which was hitherto mostly teacher centred. The second benefit was that learner interactive involvement assisted those who were participating to develop confidence in using the target language. The participation also helped the learners realize that the language they were learning was not just a subject, but also a medium for communication.

Despite these positive gains from the CLT approach, it can be stated that there is still a lot to be done in order for the learners to participate effectively in the classroom in the four cases in this study.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

In order for learner participation to be realized as outlined in the new English syllabus, there ^{are} a number of things that have to be done.

- Although the syllabus encourages the development of the four language skills, the examinations test reading and writing only, therefore, there is a need to introduce an oral English examination in order to compel both the teachers and the learners to take learner talk seriously.
- The list of the prescribed textbooks should be streamlined in order to realize the learner participation as outlined in the syllabus. To achieve this, the other three textbooks should be removed from the list and remain with *Senior Secondary Integrated English Book 3*.

- The teachers have to encourage the learners to use English in their social interactions to improve on their confidence in using the language in the classroom.
 - It is imperative that those employed to teach the English language should be properly trained in order for them to be confident and flexible enough to adopt the innovative approach.
 - In addition to having the prerequisite qualifications, all practicing language teachers need to be trained in the implementation of the approach rather than a few teachers from various secondary schools, as was the case when it was introduced.
 - The teachers should ensure that the groups have a maximum of 5-6 members in order to ensure the participation of most the members during discussions. In addition to this during group discussions, group leaders should control the discussions, but the leadership should rotate in order to avoid situations where the same learners dominate the discussions.
 - Teachers should systematically use group work and monitor the learners' participation in the groups, making sure to give appropriate tasks for discussion, and then systematically calling on different groups each week.
 - The number of periods for language teaching needs to be increased in order to accommodate the demands of the CLT approach.
 - The teachers should encourage the learners to listen to opposing views patiently to avoid discouraging most of the learners to express their opinions.
- These recommendations were not meant to be exhaustive. Nevertheless, it is clear that with some adjustments the implementation of the approach could contribute to effective language use in the classroom.

5.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study concentrated on some secondary schools in Blantyre district further research could focus on secondary schools in other districts. The other areas could be the Community Day Secondary Schools and the Private secondary schools. In Community Day Secondary Schools the learners attend classes for fewer hours than

the conventional secondary schools where this study was done. As for the Private schools, they are based on economic factors and the teaching seems to be focused on enabling the learners to pass the examination for the sustainability of the school. Another research area could be a comparative analysis of how teachers with different qualifications handle the CLT approach. The reader will have noted that unintentionally this study used four teachers all with diplomas from Domasi College of Education. These teachers had taught in primary schools prior to attending the course which qualified them to teach in secondary school. Therefore, another interesting area would be to find out how those teachers who have been teaching in secondary school throughout their experience handle the approach. In this study the focus was on form three classes. This also means that other studies could focus on the other forms. All these research areas could provide useful information to educational planners on the effectiveness in the implementation of communicative language teaching approach in secondary schools in Malawi.

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7.1 Appendix 1

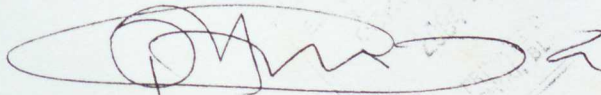
31ST MAY, 2004

TO : THE HEADTEACHER.

AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH ON THE ENGLISH TEACHING IN
SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The bearer of this letter is a (MA) Student from Chancellor College.
He would like to observe the Teaching of English in Secondary Schools.

Would you please allow him to do his research for his paper.



E.H.M. Kwaliimba
for/ DIVISIONAL EDUCATION MANAGERESS SOUTH WEST DIVISION

7.2 Appendix 2

Learner questionnaire

SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE ON HOW THEY PARTICIPATE IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

This questionnaire is meant to get your views on your and your fellow students' participation in the language classroom as proposed in the integrated English teaching approach. I need the information for my MA research which I am pursuing at Chancellor College. Your responses will enable me to obtain the data I need in the research and the findings will also provide information on the effectiveness of the implementation of the language teaching new approach. Please feel free to give your views on the various aspects which have been outlined below. I assure you that the information you provide will be handled with **utmost confidentiality**. I wish to thank you in advance for taking some time from your busy schedule to respond to the questions.

1. How often do you use the following English language texts?

Tick your response

	Never	Sometimes	Very often	Always
Secondary integrated English Book 3				
English for Communication Book 3				
Secondary English Book 3				
Step Ahead Book 3				

2. Do all the members of the group participate in the discussion?

Never	
Sometimes	
Very often	
Always	

- 3 During group discussion, do you give each other turns at speaking?

Never	
Sometimes	
Very often	
Always	

- 4 Do you and your fellow students speak in English during discussions?

Sometimes	
Very often	
Always	

- 5 Do the groups finish the discussion in the allocated time?

Never	
Sometimes	
Very often	
Always	

- 6 Do all the groups have an opportunity to present their answers to the whole class?

Never	
Sometimes	
Very often	
Always	

- 7 Do you have the same individuals representing the group?

Never	
Sometimes	
Always	

8. What problems are there (if any) when students do activities in pairs and groups?

THANK YOU

7.3 Appendix 3.

Teacher questionnaire

SECONDARY SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE ON STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

This questionnaire is meant to get your views on how you involve the students in the language classroom as proposed in the integrated English teaching approach. I need the information for my MA research which I am pursuing at Chancellor College. Your responses will enable me to obtain the data I need in the research and the findings will also provide information on the effectiveness of the implementation of the new language teaching approach. Please feel free to give your views on the various aspects which have been outlined below. I assure you that the information you provide will be handled with **utmost confidentiality**. I wish to thank you in advance for taking some time from your busy schedule to respond to the questions.

1. How often do you use the following English language texts?

Tick your responses

	Never	Sometimes	Very often	Always
Secondary integrated English Book 3				
English for Communication Book 3				
Secondary English Book 3				
Step Ahead Book 3				

2 When holding group discussions, do students understand what you want them to do?

Tick your response

Sometimes	
Very often	
Always	

3 Do **all the members** of the group participate in the discussion?

Tick your response

Never	
Sometimes	
Very often	
Always	

- 4 During group discussion, do the students listen to each other?

Never	
Sometimes	
Very often	
Always	

- 5 Do students **speak in English** during discussions?

Sometimes	
Very often	
Always	

- 6 Do the groups finish the discussion in the allocated time?

Never	
Sometimes	
Very often	
Always	

7. Do all the groups have an opportunity to present their answers to the whole class?

Never	
Sometimes	
Very often	
Always	

8. Do you have the same individuals representing the group?

Tick your response

Never	
Sometimes	
Always	

9. What problems are there (if any) when students do activities in pairs or groups?

THANK YOU