4.0 THE THEORETICAL BASIS FOR THE PROPOSED DESIGN

The writer being an English language teacher in a secondary school in Malaysia, is guided by the English language syllabus designed by the Curriculum Development Centre. The English language Syllabus for secondary schools emphasizes the teaching of both the oracy (listening and speaking) and the literacy (reading and writing) skills. The skills are taught through specified topics which are based on settings selected for the secondary school programme.

Thus, upon completion of the English Language programme for secondary schools, students will be equipped with sufficient skills and knowledge of the language and its use, to enable them to undertake various post-secondary school pursuits(Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran, 1991).

The English Language programme for secondary schools has sanctioned the communicative approach implicitly because explicit approval of the communicative approach would impede the use of other appropriate approach of language learning.

The writer adopted the Communicative Approach as the underlying language learning principle for the modules because of two reasons. Firstly, findings from research in second language acquisition indicate that although some learners are successful at learning grammar rules which they have been taught and then using those rules productively and communicatively, most learners cannot utilize their intellectual understanding of the grammar of the language in real communication (Johnson. 1981; Long, et al. 1976). Krashen (1979) and others have argued that communicative competence, for most learners, can only be achieved by

subconsciously acquiring the language through active participation in real communication - in a process similar to the way children acquire their first language.

Secondly, Real communicative experiences in the target language for learners are supported by the syllabus designed for secondary school in Malaysia. If learners are expected to learn how to use language to fulfill real communication functions, they must have opportunities to do so in a full range of situations. These two reasons taken together, suggest that for most students language is best acquired when it is not studied in a direct or explicit way it is acquired most effectively when it is used as a vehicle for doing something else(Tucker, 1977).

In sum, it appears that second language acquisition depends upon the to extent to which learners are exposed to and involved in genuine communication in the target language. Thus, the writer's goal is to maximise opportunities for language acquisition to take place. This can be fulfilled by incorporating the following features in the modules:-

a) The materials will facilitate the communicative ability of interpretation, expression and negotiation.

b) Materials will focus on understandable and relevant communication rather than on grammatical form.

c) Materials will command the learners' interest and involve their intelligence and creativity.

d) Materials will involve different types of text, and different media, which the participants can use to develop their competence through a variety of different activities and tasks (Richards J.C. and Rodges T., 1987)

The exercises in the module are designed to be interactive, authentic, purposive and contextualised (Palmer and Rodges, 1982). The writer has sought two pedagogical techniques that have been developed to create information gaps in the classroom. They are "jigsaw" (Geddes and Strutridge,1979) and "task dependency" (Johnson,1986 b) principles. The "jigsaw" principle is used for group activities which are a task-oriented or problem-solving nature. This kind of information gap creates a real need for students to communicate with each other. On the other hand, activities that are structured according to the task dependency principle will allow students to first successfully complete certain sub-tasks before they are able to complete the major task that they have been assigned.

The exercises in the module are structured to adopt the two pedagogical techniques underlying the Communicative Approach. Ultimately, it does not matter how successful students actually are in accomplishing the task they undertake. The real language experience is what is most important, and this kind of approach can be particularly successful because students are directly involved. They develop confidence in their ability to cope with the language for some useful purpose (Allwright, 1979). They are self-invented and their maturation is likely to be greater (Maley, 1981).

Based on the language principle underlying the Communicative Approach, the teacher expects students to be communicatively competent. Most of the activities in the module are done with a communicative intent.

4.1 TASK BASED ACTIVITIES AND THE UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES USED IN THE MODULE

Lesson One (Listening and Speaking)

Pre-listening

Task 1 – Group work

Sequencing the picture series

Principle

In sequencing the picture series in small groups, students are encouraged to participate in communicative interaction. The speaker has a choice not only about what to say, but also how to say it. In addition to that, the students are given an opportunity to express their ideas and opinions.

While-listening

Task 2

Completing the text while listening to a recorded tape-script.

Principle

Learning to listen carefully is a skill needed to communicate precisely. This task will allow students to retain the phrases omitted in the passage and to use them correctly. Retention will best take place somewhere in between novelty and familiarity (Larsen-Freeman, 1986).

Task 3 – Individual/Group work.

Filling in the bubbles with words and phrases.

Principle

This task provides learners with opportunity to engage in unrehearsed communication and thereby experience doubt and uncertainty, and learn to make appropriate content and linguistic choices accordingly. Authentic language is used for this exercise (Johnson,1979).

Speaking

Task 4 – Group work

Role-play

Principle

The social context of the communicative event is essential in giving meaning utterance (Larsen-Freeman, 1986). Role-plays are very important in communicative approach because they give students an opportunity to practice communicating in different social contexts and in different social roles. For example, in the module the teacher tells the students who they are, what the situation is, and what they are going to talk about, but the students determine what they say. The role-play provides information gaps since students cannot be sure of what the other person will say (there is a natural unpredictability). Students also receive feedback on whether or not they have communicated effectively.

Lesson Two (Reading)

<u>Pre-reading</u>

Task 1– Group work

Discussion based on a picture

Principle

This task allows the students to communicate in the target language because it is a vehicle for classroom communication, not just the object of study. The students are given an opportunity to express their views. The picture will lead on to the next task.

Task 2

Answer questions based on the picture.

Principle

This task allows the students to be communicatively competent because when they answer the questions, they will have to negotiate the meaning.

<u>While-reading</u>

Task 1 – Individual work

Silent reading of the story (passage)

Principle

The students, while reading the text, silently figure out the writer's intentions. This sub-skill is part of being communicatively competent.

Task 2 – Pair- work

Vocabulary exercise – matching words with meanings

Principle

This task gives students an opportunity to work on negotiating meanings and coming to a consensus. Communicative interaction encourages cooperative relationships among students.

Task 3 – Pair-work

Word-Puzzle

Principle

The task is enjoyable and gives students valuable opportunities to develop vocabulary that the students learn from the earlier task. According to Morrow (in Johnson and Morrow, 1981), communicative activities should have the three features of communication: information gap, choice and feedback. The word-puzzle creates the information gap in that the teacher has the words but the students do not. The students predict the words, though they may not get all the 20 words. The students get the feedback to the answers from the teacher.

Post-reading

Task 1 – Group work

Summary writing – Flow chart

Principle

This task focuses attention on the ability to understand the story and convey information content in a sequence. The flow chart helps students to learn about cohesion and coherence, those properties of language that binds the sentences together.

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Lesson Three (Writing)

<u>Pre-writing</u>

Task 1 -- Whole class

Listening to a song and discussion

Principle

This task is designed to stimulate imagination among students. The task is also a lead-on to a later task. This task allows students to develop strategies for interpreting language as it is actually used by native speakers (Littlewood, 1981).

Task 2 -- Pair-work

Matching the phrases with the pictures

Principle

The task allows students to negotiate meanings of imageries used in the song with the pictures given. In doing so they indulge in communicative interaction which allows them to choose what to say and how to say it. The task is structured so that the students arrive at a solution.

<u>While-writing</u>

Task 1 -- Group-work

Listening to a taped interview and filling in missing words and phrases

Principle

This task allows students to listen carefully and retain the words and phrases to be filled in the blanks in the handouts. This is a sub-skill needed to communicate precisely using the productive skills ,i.e. speaking and writing.

Task 2 – Pair-work

Answer questions with the help of the tape-script

Principle

The task above creates room for the students to communicate interactively in negotiating the content and the meaning of the story they listen to. They learn the language used for negotiations in a real communication situation.

Task 3 - Group-work

Re-arranging sentences so that they form an interesting story

Principle

The task above teaches students about the cohesion and coherence properties of language. They learn how sentences are bound together at the suprasentential level through formal linguistic devises such as anaphoric pronoun , which make a text cohesive, and semantic propositions which unify a text and make it coherent (Larsen-Freeman, 1986).