

**Strengthening Discourse - Intensive pedagogical practices: The utility of peer-facilitated small-group discussions to develop critical-analytic thinking**

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

**PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR**

**(Educational Psychology)**

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**JANUARY 2021**

## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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I Sipikelelo Mugari

declare that the thesis:

**Strengthening Discourse-Intensive pedagogical practices: The utility of peer-facilitated small-group discussions to develop critical-analytic thinking**

which I hereby submit for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor in Educational Psychology-  
Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria,  
is my own work and has not been previously submitted by me for a degree  
at this or any other tertiary institution.

Signature..... 

Date.....19/01/2021

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Strengthening discourse-intensive pedagogical practices: the utility of peer-facilitated small-group discussions to develop critical-analytic thinking

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- No significant changes,
- Informed consent/assent,
- Adverse experience or undue risk,
- Registered title, and
- Data storage requirements.

## DEDICATION

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I dedicate this Thesis firstly to my dear parents, my late father and my friend,  
Cleophas Museka, Baba va Tsungie and his ever-loving wife Viola Museka and my siblings.  
Our parents led the way....

I also dedicate this thesis to my family:  
Exson, my husband ...thank you for throwing me in the deep end,  
Our children: Michael, Shelomith, Mitchelle, Ray o' Hope, Kishel  
and Whyter-our granddaughter  
for all the spiritual, emotional, moral and financial support that was just needed to see me  
through this project.  
You were there when I needed you most.

May Jehovah bless you all abundantly.

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---

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May Jehovah Bless You All for believing in me.

## ABSTRACT

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Evidence-based research acknowledges the current shift in pedagogical practices from the conventional teacher-centered approaches to the collaborative, discourse-intensive practices that promote critical-analytic thinking in students. Among the discourse-intensive pedagogical practices, the use of small-group discussions has proved to be one of those most successful. The Sociocultural Theory from Vygotsky was employed to gain insight into interventions that enabled education in schools in challenged spaces by describing how peer-facilitation partnered in developing discourse-intensive pedagogical practices through the use of small-group English discussions. The interventions aimed to improve critical-analytic thinking in students in a remote South African rural secondary school, using discourse elements from the Quality Talk study as a model. A qualitative interpretive methodology was deployed to understand how peer-facilitation in small-group, text-based English discussions enriches teaching and learning. Classroom observations and interviews were used to collect data from one purposively selected rural secondary school. The participants included Grade 8 and 9 English teachers (n=2), two control groups of students (n=92 students), two intervention groups of students (n=94 students) from English classes, and peer-facilitators (n=13). Data was coded and analysed using qualitative thematic analysis. The findings indicate that higher student-talk and higher-level cognitive engagement through the use of discourse elements authenticated: (1) The use of peer-facilitation small-group discussions; and (2) the use of home language as scaffolding through code-switching as students co-constructively made-meaning of the English text under discussion. The trained peer-facilitators making use of the Quality Talk model succeeded in drawing most of the group members into active participation in class discussions. The current study highlights the salient role of peer-facilitation in enhancing participation in discourse-intensive small-group, text-based English discussions that develop high-level, critical-analytic thinking in students. Insights from this study can be used to improve English proficiency and the overall academic performance of students in a way that lessens the achievement gap between rural secondary school students and their urban counterparts. It is recommended that peer-facilitated small-group discussions be implemented across the curriculum in resource-constrained school settings and that code-switching be used as a resource for scaffolding students' learning English as a second language.

### **Keywords**

Critical-analytic thinking; small-group, text-based discussions; peer-facilitators; discourse elements; discourse-intensive practices, Sociocultural Theory.





## CERTIFICATE OF LANGUAGE EDITING

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Kind regards

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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ANA	Annual National Assessment
CSR	Centre for the Study of Resilience
DoE	Department of Education South Africa
EFL	English First Language
ESA	East and Southern Africa
FAL	First Additional Language
FLY	Flourishing Learning Youth
IRE	Initiation, Response and Evaluation
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NEEDU	National Education and Evaluation Development Unit
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
QT	Quality Talk
QTSA	Quality Talk South Africa
RPT	Reciprocal peer-tutoring
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality
SCT	Social Cultural Theory
SCT	Social Cognitive Theory
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SLT	Social Learning Theory
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY.....	I
ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE .....	II
DEDICATION .....	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	IV
ABSTRACT .....	VI
CERTIFICATE OF LANGUAGE EDITING.....	VIII
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .....	IX
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	X
LIST OF FIGURES.....	XVI
LIST OF TABLES.....	XVII
LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS .....	XIX
<b>CHAPTER 1: CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....</b>	<b>9</b>
1.4.1 Purpose of the Study .....	9
1.4.2 Research Questions .....	10
1.4.2.1 Primary Question .....	10
1.4.2.2 Secondary Questions.....	10
<b>1.5 KEY CONCEPT CLARIFICATIONS.....</b>	<b>11</b>
1.5.1 Literacy .....	11
1.5.2 Classroom Discourse.....	11
1.5.3 Discourse-intensive Pedagogical Practice.....	11
1.5.4 Collaborative Learning .....	11
1.5.5 English Reading Comprehension .....	12

1.5.6	Student Participation in Learning .....	12
1.5.7	Peer-facilitator .....	12
1.5.8	High-Level Comprehension.....	12
1.5.9	Critical-Analytic Thinking .....	13
1.5.10	Remote Rural Secondary School.....	13
1.5.11	Classroom .....	14
1.5.12	Multilingual Education.....	14
<b>1.6</b>	<b>THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>1.7</b>	<b>RESEARCH PARADIGMS .....</b>	<b>16</b>
1.7.1	Metatheory.....	16
<b>1.8</b>	<b>METHODOLOGICAL PARADIGM.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>1.9</b>	<b>RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>18</b>
1.9.1	Research Design.....	18
<b>1.10</b>	<b>STRATEGIES TO ENSURE RIGOUR AND QUALITY .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>1.11</b>	<b>ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>1.12</b>	<b>LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>1.13</b>	<b>SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>1.14</b>	<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVE NATURE OF MEANING-MAKING .....</b>		<b>24</b>
<b>2.1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>2.2</b>	<b>THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....</b>	<b>25</b>
2.2.1	The Sociocultural Theory .....	25
<b>2.3</b>	<b>CONTEXTUALIZING READING COMPREHENSION .....</b>	<b>28</b>
2.3.1	What is Literacy? .....	28
2.3.1.1	Problematising Literacy.....	30
<b>2.4</b>	<b>SCHOOL-BASED INTERVENTION TO SUPPORT POSITIVE LITERACY OUTCOMES .....</b>	<b>37</b>
2.4.1	Text and Discourse Comprehension .....	39
2.4.2	Conventional Classroom Recitation in Reading Comprehension .....	40
<b>2.5</b>	<b>Peer-led Facilitation Interventions in Small-group Classroom-based Discussions .....</b>	<b>41</b>
2.5.1	Strengths of the Peer-facilitated Small-group Discussions.....	44
2.5.2	Challenges of Peer-facilitation of and Participation in Small-group Discussions.....	46
<b>2.6</b>	<b>TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECT OF PEER-FACILITATED SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSIONS .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>2.7</b>	<b>THE QUALITY TALK MODEL.....</b>	<b>49</b>
2.7.1	Components of the Quality Talk Model.....	50
2.7.1.1	Ideal instructional frame .....	50
2.7.1.2	Discourse elements .....	52

2.7.1.3	Teacher Discourse Moves .....	54
2.7.1.4	Pedagogical Principles in the QT model .....	55
<b>2.8</b>	<b>THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK .....</b>	<b>56</b>
2.8.1	Conceptual Definitions in Relation to the Current Study .....	58
2.8.1.1	Teacher-centred learning .....	58
2.8.1.2	Student-centred Learning and Small-group, Text-based Discussions .....	59
2.8.1.3	Peer-learning and the Zone of Proximal Development .....	59
<b>2.9</b>	<b>SUMMARY OF CHAPTER .....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....</b>		<b>61</b>
<b>3.1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>3.2</b>	<b>PARADIGMATIC ASSUMPTIONS .....</b>	<b>62</b>
3.2.1	The Philosophical Background of the Study: The Meta-theoretical Paradigm-Interpretivism .....	62
3.2.1.1	Justification for Employing the Interpretivist Research Paradigm .....	65
3.2.1.2	Interpretivist Research Paradigm Criticisms .....	65
3.2.2	The Methodological Paradigm: Qualitative .....	66
3.2.2.1	Characteristics of the Qualitative Research Approach and Justification for Use in the Present Study .....	67
<b>3.3</b>	<b>RESEARCH DESIGN: A DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY .....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>3.4</b>	<b>RESEARCH SCHEDULE AND PROCEDURE .....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>3.5</b>	<b>SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS AND RESEARCH SITE .....</b>	<b>75</b>
3.5.1	Introduction .....	75
3.5.2	Selection of the School .....	76
3.5.2.1	Contextualising Learning in a Rural Secondary School.....	78
3.5.3	Purposive selection of the teachers .....	80
3.5.3.1	Weaknesses of purposive sampling and justification for use in the present study. ....	80
3.5.4	Convenience selection of students as participants .....	81
3.5.4.1	Weaknesses of convenience sampling and justification for use in the present study.....	82
<b>3.6</b>	<b>DATA GENERATION METHODS .....</b>	<b>82</b>
3.6.1	Non-participant Classroom Observations.....	83
3.6.2	Face to Face Semi-structured Interviews .....	85
<b>3.7</b>	<b>DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION .....</b>	<b>85</b>
3.7.1	Inductive Thematic Content Analysis .....	86
<b>3.8</b>	<b>QUALITY CRITERIA.....</b>	<b>88</b>
3.8.1	Authenticity .....	88
3.8.2	Credibility.....	88
3.8.3	Confirmability .....	89
3.8.4	Dependability.....	90
3.8.5	Transferability.....	91
<b>3.9</b>	<b>Ethical Considerations for Protecting Participants.....</b>	<b>91</b>
3.9.1	Autonomy and Informed Consent .....	91
3.9.2	Anonymity and Confidentiality .....	92

3.9.3	Non-maleficence and Beneficence .....	92
3.9.4	Protection from Harm.....	93
<b>3.10</b>	<b>MY ROLE AS A RESEARCHER .....</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>3.11</b>	<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4:</b>	<b>PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS .....</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>4.2</b>	<b>RESULTS .....</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>4.3</b>	<b>THEME 1: THE ROLE OF PEER-FACILITATORS IN SMALL-GROUP, TEXT-BASED DISCUSSIONS.....</b>	<b>97</b>
4.3.1	Subtheme 1.1: Peer-facilitators Take the Social Role of Supporting Other Peers to Learn.....	99
4.3.1.1	Category 1.1.1 Promotes Critical-analytic Thinking in Students .....	100
4.3.1.2	Category 1.1.2 Promotes High-level Thinking .....	104
4.3.1.3	Category 1.1.3 Enhances Students' Cognitive Engagement .....	106
4.3.1.4	Category 1.1.4: Helps Students to Develop Confidence.....	107
4.3.2	Subtheme 1.2: Peer-facilitation bridges the gap between Teacher and Students .....	109
4.3.2.1	Category 1.2.1: Use of Code-switching .....	111
4.3.2.2	Category 1.2.2: Peer-facilitation Creates a Common Learning Ground .....	113
<b>4.4</b>	<b>LITERATURE CONTROL: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS RELATED TO THEME 1 .....</b>	<b>116</b>
4.4.1	Confirmation of Knowledge in Existing Literature .....	116
4.4.2	Silences Related to Existing Knowledge.....	118
4.4.3	Contradictions between Data and Existing Knowledge .....	119
4.4.4	Contribution to New Knowledge .....	119
<b>4.5</b>	<b>THEME 2: PERCEPTIONS OF PEER-FACILITATED SMALL-GROUP, TEXT-BASED DISCUSSIONS.....</b>	<b>120</b>
4.5.1	Subtheme 2.1: Peer-Facilitators' Perceptions of Peer-facilitated Small-group Text-based Discussions.....	122
4.5.1.1	Category 2.1.1: Interpersonal and communication skills repertoire.....	122
4.5.1.2	Category 2.1.2: Steered debate .....	123
4.5.1.3	Category 2.1.3: Supported learning .....	127
4.5.2	Subtheme 2.2: Group Members' Perceptions of Peer-Facilitated Small-group Text-based Discussions.....	131
4.5.2.1	Category 2.2.1: Peer-facilitation of Small-group, Text-based Discussions Increases Students' engagement with text .....	131
4.5.2.2	Category 2.2.2: Acquired debating skills. ....	133
4.5.2.3	Category 2.2.3: Encouraged productive talk. ....	133
4.5.2.4	Category 2.2.4: Encouraged critical-analysis of text .....	134
4.5.3	Subtheme 2.3: Teachers' Perceptions of the Peer-facilitated Small-group, Text-based Discussions	135
4.5.3.1	Category 2.3.1: 1 Increases student engagement in learning .....	135
4.5.3.2	Category 2.3.2: Promotes independent learning .....	135
<b>4.6</b>	<b>LITERATURE CONTROL: DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS OF THEME 2 .....</b>	<b>136</b>
4.6.1	Confirmation in Data of Existing Knowledge .....	136
4.6.2	Silences Related to Existing Knowledge.....	137
4.6.3	Contradictions between Data and Existing Knowledge .....	138
4.6.4	Contributions to New Knowledge.....	138

<b>4.7</b>	<b>THEME 3 PERCEIVED CHALLENGES OF PEER-FACILITATED SMALL-GROUP, TEXT-BASED ENGLISH DISCUSSIONS.....</b>	<b>139</b>
4.7.1	Subtheme 3.1: Perceived challenges of peer-facilitation .....	139
4.7.1.1	Category 3.1.1: Experiencing a Cultural Shift .....	140
4.7.1.2	Category 3.1.2: Relationship Issues.....	141
4.7.2	Subtheme 3.2: Perceived Challenges of Participation .....	142
4.7.2.1	Category 3.2.1: Fear of Failure to Express Themselves in English.....	142
<b>4.8</b>	<b>LITERATURE CONTROL: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS OF THEME 3 .....</b>	<b>143</b>
4.8.1	Confirmation in Data of Existing Knowledge .....	143
4.8.2	Silences Related to Existing Knowledge.....	144
4.8.3	Contradictions between Data and Existing Knowledge .....	144
4.8.4	Contributions to New Knowledge.....	145
<b>4.9</b>	<b>SUMMARY OF CHAPTER .....</b>	<b>145</b>
 <b>CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>		<b>147</b>
<b>5.1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>147</b>
<b>5.2</b>	<b>SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS .....</b>	<b>147</b>
<b>5.3</b>	<b>ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....</b>	<b>149</b>
5.3.1	Secondary Research Question 1 .....	150
5.3.2	Secondary Research Question 2 .....	152
5.3.3	Secondary Research Question 3 .....	155
5.3.4	Secondary Research Question 4 .....	156
5.3.5	Secondary Research Question 5 .....	157
<b>5.4</b>	<b>POSITIONING THE PRESENT STUDY WITHIN THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....</b>	<b>159</b>
<b>5.5</b>	<b>LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>162</b>
<b>5.6</b>	<b>CONTRIBUTION TO THE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE .....</b>	<b>163</b>
<b>5.7</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES .....</b>	<b>164</b>
<b>5.8</b>	<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>165</b>
 <b>REFERENCE LIST .....</b>		<b>166</b>
 <b>APPENDICES .....</b>		<b>186</b>
 <b>APPENDIX A. CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS .....</b>		<b>187</b>
(i)	Pictures .....	187
(ii)	Field Notes and Reflexive Notes - (Sample) .....	191
 <b>APPENDIX B. INTERVIEWS.....</b>		<b>201</b>
(i)	Semi-structured Interviews– Peer-facilitators Interview Questions .....	202

(ii)	Semi-structured Interviews– Peer-facilitators Interview .....	203
(iii)	Data sets for Peer-facilitators .....	219
(iv)	Semi-structured – Teachers Interviews .....	235
APPENDIX C. CLASSROOM DISCUSSIONS .....		238
(i)	Control Class Whole class Discussions .....	239
(ii)	Key to Discourse elements .....	244
(iii)	Peer-facilitated small-group, text-based Discussions .....	245
APPENDIX D. CONSENT LETTERS .....		271
(i)	Request for Approval for planned changes to the existing project .....	272
(ii)	Approval letter .....	275
(iii)	Consent letter: Principal .....	276
(iv)	Consent Letter: SGB .....	279
(v)	Consent Letter: Educator .....	281
(vi)	Consent Letter: Learner and Parent/Caregiver .....	283
APPENDIX E. TEXTBOOK LESSONS (Sample) .....		284
(i)	Textbook Lessons: .....	285
APPENDIX F. EXTENDED SUMMARY OF 2016 PIRLS REPORT .....		289
(i)	The unfolding reading crisis: The new PIRLS 2016 results .....	290



## LIST OF FIGURES

---

FIGURE 1.1: A SUMMARY OF RESEARCH PARADIGMS, DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY .....	20
FIGURE 2.1: EXPRESSIVE AND EFFERENT STANCES SUPPORTING CRITICAL-ANALYTIC THINKING .....	50
FIGURE 2.2: OPEN PARTICIPATION IN INTERPRETIVE AUTHORITY WITH THE TEACHER AS A FADING FACILITATOR.....	51
FIGURE 2.3: TYPES OF QUESTIONS - DISCOURSE ELEMENTS .....	53
FIGURE 2.4: TYPES OF RESPONSES - DISCOURSE ELEMENTS .....	54
FIGURE 3.1: DATA SOURCES .....	87
FIGURE 4.1: DEVELOPING CRITICAL-ANALYTIC THINKING .....	95

## LIST OF TABLES

---

TABLE 3.1: SCHEDULE OF EVENTS DURING THE DATA COLLECTION PHASE .....	72
TABLE 3.2: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FOR CONTROL AND INTERVENTION CLASSES ...	75
TABLE 3.3: INTERVENTION CLASS DEMOGRAPHICS .....	81
TABLE 3.4: DATA SOURCES .....	83
TABLE 4.1: OVERVIEW OF THEMES AND SUBTHEMES .....	96
TABLE 4.2: THEME 1–ROLE OF PEER-FACILITATORS IN FACILITATING SMALL-GROUP, TEXT- BASED ENGLISH DISCUSSIONS .....	99
TABLE 4.3: A TYPICAL EXAMPLE OF ELABORATED EXPLANATION .....	100
TABLE 4.4: A TYPICAL EXAMPLE OF CUMULATIVE TALK.....	102
TABLE 4.5: TRANSCRIPTION OF ENGLISH LESSON OBSERVATION .....	103
TABLE 4.6: EXPLORATORY TALK – EXAMPLE 1 .....	105
TABLE 4.7: EXPLORATORY TALK - EXAMPLE 2 .....	105
TABLE 4.8: CO-CONSTRUCTED RESPONSES, CUMULATIVE TALK - GRADE 9B - APPENDIX C .....	107
TABLE 4.9: INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES, ELABORATED EXPLANATION - GRADE 8A - APPENDIX C .....	108
TABLE 4.10: THEME 2. PERCEPTIONS OF PEER-FACILITATED SMALL-GROUP, TEXT-BASED ENGLISH DISCUSSIONS .....	121
TABLE 4.11: THEME 3. PERCEIVED CHALLENGES OF PEER-FACILITATED SMALL-GROUP TEXT-BASED ENGLISH DISCUSSIONS .....	139
TABLE 7.1: GRADE 8A PEER-FACILITATOR 20.....	203
TABLE 7.2: GRADE 8A PEER-FACILITATOR 42.....	205
TABLE 7.3: GRADE 8A PEER-FACILITATOR 12.....	207
TABLE 7.4 GRADE 8A PEER-FACILITATOR 15.....	209
TABLE 7.5 GRADE 8A PEER-FACILITATOR 23.....	213
TABLE 7.6 GRADE 8A PEER-FACILITATOR 17.....	216
TABLE 7.7 GRADE 9C-CONTROL CLASS-WHOLE CLASS DISCUSSION.....	239
TABLE 7.8 GRADE 9B GROUP 1 PEER-FACILITATED SMALL-GROUP, TEXT-BASED ENGLISH DISCUSSION .....	245
TABLE 7.9 GRADE 9B GROUP 2 PEER-FACILITATED SMALL-GROUP, TEXT-BASED ENGLISH DISCUSSION .....	248
TABLE 7.10 GRADE 9B GROUP 3 PEER-FACILITATED SMALL-GROUP, TEXT-BASED ENGLISH DISCUSSION .....	253
TABLE 7.11 GRADE 9B GROUP 4 PEER-FACILITATED SMALL-GROUP, TEXT-BASED ENGLISH DISCUSSION .....	255
TABLE 7.12 GRADE 9B GROUP 5 PEER-FACILITATED SMALL-GROUP, TEXT-BASED ENGLISH DISCUSSION .....	257

TABLE 7.13 GRADE 9B GROUP 6 PEER-FACILITATED SMALL-GROUP, TEXT-BASED DISCUSSION .....	262
TABLE 7.14 GRADE 9B GROUP 7 PEER-FACILITATED SMALL-GROUP, TEXT-BASED ENGLISH DISCUSSION .....	265

## LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

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PICTURE 3-1: PEER FACILITATORS TRAINING	70
PICTURE 3-2: SITE MAP AND LOCATION OF THE STUDY SITE	77
PICTURE 3-3: STUDY SITE	78
PICTURE 3-4: THE SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM SET-UP	79
PICTURE 4-1: CONVENTIONAL CLASS SITTING ARRANGEMENT	110
PICTURE 4-2: SMALL GROUP SITTING ARRANGEMENT	110

## CHAPTER 1: CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY

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### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study explores how peer-facilitators participate in developing critical-analytic thinking of students in a remote secondary school by facilitating small-group, text-based English discussions in teaching/learning situations. The premise is that high-level comprehension and critical-analytic thinking skills can be enhanced by improving student participation in classroom discussions. The research was nested within the Inkhulumo study. The Inkhulumo study aimed at adapting an evidence-based approach to reading and instruction, Quality Talk (QT), (Murphy et al., 2010) for use in a remote South African secondary school. According to Murphy et al. (2018, p.1120), Quality Talk “is a multifaceted approach toward classroom discussions designed to increase students’ high-level comprehension by encouraging students to think and talk about, around, and with the text”. The Quality Talk approach is premised on the belief that talking is a tool for thinking, and that certain kinds of talk can contribute to the development of high-level comprehension skills in students.

The Inkhulumo study is a collaboration between researchers from the Centre for the Study of Resilience (CSR), the University of Pretoria and the Pennsylvania State University. Inkhulumo accessed a school as a research site via a long-term CSR study, Flourishing Learning Youth (FLY). The FLY study was initiated in 2005 as collaborative academic service-learning and research with teachers and students in nine remote schools in Mpumalanga, South Africa.

In the Inkhulumo study, peer-facilitators collaborated to lead small-group, text-based English discussions in a multilingual context where English is the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT). The current study describes the steady and gradual release of responsibility from the teacher to the students, an approach in which Wei and Murphy (2019, p.7) refer to the teacher as a “fading facilitator”. The gradual release of responsibility in this study was through the peer-facilitators who played the leading role in facilitating the small-group, text-based discussions as the large numbered classes had to be broken down into small groups. The use of peer-facilitators in small-group, text-based discussions locates this study in ongoing debates in the paradigm shift from teacher-centred to student-centred, discourse-intensive and collaborative approaches to learning and teaching in developing high-level and critical-analytic thinking skills in students as partners in the learning process. The student-centred approach discourages students from being passive recipients of information from an authority (Mayo, 2013, p.24; Peter, 2012, pp.67-68, 71).

Several studies confirm a global shift from “the teacher-centred” to the “student-centred” approach in teaching and learning (Agrahari, 2016; Kennedy et al. 2006, p.2; Lal, 2018; Smart et al., 2012), with classroom discourse almost overtaking the traditional question and answer method of teaching. Some studies indicate that for an effective student-centred approach, large classes can be broken down into small subgroups to allow every student the opportunity to participate. According to Soter et al. (2008), small-group discussions, whether teacher or peer-led can yield productive discussions if they are structured and focused and if they occur for extended periods. The approach is more effective where students are encouraged to use authentic questions as these give the students more room for student talk and greater reflection, which generates high-level thinking. In addition, high-level comprehension and critical-analytical responses can occur through the use of affective connection questions between the reader and the text in the small-group, text-based discussions (Soter et al., 2008, p.373). Working in small-groups provides opportunities for academic success without disrespect from peers for both high and low-achievers (Dalkou & Frydaki, 2016). The student-centred approach redirects attention and focus away from the teacher-led to student-led discussion groups about texts. Studies have shown how these discussions can lead students to understand text under discussion and acquisition of concepts through social interaction better. Small groups make it easier for students to negotiate meaning with peers, deliver their opinions and ideas to smaller audiences and learn better (Gabriel, 2005, Resti & Anwar, 2019, p.114). Through peer-facilitated discussions of the text, students can learn to ask the authentic type of questions and critically look at each other’s responses. Cook-Sather (2010) argues that for effective learning to take place, students should also take responsibility for their learning. It is against this background that the current study specifically seeks to understand how insights from peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions can inform discourse-intensive pedagogical practices in a remote secondary school.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

Global efforts to improve the quality of education have seen the launch of programmes such as Education for All with goals set to have been achieved in 1990, specifically goal number six, which targets quality education and access for all. Goal number two of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set in 2000, speaks to achieving universal primary education. The current Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set in 2015, have goal number four aimed at ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education (UNICEF, 2007). Despite all these efforts, reports indicate that globally, students are still not meeting the minimum proficiency standards in reading and mathematics ([sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4](http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4)). In the following paragraphs, I will briefly

discuss some of these reports and highlight the magnitude of the challenge in reading for understanding (comprehension), which leads to high illiteracy rates. Progress reports on the successes and failures of the above-named programmes reveal the importance of developing high-level comprehension and critical-analytic thinking skills to improve reading standards.

According to the UNESCO Summary of Progress towards Education for All (ED-11/HLG-EFA/1, p.3, 5, 11, 13) report, a lack of equity in the provision of education was noted in Latin America and the Caribbean in the period from 1990-2000 between the Jomtien and Dakar conferences, leaving certain social groups at the margin of educational systems. Functional illiteracy and severe problems with learning achievements and the quality of education were among the major challenges identified. According to the same report, in Sub-Saharan Africa, notable challenges include inadequate infrastructure and teacher resources, persistent geographic and socioeconomic disparities that lead to poor performance in school. The report noted that when students leave school, most of them will be partly literate with illiterate rates remaining persistently and inexcusably high in South and West Asia and sub-Saharan African countries which have over 150 million illiterates. The total illiterate population is said to have increased by one million in the last decade in the Arab states. Highlighting the quality of education, the report shows that among factors that contribute to discouraging children from enrolling in school or push them out of school or “leaving them in school but not learning” was the use of a language of instruction that students did not understand and a lack of textbooks. As a result, according to the same report, in sub-Saharan Africa 40% of the students who finish primary school cannot read or write.

Highlighting what happens in the classroom, the UNESCO Summary report looked at the International and National tests that revealed children’s poor academic performance. These showed the extent to which children were not learning in school as “more children are included in school but excluded from learning what they should learn” (UNESCO Summary of Progress towards Education for All. ED-11/HLG-EFA/1, p.16). The report indicated that in a study conducted in 2006 among 16 Latin American countries, 23.3% of sixth-grade students had not reached at least level 11 in language and 19.4% had not done so in mathematics. In the PISA study conducted in 2009, none of the LAC countries scored above any of the OECD countries. In Qatar in the 2007 TIMSS study, 84% of the grade eight students scored below the benchmark in language and 71% in science. The report emphasised the importance of paying greater attention not to the number in the classroom but to what kind of learning is taking place or not taking place in the classroom. There is also a need to address challenges such as the persistent influence of

colonial legacies and biases at the expense of African models. For example, English is the language of instruction used in most schools in the former British colonies as highlighted by the report (UNESCO Summary of Progress towards Education for All. ED-11/HLG-EFA/1, p.16, 21). In the following paragraphs, I compare the reports on literacy achievements on SDG goal number four for the years 2016-2018 and progress on the SDGs to highlight the magnitude of the literacy challenges globally, regionally and then in South Africa.

According to The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Report 2018, on the progress of goal number four in 2016, and according to 2013 data from 15 Latin American countries, 50% of grade three students from six countries had a minimum proficiency level in maths while less than half in three countries were proficient in reading. Despite the fact that by the end of primary education a student should be able to read, write and understand basic concepts in mathematics, between 40% and 90% of the students did not achieve the minimum level of proficiency in reading and mathematics. On the progress of the same goal in 2017, the reports again indicate low proficiency levels in both reading and mathematics. In the recent learning assessments conducted, studies indicate that in 9 out of 24 countries in sub-Saharan Africa and 6 out of 15 Latin American countries, by the end of primary education less than half of the students had attained minimum proficiency levels in mathematics. Less than half again in 6 out of 15 sub-Saharan African countries had attained minimum level proficiency in reading on completion of primary school. On equity in education, the report indicated that 20% of students coming from the richest households achieved greater proficiency in reading at the end of their primary and lower secondary education than 20% of students coming from the poorest households. In comparison, the available data showed that urban students scored higher in reading than their counterparts from rural schools.

The report also indicated that on the progress of sustainable development goal number four in 2018, more than half of children and adolescents worldwide are failing to meet the minimum proficiency standards in reading and mathematics. Approximately 58% of an estimated 617 million children and adolescents in primary and lower secondary school worldwide are failing to achieve the minimum proficiency in reading and mathematics. The report cited disparities in education along the lines of urban-rural location among other dimensions to be still running deep and called for rethinking efforts on improving the quality of education. The above international and regional reports speak to the challenges within the education system that have seen global literacy levels going down and calls for rethinking reading problems.



In today's competitive world, an opportunity to secure gainful employment depends mostly on how one has performed academically in school and "it is accepted that literate and educated people are better situated to obtain decent formal employment and to create job opportunities for themselves and others" (Modisaotsile, 2012, p.2). As alluded to earlier, English is the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) in most South African schools. This is despite the fact that the 11 official languages in South Africa, namely isiZulu, Xhosa, Afrikaans, Sepedi, English, Setswana, Sesotho, Xitsonga, Swati, Tshivenda and Ndebele gained official status in 1996 (Statistics South Africa 2004, p.8). This became necessary in response to the dynamic needs of the society which saw the passing of the Bill of Rights and the Language in Education Policy (Republic of South Africa 1996a) after the 1994 elections. This policy acknowledges the importance of home language as a language of instruction in the early years of school in assisting learners to then learn a second language in the later years of school (Kembo, 2009). However, from literacy reports discussed below, it would appear students have been performing poorly, with poor reading comprehension skills amongst some of the major causes of poor academic performance.

Reports on the performance of South African students in literacy tests conducted show that students have been performing poorly. SACMEQ (2007), for example, indicated that at least 27% of South Africa's Grade 6 pupils were illiterate since they could hardly read a short and simple text and extract meaning from it. According to Progress in International Reading Literacy (PIRLS) 2016 Report, 91% of Grade 4 children in Limpopo, 85% in Eastern Cape, 83% in Mpumalanga, 69% in Gauteng and 55% in the Western Cape cannot read for meaning. There were even very large differences by test language where 93% of Grade 4 tested in Sepedi, 90% in Setswana, 89% in Tshivenda, 88% in Xitsonga, 78% isiZulu and 87% IsiNdebele could not read for meaning (PIRLS, 2016 Report, p.5). This could be looked at in the light of what Sa'ad and Usman (2014) indicated in a study conducted in Nigeria that factors like poor infrastructural facilities, unavailability of language laboratories, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate and obsolete teaching resources and even unqualified teachers can be contributory factors. This is further compounded by challenges resulting from learning English as an additional or second language, especially given the fact that the language of instruction is different from the student's home language.

In citing some of the challenges encountered by learners learning English as a second language, Kruger and Nel (2005) opine that students learning English as a first language and those learning English as a second language acquire communicating and talking abilities differently. They

purport that when students learning English as a second language come to school, “their linguistic behaviour and communication styles are not appreciated and understood and thus learners experience discontinuity between home and school” (p.127). This is because of the “differences in the learner’s linguistic and cultural background, such as the cultural differences which existed before the population came into contact with the new culture” (Kruger & Nel, 2005, p.127). This means that when students get back home, they get into a linguistic environment that does not support or consolidate their acquisition of the school language. They do not have time to practice English at home.

The South African *National Senior Certificate Examination 2014 Diagnostic Report* attributes the learner’s poor language skills to their inability to interpret questions correctly and substantiate answers particularly where “analytical, evaluative and/or problem-solving questions” are involved (Department of Education 2014, p.5). As a recommendation, the report urges teachers to focus on language competence and comprehension to enable learners to evaluate content critically. Interventions that therefore help students to read for understanding, as opposed to mechanical reading without full interaction with the text, could help students in reading comprehension and development of critical-analytic thinking skills.

Various scholars have noted that lack of high-level comprehension skills is among the causes of students’ poor academic performance and lack of English proficiency for students learning English as an additional language (Martirosyan et al., 2015, Ozowuba, 2018; Rashid, & Hashhim, 2008). Racca and Lasaten (2016) cite poor analytical, critical and problem-solving skills as some of the causes. As alluded to by Ningsih (2017), teaching processes that include teaching components such as the content, the teachers, the students and the method influence students’ achievements in reading comprehension. The paradigm shift from teacher-centred approaches to dialogic, collaborative, student-centred approaches continue to give hope for improving students’ academic performance through the use of small-group, text-based discussions (Ningsih, 2017). As a fading facilitator, the teacher can gradually release responsibility to the students through the peer-facilitator to allow more student-to-student productive talk and less teacher-talk, allowing co-construction of knowledge meaning-making through social interaction in the students’ learning communities.

Research conducted to date has focused mainly on small-group discussions in higher institutions of learning and primary schools with very little research focusing on peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions at the secondary school level in remote rural settings (Dalkou &

Frydaki, 2016). From the literature reviewed, there seems to be a gap of knowledge on how peer-facilitated small group, text-based discussions conducted in a remote secondary school setting may contribute to learning and developing high-level comprehension critical-analytic thinking skills. To improve students' literacy levels using an additional language, acknowledging that the use of English as the language of instruction has its challenges to such students, should inform efforts targeted at helping students improve their academic performance (García & Leiva, 2014). By ensuring that no child is left behind in the classroom and to achieve SDG goal number four that speaks to equitable and quality education, there is a need to redefine how classroom discussions are conducted.

New learning theories have documented the benefits of using more interactive and collaborative approaches to learning and teaching (Larson, & Marsh; 2005, McElhone, 2014). Schools of thought in support of dialogical approaches to teaching and learning argue that through social interaction, students can take responsibility for their learning as opposed to the traditional recitation mode of teaching where most of the talking is done by “the knowledgeable teacher” while the passive learner receives and listens in silence. It is then not surprising that for these passive students with little or no room for asking questions or giving elaborative responses to questions, it becomes difficult for the students to ‘extract meaning’ from a text as shown in the above reports. With the traditional method of teaching and learning and in the conventional recitation traditional classroom, the norm is, as a “**good student**” one should not talk, they should remain quiet and only raise their hand when they want to speak after the teacher has asked a question as alluded to by Murphy (2019)

*Historically, children in schools, public and private, have been taught that being a “good” student has a certain look. Good children are quiet and respectful, they raise their hands to ask the teacher a question, they stay seated in their chairs with their attention focused on the teacher or the task at hand, and perhaps more than anything else, they speak only when they are spoken to by the teacher or when instructed to speak, and even then, only in moderation. (Murphy, 2019, p.7)*

This is even more so if students cannot express themselves in the language of instruction and learning and may fear being laughed at by classmates, should they fail to express themselves

well in English. Remaining quiet would help them out of such embarrassing situations. Peer-facilitation of small-group discussion provides an environment in which students can increasingly participate in more meaningful teaching and learning as learners support each other creating a more social view of learning (Ashwin, 2003). More important to note is the natural and relevant ways interaction is carried out in near-peer instruction, the peer-facilitators as a near equal is close to their peer so that they can share abilities to comprehend and solve problems (Tien et al., 2002).

The current study seeks to describe observations from a case study of peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions in a rural secondary school in Mpumalanga yielding thick descriptions on how students develop critical-analytic thinking skills during peer-facilitated text-based English discussions. I contend that the study will contribute to the already existing body of knowledge on the use of small-group, text-based English discussions using peer-facilitators to develop high-level comprehension and critical-analytic thinking skills among students. It exemplifies the extended use of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory on the use of peers as students move from individual learning to the use of "more knowledgeable others" in the social construction of knowledge in the zone of proximal development, in this case, the use of more skilled peers, with the peer-student facilitators of the small-group, text-based discussions.

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

South African students' poor academic performance internationally and nationally in administered tests over the past two decades has been widely documented (Roodt, 2018; Rule & Land 2017; Spaul, 2013; Willenberg 2018). The unsatisfactory academic performance of students in both international and national assessment tests should be a cause for concern for all the players concerned, and specifically teachers and students. There has been an outcry due to the poor academic performance of students in English and lack of English proficiency in reports showing that South African Education is in a crisis (Roodt, 2018; Rule & Land 2017; Spaul, 2013)). Willenberg (2018, p.2) contends that describing the South African education system as being in a crisis is not an overstatement and had this to say, "Nearly a quarter of a century into democracy, four presidents and several curricular revisions later, South Africa has made little headway in its reading crisis". This is confirmed by the results of the Progress in International Reading Literacy (PIRLS) 2016 Report in which South Africa was ranked last out of 50 countries, where 78% of the South African pupils at grade four level could not read for meaning. The study was testing the reading comprehension of learners in their fourth year of primary schooling (Willenberg, 2018, p.2). Roodt (2018) concurs with Willenberg and also argues that South African Education is

indeed in a crisis as revealed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) 2015 Report, in which South Africa came 75<sup>th</sup> out of 76 countries, which stated that South Africa's education system was only better than that of Ghana which came last. The rankings were based on how well students performed in mathematics and science (Roodt, 2018, p.1).

According to Spaul (2011), South African school children's reading was ranked "4<sup>th</sup> out of 15 African countries for the richest 25% of children and 14 out of 15 of the poorest 25%" by the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality" (SACMEQ 111) in 2011 (Rule & Land, 2017, p.1). On comparing the SACMEQ 11 (2000) and SACMEQ 111 (2007) results, Spaul (2013) noted that there was no improvement in Grade 6 literacy or numeracy performance over the seven years. The same report indicated that the 2007 SACMEQ 111 results of the study showed that South African pupils were ranked 10<sup>th</sup> out of 14 education systems for reading and 27% of South African Grade 6 pupils were illiterate as they could not read a short and simple text and extract meaning, with the proportion varying by province. According to the report, 49% of Grade 6 pupils in Limpopo and 5% in the Western Cape were illiterate.

According to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) (2011), even South Africa's Annual Assessment (ANA) indicates that although there has been some improvement in home language performance, results for first additional language remain below 50% across the grades (Rule & Land 2017). According to an analysis of the National Education and Evaluation Development Unit (NEEDU) data of a South African study conducted by Draper and Spaul, 41% of Grade 5 ESL learners are non-readers, as these students read so slowly that they would not understand what they were reading. Eighty-eight percent of these non-readers scored less than 20% on the comprehension test according to the NEEDU report (Draper & Spaul, 2015, p.71). All these reports appear to concur that there is an urgent need for an overhaul of the education crisis in South Africa with attention given to assisting students in reading for understanding as a way of improving high-level comprehension and critical-analytic thinking when conducting text-based discussions. One way of addressing the situation can be through rethinking approaches to learning and teaching.

## **1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This section outlines the purpose of the study and sets out the questions that guide the study

### **1.4.1 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to inform knowledge interventions that enable education in schools in challenged spaces by describing how peer-facilitators partnered in developing discourse-intensive pedagogical practices when using small-group, text-based English reading comprehension discussions in a remote South African secondary school. The current study is an adaptation to multi-lingual, poorly resourced rural secondary school settings of Quality Talk, an evidence-based small-group, text-based English discussion that is used in US communities where English is a First Language (EFL) and is also the Language of Instruction. Findings from this study may address knowledge gaps around three pedagogic areas for enhancing quality education in resource-constrained culturally deprived schools: (i) the use of peer-facilitators in assisting teachers with large classes to gradually release responsibility to students (ii) use of small group, text-based English reading comprehension discussions in a multilingual context and (iii) use of discourse elements to develop critical-analytic thinking.

It is anticipated that through implementing peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions in place of the teacher-led question and answer or conventional discussion recitation approach, the dialogical space for productive talk created may have positive outcomes in the students' learning encounter. Students can collaboratively learn and develop high-level comprehension and critical-analytic thinking skills as they learn to read to understand and make meaning from a text to prepare the students for their final exams in an attempt to lessen the achievement gap of rural day secondary school students and their urban counterparts and thus close the literature gap that has been identified.

#### **1.4.2 Research Questions**

This section outlines the research questions.

##### **1.4.2.1 Primary Question**

How can insights from peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions to develop discourse-intensive pedagogical practices inform knowledge on interventions that enable education in schools in remote rural areas?

##### **1.4.2.2 Secondary Questions**

The following secondary research questions helped to answer the primary question.

- 1) To what extent and in what ways are peer-facilitators useful at facilitating small-group, text-based discussions in English classrooms in a remote secondary school?

- 2) How do the peer-facilitators perceive their role in facilitating small-group, text-based discussions?
- 3) How do discussion group members perceive the peer-facilitated small group discussions?
- 4) What are the perceptions of teachers on the use of peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions?
- 5) What are the challenges of facilitating a small-group, text-based discussion in English language class?

## **1.5 KEY CONCEPT CLARIFICATIONS**

### **1.5.1 Literacy**

Keefe and Copeland (2011, p.1) contend that “the way literacy is defined affects the classroom instruction, community services, and the literacy opportunities offered to students and adults with extensive needs for support” and how it is defined shapes our perception of who is and who is not literate. For this study, I borrow the definition of reading literacy from the Programme for International Student Assessment (OECD, 2013, p.11) which is “understanding using reflecting on and engaging with written text to achieve one’s goal to develop one’s knowledge and potential and to participate in society”.

### **1.5.2 Classroom Discourse**

For purposes of this study, classroom discourse refers to all the forms of talk that are found in the classroom (Jocuns, 2012) with emphasis on the language used in the teacher-to-students and student-to-student interactions within the social surroundings of the classroom.

### **1.5.3 Discourse-intensive Pedagogical Practice**

Discourse intensive pedagogical practices shall be defined as practices that involve the use of language devices to elicit specific responses and stir productive talk among students. According to Gover and Pea (2013), discourse-intensive pedagogical practices combine tasks with student interactions and teacher-led productive discussions.

### **1.5.4 Collaborative Learning**

Collaborative learning can be defined as a “situation in which two or more people learn or attempt to learn something together” through face-to-face social interaction as group members participate in learning activities and work together to achieve a learning outcome (Dillenbourg 1999, p.1, 2).

In collaborative learning, the “small groups of students” in this community of learners “help each other to learn” (Laal & Laal, 2011, p.492).

### **1.5.5 English Reading Comprehension**

The current study adopts Snow’s (2002) definition of reading comprehension. Snow defines reading comprehension as a simultaneous process of extracting and constructing meaning through the reader’s involvement and interaction with written language. The process, according to Snow, involves three elements, namely the reader who is doing the comprehension, the text to be comprehended and the activity which is the comprehension (Snow, 2002, p.11). An English text will be used for this study.

### **1.5.6 Student Participation in Learning**

Learning can be defined as the acquisition of new behaviour or modifying existing knowledge, skills or behaviours or the quest for knowledge (Abdullah, Bakar & Mahbob, 2012). In the present study, student participation in learning will be defined as the student’s active participation or engagement in dialogue and practices in seeking and receiving information during the learning process in the school context.

### **1.5.7 Peer-facilitator**

For this study, a peer-facilitator is also a student, but the difference with peer-facilitators is that they would have been selected and then trained so that they can offer educational services “intentionally designed to assist in the adjustment, satisfaction and persistence of students toward attainment of their educational goals” (Ender & Newton, 2000; Newton & Ender, 2010).

### **1.5.8 High-Level Comprehension**

Chang-Wells and Wells (1993) (as cited in Murphy et al., 2009, p.741) opine that “high-level comprehension requires that students engage with the text in an epistemic mode to acquire not only knowledge of the topic but also knowledge about how to think about the topic and the capability to reflect on one’s thinking”. For this study, high-level comprehension will be defined as reflective thinking about text under discussion as opposed to mechanical reading which usually leaves a student failing to explain what they have read as they will not have invested any thought in the text.



### 1.5.9 Critical-Analytic Thinking

Murphy et al. (2014, p.563) contend that “the marriage between critical thinking and analytic reasoning provides a necessary structure to the ‘ways’ or ‘mechanisms’ by which learners come to reasoned decisions about what to know, believe, and do”. Murphy et al., thus define critical-analytic thinking as “effortful, cognitive processing through which an individual or group of individuals comes to an understanding of something known or believed” (Murphy et al., 2014, p.563). In light of the above definition, this study defines critical-analytic thinking as a student’s cognitive active dialogic engagement in productive talk with both the teacher and other students and not passive acceptance of information. This involves the use of authentic questions and elaborated responses to questions during small-group, text-based English discussions as students reflect on the text and make meaning during the co-construction of knowledge.

### 1.5.10 Remote Rural Secondary School

A remote rural secondary school signifies a school in a challenged space, a space of social disadvantage or socioeconomic deprivation. The differences in access to education can also be determined by a student’s geographical location, whether they live in the urban or the rural setting. Gardner (2008) admits that-:

*conditions in rural areas still have many shortcomings despite their potential, and that the conditions of poverty and under-development are reflected in the quality of education available there. It argues that the achievement of real quality in education in rural areas will only come about when there is significant social and economic development in those areas. Until then, the education provided in rural areas will limit people’s opportunities to lead long, healthy and creative lives, or to acquire knowledge and enjoy freedom, dignity and self-respect. (Gardner, 2008, p. 9)*

In resourced constrained schools, poverty circles from different generations, the long distances students sometimes travel to and from school, lack of exposure to the most recent technologies and the poor working conditions of their teachers explain some of the difficulties rural school-based students face just because of the geographical location of their school.

### **1.5.11 Classroom**

For purposes of the present study, a classroom will be defined as a room in an educational setting in which learning activities for students take place.

### **1.5.12 Multilingual Education**

Multilingual education can be defined as the use of two or more languages in a school that aims to achieve multilingualism and multiliteracy. The term multilingual is an umbrella term that includes bilingual education which refers to only two languages (Cenoz, 2013).

## **1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Theories can be used as a lens through which researchers can “look at complicated problems and social issues; focusing attention on different aspects of the data and providing a framework within which to conduct their analysis” (Reeves et al., 2014, p.2). For example, scholars use social theories as an essential tool for analysing society (Benetti, 2014, p.2). Theoretical assumptions from sociocultural theory (SCT) (Vygotsky, 1978) were adopted to provide insights into this study. The sociocultural theoretical framework was considered suitable because of the support it provides in the teaching of reading through text-based discussions (Saleem, & Azam, 2015, p.47) as students work in small groups thereby allowing social interaction between teacher and students and between students. According to Vygotsky (1978b, p.85, 86), cognitive development within individuals occurs at “two cultural levels” namely between people, which is inter-psychology, and then inside the individual, which is intra-psychology. Saleem and Azam (2015, p.47) argue that according to Vygotsky, with the tools for thinking obtained from cultural settings, individuals can learn from knowledgeable others around them thus gradually taking responsibility for their learning. At the intra-psychology level, also known as the actual development level, individuals work on their own to solve problems. At the same time, at the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the distance between the actual development and the level of potential development, individuals work collaboratively with their peers to solve a problem.

Collaborative learning, with its roots in Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, views learning as a social process activated through the ZPD, is premised on the belief that knowledge is socially constructed. Through interaction with either adults, trained peer students or more capable peers, students can increase their knowledge even resulting in their cognitive development (Dillenbourg, Baker et al., 1996, p.5). Dillenbourg et al., argue that collaborative learning is activated through Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development wherein interactivity, referring to the extent to which interactions influence participants’ thinking, is one of the key markers of collaboration leading to

the co-construction of knowledge through interactions among collaborators (Lai, 2011, p.7, Lin, 2015, p.11) working in small-groups.

Most current studies emphasise the importance of helping students to be responsible for their learning and that by empowering students to engage in productive talk during small-group text-based discussions, high-level comprehension and critical-analytic skills can be achieved (Croninger et al., 2010). Notably, Nouri (2016) pointed to the ability to engage in dialogue as a unique feature that humans have, unlike animals. Nouri further argues that, as social beings, humans have been created for dialogue and social interaction, wherein “the interdependence of social and cognitive processes play a critical role in the construction of knowledge and cognitive development”. Students, “as social learners who actively construct meaning and knowledge as they interact with their cultural and social environment through dialogue” (Nouri, 2016, p.1).

As alluded to earlier on, through social interaction, students get new knowledge. However, for this interaction to take place, language plays a pivotal role since language is a social practice through which we can make meaning and interpret life around us. Language is used in everyday life to establish and maintain social and personal relationships and as a social practice for making meaning and interpretations (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009, p.16). It can be argued from this discussion that language, the social context, and critical-analytic thinking form the basis of learning as social interaction.

Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory then helps to bring meaning into how students construct new knowledge in communities of learning that are created in the classroom through classroom discussions (Vygotsky, 1978a). In his sociocultural approach, Vygotsky (1978b) argues that individual cognition is shaped through the social experience of language use through communication and interaction with teachers, expert peers, and other adults at the inter-mental level through the process of internalisation and then gradually transferred at the intra-mental level. Vygotsky identified three important functions of language where he characterises language as a “cognitive tool that is used for processing and constructing knowledge”, language as a “significant social and cultural tool for sharing knowledge during joint interactions amongst other people”, and language as a “pedagogical tool that may be used in supporting and guiding other people’s intellectual development” (Vygotsky, 1962) (as cited in Kovalainen, 2013). This implies that the teacher then can create an environment that “maximises the students’ ability to interact with each other through discussion, collaboration and feedback” and this is when the teacher can also make

use of peer-student leaders to facilitate the small-group discussion to create an environment that allows maximum participation of all the students.

Collaborative learning with more capable peers, the interaction between students and teachers, and amongst students helps students advance to the zone of proximal development to achieve the potential level of development that an individual cannot achieve independently. Peers can provide others with new ideas, where peer scaffolding as a mediating tool promotes the students' ZPD (Lin, 2015, p.11, 12, Vygotsky, 1978b). This study sought to understand the implications for the use of the sociocultural theory in developing high-level comprehension and critical-analytic thinking skills through the use of peer-facilitators in small-group, text-based discussions specifically in a resource-constrained remote rural secondary school.

In this study, the Quality Talk model was used in the process of gradually releasing the teacher's responsibility, allowing the peer-facilitator to run the small group discussion. Allowing students to ask questions and discuss in small groups provides them with opportunities that lead them to think critically through dialogue with others, enabling them to reflect about their thinking and become aware of their thinking processes. This is a shift from the traditional approaches of teaching that deprive students of the opportunity to discuss and exchange ideas genuinely in the classroom. It is hoped this will help students improve their comprehension skills as they socially interact and make meaning of text-based content.

Critiques of the sociocultural theory argue that there is some vagueness about the ZPD in that there is insufficient information on how wide or narrow the zone may be, among other critiques (Polly et al., 2017). Since the present study seeks to describe what happens during social interaction amongst peers with a peer-facilitator running the dialogue in the development of critical-analytic thinking skills, I still found the SCT suitable for this study as the width of the ZPD was not of paramount importance in this study. Chapter two provides a detailed discussion of the use of SCT as a theoretical framework for this study.

## **1.7 RESEARCH PARADIGMS**

### **1.7.1 Metatheory**

The present study is situated in the interpretivist paradigm. A paradigm is a set of beliefs that “defines for its holder the nature of the world, the individual's place in it, and the possible relationships to that world and its part.” (Guba & Lincoln 1994. p.107; Viljoen, 2012). Mack (2010) also contends that the combination of ontological and epistemological assumptions makes a

paradigm. For interpretivists, reality is socially constructed, and there is no single reality, instead, there are multiple realities (Thanh & Thanh, 2015) that are socially and experientially based and alterable. These realities are intangible mental constructs that depend on individuals or groups that hold the constructions. Interpretivists view the world through the participants' perceptions and experiences. This means that a researcher using the interpretivist approach uses the participants' experiences and perceptions to answer research questions, constructing and interpreting their understandings from the gathered data. (Thanh & Thanh, 2015, p. 24). The researcher plays the role of a "passionate participant as a facilitator of multi-vocal reconstruction", and the knowledge construction process is value-laden. Both the participants and the researcher's views and voice are important in the construction of knowledge in this case. The separation in ontology and epistemology disappears as the investigator and object of investigation are interactively linked so that the findings are indisputably created during the investigation process (Creswell, 2014; Guba, & Lincoln, 1994. p.112; Viljoen, 2012). Using the interpretivist paradigm for this study enabled me to seek and accept the multiple realities, approaching reality from my participants, that is, from people who are members of a group that owns the experiences. A detailed discussion of the interpretivist meta-theoretical paradigm will be done in Chapter Three.

## **1.8 METHODOLOGICAL PARADIGM**

Since the present study is situated within the interpretivist paradigm, which acknowledges the multiplicity of realities and emphasises the importance of social interaction between what is to be known and the knower, the qualitative methodological paradigm was considered most appropriate. The qualitative research approach allows for the use of data collection methods that give room for the "exploration of meanings that groups ascribe to a social or human problem". In this approach, data is collected in the participant's natural setting and through inductive reasoning, building from the particular to general themes that emerge from the data (Creswell, 2014, p.32). The current study seeks to understand how peer-facilitation using peer-facilitators contributes to small-group, text-based English discussions in the classroom. The qualitative research approach allowed me to observe the participants in action, conducting interviews that brought out the peer-facilitators' experience in this activity. What made the intervention easy for them and what challenges they met could only be understood from the peer-facilitators and what I observed happening in their natural setting. Chapter Three discusses in greater detail the use of the qualitative research approach in the current study, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the approach.

## 1.9 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### 1.9.1 Research Design

Schurink (2009, p.803) views a research design as a researcher's plan on how to conduct research, from topic identification right through to the interpretation of results, while Creswell (2014) describes research design as a type of inquiry within the qualitative, quantitative and mixed-method research approaches. A research design provides a road map that one follows in conducting a research study. Below I discuss the descriptive case study design as well as justifying why the design was considered suitable for the present study.

The current study employed the descriptive case study design which provides descriptions and interpretations through the use of observation methods that focus on the sociocultural context, time and space as important aspects (Hitchcock et al., 1995, p.320). The descriptive case study design was used to collect and analyse thick descriptions of the student peer-facilitators' experiences during the text-based small group discussions in English comprehension class discussions at a rural secondary school in Mpumalanga Province in South Africa. The descriptive case study design was selected because of what it was able to tell me in response to my research questions and questions that could come up during the research process (Hitchcock et al., 1995, p.320). In the following paragraphs, I briefly discuss the descriptive case design to justify the relevance of this design to the current study.

Krusenvik, (2016, p.1) defines a case as an intensive in-depth study of a few units of multiple variables. These units, which can be a group, an organisation or a local community, can be of different kinds that are defined by both space and time. Hitchcock et al., (1995) suggest that a case can be defined in terms of the following:- key players, key situations and critical incidents in the life of a case (Hitchcock et al., 1995, p.319). Stake (1994) in Hitchcock et al., (1995, p.316) emphasises that it is important to remember that in a case study it is the object to be explored that is of paramount importance and not the methodological approach employed in studying it. Also, characteristic of a case study is the need for one to define the boundaries for the case to have clearly bound settings so that one operates within the focus of the study. According to Creswell (2014) and Hitchcock et al., (1995), time and activity are used to limit the case study and a variety of data collection methods are used over a reasonable period. To reduce "ritual academic blind alleys where effect and usefulness of research become unclear and untested" due to a "great distance between the object of study and lack of feedback", Flyvbjerg (2011, p.303) contends that a case study provides space for "concrete experiences" that can be achieved through "continued

proximity to the studied reality and via feedback”. In practice, the interpretivist approach provides room for the interaction of the object of study, what is to be known and the knower.

### **1.10 STRATEGIES TO ENSURE RIGOUR AND QUALITY**

The quality criteria that will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3, which include, credibility, confirmability, dependability, transferability and trustworthiness, guided the processes and procedures followed in conducting this research. This called for vigilance in ensuring that I correctly reported the findings so that I try and eliminate bias through self-reflection on my role as a researcher.

### **1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

In conducting research, I applied for Ethical Clearance from the University of Pretoria Ethics Research Committee. Since I was aware of my responsibility as a researcher to ensure the physical, social and psychological well-being of the research participants (Parveen, & Showkat, 2017, p.6), I adhered to this requirement during data collection in the field and during the data analysis process.

I adhered to issues relating to seeking participants’ informed consent before conducting the study, protecting my research participants from harm, issues of beneficence and non-maleficence, autonomy, anonymity and confidentiality as further explained in Chapter 3. I clearly understood that it was my duty as a researcher to do not only what is legally right but that which had ethical validity, was morally right and acceptable behaviour in research (Parveen, & Showkat, 2017, p.3, 5).

In the figure below, I summarise the research paradigms, design and methodology.

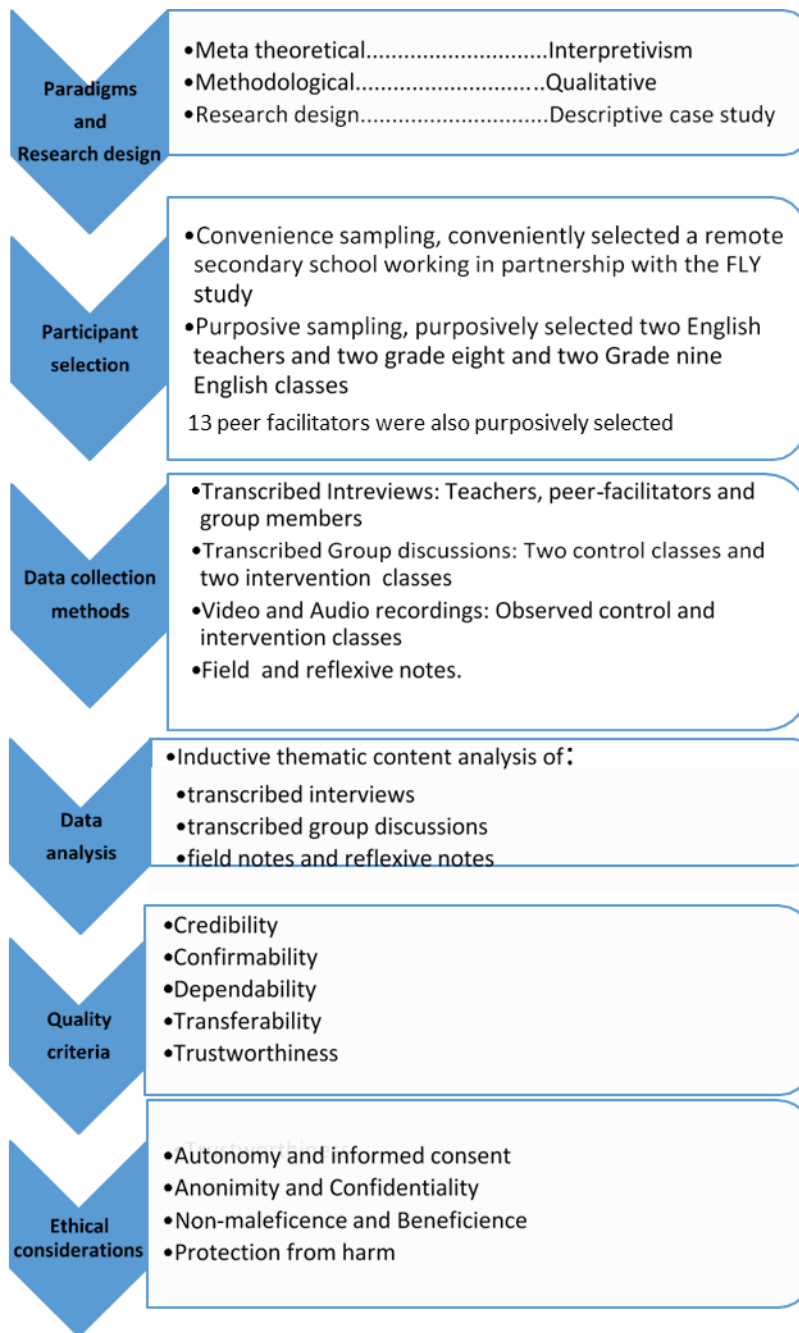


Figure 0.1: A summary of Research paradigms, Design and Methodology

## 1.12 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted using the qualitative approach aligned to a descriptive case study perspective, where data was gathered following standard operational procedures for qualitative data collection methods. As such, this research approach allowed the use of smaller samples



which then makes it difficult to generalise the research findings to large populations. I also joined the research project leading to my research study in the second and final phases of the project, meaning that there is data from the first phase of the project that I missed, and this may account for some gaps in my understanding of the background to the study.

In terms of delimitation, the teachers used as research participants had to be Grade Eight and Nine qualified English teachers and the two (2) Grade Eight and Two (2) Grade Nine classes that they taught English automatically became research participants for the present study. The research observation was conducted over one year in 2017, and member checking was done the following year in 2018.

### **1.13 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS**

The thesis is organised into five chapters as follows:-

#### **Chapter 1. Contextualising the Study**

This chapter provides an introduction to the study, providing background to the study and the problem statement. The chapter explains the purpose of the study and then outlines the research questions that gave rise to the methodological processes of this study. This is followed by an explanation of the theoretical framework and the clarification of the key concepts. The chapter also briefly outlines the research methodology and strategies to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research and ethical considerations in conducting qualitative research. I conclude the chapter by looking at my role as a researcher.

#### **Chapter 2. The Socially Constructed Nature of Meaning-Making**

The chapter begins by attempting to situate the problem at hand into debates on literacy as poor academic performance of students leads to low literacy levels globally, regionally, nationally and even in the context in which the study was conducted, the rural area. In the first section of the chapter, I briefly look at literacy and how multilingual education and rurality may be seen as confounding factors that lead to low literacy levels. I then also discuss how such inequalities in education become a social justice issue to justify the need for an intervention to improve literacy outcomes. In the next section, I discuss school-based interventions looking at the strengths and weaknesses of the conventional recitation approach versus the collaborative and dialogic approach. The discussion leads to what text and discourse are all about and then looks at the Quality Talk model for use in Comprehension teaching and learning. The section then introduces

the core of the present study, the use of peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English intervention that aims to improve high-level thinking and development of critical-analytic skills in comprehension reading, its merits and demerits. In conclusion, the chapter explores the literature on how teachers perceive this peer-led small-group facilitated intervention.

### **Chapter 3. Research Methodology**

Providing an in-depth analysis of the processes and procedures followed in conducting this research, the chapter begins by discussing the philosophical background of the study, identifying the research paradigm and research design. This is followed by a discussion on the research questions and research approach and justification of the choice of each. This is followed by a discussion on study units such as the study site, study population, sample and sampling procedures followed for this study. The next section then discusses the research methods employed for each research question and a description of each method. Data analysis procedures, strategies to ensure quality in the study, and ethical consideration are then discussed before I conclude the chapter by looking at my role as a researcher in the present study.

### **Chapter 4. Results and Findings**

In this chapter I discuss the results of the study on the issue of employing peer-facilitators to facilitate small-group classroom discussions. This was done to assess the effectiveness of the intervention in the teaching of reading comprehension in a rural context.

### **Chapter 5. Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations**

A synthesis of both literature and the empirical study is conducted in this chapter. A discussion focusing on both the primary and the secondary research questions in relation to findings is carried out in this chapter before I conclude by suggesting recommendations on the effective use of peer-facilitators in facilitating small-group discussions in teaching and learning of reading comprehension in an effort to develop high-level thinking and critical-analytical skills in all students for high-level literacy outcomes.

## **1.14 CONCLUSION**

While there have been global calls for quality education for all, most countries still encounter challenges leading to the poor academic performance of students. This results in low levels of literacy, especially for students in rural contexts where it would appear, the level of effort does not

equate the magnitude of the problem. South Africa is amongst countries that have been affected as literacy tests over the years have not shown much improvement despite the efforts being made to improve the situation. To contextualise the problem, I discussed the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the rationale of the study, the purpose of the study and then provided the research questions that guided the study. Key concepts were clarified, and a brief introduction to the research methodology was discussed. This study sought to establish possible ways of providing support for students in resource-poor settings to provide guidelines for improving the learning and teaching of reading comprehension to improve levels of literacy outcomes. Chapter 2 will discuss literature related to this study and provide the theoretical framework that was used as a lens for the present study.

## CHAPTER 2: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVE NATURE OF MEANING- MAKING

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***“Literacy is not a luxury; it is a right and a responsibility. If our world is to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, we must harness the energy and creativity of all our citizens”***

*President Clinton on International Literacy Day, September 8th, 1994*

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a detailed review of relevant literature on peer-facilitators, small-group, text-based discussions, and critical-analytic thinking as they form the basis for the current study and are key to providing insights on how peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions can inform discourse-intensive pedagogical practices in a remote rural secondary school. The first section reviews the literature on the Sociocultural Theory (SCT), which provides the theoretical framework of the study. This is premised on current debates that emphasise the importance of dialogue in learning and teaching wherein it is strongly argued that knowledge is socially constructed and through active participation, students can broaden their knowledge and sharpen their thinking skills. Vygotsky’s (1978b) Sociocultural Theory was used as a lens for the study, and towards the end of the chapter, I discuss the SCT’s use and its limitations in the current study. The second section, which contextualises reading comprehension as literacy, then discusses educational inequality and social justice-related issues. The section that follows reviews literature on the shift from teacher-centred to student-centred collaborative and dialogic teaching and learning. These approaches are discussed as important background to the peer-facilitated small-group discussions. The Quality Talk Model is used as a case example in this study and will also be discussed in this section. The section explores various scholarly views on the use of talking in small-group, text-based English discussions as a way of improving comprehension skills and developing high-level critical-analytic thinking in the teaching and learning of reading comprehension. The use of peer-facilitators as facilitators in the small-group discussions will be explored from the peer-facilitators’ perspective to establish their role, as well as exploring the teachers’ perceptions of this student-centred approach to learning and teaching. In the following section, I focus on Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory as the theoretical framework for the current study.

## 2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section focuses on Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory as the theoretical framework for the current study.

### 2.2.1 The Sociocultural Theory

The Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978b) was used to provide a lens through which the current study could be understood. Collaborative learning is premised on the belief that knowledge is socially constructed and interaction with either adults or trained peer students can increase students' knowledge, even resulting in their cognitive development. Dewey (1963) acknowledges that learning is a social activity. Yet, in contrast to what normally happens in the traditional classroom setup, it is the teacher who does most of the talking and usually to passive recipients who are not allowed to interact with their peers. Research now emphasises the importance of helping students to be responsible for their learning and showing how important it is for a student to know when they are understanding a concept and also when they need help so that they take the necessary action to get help. Interestingly, Nouri (2016) notes a very important point for consideration on the important gift we have as humans, the ability to dialogue. He argues that, unlike animals, people can dialogue and in socially and culturally shaped contexts, humans can dialogue and interact with one another. Children, too, he further pointed out, are social learners and can actively construct meaning and knowledge through interaction with their social environment.

Similarly, it is through interaction with the environment that students get new knowledge. However, for this interaction to take place, language plays a pivotal role as language is "something that people use in their daily lives and something they use to express, create and interpret and to establish and maintain social and personal relationships", and also as "language is a social practice of meaning-making and interpretation" (Scarino, 2010). In the same vein, Mitchell and Myles (as cited in Linake & Foncha, 2015) argue that the learning process involves students reflecting on their personal experiences and linking the new knowledge to what they already know and then learn to adjust. Linake and Foncha (2015, p.114) agree, "One such skill could be the provocation of the student's experiential knowledge where social constructivists see reading and learning as social practice". It can thus be noted from this discussion that language, the social context, and critical-analytical thinking form the basis of learning as social interaction. Concurring with the same idea, Stahl (2003) suggested the treatment of meaning-making as an essential

social activity that is conjointly conducted collaboratively by a community as opposed to individuals who happen to be co-located.

Still, on the importance of language in the process of social interaction that leads to the learning process, Planas and Setati-Phakeng (2014) propose three perspectives that impact language policies and multilingual classrooms. They argue for the use of home language as a language of learning and instruction, although this could result in stigmatisation. Under the language as a resource, they encourage the use of multiple languages for teaching while students can improve their second language through the use of their mother tongue. This is in line with Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory. Vygotsky argues that people acquire language through social interaction, and, as such, collaboration is important in language learning. Through effective communication, knowledge can be co-constructed, and "what is communicated should not be far from the level of the learner" so students can learn language skills in a social context. Hence the need for teachers to "understand the role of language in communication, which is to express and share ideas, thoughts and feelings thus enabling learners to be part of the speech community" (Lugolobi-Nalunga, 2013, p.7). As such, teachers and students can use code-switching to "express solidarity, checking for comprehension and other social motivations" (Mesthrie et al., as cited in Lugolobi-Nalunga, 2013).

It should be noted that the Sociocultural Theory helps to bring an understanding of how students get to construct new knowledge in the community of learning that is created in the classroom through classroom discussions. Vygotsky (1978b), in his sociocultural approach, argues that learning occurs through communication and interaction with teachers, expert peers and other adults at the inter-mental level through the process of internalisation. This knowledge is then gradually transferred at the intra-mental level with the social experience of language use, shaping an individual's understanding. He identified three important functions of language where he argues that language is cognitive too and is necessary for processing and constructing knowledge. Language can also play the role of a social and cultural tool for sharing knowledge during interactions amongst people, and as a pedagogical tool, language can be used to support and guide people's intellectual development (Vygotsky, 1962, as cited in Kovalainen, 2013).

The implication for the teacher then is that they can create an environment through discussion, collaboration and feedback to maximize the students' ability to interact with each other. Peer-student leaders facilitating small group discussions can thus be used to create an environment that allows maximum participation of all the students. The Sociocultural Theory places importance

on the teacher making an effort to understand what the student can achieve on their own and when they need others to perform an assignment, as they socially interact and learn in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978b).

In this study, the Quality Talk model was used as a guide for the training of the peer-facilitators and the students to conduct productive talk during small group discussions that allowed maximum participation of all the students as alluded to by Mayfield (2001, as cited in Rezaei et al., 2011). Mayfield argued that in classroom teaching, students' awareness of critical thinking could be raised through involving them "in critical thinking opportunities and dialogue with others so that they could contemplate upon their thinking and be cognizant of their thinking processes through asking questions and discussions" (Rezaei et al., 2011, p.773). This is a shift from the traditional monologic approaches of teaching that deprive students of the opportunity for genuine discussions through the exchange of ideas in the classroom. Bandura's (1971) four conditions of the modeling process will be put to the test in trying to help students develop critical thinking through the use of authentic questions. It is hoped that this may help students improve comprehension skills as they socially interact and make meaning of text-based content.

The past few decades have seen a shift from the teacher-centred to the peer-centred approach in teaching and learning, where discourse has now taken over the traditional "teacher initiation, student response and teacher's evaluation (IRE)" teaching method. (Mehan, 1979). In the IRE method of teaching, dialogues were dominated by "closed questions" which mostly required a one-word answer or a "yes /no answer" and students were rarely "encouraged to elaborate on or give a reason for their thoughts" (Olaussen, 2016, p.1). This also meant a shift of attention from the teacher-led to the peer-led groups discussing texts, as these have shown evidence of how the discussion can lead students toward a better understanding (Gabriel, 2005) of the text. They learn to ask authentic questions and critically evaluate each other's responses in the discussion groups. Cook-Sather (2010) argues that for effective learning to occur, students' involvement and assumption of responsibility for their learning is a requirement. It is against this background that this study will specifically seek to understand the role of peer-facilitators as they facilitate a productive discourse in their small groups.

The literature search conducted looks at literacy, educational inequalities and social justice, intervention research, the conventional recitation approach to teaching reading comprehension, collaborative learning, and peer-led interventions to justify the importance of responding to the disadvantaged's needs to improve literacy outcomes. While most of the studies conducted point

to the importance of collaborative learning, the community of learners, and the importance of classroom discussions in enhancing learning. Only a few studies have looked at bridging the gap between the teacher who is an authority figure and the powerless figure on the receiving end in establishing a conducive environment for learning in the classroom. Therefore, it is not surprising that students, because of cultural expectations, like reminders that they should respect the elderly, not ask questions in the classroom, and be quiet, believe that these actions can also be taken as a sign of being a good student. However, researchers have indicated how talk can be used as a thinking tool and how, through social interaction, students can get to learn. This study looks at the effect of the intermediary role peer-facilitators can play as they facilitate small group discussions in the classroom. This model establishes social justice in the classroom and gives all the students an equal opportunity to co-construct knowledge as a process of learning (Mckimm & Morris, 2009; Moust & Schmidt 1995).

## **2.3 CONTEXTUALIZING READING COMPREHENSION**

### **2.3.1 What is Literacy?**

According to Mullis et al., (2006, p. 148) the word “literate” means to be “familiar with literature” or, more generally, “well educated, learned”. Only since the late nineteenth century has it also come to refer to the abilities to read and write a text while maintaining its broader meaning of being “knowledgeable or educated in a particular field or fields”. According to the Mullis et al. (2006, p.147), the definition of literacy has evolved over the years from simply referring to one’s ability to read and write to viewing literacy, not as a “simple process of acquiring basic cognitive skills” but to encompass how those skills can then be used “in ways that contribute to socio-economic development, to develop the capacity for social awareness and critical reflection as a basis for personal and social change”. This can only be achieved if the student is not just a passive recipient of information as described in Freire’s (1970) “banking system”, in a situation worsened by the poor working conditions of a demotivated teacher, who has to work with very scarce resources, teaching students coming from impoverished backgrounds who sometimes have to walk for long distances to school. In this case, the chances are, very little learning may be taking place.

Harste (2003) acknowledges the most recent breakthrough in defining literacy, states that there are multiple literacies and treats literacy as a social practice. As such, he argues about multiple literacies that, “Literacy means different things to different groups. Closer to home, school literacy may be very different from ‘everyday literacy’ or even literacy as the parents of your students may



be thinking about it” (Harste, 2003, p.8). This also explains why, when students come to class, in the constructivist approach, they should not be treated as empty slates given the vast experiences that they bring to bear on the learning enterprise from the different social practices and backgrounds (Linake & Foncha, 2015). Hence, the need for teachers to look at which social practices they would need to put in place to legitimize the multiple literacies students bring to class. There are certain things, as suggested by Harste (2003), that teachers may need to do so that they show that they honour the home literacies that their students bring to school (Harste, 2003). Street (1997, p.54) argues that whatever teaching method is used, it should consider “the variation in literacy amongst students and give value to their different backgrounds and the different literacies they employ in their home contexts”. The above definitions can be very useful when conducting reading comprehension lessons as these multiple literacies can be used for co-constructing knowledge based on the text under discussion. By creating spaces for students to interact actively through small-group discussions, there is room to accommodate the multiple literacies that the students bring from home as long as they are helped to keep the discussions constructive and productive.

For purposes of this study, I will use Hobbs (2016)’s definition of literacy, namely:

*Literacy includes that ability to decode text, to participate in meaning-making by interpreting and composing, to use texts functionally and appreciate their particular forms, structures and purposes, and to analyse texts critically recognizing how they represent the world in selective and incomplete way. (Hobbs, 2016, p. 1)*

As students work in small groups, with peer-facilitators facilitating the discussions, they make use of appropriate questions in helping each other to understand the text under discussion, as they decode the text and participate in meaning-making through the interpretation of the text. It is this active and collaborative social interaction that leads to the literacy of each group member in an attempt to leave no one behind. It is my argument that regardless of the student’s setting, being in a rural school as in this case, once the students acquire such a skill, they can also develop high-level thinking and critical-analytical skills. However, there are compounding factors

associated with rurality that have created educational inequalities that have seen students in rural schools performing poorly academically compared to their urban counterparts (Chakaninka et al., 2012, Mandina, 2012, Ncube, 2013, Ramón et al., 2019). I discuss the compounding factors associated with rurality in the following paragraphs and conclude the section by looking at how from a social justice point of view, teachers can empower their students through teaching them to think critically and analytically by allowing students to actively participate in their education through the use of “a knowledgeable other”, the peer-facilitator, who can be a necessity according to Vygotsky’s ZPD (Abtahi, 2017; Sundurarajan, 2010).

### **2.3.1.1 Problematising Literacy**

Global, regional and national educational reports on students’ literacy have noted students’ poor academic performance across the curriculum, which is caused by lack of proficiency in the language of learning and lack of literacy skills, which leads to poor development of high-level thinking and comprehension skills (Au, 1998, Echazarra, & Radinger, 2019; Sullivan et al. (2018). According to the Results for Development Institute (R4D) (2016), literacy remains a global challenge, especially in low and medium-income countries. Youth literacy is still lagging behind, as approximately 126 million 15-24-year-olds globally, which accounts for 10 percent of the global youth population, are not able to read (UIS, 2014) (as cited in R4D, 2016, p.4). As a region, East and Southern Africa (ESA) has not been doing well either as statistics indicate that “average test scores for numeracy in international and regional assessments undertaken in the ESA region were generally low, with a considerable proportion of students not achieving basic skills in reading and mathematics” (Friedman et al., 2016, p.27).

SACMEQ III (2007) results from countries that participated from the ESA region show wide disparities in reading and mathematics by the end of primary education. The results show that three out of the twelve participating countries (Kenya, Tanzania and Swaziland) had between 80 and 93% of students achieving the minimum reading level in SACMEQ. “Six countries (Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Mozambique, Uganda and South Africa), between 50 percent and 80 per cent of students achieved the minimum level. In Lesotho, 48 percent of students in Grade 6 achieved basic reading skills; in Zambia and Malawi, only 27 percent of students reached this level” (Friedman et al., 2016, p.27). These results are clear testimony that countries should invest more in ensuring that something is done to improve literacy levels in students. The results only help us perhaps want to interrogate pedagogical practices that do not help students to be active participants in the learning process. In the traditional teaching models, students are continuously

on the receiving end where the teacher as the transmitter of knowledge talks the most, and the students do very little talking (Weimer, 2013). Such students may continuously remain in a situation where high-level thinking and the development of critical-analytical skills remain a nightmare. It is when students are given a platform to ask questions, use exploratory talk and learn to give evidence for their answers that they can begin to co-construct knowledge collaboratively and utilise meaning-making through the use of talk as a tool for thinking and inter-thinking (Croninger et al., 2018). This calls for rethinking strategies that can develop high-level thinking and critical-analytical skills in text-based reading, which is one area through which such skills can be imparted.

By comparison, South Africa is in a deep literacy crisis highlighted by the 2016 PIRLS report. For example, the report indicates that eight out of ten (78%) of South African Grade 4 children cannot read for meaning, scoring the lowest marks among the fifty countries that participated in the 2016 PIRLS study (see Appendix F for an extended summary). The same report indicates that only 4% in America and 3% in England cannot read. The report also noted that there was no significant improvement in reading between 2011 and 2016. In addition, the report showed massive differences in percentages in four of South Africa's nine provinces in which Limpopo has 91%, Eastern Cape has 83%, Mpumalanga 83%, Gauteng 69% and the Western Cape 55% of their children who cannot read for meaning. The current study was conducted in rural Mpumalanga, which, as indicated in the report, has 83% who cannot read for meaning. The 2016 PIRLS statistics reveal the magnitude of the literacy challenge in South Africa, despite efforts by the Department of Basic Education to try and introduce measures to improve literacy outcomes. In the next section, I discuss how factors such as the use of English as the language of instruction, although it is not the home language of learners, and rurality, could be contributing to lack of English proficiency and poor academic performance of students.

#### 2.3.1.1.1 Educational inequality and social justice

According to Freire (1970), the “oppressed” and marginalised people can be emancipated when literacy is used as a tool for social change and through discursive practices in the classroom. (Mayo, 2012; Weimer, 2013). Freire's contribution in terms of the present education system's output compared to its intended output in terms of student-teacher communication highlights the importance of dialoguing if the learners' critical thinking powers are to be stimulated with a teacher as a partner of the learner. He described the traditional, teacher-centred way of teaching as the “banking” system in which the teacher transmits information to the students, while the students

have to record, memorise and recite. As the teacher deposits information and students receive it, there is no communication as no room for dialogue has been given (1970).

Freire instead argues for a dialogical system to “promote inquiry” wherein a “true dialogue demands those who dialogue to engage in critical thinking. True education, therefore, means the need for communication, which in turn is based on dialogue” (Freire 1970, p.4). This is also in line with the instructional frame, where Wilkinson et al., (2010, p.149) argue that a “productive discussion includes shared control between the teacher and the student, in which the teacher has control over the choice of text and topic and students have interpretive authority and control of turns”, (i.e., there is an open participation structure). Communication, which is a two-way process, can effectively be conducted if all the parties dialogue and can fully understand what is being talked about. This, I argue, is possible if the dialogue, the discussion is conducted in an atmosphere that allows all those involved to express themselves freely.

Vygotsky (1978b), through his sociocultural theory, posits that knowledge is socially constructed as the individual interacts with others. During class discussions, as they ask genuine questions in search of knowledge and as responses are given, and clarity is sought in an interactive process, students can add new knowledge to their existing knowledge in the inter-psychological and then intra-psychological stages. According to Vygotsky’s theory, on the “zone of proximal development” (ZPD), the student can fully develop through social interaction and through scaffolding from the teacher or a more experienced peer as they offer support to the “student’s evolving understanding of knowledge domains or development complex skills”. He argues that “collaborative learning, discourse, modeling and scaffolding are strategies for supporting the intellectual knowledge and skills of learners and facilitating intentional learning”.

Hackman (2005) argues that effective teaching from a social justice point of view includes allowing and encouraging the student to think critically and allowing students to be active participants in their education as teachers create critical, democratic and empowering educational environment. Students should be allowed to take an active role in their education, to be responsible for their learning, cognisant of the reality that students have been socialised to be quiet in class and would need empowerment to feel free to contribute towards a meaningful dialogue. However, as long as students continue to face impediments to the learning process, caused by rurality, poverty, lack of educational resources and difficulties in expressing themselves in the language of instruction, which is not their home language, it then becomes a social justice issue. This, therefore, calls for concerted efforts to ensure that the systems make an effort to redress issues

such as these impediments, which are a good indication of the situation of the disadvantaged student who then finds it difficult to achieve academically in life.

As shown from the PIRLS (2016) findings, English proficiency and literacy levels for students in South Africa are very low, and this is even worse for rural schools. In addition, such schools can also be characterised by a multilingual situation in which the teachers and the students often do not share the same home language. In deploying teachers, no care is taken to deploy them in areas where they are familiar with the first language of the learners and this only creates a situation where students are taught in English, a second language that they may not understand, hence the poor performance academically. If this is evaluated in the context of Vygotsky's (1978b) Sociocultural Theory, where socialisation amongst the students themselves and between the teacher and the students is supposed to help in the co-construction of knowledge for students, the chances of little learning taking place are high as students may find it difficult to ask questions because failure to speak English fluently may result in the other students laughing at them. Hence, there is a need to create a conducive dialogical space to lessen the burden brought on learners by inequalities in education.

Education or the classroom, to be more precise, can also be a site for the perpetuation and reproduction of social inequality. Sullivan (2000) indicates how, according to Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction, the disadvantaged and the marginalised have always lived in circles of poverty and poor academic performance because of educational inequalities, not a lack of giftedness in the students.

According to Sullivan (2002), in Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction, systems in industrialised communities condone class inequalities. Once someone is of a good cultural capital standing and high-class disposition, then their success in education is guaranteed. However, because the poor do not have these things, the opposite is true. This argument can explain the inequalities in educational attainment (Sullivan, 2002). With different social classes established in our societies and failure to redress these inequalities, it has not been surprising that children from lower classes in the society have continuously been attaining lower education performance than their counterparts from upper-class families. This could be because they do not have equal access to educational resources compared to the children from the upper class, but they have to sit in the same national exam. The language of instruction, which is normally different from the

student's home language, worsens the burden a student in a rural school faces in an effort to understand what they are learning.

#### 2.3.1.1.2 The Language of instruction and home language discrepancy

Learning English as a second language, as in this case, children often face challenges as the language of instruction is completely different from the language spoken at home. The challenges include having to learn the new language and learning content related to the various subjects in this new language of instruction. The situation is further complicated when the teacher speaks a different home language from the students, and the students also speak a variety of home languages (Daly & Sharm, 2018). In South Africa, for example, there are now 11 official languages. However, from a study conducted by Songxaba, Coetzer and Molepo (2017), English still dominates as the language of instruction. Songxaba et al., (2017) argue that following the post-apartheid educational context of South Africa, learners from various linguistic backgrounds are bundled together in class, posing challenges in teaching comprehension in English, the language of instruction for students learning English as a second language. According to the PIRLS 2011 Assessment Report, in seven countries, 10% of students are reported to be tested in a language that is different from the one they speak at home, and their chances of achieving minimum learning standards in reading were lower when compared to students whose home language was the same as the language of assessment.

From the above discussions, it follows that by creating spaces that allow students to communicate effectively as they help each other to understand the text under discussion, their home language can be useful in helping each other to learn the language of instruction. They can use their home language as a resource to help them understand the second language through code-mixing and code-switching. However, just being in a rural school has its own challenges compared to students in urban schools.

#### 2.4.1.1.3 Rural schools

In some studies conducted to date in rural schools, in comparison to urban schools, their academic performance suggests that there could be some factors related to the geographical location of the students that contribute to poor literacy levels, although a few studies dispute this (Chakaninka et al., 2012; Du Plessis, & Mestry, 2019; Mandina, 2012, Ncube, 2013; Ramón et

al., 2019). According to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (2000), Australian students attending schools in rural areas and remote communities experience poorer educational outcomes than their peers in the cities. A study conducted in Australia seems to confirm a link between the availability of resources and learning outcomes (Sullivan et al., 2018). In a study conducted in Uganda, Banda and Kirunda (2005) confirmed that “untrained teachers, poor infrastructure, management practices in rural schools, lack of supportive academic discourse practices, general lack of enthusiasm among rural parents (most of whom have very little formal education) for their children’s education” are some of the contributory factors for poor academic performance in students in rural settings (Banda & Kirunda, 2005, p.1).

Comparisons of academic achievement based on geographical locations have been widely documented with some possible relationships between poor school literacy achievements and students in diverse backgrounds being argued. Au (1998, p. 298) avers that there is a growing cause for concern about the gap between “the school literacy of students in diverse backgrounds and those in the mainstream background”. I will consider rurality and learning English as a second language with English as the language of instruction, as a diverse background in this case. The language policy in education which mandates that English must be used as the language of instruction and for school examinations, although students may not understand it, has seen rural people struggle to break away from the vicious circle in which poverty and academic literacy deprivation for the rural-based parents continue to haunt their children (Banda & Kirunda, 2005). They also argue that other factors that worsen the academic performance of these learners include “untrained educators, poor infrastructure and school management practices in rural schools, poverty and lack of supportive academic discourse practices and a general lack of enthusiasm among rural parents (most of whom have very little formal education) for their children’s education” (Banda & Kirunda, 2005, p.1). Ramas et al. (2012) argued that a student’s individual characteristics, including their home environment, nationality, main language, and home background, also determine their academic performance. As alluded to by Au (1998) “students’ poor academic performance in diverse backgrounds is due to the exclusion or limited instruction in their home language in many school programs or the low status accorded to their home language. Unlike their mainstream counterparts, students in diverse backgrounds are not encouraged to use their existing language skills as a foundation for developing literacy in school as such skills are usually ignored” (pp. 301, 302.). Au gives an example of Spanish students not being allowed to express their thoughts of an English text-based story in Spanish to illustrate that linguistic differences are related to decreased opportunity to use their existing language skills as

a foundation for learning to read and write. In addition, the student's family background also counts. Häkkinen et al. (2003) argue that students from parents with high educational levels usually obtain better grades than students whose parents have a lower level of education. Considine and Zappala (2002, p.92) similarly agree that these students from low economic status families "have lower levels of literacy, numeracy and comprehension, lower retention rates and lower higher education participation rates".

Ramas et al., (2012) further noted that another important factor that determines a student's academic performance was the type of school they attended. Whether it was an urban or rural, private or public school, the school size and teacher-student ratios and then also the peer effects all contributed as factors influencing the students' performance. With most rural schools, a ratio of one teacher to fifty students or more is the order of the day while students scramble for the few textbooks in poor classroom environments.

Ebersöhn and Ferreira (2012) contend that a scenario of broken windows, insufficient classrooms, limited access to library books, water, electricity, and sanitation are things one can expect from a rural school. "Rural' calls to mind isolation, backwardness, and even 'being left behind'" (Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2012, p.1). From the above contributions, it is clear that all these factors point to the disadvantages a student learning in a rural environment has to endure over and above all the problems encountered by any other student during the learning process. If quality education for all is to be achieved, these educational inequalities need social justice-based interventions. It is my argument in this case that making better use of the few available resources would cost schools little or nothing at all. An example is making use of productive discussions to help students understand the text being read, with the aid of peer-facilitators to facilitate the discussions. More meaningful discussions can yield positive results when students are helped to develop high-level and critical-analytic thinking in comprehension reading. The peer-facilitators facilitating such discussions also have an opportunity to develop their leadership skills that can be very useful later in their lives. In the following section, I discuss the school-based intervention that can support positive literacy outcomes



## 2.4 SCHOOL-BASED INTERVENTION TO SUPPORT POSITIVE LITERACY OUTCOMES

Some children can do very well academically even in the most poorly resourced schools provided they get the needed support in a conducive classroom environment. Bandura (1971), in his theory of Social Learning (SLT), argues that learning takes place in a social context and that people learn from one another through “observational learning, imitation and modeling” known as “vicarious learning”. By observing other people's behaviours and the outcome of such behaviours, learning, according to Bandura, can take place even without a behaviour change. With the correct model, if a student is motivated to imitate capable others, learning can also take place. Hence there is a need for the teacher to model his students so that amongst them he can get peer-facilitators to help facilitate small group discussions.

Bandura (1994) later developed the SLT to the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), taking cognisance of the fact that a change in behaviour was a result of the interplay between the environment, the behaviour and one's psychological processes. The word “efficacy”, which became part of the SCT but was not part of the SLT, is worth considering here when looking at how the whole social interaction and cognitive processes help one to learn, and, in this case help peer-facilitators assume their role. Efficacy, according to Bandura, is the belief that an individual holds that he has the capacity to execute behaviours necessary to produce specific performance attainments. It is through “perceived self-efficacy” that these student leaders can offer support to those “who doubt their ability to accomplish difficult tasks and see these tasks as threats” (Bandura, 1994,). Through modeling from the teacher, the peer-facilitators can take up their role when the teacher gradually releases responsibility, allowing more student-to-student interaction in the ZPD. Gradually the peer-facilitator assumes the knowledgeable other's role after the teacher gradually fades away (Abtahi, 2017, p.36).

Darling-Hammond et al. (1995) explain how according to Vygotsky, language is the tool that “promotes thinking, develops reasoning and supports cultural activities like reading and writing”, interestingly noting how children use their eyes, hands, and speech to solve their problems, and even talking “aloud to guide their thinking processes”. As they grow, they then internalise those words they were speaking aloud to solve problems According to Vygotsky this is “the basis for learning” and it is the speech that “we use aloud and with others” that is internalized “as part of our repertoire of strategies for problem-solving” eventually. It is language, he argues, that “helps

children to be strategic, rather than purely impulsive, in their approach to complex problems, and it helps them to gain control over their thinking and behaviour” (Hammond et al., 1995, p.126).

This has implications for the teacher who should then be available or make use of a peer-facilitator who is skilled to assist in individual development. According to Hammond et al., (2012), this takes place in a context of activities in which someone more skilled is assisting. The teacher needs to assess the level of proximal development of each learner to give the appropriate level of assistance needed. The teacher can identify those student leaders to whom she can provide coaching and modeling so that they can then be assigned to lead the small groups (Hammond et al., 2012). The teacher can then assume the role of a fading facilitator, gradually releasing responsibility as the trained peer-facilitator then facilitates the small-group discussion.

It is my argument, therefore, that with the minimum resources available in large classes, the small-group, text-based discussions can be used to allow learning through social interaction so that the students can gradually gain confidence and lead each other through the learning process. As the peer-facilitators facilitate the discussion in an atmosphere where peers feel comfortable not only to ask but to seek understanding and use the various types of responses that characterise a productive discussion leading to the development of high-level thinking and critical-analytic thinking skills. As evidenced from a study conducted by Mkonto (2018), students revealed that gaining a better understanding and the ability to deal with a difficult subject in a less threatening environment emerged as one of the benefits of attending peer-facilitated learning. This resulted in students taking ownership of their learning. Evidence from Mkonto’s study also showed that peer-facilitated learning substantiates the social constructivist approach which encourages social interaction as students explore course content, and support each other emotionally.

McGlynn’s (2015) study on peer-led small-group discussions corroborated Mkonto’s findings by elaborating that the peer-facilitated discussions lead to cognitive engagement and had social benefits for the participating students. She noticed that during whole-class discussions, only a few students participated. When McGlynn changed her approach to student-led/facilitated small-group discussions, the results pointed among other things, to the effect of increased student engagement and understanding through participation in student-led small-group discussions.

The present study uses the use of peer-facilitated small-group discussions based on an English text and in the following sections, I will begin by elaborating what text and discourse

comprehension calls for and then compare two different approaches, namely, the traditional recitation and the discourse-intensive, dialogic and collaborative approaches to establish how each of the two approaches can lead to the ability to develop critical-analytic abilities in students. It is important to look at the differences between the conventional classroom recitation and the discourse-intensive pedagogical practices to teaching and learning reading comprehension, their strengths and their weaknesses to appreciate the need for rethinking new ways of conducting reading comprehension lessons. I will then explain how the Quality Talk Model, the model upon which the current study is based, works and how it was used in this endeavour, then explore the effects of employing peer-facilitators as facilitators of small-group classroom-based discussions in reading comprehension and their challenges as peer-facilitators. I will conclude this section by looking at the teachers' perceptions of the peer-led intervention in the teaching and learning of reading comprehension.

#### **2.4.1 Text and Discourse Comprehension**

Pardo (2004, p.172) defines comprehension as “a process in which readers construct meaning by interacting with text through the combination of prior knowledge and previous experience, information in the text and the stance the reader takes in relation to the text”, a process in which the reader's prior knowledge and experiences play an important role to help the reader understand the text, as they construct and extract meaning through interaction and engagement with the text (Snow, 2010). A text here can be any form, for example, paragraphs from newspapers, a whole novel or even a research report. The choice of a text should be done with the age and developmental stage of the reader in mind. Such a choice of a text is important as students need to have the background knowledge that will assist them to build and continually revise or expand the text representation as they are reading, so that they can guess and connect what they are reading to the real world (Snow, 2010). Duke and Pearson (2002) indicate that a good reader is an active reader, sets clear goals in his mind about the reading, constantly evaluates if the reading is meeting his goals, makes predictions of what is to come and constructs, revises and questions the meanings of what they are reading.

As propounded by Croninger et al. (2018, p. 7) “talk can also ignite and fuel students' thinking, particularly when the students play a central role in the talk”. Instead of having the students sit passively and quietly gaze at “the teacher who knows it all” and is depositing knowledge into these empty vessels (Freire 1970), and being taught in a language that most of them find difficult to understand, classroom discourse can improve literacy skills. This is more so if the discussions are conducted in small groups, and the teacher gradually releases responsibility to the student.

With someone at the same level as them, the students find it easier to ask each other questions and interrogate the responses being given. Croninger et al., note that “when used productively, classroom talk, particularly, small group discussion, fosters students’ critical-analytic thinking and reasoning, as well as comprehension of text (Croninger et al., 2018, p.8). In these small groups, students have an opportunity to ask questions and share ideas and emotions as they connect text to their lived experiences.

It can thus be argued that schools and teachers in a rural school can make use of peer-facilitated small group discussions to ensure maximum participation of all students in an environment that allows them to ask questions, offer support to each other, allow social construction of knowledge in the zone of proximal development and develop critical-analytical thinking skills in a collaborative group learning environment.

#### **2.4.2 Conventional Classroom Recitation in Reading Comprehension**

The conventional classroom recitation approach is a method of teaching in which the teacher, “who knows it all” transmits information to students, “the empty slates” in a pattern that has widely come to be known as the Initiation/Instruct-Respond-Evaluate (IRE) model (Mehan, 1979). In this approach, it is the teacher who decides the text to be used for discussion, controls the topic to be discussed, the turn-taking during the discussion while also possessing the interpretative authority during the discussion, and determining the types of questions to ask in the pre and post discussion activities (Chinn et al., 2001). Murphy and Wei (2018) argue that in this IRE whole class discussion, the teacher exercises interpretative authority over the text by asking questions and giving praise responses predetermined by an authority. The discussions, characterised by the teacher maintaining “complete control over the discussion by frequently injecting comments into the conversation and correcting students’ responses” leads to decreased student participation “and [they] eventually fade from the discussion with the belief that teachers are the only source of knowledge” (Murphy & Wei, 2018, p. 49, 50). According to Murphy and Wei, the effect of such a discussion is that since the discussion is less productive, it leads to lower cognitive efforts and active participation by the students. They contend that in this IRE classroom, students are likely to be exposed to test questions, questions that assess memorisation of predetermined answers such that students may be able to remember answers to particular questions with less preparation to respond to questions that require them to interpret information. In this case, students are not exposed to critical-analytic thinking “about the text, around the text, and with the text” (Murphy &

Wei, 2018, p. 50). They become passive recipients of information as opposed to what happens in discourse-intensive, collaborative and dialogic discussions that I discuss below.

## **2.5 Peer-led Facilitation Interventions in Small-group Classroom-based Discussions**

Peers, according to Little (2020), can be defined as a group of people of the same age, background or social status who through interpersonal interactions serve as important sources of information, feedback and support for individuals in developing a sense of self. They have similar interests to the individuals and are helpful throughout the adolescent's social development. On the other hand, as defined in Section 1.5.6, a peer-facilitator as defined for purposes of this study is a student who has been trained to offer educational services intentionally designed to assist in the adjustment, satisfaction and persistence of other students in attaining their educational goals (Ender, & Newton, 2000, Newton & Ender, 2010). Peer-facilitators can play an effective role in promoting positive student learning outcomes in English comprehension in classroom-based discourse. The premise behind Vygotsky's theory on peer learning points to the fact that students can learn through collaboration with a more capable peer, as indicated in his argument that should a child be assisted to do something today, the child would be able to do what the child was assisted in doing the following day (Vygotsky, 1978a). He further notes that through social interactions with peers within the student's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), learning can take place at the first level of the two levels he identified as he noted the difference between what the student can learn on their own and "the potential achievement that could be attained with assistance from capable peers" in the ZPD (Smith et al., 2014, p.716). Smith et al., (2014) also argue for the need to have "trained peer-facilitators to scaffold student learning, rather than merely providing answers" and coming up with an "educational intervention that strategically partners trained peer-facilitators with students of varying abilities to collaboratively solve challenging problems in order for students to develop within their ZPD" (Smith et al., 2014, p.716). Research conducted to date considers peer-facilitators to be students who could have done well in a previous course (Micari, Streitwieser & Light, 2006), and they are trained to use collaborative learning techniques to facilitate the small group discussions. My question would be whether or not these peer-facilitators can be picked from the same class without any record of good previous performance and with what effect?

Through the use of classroom discourse, the teacher models the students as s/he gradually releases responsibility, allowing the peer-leader to facilitate the discussion. During the process,

the teacher provides guidance to students to socially construct knowledge in the zone of proximal development as argued by Vygotsky (1978a) in his Sociocultural Theory that children's cognitive development is mediated by the social world. Vygotsky avers that a child's thinking is molded by society through parents and peers, which provides a background for peer tutoring in the classroom.

According to Vygotsky, language and culture determine thinking development and the use of "the expert other" is considered "a fundamental part of cognitive development", and the peer -facilitator can facilitate a discussion in an atmosphere where the use of the students' home language can be beneficial to help the others understand difficult words in the text. In addition, as they ask authentic questions, an opportunity within the ZPD is being availed to all to participate in problem-solving that is beyond their current abilities. By so doing, students accomplish tasks and interact with each other, scaffolding and assisting each other in the acquisition process of the second language (Turuk, 2008). Li et al. (2007) noted that children with higher motivation who usually play an active role in group activities emerge again as leaders. It is important for the teacher to quickly identify these students and offer them the necessary support so that they can become the expert peers who can play the role of peer-leaders in facilitating discussions in small groups.

Freire (1970) argues for the use of the dialogic approach to teaching and learning as opposed to what he refers to as the banking system, where "the teacher who knows" it all transmits the knowledge to the passive students on the other end. While his excellent argument could be used effectively for positive learning outcomes in classroom discourse in an English Comprehension lesson, for example, his theory does not explain the dynamics of the unequal relationship between the powerful teacher, who is an authoritative figure who knows everything in the classroom and the powerless student who is dependent on the teacher for everything. There is generally a structural power relationship that is not even in the classroom that places the student in a difficult situation as it is not a natural relationship. The peer-leader comes in as an intermediary who bridges the gap between the powerful teacher and the powerless learners, to moderate the binary, dichotomous relationship between teacher and student. It is true that the peer-leader is a learner but in a different category. However, Freire does not clearly explain how that disparate, polemic relationship between the powerful teacher and the powerless student can be resolved. He does not explain how the teacher and the students can be at the same level as they conduct the classroom discussion. The achievement of that kind of learning, situation, or context in terms of the Freirean idea is largely dependent on a knowledgeable informed teacher who is conscious of

their role of empowering the learner. I argue that those in the position of powerlessness should, as a process of empowerment itself, be able to have a sense of having played a role in the process of acquiring power. This study looks at the effectiveness of peer-facilitatorship in creating this dialogic environment for a productive talk that helps develop critical-analytical thinking skills in students.

While the community of learners in collaborative learning is an important feature of classroom discourse, the effectiveness of peer-leading as facilitators in small-group discussions need not be undermined. In the conventional recitation classroom setup, as discussed earlier, the teacher asks questions to initiate the discussion and expects learners to respond. This is sometimes not the case as some classes can be characterised by a degree of quietness or passivity that could generally be a sign of misunderstanding. In most cases, language is the barrier to learning as learners are taught in a language of instruction that they may not understand. Because of the structural imbalances in the classroom, as alluded to earlier on, students may lack the confidence to converse in a language they feel they are not competent in, hence the passivity.

On citing some of the challenges encountered by students learning English as a second language, Kruger and Nel (2005) further note that students learning English as their first language and those learning English as a second language acquire communicating and talking abilities differently. When the students learning English as a second language come to school “their linguistic behaviour and communication styles are not appreciated and understood and thus learners experience discontinuity between home and school” as a result of the “differences in the learner’s linguistic and cultural background, such as the cultural differences which existed before the population came into contact with the new culture” (Kruger & Nel, 2005, p.127). This is further compounded by the fact that even as they get back home, there may not be support as the home environment is also new to the new culture, leaving the students with nowhere to fall back on. Lin (2015, p.22, 23) admits that collaborative learning has the merits of providing more opportunities for language practice, improving the quality of students’ talk, creating positive learning climates, and promoting social interaction and nurturing critical thinking. These merits can be considered more in terms of where we have a small-group discussion, which is peer-led. A peer-facilitator who is at the same level as his peers can allow each student enough time to practice speaking in the language of instruction as they work towards a common goal. They can have enough room to share their ideas as they freely ask questions and socially interact in an atmosphere with no competition and hence no fear of being criticised and ridiculed. Through this social interaction and

with the help of a trained peer-leader, authentic questions asked can get different responses from the different group members, building confidence and self-esteem amongst the students (Lin, 2015).

Most of the research on the use of peer-facilitators in classroom discourse to date has been done in mathematics, science subjects or in literature circles in which students are expected to choose books, leaving a gap in research on the successes or failures when using peer-led small-group discussions for reading comprehension where the teacher chooses a text. This forms part of critical areas to look at since failure to comprehend English-based texts can have a rippling effect on all the other content subjects since they are also taught in English. What further compounds the situation is when students come from disadvantaged and marginalised communities like rural schools where resources are scarce, and the exposure to media that could assist is also limited. Here students often use a language that is different from the one they speak at home for learning, and the teacher is demotivated due to poor working conditions. The teacher also sometimes bringing to class not only the language of instruction that students may not comprehend but also the teacher's home language, which may be different from that of the learners. Therefore, it is important to seek to understand whether peer-facilitatorship through the facilitation of small-group classroom-based discussions can alleviate the situation as they play an intermediary role between the teacher and their peers.

### **2.5.1 Strengths of the Peer-facilitated Small-group Discussions**

Although held in different subject areas to the one under study, research conducted to date confirms the effectiveness of the student-centred approach to learning and teaching in the peer-led facilitated small-group discussions. Researchers contend that the approach increases student participation, helps to develop confidence in students, fosters the intellectual capacity of students, enables students to build multiple historical perspectives, improves students' understanding of historical ideas and shifts the learning responsibility to students. In addition, it promotes learning and creates a safe environment for students (Burke, 1983; Dandoulakis, 1986; Kelly, 1985; Ogawa, 2001; Passman, 2000; Stout, 2004; White et al., 2012). As the teacher gradually releases responsibility for the facilitation of the small-group discussion to the peer-leader as in this case, the relationship of peer-group members and their peer-leader creates an environment where this social interaction enables students to participate freely and increases the student-to-student talk.



It removes the passive participation in the conventional recitation in which the teacher does most of the talking.

Participating in peer-led instead of teacher-led discussions has been argued to provide greater opportunities for “significant amounts of student verbalization, which is key to promoting conceptual change” (Almasi, 1995, p.343), promoting higher-level thinking processes evidenced by more elaborate and composite responses. Through the use of open-ended questions that are student-generated, with the peer-leader as facilitator, there is an increased amount of talk as students explain, elaborate and defend their positions to peers (Brown & Campione, 1986.)

Reporting on findings from a meta-analysis of nine small group discussion approaches, Soter et al. (2008) opine that when students hold the floor for extended periods, they are evoked to use open-ended authentic questions for discussing a text, and when a high degree of uptake is incorporated into the discussion, the result is well structured and focused productive discussions. Their findings indicate that “authentic questions led to longer periods, longer incidences of student talk and greater elaboration which generated reasoning and high-level thinking” and affective connections between readers and text played a role in eliciting high-level comprehension and critical-analytical responses” (Soter et al., 2008). When test questions are asked, usually because they require one-word answers or responses emanating only from the text under discussion, they do not allow for more talk, and less reasoning is required. This is unlike when authentic questions are used, which offers the opportunity for students to generate connections between the text under discussion under their lived experiences as individuals. Because such discussions are critically minded, students are encouraged to reflect on personal experiences concerning the text they are reading. However, facilitating a small-group discussion as a peer-leader has its own challenges, and these will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

McGlynn’s (2015, p. 5) study, mentioned earlier in Section 2.4, revealed cognitive learning benefits as one of the strengths of peer-facilitated learning. The 33 students in her study mentioned that they were “able to hear, consider and understand the perspectives and interpretations of their peers” through sharing topic related practical experiences. The students in McGlynn’s study stressed the importance of age as one student indicated that it was easier to ask or seek clarification from a peer with similar experience and knowledge than ask a professor because they were of the same age. Emotional and social benefits also emerged as another strength of peer-facilitated discussions. The students mentioned the comfort they felt in asking for help from their peers as opposed to asking the lecturer or asking during whole-class discussions.

They indicated that asking their peers was less intimidating as they did not feel judged. The students from McGlynn's study appreciated the opportunity to learn from their peers' views and interactions with others as this led them to appreciate that "they had more things in common than they thought" (McGlynn, 2015, p.6). They experienced these benefits by participating in peer-facilitated small-group discussions. The few students who described themselves as shy also explained that they felt encouraged by participation in smaller groups compared to participating in bigger groups which made them hesitant, and they had an opportunity to practise group discussion skills.

Mkonto (2018) supports McGlynn's findings in a study that used peer-facilitated learning and found that students experienced participation in peer-facilitated learning as a less threatening environment for them while they understood what they were learning and improved academically. Students from Mkonto's study also revealed that being taught by students who were more or less of the same age made it easier for them to ask questions and engage with their learning materials and students took ownership of their learning. On the social aspects, the study built on the findings of Vygotsky (1978a) that through teacher-to-student or student-to-student interactions, students could develop their language and thinking, leading them to engage in discussions confidently. In Mkonto's study, the home language was used for code-switching when the facilitator shared the same home language with the peer-group participants. This "made it easier for both parties to ask and respond to questions" (Mkonto, 2018, p. 24).

### **2.5.2 Challenges of Peer-facilitation of and Participation in Small-group Discussions**

The challenges of facilitating peer-led small-group discussions range from lack of collaborative skills to what takes place during the process of facilitation, for example, when group members do not pay attention to others' opinions, interrupting while others are talking, and rejecting other people's suggestions without justification (Barron, 2003; Le, Janssen & Wubbles, 2018). In a study that Le et al., (2018) conducted to explore the challenges students face during small-group discussions, the students admitted that when they started, they did not know how to collaborate effectively, indicating lack of collaborative skills. These are skills that, for example, enabled them to accept opposing viewpoints, provide elaborative explanations, provide and receive help, and negotiate. From the study, only seven out of twenty-three students admitted that they failed to effectively coordinate their group activities, mentioning poor planning on activities to be completed on time and failing to support each other's progress. Their teachers agreed with their students as

18 out of 19 confirmed this lack of collaborative skills. One teacher admitted that “some rarely share their opinions while others defensively argue for their idea” as the students, according to this teacher, had not received any training both at primary and at secondary school levels (Le et al., 2018, p.110).

Le et al., (2018, p.111) refer to competence status as another challenge in collaborative learning, although according to them, participants reported this problem less often. Here the high-status students are often influential members whose ideas most fellow group members would accept without any questions; thus, they dominate the group and resulting in them underestimating the intellectual capacity of low-status members. The study reveals, as one student noted that the low-status students whose opinions were valued less than others were generally thought to be passive, less competent, or junior. As a result, the low-status students felt inferior and would not be confident enough to talk. As one student from the study pointed out, the low-status students thought their ideas were not good enough, and they did not feel safe to share. Confirming this power imbalance between the high-status and the low-status students, one of the teachers in the study indicated that it was the low-status students’ perception that they did not have equal chances to express their thinking and to contribute fully to group tasks. Giving an example of this opinion, the teacher added that there were times when some low-status students could share great ideas with her but could not dare share the same ideas within their groups as they felt that their ideas were worse than those of their brighter peers in the group. It may be noted from this discussion that once such a situation prevails throughout a group discussion, the so-called “low-status” students may not effectively benefit from the discussion as they keep to themselves and again fail to take part in “the productive talk” that helps them to think. This may remain a drawback to the development of their high-level thinking and critical-analytic skills.

Friendship also emerged as a challenge to productive collaborative learning in these small-group discussions. According to Le et al., (2018, p.112), although only six out of twenty-three students mentioned friendship as a challenge, they indicated that friendship feelings in the group sometimes inhibited them from working seriously and constructing good arguments. Confirming this, one student agreed that because of these friendships in groups, students became less disciplined and less critical in thinking as members may not criticise a deserving member to maintain the friendship bond. Students in this study also agreed that because of friendship within the small-groups, sometimes they ended up discussing issues outside the assigned topic. They agreed that this was time-consuming and unproductive. Confirming the challenge of friendship

within the small-groups, one of the two teachers admitted that because of the good feelings that the students have for each other, students could easily be distracted and start sharing social life stories within the assigned group work. If this happens, reflection on the text under discussion falls by the wayside, the talk is no longer productive as admitted by one of the students, hence the need for the continuous role of the teacher as a fading facilitator in small-group, text-based discussions.

In addition to challenges peer-facilitators meet in facilitating small-group discussions, group members sometimes also feel the peer-facilitators may not be as competent as the subject specialist or the teacher. In a study conducted by Moore, although students mentioned more opportunities for discussion and personal reflection during facilitation of small-group discussions, they also indicated that there was discomfort in some students created by the “uncertainty of not knowing ‘the right answer’ in the absence of a faculty tutor as ‘expert’” (2017, p.328.). Similarly, in a study conducted by Shore, students indicated that, “they would rather learn from the instructor than from peers because peers do not know any more than they do, and therefore might provide them with erroneous information” (1976, p. 29; Anderson & Rourke, 2002). This discomfort in students may affect the successful implementation of peer-facilitation of small-group discussions.

The above discussion has highlighted some of the challenges peer-facilitators facilitating small-group, text-based discussions are likely to face. Some of these challenges can be addressed if the peer-facilitators are trained as facilitators of these small-group discussions and taught ground rules on guiding such discussions and how to implement them. They also need to be taught how to make use of authentic questions, focusing on the text under discussion in text-based discussions. In the following section, I discuss the teachers’ perceptions on the role of peer-facilitated small-group discussions as they are active players in this intervention.

## **2.6 TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECT OF PEER-FACILITATED SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

Most studies conducted to date have explored the teachers’ perceptions of the effects of small-group discussions within different subject areas, mostly at tertiary institutions. Few researchers have looked at teachers’ perceptions of specifically peer-led small-group discussions in reading comprehension, thus creating a gap in the body of knowledge. Also, little research has been conducted on the teachers’ perception of small-group interaction aspects (Barron, 2003).

However, the few studies that have been conducted confirm the many benefits of peer-led discussions as they allow teachers to develop more comprehensive assignments (Mello, 1993, as cited in Dagnev, 2018). Dagnev's study, though not specifying in which subject area the peer-led discussions were conducted, revealed that although there are significant differences in their perceptions, teachers have positive perceptions of peer-led learning. Because of the benefits they obtained from the peer-led learning, they were willing to implement them and various research findings indicate that there was a strong tie between peer-led learning and implementation, wherein a positive attitude led to better efforts in implementing the peer-led learning (Dagnev, 2018, p.104, 105). The study, however, also revealed that teachers, as well as their students, complained that shortage of time was negatively affecting the implementation of this active learning approach (Farant, 1980, as cited in Dagnev, 2018). The study also noted that because of a shortage of time, there was teachers' relapse to the traditional methods of teacher explanations or the lecture method of teaching (Dagnev, 2018, p.108). There is a need for more studies on what the teachers say about the role of the peer-facilitated intervention in reading comprehension as it appears few studies have been conducted in this area. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks employed for this study are discussed in the following sections.

## **2.7 THE QUALITY TALK MODEL**

According to Murphy et al., (2018, p.1120), Quality Talk "is a multifaceted approach toward classroom discussions designed to increase students' high-level comprehension by encouraging students to think and talk about text, around, and with the text". The approach shifts students from a mechanical way of reading, which usually leads to failure to comprehend read text as it lacks that student's engagement with the text achieved through thinking, inter-thinking, and talking about text, around text, and with the text. This interaction with the text, leading to high-level comprehension, is "achieved through critical-analytic thinking in a discourse which fosters students' basic comprehension, epistemic cognition, and ability to engage in oral and written argumentation" (Murphy et al., 2018, p.1120). Students critically analyse the text using authentic questions that elicit individual and co-constructed responses in the co-construction of knowledge based on the text under discussion. The approach uses four interrelated components namely:- an ideal instructional framework, discourse elements, teacher discourse moves, and pedagogical principles (Murphy & Firetto, 2017, Wilkinson et al., 2010, as cited in Murphy et al., 2018). I discuss the four components in the following paragraphs.

## 2.7.1 Components of the Quality Talk Model

### 2.7.1.1 Ideal instructional frame

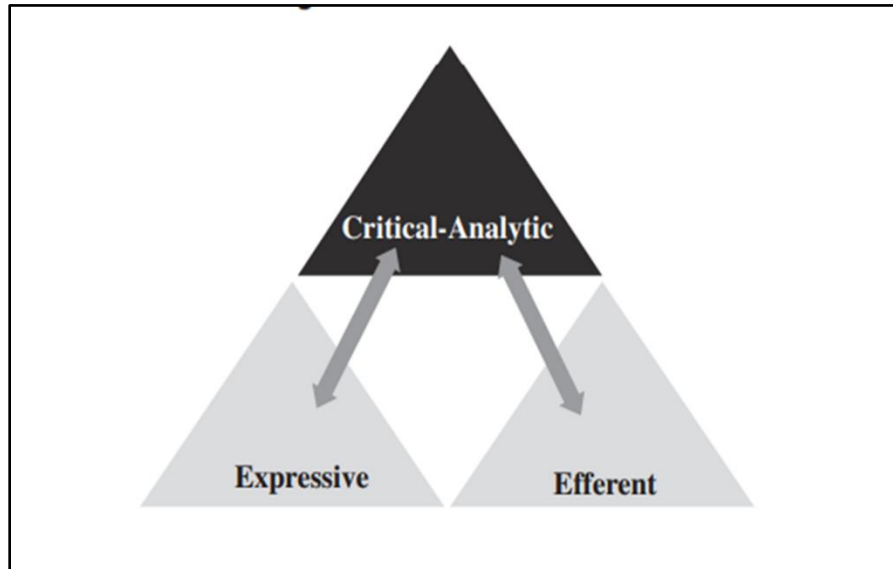


Figure 0.1: Expressive and efferent stances supporting Critical-analytic thinking (Croninger et al., 2018)

An ideal Instructional frame constitutes of a set of conditions that are necessary for promoting “productive talk” about the text. The Quality Talk (QT) discussions are conducted in teacher-facilitated discussions with a small group of four to six students with shared control between the teacher and the students. (Croninger et al., 2018). Through an open participation structure and interpretative authority, the students have control over turns, but the choice of topic and the text is made by the teacher Croninger et al. (2018) argue that common to a critical-analytic discussion is a discussion that seems to promote shared control between the teacher and the students (Anderson, et al.; 2001). According to Murphy et al., (2018), before the discussion and using a number of mini-lessons, students are taught critical-analytical ways of meaningfully responding to authentic questions. In a pre-discussion activity in their QT journals, students read the text and identify relevant features of the text, such as the main idea of the text. They design authentic questions from the text that lead to high-level thinking and help students develop reasoned arguments. Coming to the discussion “with an explicit text-based level of comprehension” provides the foundation for advanced “critical and analytic thinking about, around and with text”

(Croninger et al., 2018, p.24) preparing students to benefit more from the ensuing small-group discussions.

As the discussion progresses, the teacher who has chosen the topic of discussion takes the role of modelling for the students and supports them to think critically and analytically through scaffolding actions so that the students learn to use the scaffolding moves in support of their own thinking. The teacher gradually releases responsibility to students who have control over turns to allow them to take interpretive authority in open participation as students co-construct understanding of the text in student-student discussions (Croninger, 2018), as illustrated in Figure 2.2 below:

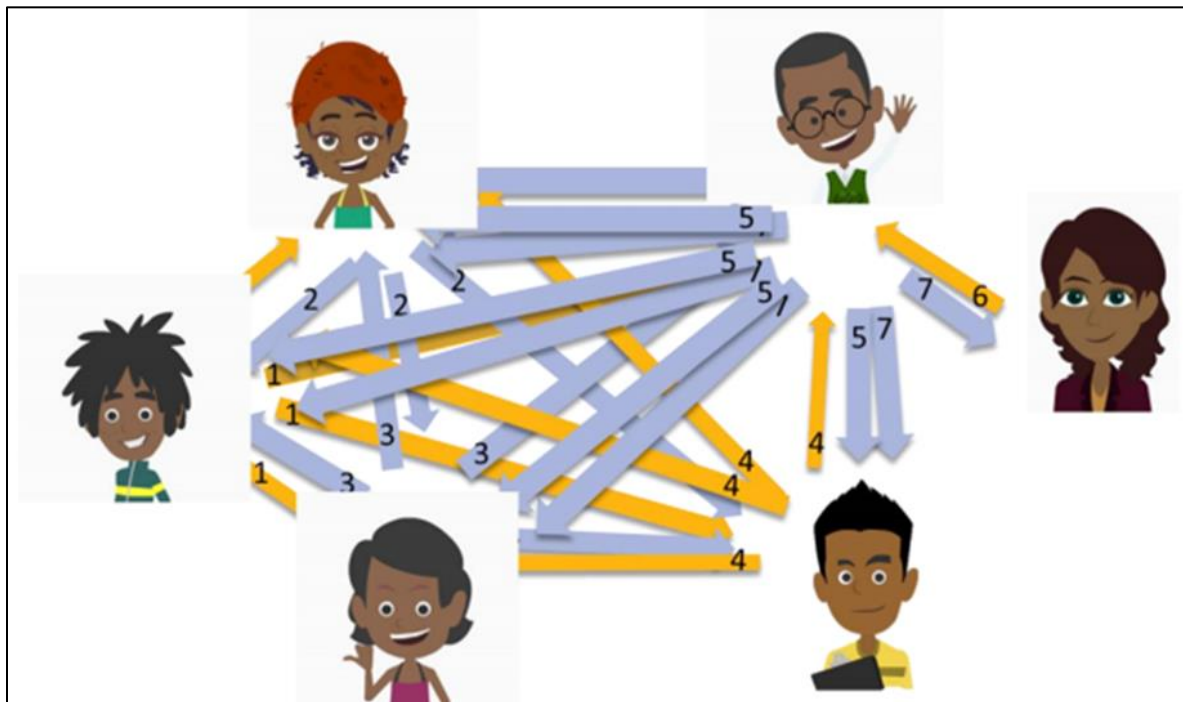


Figure 0.2: Open participation in interpretive authority with the teacher as a fading facilitator (Murphy, 2018)

Following the pre-discussion activity, in a teacher-facilitated discussion, the teacher “fosters a moderate degree of affective and knowledge-driven engagement as well as encourage the students to interrogate or query the text in search of underlying arguments, assumptions, or beliefs (that is epistemic competence)” (Murphy & Alexander, 2016, as cited in Murphy et al., 2018, p.1121). Using expressive responses, students encourage each other to talk about their lived experiences to the text under discussion and in an efferent stance, retrieve information as they discuss. With “a basic understanding of the text, and an opportunity to generate connections to it”. Murphy et al., argue that “students are better positioned to take on a critical-analytical

stance” (2018, p.1121). Through the notion of internalisation (Vygotsky, 1978, as cited in Murphy et al, 2018), students engage in a post-discussion activity in their individual journals, as they commit to their text-based perspective in writing (Graham & Harris, 2014, as cited in Murphy et al., 2018).

### **2.7.1.2 Discourse elements**

The second component of the QT model is the discourse elements, which is the vehicle that is used to get students into critical-analytic thinking. This component uses authentic questions, which are open-ended questions followed by uptake questions that build onto others’ contributions; together with the other discourse elements. The approach also uses generalisation, analysis and speculative questions to elicit critical thinking (Nystrand, 1997, Nystrand et al., 2003, as cited in Murphy et al., 2018, p.1123) and affective, intertextual, and shared knowledge connections (Applebee et al., 2003, Edwards & Mercer, 1978; Taylor et al., 2003, as cited in Murphy et al, 2018, p.1123). In response to the questions, students may generate elaborated explanations and exploratory talk (Chinn et al., 2000, Mercer, 1995, 2000, Webb, 1989, as cited in Murphy et al., 2018, p.1123). As students receive instruction in working with reason, evidence, and counterarguments, their epistemic cognition, their ability to scrutinise sources as well as constructing and critiquing justifications for claim develops (Bråten et al., 2011, Greene et al., 2016). Below I use the table adapted from “The QT coding manual Version 2.1” (Soter et al., 2008) to show the different types of questions and how they work and a summary of the question types and possible responses that they can elicit in Figure 2.3



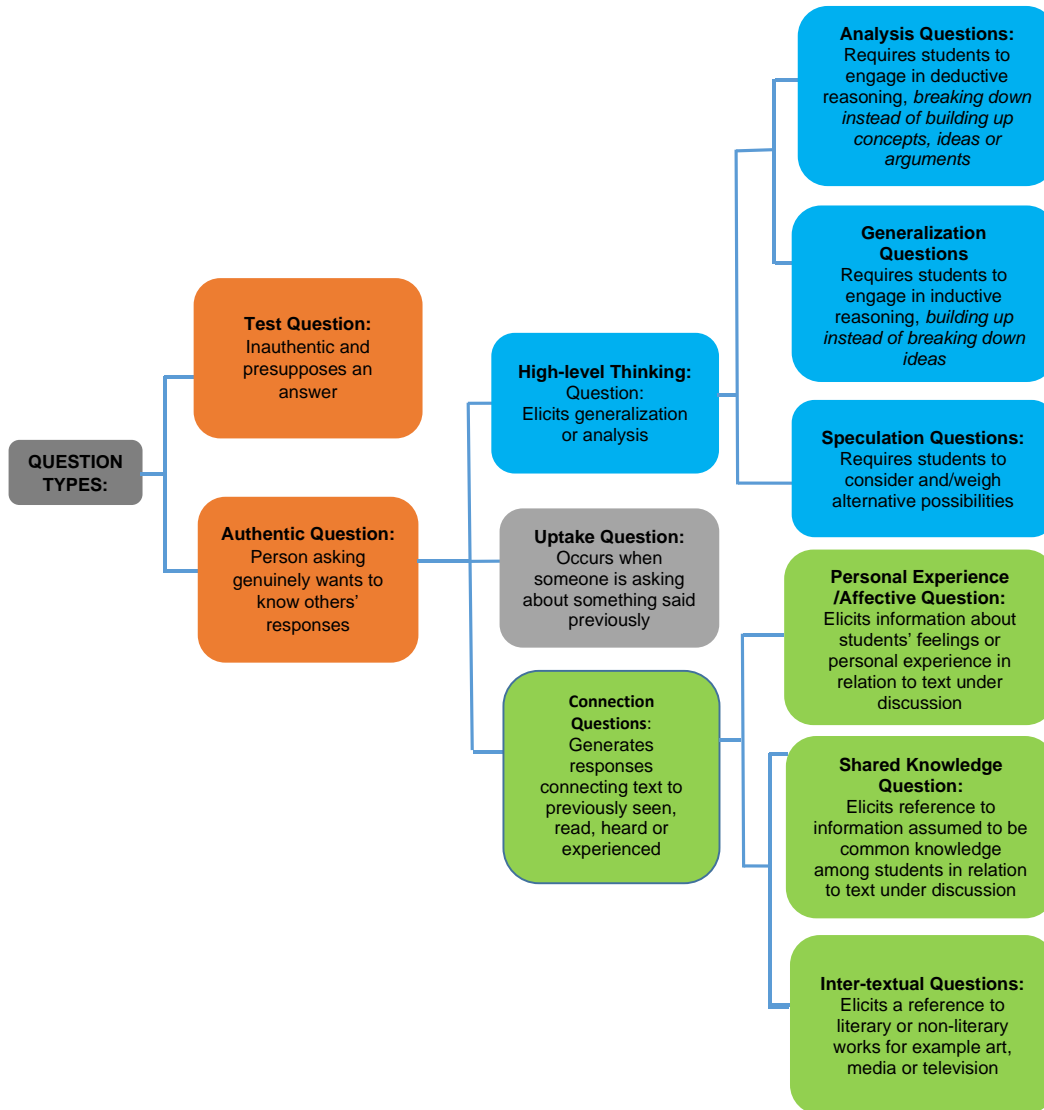


Figure 0.3: Types of Questions - Discourse Elements

Adapted from: Soter et al., (2008, as cited in Murphy et al., 2018, p1122)

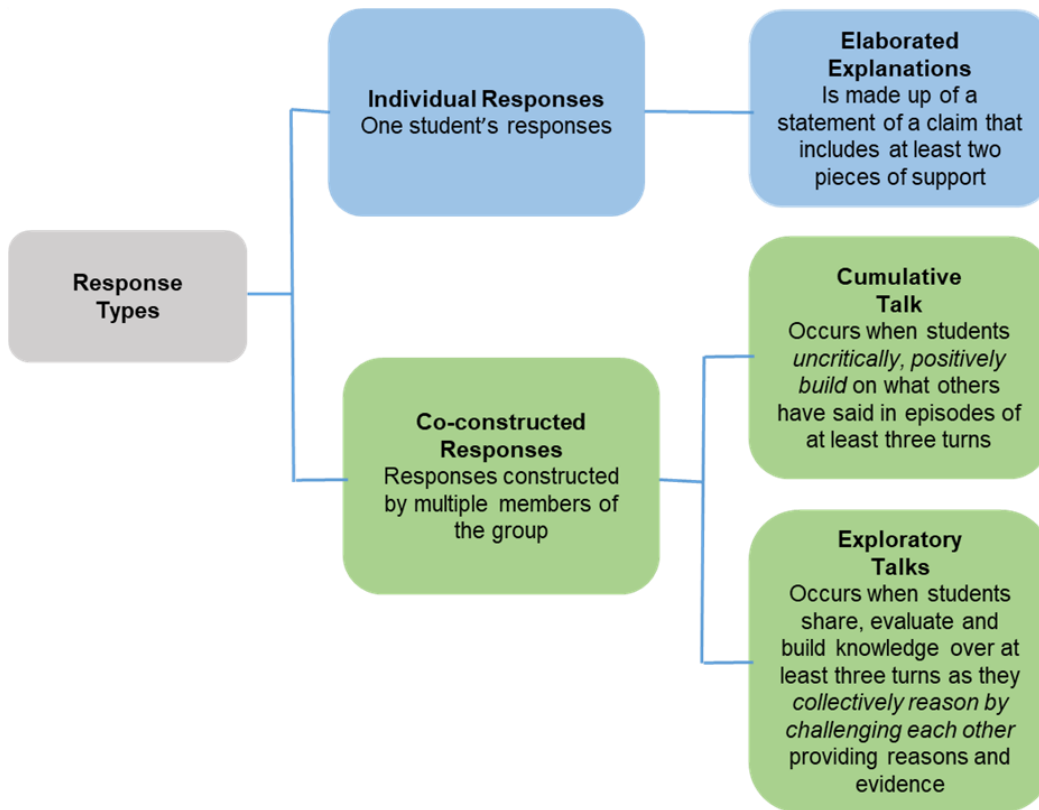


Figure 0.4: Types of Responses - Discourse Elements

Adapted from Murphy and Firetto (2017).

### 2.7.1.3 Teacher Discourse Moves

Teacher discourse moves, the third component of the QT model, can be defined as purposeful actions that a teacher uses to promote productive talk by ensuring participation of all group members and maintaining the flow of the discussion Wei et al. (in press) (as cited in Murphy et al., 2018, p.1123). Springer and Dick (2006) purport that a discourse move would be a deliberate action a teacher would take to encourage, facilitate, participate or influence a discourse. Wei et al. (in press) (as cited in Murphy et al., 2018, p.1123) argue that for the instructional frame to be implemented, “the way the teacher engages in and leads the discussion changes over time as they implement QT”. They posit that “certain kinds of talk and support that teachers provide to promote productive discussions”, all make up what they refer to as teacher discourse moves. Initially, more frequent talk and more teacher moves are necessary to provide students with more support and guidance. An example of how the teacher can model the talk they expect the students to generate is when she can say, “I’m going to start by asking an authentic question” or by reinforcing instances where a student has done well like, “That was a great elaborated answer, Sienna” (Murphy et al., 2018, p.1123). The teacher lessens her moves as she gradually releases

control, allowing students to talk more, and this is when the students have grasped what is required of them, and they can now engage in QT. Since scaffolding is still needed, the teacher will always be available to give this support occasionally. QT discussions, therefore, employ both the elements of discussions and the teacher discourse move with the latter being used by the teacher to scaffold specific elements of critical-analytic thinking” (Murphy et al, 2018, p.1123).

#### ***2.7.1.4 Pedagogical Principles in the QT model***

The fourth component of the QT approach emphasises how the teacher can instil “a culture of dialogically enhanced, text-based learning in the classroom” (Murphy et al., 2018, p.1123). This, according to Mercer (1995, 2000), starts with the teacher’s acknowledgement that “talk is a tool for thinking” (as cited in Murphy et al., 2018, p.1123) “scrutinizing knowledge” (Murphy, 2012, as cited in Murphy et al., 2018, p.1123) and acknowledging the important role that is played by discussion in learning, (Murphy et al., 2018, p.1123). Secondly, Murphy et al (2018) argue that these discussions should be “grounded through a set of normative discourse expectations [i.e., ground rules] and dialogic responsiveness”; they continue by stating that “normative discourse expectations set through a series of explicit rules for the QT discussions, such as, ‘We do not need to raise our hands’ and ‘We respect others’ opinions” (Firetto, 2017, as cited in Murphy et al, 2018, p.1124). The teacher gradually releases responsibility allowing students to “take on interpretive authority showing evidence of dialogic responsiveness [i.e., teachers’ receptivity to allowing their students to lead the discourse]”, when the “students become familiar with and engage in, discourse aligned with normative expectations” (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983, as cited in Murphy et al, 2018, p.1124).

Thirdly, the teacher uses moves for guiding or reframing the conversation when it is necessary “while allowing students the freedom to contribute in ways that are meaningful to them” in balancing structure and responsiveness (Cohen, 1994, King, 1999, as cited in Murphy et al., 2018, p.1124). Fourthly, Murphy et al., (2018) argue that the teacher must be clear on what content is to be discussed, must have a strong understanding of the story and be prepared with potential questions to ask. And, lastly, they argue that teachers should embrace space and diversity within the discourse through “allowing students the freedom to discuss their own unique, individual experiences and background, resulting in discourse with broader and richer perspectives” Murphy et al., 2018, p. 1124).

From the above discussion, it can be argued that through the use of these four elements of the QT model, a dialogic and collaborative environment can create opportunities for students’ active

social interaction as they form learning communities in the co-construction of knowledge within the zone of proximal development, as seen here through the use of a knowledgeable other, the teacher, or the peer-facilitator as is the case in the current study. This model allows for the gradual release of responsibility to the student, allowing room for interpretive authority in the discussion. Students are empowered when the teacher, as a fading facilitator, gradually releases responsibility and students take over the interpretive authority. The students thus empower themselves through by taking control of the discussion and interpreting the text as a group. I discuss how questions in peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions can lead to the development of critical-analytic thinking in the section below.

## **2.8 THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The current study focused on the role of peer-facilitators in small-group, text-based English discussions in developing critical-analytic thinking in a remote secondary school. The identified major concepts served as a guide and as a conceptual framework for my study.

In Figure 2: 2 below, informed by my literature review and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, I developed a conceptual framework that I used for this study to help me respond to the research questions.

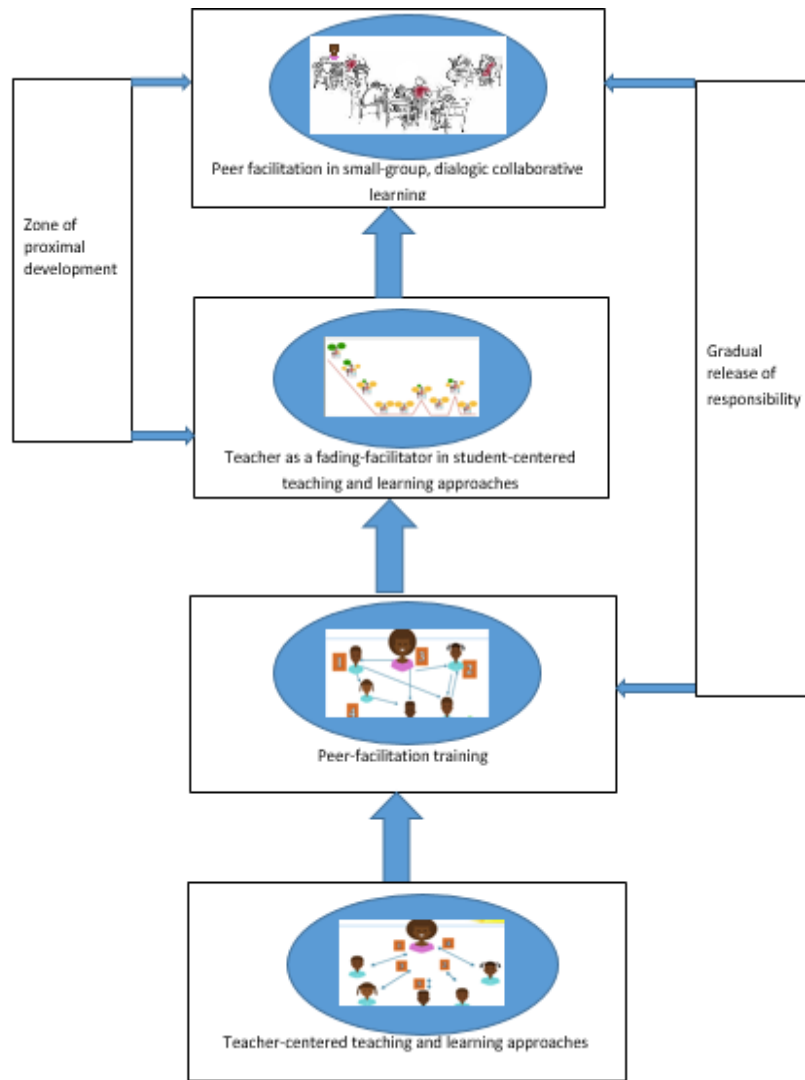


Figure 0.5: Conceptual Framework for Peer-facilitated Learning

Adapted from Mehan (1979), Murphy et al., (2018) and Vygotsky (1978).

In the development of critical-analytical thinking and high level-comprehension skills, the importance of a productive talk through collaborative and dialogic approaches cannot be ignored. The paradigm shift in new literacies emphasises the need for a shift from the traditional approaches to teaching and learning. In this model, the teacher as the transmitter who knows it all does all the talking with a few leading questions requiring very minimal thinking and participation of the students. In adopting a student-centred approach, to allow spaces for the development of students in their zone of proximal development with the help of a knowledgeable

peer, the peer who facilitates the discussion has to be trained to avoid going back to the passive approach that sees one person in full control of the small-group discussion.

In the gradual release of responsibility, the teacher as a fading facilitator, gradually gives the interpretative stance to the small-group with the trained peer as the facilitator and the students who have been taught on the use of authentic questions and the responses they elicit. In these peer-facilitated small-groups, students can ask questions and critically analyse each other's responses in meaning making and co-construction of knowledge.

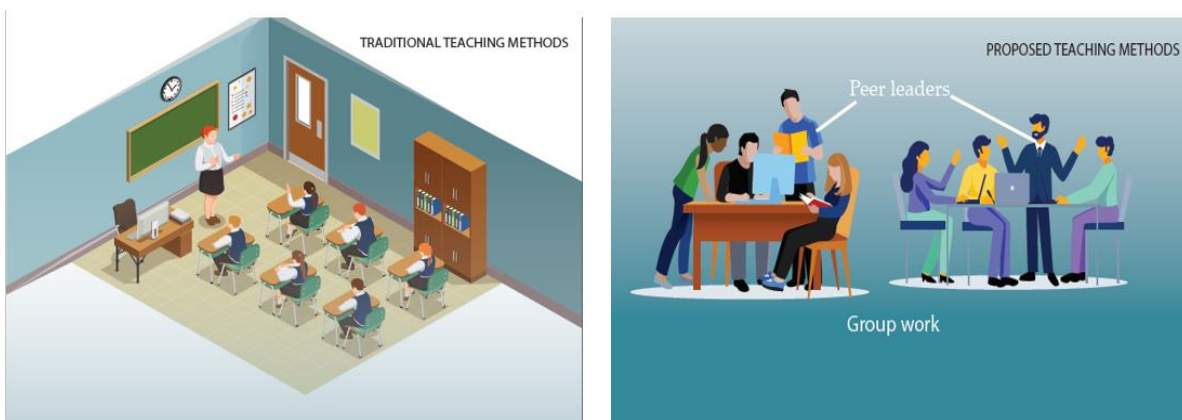


Figure 0.6: From Teacher-centred to Learner-centred Discourse-Intensive Pedagogical Practices

## 2.8.1 Conceptual Definitions in Relation to the Current Study

### 2.8.1.1 Teacher-centred learning

Over the years, the traditional Initiation, Response, Evaluation (IRE) (Mehan, 1979) method of teacher-pupil interaction in classroom discussions has dominated the teaching-learning spaces. A characteristic of such classes in a rural setting are large numbers of students. In most cases, the language of instruction is different from the language that both the students and the teachers use at home. This language barrier may make it difficult for students to comprehend what is being discussed, and unfortunately, assessment is based on what is being taught in this second language one may find difficult to understand.

### ***2.8.1.2 Student-centred Learning and Small-group, Text-based Discussions***

Mechanical reading of a text does not help students interact with a text well enough to bring about the desired outcomes in comprehension reading. Hence the help of the “knowledgeable other” in helping each other to interact with the text through the use of authentic questions, which in turn elicit co-constructed responses through social interaction. In these learners' communities, the students learn to respect each other's opinions and not argue with the person but with the idea, and much more. In small-group discussions, students can freely ask questions to seek clarification and understanding, which may not be the case in whole-class discussions. Students can code switch or code mix, all to express themselves and help each other understand the text under discussion. This creates an environment in which social skills are learned and shared. Students learn to take responsibility for their learning but not ignoring the challenges that may be experienced with the one who is taking the role of facilitating the discussions.

### ***2.8.1.3 Peer-learning and the Zone of Proximal Development***

This exemplifies the extended use of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory on the use of peers as students move from individual learning to the use of “more knowledgeable other” in the social construction of knowledge in the zone of proximal development. In this case, more skilled peers are used, a peer-leader is the facilitator of the small group discussion. As peers they help each other to learn that which they were not able to learn on their own but can now learn with the help of others in the zone of proximal development.

## **2.9 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER**

The chapter highlighted challenges associated with literacy globally, regionally, and in South Africa that students in diverse backgrounds have to endure to improve their academic performance. The discussion raised insights into new literacy studies that show the benefits of the paradigm shift from teacher-centred to student-centred approaches that teachers can employ to help students to be responsible for their learning and at the same time develop critical-analytic thinking skills. The reviewed literature also spotlighted how classroom discussions can be effective in teaching reading comprehension. However, given the large classes in poorly resourced rural secondary schools, the literature seems to be silent on how the teacher as a fading facilitator can gradually release responsibility in peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions. The literature also seems to be silent on the role of peer-facilitators in active learning as students help each other in the co-construction of knowledge and meaning-making with the help of a knowledgeable other in Vygotsky's zone of proximal development in developing

critical-analytical thinking skills. If the teacher would gradually release responsibility, would the peer-facilitator manage to ensure the maximum use of discourse elements for a productive discussion? How would the peer-facilitator deal with the challenges of facilitating the small-group, text-based English discussion in a multilingual context where the language of instruction is different from the home-language? This is the knowledge gap that this study attempts to address. Through the literature review, a suitable lens, the theoretical framework that informed my research, the conceptual framework, and the appropriate methodological approaches that I could employ for my study were identified. In the next chapter, I explain my philosophical standpoint and how I conducted the study informed by Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory.



## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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*“It follows that ontological assumptions will give rise to epistemological assumptions which have methodological implications for the choice of particular data collection techniques.”:  
(Hitchcock et al., (1995, p.21).*

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, methodology is used as the bridge to bring together the philosophical standpoint of this study, which is its ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological grounding. This study seeks to understand how peer-facilitators can effectively contribute to knowledge construction in the classroom through their lived experiences as they facilitate small-group, text-based English discussions. To reach such an end, I had to follow certain steps that included the choice of a paradigm, research design, sampling procedure, data collection, and data analysis methods. All these steps form part of this chapter, and towards the end of the chapter, I discuss measures taken to ensure quality in my data collection and analysis procedures as well as the research ethics that guided me throughout this study.

Philosophical assumptions shape the formulation of the problem and the research questions. For example, a cause-and-effect type question could be used where variables are predicted to explain an outcome as opposed to where a single phenomenon is explored in qualitative research (Huff, 2009). As such, it was important for me right from the onset to establish my view of the world before embarking on my research journey. Walliman (2011, p.30) argues that research is conducted to acquire information on what the world within us and around us is all about, and this is achieved through acquiring knowledge and developing an understanding of the knowledge as we collect facts and interpret them. He thus argues for the importance of us having a view of what knowledge is and how we can make sense of it. This is all based on a philosophical stance that one takes. He further notes that the legitimacy of knowledge is determined by the reality that all philosophical positions and their attendant methodologies hold and develop sensitivity regarding philosophical issues to evaluate research critically. Such evaluations of assumptions upon which research reports are based, the suitability of methods used, and the validity of conclusions reached also help us conduct research. In this vein, I identified a theory that influenced my study and the philosophy that underpins it and I discuss these in the following sections.

## 3.2 PARADIGMATIC ASSUMPTIONS

There are three types of paradigms, namely, the metatheory (philosophical; epistemology, axiology, and ontological positions), methodology (for example the qualitative, the quantitative and the mixed-method approaches) and the theoretical paradigm. A paradigm can be defined as a set of beliefs that “defines for its holder the nature of the ‘world,’ the individual’s place in it, and the possible relationships to that world and its parts”, a way of describing the worldview informed by philosophical assumptions about the nature of social reality (Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012, p.1; Guba, & Lincoln 1994, p.107; Viljoen, 2012). Mack (2010) also contends that the combination of ontological and epistemological assumptions, as discussed in the preceding paragraphs, make a paradigm. According to Rehman and Alharthi (2016, p.51), a paradigm is a basic belief system and theoretical framework with assumptions on ontology, epistemology, methodology, and the methods, our way of understanding the world through studying it. Kivunja and Bawa (2017, p.26) contend that a paradigm constitutes the abstract beliefs and principles shaping how a researcher sees and interprets the world, acts within that world and a lens through which a researcher looks at the world. To determine what research methods will be used for data collection and how the data will be analysed, I use a paradigm as a conceptual lens to examine these methodological aspects. The above definitions all seem to agree that a paradigm provides the beliefs and principles that help a researcher to understand the world and, as such, provides a lens that helps one to determine the choice of the data collection methods and how the data will be analysed. The current study employed the interpretivist meta-theoretical paradigm and the qualitative research approach as the methodological paradigm.

### 3.2.1 The Philosophical Background of the Study: The Meta-theoretical Paradigm-Interpretivism

The present study is situated in the interpretivist paradigm. For interpretivists, there is no single reality; instead, there are multiple realities that are socially and experientially based (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). They are alterable, intangible mental constructions that depend on individuals or groups that hold the constructions. Inquiry in interpretivism aims to understand and reconstruct knowledge through the perceptions of the participants. The researcher plays the role of a “passionate participant” as a facilitator of multi-voice reconstruction, and the knowledge construction process is value-laden. Both the participant and the researcher’s view and voice are important in the construction of knowledge in this case, and the separation in ontology and epistemology sort of disappears as the investigator and object of investigation are interactively linked such that the findings are indisputably created during the investigation process (Creswell

2014; Guba, & Lincoln, 1994, p11; Viljoen, 2012,). The interpretivist paradigm was chosen as it allows the researcher to prompt things that we can observe like perceptions, attitudes, and feelings. Also, the descriptive case study design that was used for this study, is among the key methodologies that can be used to conduct research in a natural setting to gain insight of the research participant within an interpretivist paradigm (Palm, 2018).

The current study is positioned from an interpretivist perspective. Research, as defined by Naidoo, (2011, p.47), is the diligent systematic enquiry into nature and society seeking to confirm and clarify existing knowledge and to generate new knowledge. Research, in addition to the other forms of inquiry which include reasoning and experiences, helps researchers to seek the truth about a phenomenon under investigation. These methods complement each other and therefore, need not be viewed as independent or exclusive of each other. However, research has to do with our understanding of the world, and this understanding is determined by how we see the world (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison., 2007). This worldview as argued by Lincoln et al. (2011) define the nature of the world for its holder, the individual's place in it, and a wide range of possible relationships to that world and its parts. Such an inquiry can be conducted deductively or inductively. Methods in the former involve using observations to hypothesise principles. At the same time, the latter identifies processes underlying the observed phenomenon, general principles, and structures using inductive methods for analysing the observed phenomenon (Barbie, 1998). While inductive reasoning aims at developing explanations, deductive reasoning aims at testing the validity of the explanations. This qualitative study used the inductive approach as I sought to understand how peer-facilitators facilitated small group, text-based English discussions. In the next section, I will explain the philosophical assumptions, that is the ontological, epistemological and axiological perspectives, before I justify the philosophical standpoint of this study.

Ontology can be explained as how we view the world. It can be defined as the study of what we mean when we say something exists (Mack, 2010), what it is that we call reality, in other words, ontologically we can ask, what is there to be known? While on the other hand, epistemologically, we ask the question: How do we come to know that which is to be known? This question looks at the relationship between what there is to be known and the knower. Axiology then has to do with how the researchers conduct themselves during the process of getting to know what is to be known, that is, whether or not any values and biases should be part of the process of getting to know that which is to be known.

In the following paragraphs, I explain how from an interpretivist paradigm, which uses the inductive approach, this study differs from the positivist approach that uses the deductive approach. As alluded to earlier, the choice of a paradigm is premised on assumptions that explain how we as individuals view the world. The positivist paradigm, whose ontological assumption contends that reality is objective and exists “out there”, independent of the knower, emphasises the need for reality to be treated objectively. For positivists, the social world exists externally and ontologically, should be measured objectively, axiologically with the observer-independent from the observed (Pathirage, Amarutanga & Haigh, 2007, p.514). As argued by Hitchcock et al., (1995), from a positivist perspective, since research is a systematic inquiry, it should be scientific just like biology or physics are seen as scientific and should, therefore, employ methods and procedures that the natural and physical sciences use. In terms of axiology, the inquiry is objective and value-free, and as such, rigorous procedures are used to eliminate biases and values (Viljoen, 2012).

Contrary to the positivist view of reality, this study employed an interpretivist paradigm; wherein ontologically, the reality is socially constructed. In the case of the present study, it meant that in interpretivist ontology, I as the researcher could not separate myself from that which I wanted to know, which is the reality, meaning that in the interpretivist ontology, reality is subjective. In interpretivist epistemology, reality is interpreted by conscious people who are “purposive actors with ideas about their world attach meaning to what is going on around them” and therefore cannot be objective and exterior (Pathirage et al., 2007, p.515). In that case as an interpretivist epistemologist, there was going to be a close relationship between the researcher and the object to be known. Hence, in the interaction between the knower and the known, axiologically, values exist as part of the process of getting to know what is to be known and as such, the researcher’s values affect the study (Viljoen, 2012). My values as the researcher were thus part of the process of getting to know the reality.

It can thus be noted from the above discussion that there are different sets of assumptions that guide each of the two philosophies discussed and hence the difference in the way the world is viewed under each philosophy. It is from this understanding that I contend that it is the “ontological assumptions that give rise to epistemological assumption, these, in turn, give rise to methodological consideration, and these, in turn, give rise to issues of instrumentation and data collection”, as argued by (Hitchcock et al., 1995, p.21). With this in mind, given the nature of my study, I employed the interpretivist stance that allowed me to interact with the observed phenomenon in its natural setting to collect rich data through the use of a qualitative design

approach and several qualitative research tools. As an interpretivist researcher, I allowed myself to view the world through the experiences and perceptions of my research participants, thus being able to accommodate multiple versions of truths and perspectives (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). Since I wanted to get insight and in-depth information on the phenomenon under study through observation, I made an effort to then understand the subjective realities and provide explanations that made meaning to my research participants.

The interpretivist paradigm was deemed suitable for the current study as it allowed me not to use my own interpretation of the role peer-facilitators play in helping their peers to develop critical-analytic thinking, and explain from my interpretation the benefits and the challenges encountered during peer-facilitation and participation. Instead, interpretivism allowed me to explain my understanding of the phenomenon under investigation through the perceptions of the participants who had lived the experience and which would help to bring value to my findings.

### ***3.2.1.1 Justification for Employing the Interpretivist Research Paradigm***

It can be noted from the above discussion that the interpretivist paradigm allows for active social interaction between the participant and the researcher as you cannot epistemologically separate the object to be known (participant) and the knower (researcher as in this case). This process leads to the co-construction of new meaning as they bring in their experiences, knowledge, and understanding resulting in meaningful and socially constructed multiple realities (Creswell, 2014). This was necessary for my study as it sought to understand the perceptions of the peer-facilitators in their lived experiences as facilitators of small-group classroom discussions. The interpretivist approach also allows for this value-laden relationship between the researcher and participants that made it possible for me to get rich data that I needed to answer my research questions. As a result, the interpretivist paradigm was used as a guide for methodological planning, which involved the choice of design, the process of conducting the research, and the data analysis. However, the interpretivist paradigm is not without criticisms, and I outline some of these criticisms in the following paragraphs.

### ***3.2.1.2 Interpretivist Research Paradigm Criticisms***

Of the several arguments that have been used to criticise the interpretivist paradigm, the first one is that the paradigm is known for its promotion of unguided or minimally guided students' instruction (Kirschner et al., 2006). Alanaz (2016) draws on a number of scholars (Brown & Campione 1994, Hardiman et al., 1986; Moreno, 2004; Tuovinen & Sweller, 1999) who argue that

the constructivist paradigm exposes students to minimal instructions and students can end up lost and frustrated. He affirms that the idea of minimally-guided instruction fails to take cognisance of the important role of the structure of working memory in learning (Alanaz 2016, p.2).

The second criticism is that interpretivist approaches fail to recognise the importance of having students connecting their knowledge to tangible objects as evidence that they have acquired new knowledge (Alanaz, 2016). Critics of this idea argue that learners should demonstrate knowledge by making artefacts as cognitive learning is not enough (Papert, & Harel, 1991). The third criticism according to Ackermann (2001), is that interpretivism also fails to take cognisance of the important contextual factors contributing “such as available educational resources, the need to integrate media into learning environments, learners’ preferences and the affordance of individual student thinking as these factors contribute to student learning environments”. Again, critics argue that interpretivists focus more on cognitive factors at the expense of environmental and technological factors (Analaz, 2016).

Another criticism levelled against interpretivism is that the promotion of group thinking in constructivism ignores students’ individuality, yet learning is supposed to promote individual rights (Analaz, 2016). Gupta (2011), avers that some psychologists feel interpretivism does not realize that through constructivism, the dominant students end up controlling interactions in the classroom at the expense of the average student who may end up being ignored. The critics also feel that the dominant students end up driving the whole class towards their thinking, leaving the other students behind. It is my contention, however, that the present study will present new insights on the issues raised through these critics. In the section that follows, I outline how the study was conducted, which is the research design, bearing in mind the criteria for ensuring quality in qualitative studies.

### **3.2.2 The Methodological Paradigm: Qualitative**

The nature of the problem under investigation, the researcher’s personal experience and the audience of the study determine the research approach to be used (Creswell, 2014) and for this study, the paradigm that I chose also contributed to what research approach I used. Since my study is situated within the interpretivist paradigm, which acknowledges the multiplicity of realities and emphasises the importance of social interaction between what is to be known and the knower, the qualitative research approach as the methodological paradigm was considered most appropriate. The qualitative research approach allows for the use of data collection methods that give room for the “exploration and meanings groups ascribe to a social or human problem,” and

data is collected in the participant's natural setting, "inductively building from particulars to general themes and the researcher making interpretations of the data" (Creswell, 2014, p.32). This study sought to describe the role of using peer-facilitators in facilitating small-group, text-based English discussions, and this could best be achieved through observing participants in action and conducting interviews that brought out the peer-facilitators' experience in this activity. What made the intervention easy for them and what challenges they met could only be understood from them and what I observed happening in their natural setting. I briefly explain the qualities of the qualitative research approach in justifying why I chose this research approach.

### ***3.2.2.1 Characteristics of the Qualitative Research Approach and Justification for Use in the Present Study***

The qualitative approach was chosen because of its major goal, which is to understand a phenomenon under study as opposed to quantitative approaches that seek to explain a phenomenon. The qualitative goal is emic, it describes and analyses the world as "experienced, interpreted and understood by people in the course of their everyday life" usually focusing on a "a specific problem in a specific situation" (Hollis, 1994, as cited in Cropley, 2019, p.36). The qualitative research approach can also be understood in terms of its ontological, epistemological, and methodological approaches, which contributed to my choice of this approach. Ontologically, the qualitative approach holds that reality is different from person to person, is socially constructed through interaction with other people, and that a person is an active participant in the construction of their individual reality from their own particular experiences. Epistemologically, the qualitative procedures used in the process of getting to know emphasise seeking to understand "how", for example, "people make sense of the external world". And methodologically, for the researcher to get to understand the phenomenon in question, the use of observation of people's behaviour in their natural setting is employed, through observations of participants, recording and video-taping what is really happening or conducting interviews, for example. What people said is then interpreted to give meaning to what the study sought to understand (Cropley, 2019, p.36).

This study sought to understand from the lived experiences of peer-facilitators, the effectiveness of using peer-facilitators as facilitators in small-group classroom-based discussions. From the above discussion, it became apparent for me that I should use the qualitative approach since I wanted to understand from the lived experiences of the peer-facilitators what they thought about their experiences. To gather this data, it meant I had to follow qualitative processes that allowed me to access participants in their natural setting, observe them and interview them so that I could get rich descriptions of their experiences. The qualitative approach allows the use of several data

gathering tools, and I used unstructured lesson observations, face to face interviews, video and audio recording, field notes, and my reflective diary to triangulate the information. The research participants included two female English teachers, thirteen trained peer-facilitators, thirteen non-peer-facilitators from the intervention classes and thirteen non-peer-facilitators from the control classes. I discuss these details in the next section.

### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN: A DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY**

Schurink (2009, p.803) views a research design as a researcher's plan to conduct research from topic identification right through to the interpretation of results, while Creswell (2014) describes research design as types of inquiry within the qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method research approaches. A research design provides a roadmap to follow in conducting a research study

The current study employed the qualitative descriptive type of a descriptive case study design. The "case" in this study is the case of peer-facilitators in a rural South African high school facilitating small-group, text-based English discussions (Section 3.6 will discuss the case in detail. Appendix A also provides field notes and photos to give more information on the case). The descriptive research design's major goal is to describe a phenomenon and its characteristics with particular interest in answering the "what happened" (Nassaji, 2015, p.129), allowing the researcher to observe and then describe the behaviour of the subject under study without influencing it.

The qualitative descriptive case study design was deemed suitable for the current study because of its ability to enable would-be readers to get a deeper understanding of the phenomenon that I was studying, owing to the thick descriptions which are characteristic of the descriptive design. If successfully used, the thick descriptions in descriptive designs will bring out the participants' interpretation within their locally meaningful contexts, thus moving away from the researcher-centric perspective (Yin, 2011, p. 213). The study sought to describe what happened during peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions, and what could possibly lead to the development of critical-analytic thinking and high-level comprehension skills through these discussions. The descriptive design uses both qualitative and quantitative research methods, which include the case study, among others. The current study employed the descriptive case study design, which provides descriptions and interpretations through qualitative research methods that focus on the socio-cultural context, time, and space as important aspects (Hitchcock et al., 1995, p.320). The descriptive case study design was used to collect and analyse thick descriptions of the student



peer-facilitators' experiences as facilitators during the text-based small group discussions in English comprehension class discussions at a rural secondary school in Mpumalanga Province in South Africa. I selected a descriptive case study design because of what it was able to tell in response to the research questions and questions that could come up during the research process (Hitchcock et al., 1995, p.320).

Adelman et al. (1980, as cited in Cohen et al., 2007), define a case study as the study of an instance in action while Hitchcock et al., (1995) suggest that a case study can be defined in terms of key players, key situation and critical incidents in the life of a case (p.319). Stake (1994, as cited in Hitchcock et al., 1995, p.316), emphasises that it is important to remember that in a case study, it is the object to be explored that is of paramount importance and not the methodological approach employed in studying it. A case study studies the phenomenon, which is the "case", in its real-world (Yin, 2011). A prominent characteristic of a case study is the need for the researcher to define the boundaries for the case to have clearly bounded settings so that the researcher operates within the focus of the study. According to Creswell (2014) and Hitchcock et al., (1995), time and activity are used to bound the descriptive case study, and a variety of data collection methods are used over a reasonable period. To reduce "ritual academic blind alleys where effect and usefulness of research become unclear and untested" due to a "great distance between object of study and lack of feedback", Flyvbjerg (2011, p.303) contends that a descriptive case study provides space for "concrete experiences" that can be achieved through "continued proximity to the studied reality and via feedback".

Stemming from an interpretivist perspective through the descriptive case study design, I shared the lived experiences of the peer-facilitators and group members on their perceptions of the discussions held using peer-students as facilitators of the learning process.



Picture 0-1: Peer Facilitators Training

*Pictures: (1)* Preparing the room for the peer-facilitator training. *(2)* Peer-facilitators training in progress with Professor Karen. *(3)* Illustrating a point during the training of peer-facilitators. *(4)* Small-group discussions with peer-facilitators as they practised peer-facilitation and (below) Professor Liesel demonstrates adjusting the camera during peer-facilitator training.



The thick descriptions of what took place in the observed classes at the study site, as peer-facilitators facilitated the small-group discussions, helped to bring insight into the sociocultural theoretical constructs in which classroom-based interactions amongst peers take place. The study involved two female teachers teaching four English language classes, grade eight and nine, in a

remote rural secondary school and thirteen peer-facilitators who were trained to facilitate the small group classroom discussions. I also interviewed nine students from the control classes on their experiences in reading comprehension lessons. The field notes collected and my reflexive notes (see Appendix A), helped in triangulating data collected through interviews and classroom observations. By being a member of my study community, I managed to use informal interactions to experience the use of language in a multilingual classroom during lessons and outside classes.

The descriptive case study design enabled me to employ the various data gathering methods that align with the chosen methodological paradigm, the qualitative research approach, namely the non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, field and reflexive notes, audio and video recordings to gather data from my research participants who included the two Grade 8 and 9 English teachers, the Grade 8 and 9 English students/ classes. Through the semi-structured interviews, I could satisfy the purpose of the case, which was to describe from the participant's perspective what it feels like to facilitate a small-group discussion triangulated by what I observed during the non-participant lesson observations within this unique case context, a remote rural secondary school. The video and audio recordings during non-participant observation helped bring out some body behaviours and voices that could help tell the story of peer-facilitation of small-group, text-based discussion for developing critical-analytic thinking.

While it is appreciated that rich and detailed data can be collected through this value-laden relationship of the researcher and the community under study and that the findings are based on a natural setting in the participants' lives, the design has shortcomings too. These include concerns about reliability and validity resulting from the researcher's subjectivity (Alnaim, 2015) in data gathering. The most common concern is a lack of rigour because of failure to provide strict and systematic guidelines (Teegavarapu & Summers, 2008). To address reliability issues, the current study utilised multiple sources of data namely, non-participant observations, semi structured interviews, audio and video recordings, field and reflexive notes for data triangulation (Alnaim, 2015, Teegavarapu & Summers, 2008) and to address issues of rigour, strategies to ensure rigour and quality were adhered to (see Section 3.10).

### **3.4 RESEARCH SCHEDULE AND PROCEDURE**

This study is part of the Inkhulumo research project that was started in August 2016, and I only joined the team as a co-researcher in 2017. The research team was made up of our three supervisors namely: Professor Funke, Professor Liesel, and Professor Karen. Representing the

PhD students were Sheila, Marisa, and myself. My first visit to the research site was on 15 May 2017, the day I was introduced to the school Principal, the Head of the English Department, other members of staff in the school, and of particular importance, the day I met my research participants except for the teachers. It followed that for all the other visits for data collection, the Inkhulumo team, me included, would visit the research site a day before the lesson observations. Data was collected on 30 May, 15 and 22 August and 12 to 14 September 2017, bringing the total number of days in which data was collected to six. On 16 May and 29 August although the research team went to the study site observations could not be conducted as teachers were not at the school. Researcher 1 (R1) refers to Marisa while researcher 2 (R2) refers to me, and Master of Education (MEd) student who accompanied us on one of the study site visits. During classroom observations, in the control classes the two teachers would use the conventional method of teaching while in the intervention classes the teachers would make use of the peer-facilitated small group discussions and the students would make use of discourse elements that they had been trained to use during the Quality Talk training sessions. The Below is a table indicating the dates and activities during the data collection period.

Table 0.1: Schedule of events during the data collection phase

Date	Time at school	Purpose of visit	Data collection method used	Research team members	Roles	Research Participants involved
16 May 2017	1000-1300hrs	Classroom Observations	Field notes, Video and Audio recording	R2	The planned class observation visit failed to materialise as the teachers were not at the school.	
16 May 2017	1000-1300hrs	Classroom Observations	Field notes, Video and Audio recording	R1		
30 May 2017	1000-1300hrs	Classroom Observations	Field notes, Video and Audio recording	R1 and one MEd student	Intervention class Observations and video and audio recording	2 English Teachers Grades 8A and 9B students
30 May 2017	1000-1300hrs	Classroom Observations	Field notes, Video and Audio recording	R2 and one MEd student	Control Class observations, video and audio recording	2 English Teachers Grades 8C and 9C students
15 August 2017	1000hrs - 1300hrs	Classroom Observations	Field notes, Video and Audio recording	R1	Intervention class Observations and video and	2 English Teachers Grades 8A and 9B students

					audio recording		
<b>15 August 2017</b>	1000hrs - 1300hrs	Classroom Observations	Field notes, Video and Audio recording	R2	Control Class observations and video and audio recording	2 English Teachers Grades 8C and 9C students	
<b>22 August 2017</b>	1000hrs - 1300hrs	Classroom Observations	Field notes, Video and Audio recording	R1	Control Class observations, video and audio recording	2 English Teachers Grades 8C and 9C students	
<b>22 August 2017</b>	1000hrs - 1300hrs	Classroom Observations	Field notes, Video and Audio recording	R2	Intervention class Observations and video and audio recording	2 English Teachers Grades 8A and 9B students	
<b>29 August 2017</b>	1000hrs - 1300hrs	Classroom Observations	Field notes, Video and Audio recording	The would have been class observation visit failed to take off as teachers were not at the school and Co-Researchers 1 and 2 ended up revising the Trip to Nelspruit with the 2 intervention classes in trying to revise the use of discourse elements.			
<b>12 Sept. 2017</b>	1000hrs - 1300hrs	Peer-facilitator Training	Video and Audio recording	QTSA Team	Peer-facilitator Training	13 Peer-facilitators	
<b>13 Sept. 2017</b>	1000hrs - 1300hrs	Classroom Observations	Field notes, Video and Audio recording	R1	Intervention class Observations and video and audio recording	2 English Teachers Grades 8A and 9B students	
<b>13 Sept. 2017</b>	1000hrs - 1300hrs	Classroom Observations	Field notes, Video and Audio recording	R2	Control Class observations and video and audio recording	2 English Teachers Grades 8C and 9C students	
<b>13 Sept. 2017</b>	1000hrs - 1300hrs	Classroom Observations	Field notes, Video and Audio recording	R3	Intervention class Observations and video and audio recording	2 English Teachers Grades 8A and 9B students	
<b>13 Sept. 2017</b>	1000hrs - 1300hrs	Classroom Observations	Field notes, Video and Audio recording	R3	Control Class observations and video and audio recording	2 English Teachers Grades 8C and 9C students	
<b>14 Sept. 2017</b>	1000hrs - 1300hrs	Classroom Observations	Peer-facilitator interviews	R1	Interviews	Peer-facilitators	
<b>14 Sept. 2017</b>	1000hrs - 1300hrs	Classroom Observations	Peer-facilitator interviews	R2	Interviews	Peer-facilitators	

Data was collected through lesson observations conducted in two (2) control and two (2) intervention English classes. Grades 8C and 9C were the control classes, while Grades 8A and 9B were the intervention classes. The table below shows the research participants by class and gender.

Table 0.2: Demographic information for Control and Intervention Classes

Class	Control classes		Total	Intervention classes		Total
	Female	Male		Female	Male	
8C	27	18	45	-	-	-
9C	28	19	47	-	-	-
8A	-	-		28	17	45
9B	-	-		25	24	49
	55	37	<b>92</b>	53	41	<b>94</b>

Audio recorded and videotaped data was collected through non-participant lesson observation from the control and intervention classes. Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain data from the two English teachers, and from the Grade 8 and Grade 9 students from the four classes named above. My field notes and the reflexive diary also served as data sources.

To ensure correct portrayal of the participant's voice in qualitative research and reduce researcher bias (Birt et al., 2016; Candela, 2019), member checking was used as a tool for enhancing trustworthiness. Member checking was done using the member check interview on 6 December 2019.

### 3.5 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS AND RESEARCH SITE

#### 3.5.1 Introduction

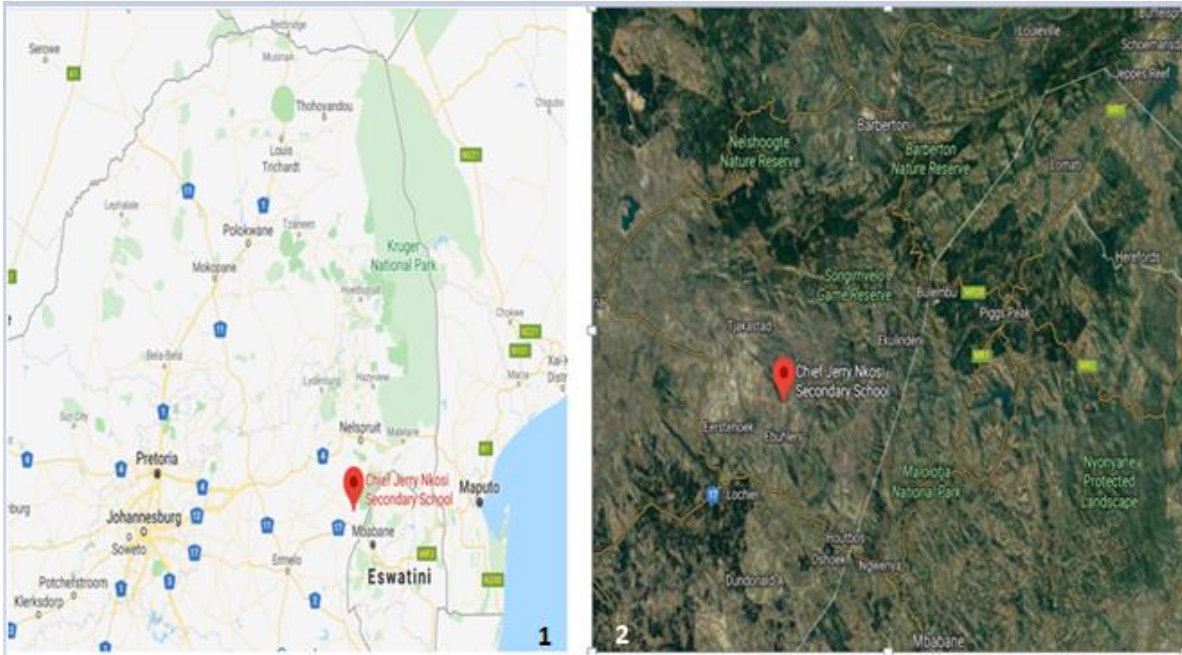
A sample can be defined as a group of subjects, if it is a quantitative study, or participants if it is a qualitative study from which data is collected (McMillan, 1990). Since the current study is a qualitative descriptive case study, the term participants shall be used for the informants of this study. Latham (2007, p.2) states that sampling "involves taking a representative selection of the population and using the data collected from these as research information". This current, qualitative descriptive case study employed two non-probability sampling methods, namely the purposive and the convenience sampling methods for the selection of the research participants and the school, respectively. A purposive sampling technique is based on the researcher's judgment "as to who will provide the best information to succeed for the objectives of the study" (Etikan & Bala, 2017, p.1). Purposive sampling was used to select the teachers and the peer-facilitators while convenience sampling was used for the selection of the rural secondary school and English language classes as they are not representative of the population. I discuss purposive and convenience sampling in the following paragraphs highlighting the reasons for the choice of each sampling technique.

### 3.5.2 Selection of the School

My participants were drawn from students from two eighth grade, and two ninth-grade classes enrolled in a public secondary school in the Gert Sibande district of Mpumalanga Province. Occupying the most southern tip of Africa, South Africa shares its borders with Namibia on the Atlantic coast, Botswana, Zimbabwe to the north and Mozambique on the Indian Ocean Coast. South Africa has nine provinces and is home to an estimated population of 58.8 million, according to 2019 mid-year population estimates (Stats SA, 2019). The same report noted that approximately 13% of youths aged 20-34 are graduates, with rural provinces being more disadvantaged as they have a significantly lower proportion of graduates. The country is a multi-cultural linguistic community using 11 official languages, with English mostly used as the language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) in additional language classes. The rural school participating in the current study is located in Elukwatini, which is in the Gert Sibande District, Mpumalanga Province, a few kilometres from Eswatini, Swaziland, and most of them speak SiSwati as their home language.

Mpumalanga is the fourth-smallest province in terms of population as its population was recorded at 4.4 million in 2016 with a total number of 1 238 861 households and averaging 3.5 people per square kilometre (South Africa Statistics, 2016). Gert Sibande, the district where the school is located, is 31 841 square kilometres in size and is the largest of the three districts in Mpumalanga Province. On the northern side, Gert Sibande is bordered by Ehlanzeni and Nkangala Municipal districts, Swaziland to the East, Gauteng to the west and KwaZulu-Natal and the Free State in the south.





Picture 0-2: Site map and location of the study site  
Image showing **(1)** the site map and **(2)** satellite location of the study site –  
Source: Google maps

Most of the research participants walk long distances to the school, with a few living in the neighbouring locations near the school. When coming from Pretoria, the road to the school passes through a busy densely populated shopping centre with several shops and lots of small vending stalls along the shop corridors and along the road. From the informal discussions that I had with the teachers, I found that most of the students are staying with grandparents or guardians who may not be gainfully employed as parents may either be deceased or staying in Nelspruit.

Convenience sampling was employed in the selection of the site for the current study. Convenience sampling, also known as accidental or opportunity sampling, selects participants by choosing the nearest available and accessible individuals for the required size of the sample. It is also deemed suitable for case studies (Alvi, 2016; Cohen et al., 2017, pp.113, 114; McMillan, 1990). Since the sample is quick and easy to approach, the sampling method becomes less time consuming and inexpensive (Alvi, 2016). These advantages of the convenience sampling method made it suitable for use in the current study as the school was already part of the Flourishing Learning Youth study that is run by the University of Pretoria's Centre for the Study of Resilience in rural primary and secondary schools in Mpumalanga Province. Although convenience sampling only represents its group, it does not seek to generalise about a wider population and this was not an issue for the current study as it only sought to observe and then describe how critical-

analytic thinking can be developed through the facilitation of small-group, text-based English discussions by peers as facilitators.



Picture 0-3: Study site

*Pictures: (1) Showing the Elukwatini Shopping centre, (2) vendors along the shop corridors, (3) the surrounding villages on the way to the school and (4) the residential homes just next to the school.*

### **3.5.2.1 Contextualising Learning in a Rural Secondary School**

The school is situated in Mpumalanga, Gert Sibande District. To get to school, students have to walk or use buses. The students look very smart in their green slacks or skirts, white shirts and green cardigans for the girls, or grey trousers, white shirts and green cardigans for the boys. From the outside on getting to the school, the buildings look quite modern with good looking ablution blocks. The school also has sporting facilities, and students are sometimes seen running around in the sports grounds during lunch hour. Students line up for meals that are served during break time.



Picture 0-4: The School and classroom set-up

*Pictures: (1) The Grade 8 and Grade 9 school blocks, (2) the classroom furniture layout in the control classrooms, (3) the unrepaired hole in the ceiling, (4) computer lab, and the school library (below).*



The school had limited resources that included inadequate seating arrangements for learners and infrastructure that needed repair. Scholars acknowledge some of these constraints characterising rural schools including, among other, a lack of basic infrastructure for teaching and learning, dilapidated infrastructure, long distances to school, lack of access to information, for example,

few or no library services, and a poor socio-economic background (Chakaninka et al., 2012; Mandina, 2012).

### **3.5.3 Purposive selection of the teachers**

In purposive sampling, I had a prior purpose in mind when approaching the sample with a predefined criterion for elements to be included in the study. This means that not every available element is included but only those meeting the defined criteria (Alvi, 2016). Purposive sampling, which is also known as judgement sampling as it deliberately chooses participants because of the qualities they possess (Etikan 2016), is typically used in qualitative research for identifying and selecting “rich cases for the most proper utilization of available resources”. Etikan et al., (2016) further argue that purposive sampling involves identifying and selecting groups and individuals who are proficient and well informed about the phenomenon of interest. In addition to participants’ availability and willingness to participate, they should also be able to articulately communicate their experiences and their opinions in an expressive and reflective manner. The major concern in purposive sampling is the acquisition of in-depth information from those in a position to provide the information (Cohen et al., 2017).

Purposive sampling was employed for the selection of the two teachers. Both teachers are qualified English First Additional Language (FAL) teachers who have taught at the study site for more than five years. One of the teachers teaches Grade 8 FAL classes while the other one teaches Grade 9 FAL classes. The two teachers do not come from the local area and as such do not share the same home language with their students. For the current study, purposive sampling was deemed suitable as it allowed me to get in-depth information from the two English teachers willing to participate as their experience helped in bringing insight into the phenomenon under study. The teachers, besides having attained an English teaching qualification, had to have been teaching English classes, and they were currently teaching the two English classes that were participating in the study. They had to be aware of the Flourishing Learning Youth Study, initiated in 2005 as collaborative academic learning-service and research between rural South African schools and the Centre for the Study of Resilience, University of Pretoria.

#### ***3.5.3.1 Weaknesses of purposive sampling and justification for use in the present study.***

Although purposive sampling has its own weaknesses, which include, among others, the difficulty to generalise findings to other subjects and being less representative of an identified population, for purposes of the current study, its strengths seemed to outweigh the weaknesses. According to McMillan (1990), purposive sampling is less costly, less time consuming, easy to administer,

assures a high participation rate, assures the receipt of the required information, and adds credibility to qualitative research. Through this sampling method, I received the required information from the participants, the teachers, and the peer-facilitators, and indeed, there was a high rate of participation.

### 3.5.4 Convenience selection of students as participants

The participating classes were conveniently selected and the classes had to be learning English and had to be taught by the purposively selected English teachers. The peer-facilitators were also conveniently selected by their teachers, and it was those who had a good command of English who were selected. They had to have undergone the peer-facilitator training with the QTSA team (see Fig 3.1 below on the training of the peer-facilitators) and had to have peer-facilitated the small-group, text-based discussion during the Inkhulumo small-group, text-based discussions. Conveniently sampling peer-facilitators helped in bringing out the benefits and challenges in peer-facilitation of small-group, text-based discussions in developing critical-analytic skills. The lived experiences of the thirteen peer-facilitators (see Table 3 below for their demographic information) during the peer-facilitation of the small-group, text-based discussion provided in-depth information for my research questions.

Table 0.3: Intervention Class Demographics

Grade 8A						Grade 9B					
Students			Total	Peer-facilitators		Peer-facilitators		Total	Students		
Groups	F	M	F & M	F	M	M	F	F & M	F	M	Groups
1	3	4	7	1	0	0	1	7	5	2	1
2	4	4	8	0	1	0	1	8	5	3	2
3	4	3	7	0	1	0	1	6	3	3	3
4	6	1	7	1	0	1	0	7	1	6	4
5	5	3	8	0	1	1	0	7	3	4	5
6	5	3	8	1	0	1	0	6	2	4	6
						1	1	8	5	3	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>Total</b>

#### **3.5.4.1 Weaknesses of convenience sampling and justification for use in the present study**

The haphazard, accidental, availability or convenience sampling was chosen as it allowed easy accessibility, availability of research participants at the given time and the willingness of research participants to participate (Etikan et al., 2016). However, it has been criticised for its lack of robustness, which researchers argue makes it difficult to generalise findings over a bigger population. Chance, the research team's prejudices and potential participants' work schedules can affect the selection of cases. (Landers, 2015; Leiner, 2014; Schutt, 2019). Schutt further argues, "The people who happen to be available in any situation are unlikely to be just like those who are unavailable. We can't be all certain that what we can learn can be generalized with any confidence to a larger population" (2019, p.322). Convenience sampling has also been criticised for its use of a target population that is a homogeneous sample which can lead to bias in the findings (Etikan et al., 2016). However, since the present study aimed to gain insight from peer-facilitated small-group discussions to develop discourse-intensive pedagogical practices to inform knowledge on interventions that enable education in resource-constrained spaces, the study did not intend to generalise findings. Instead, the peer-facilitators' lived experiences, the participating group members and the teachers as the research participants tell a story through the research findings, a story that can be used in practice to develop critical-analytic thinking in a remote, resource constrained secondary school.

### **3.6 DATA GENERATION METHODS**

Data, according to Marson (2002, pp. 51, 52) does not exist in a collectable state, but since in qualitative research, I am not a neutral data collector and I actively construct knowledge "about the world using methods derived from, or which express, their (my) epistemological position". I had to work out how best I could generate data from the chosen sources of data. As such, the word data generation, as opposed to data collection, became more suitable for use in the current study.

The data was generated in collaboration with the teachers, students, two senior PhD students and myself (see Section 3.5 Table 3.1 on the roles of each of the three PhD students during data collection), two MEd students, and my three supervisors as co-researchers. The M Ed students helped in the transcriptions of the observed lessons both in the intervention and in the control classes. Multiple techniques, which included non-participant classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, audio-visual techniques, personal field, and reflexive journal notes were employed for the current case study since no one qualitative tool is used in case studies (Lodico,

Spaulding and Voegtle (2006). One of the senior Ph D students helped me interview the teachers and the students, who included the peer-facilitators and the group members, as these interviews were conducted on the same day (See table 3.1 in Section 3.5) on their roles during the data collection process). In the table below, I summarise what data tools I used for each research question with more detailed discussions on each method employed in the subsequent sections.

Table 0.4: Data sources

Research Question	Research Participants	Sources of Data
To what extent and in what ways are peer-leaders effective at facilitating small-group, text-based discussions in English classrooms in a remote secondary school?	Students from: Baseline classes (n=92) Intervention classes (n=94)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group discussion recordings - (baseline v peer-facilitated)</li> <li>• Videos and Audio recordings</li> <li>• Field and Reflexive journal notes</li> </ul>
How do the peer-facilitators perceive their role in facilitating small-group, text-based discussions?	Peer-facilitators (n=13)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer-facilitator interviews</li> </ul>
What are the challenges of facilitating a small-group, text-based discussion in English language classes?	Peer-facilitators (n=13)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer-facilitator interviews</li> <li>• Videos and Audio recordings</li> <li>• Field and Reflexive journal notes</li> </ul>
How do discussion group-members perceive the peer-facilitated small group discussions?	Group members (n=9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group member interviews</li> </ul>
What are the perceptions of teachers on the use of peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions?	Teachers (n=2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher interviews</li> </ul>

### 3.6.1 Non-participant Classroom Observations

Classroom observation, according to Nick (1998, p.2), involves more than just recording of data from the environment since during observation, the researcher is not a passive data collector like a tape or video recorder. Instead, he argues, the researcher is an active participant in that the brains, the eyes, and the ears are busy organising the data for it to make sense, thus making perception part of us as human beings. As such, factors associated with my background and who I am, my experience of the situation, my culture and how I interpret the observed situation, and

my conscious and unconscious attitudes and prejudices can affect my perception of the observed phenomenon. Hence, the need to approach observation with caution if used as a research method because “research is an activity which attempts to report aspects of the world in ways which minimize error and offer accounts which may be used for some purpose or another” (Nick 1998, p.2).

Towards the end of the chapter, I explain how I dealt with the above issues in my role as a researcher. Participant observation falls under the qualitative methods of data collection, where I observed the participant in their natural setting. Mark et al., (2011, p.13) aver that in participant observation, I as the researcher had to consider community settings with relevance to the research question and go to the participant’s setting and not vice versa “to learn what life is like” from the emic, from the insider’s view and voice while I remained the etic, the outsider.

In this case, I did not take part in the participants’ activities but sat, observed, and took down field notes. I conducted non-participant observations during the two phases of the study and took field notes in addition to video and audio recording the lessons. Observations were conducted in two control classes and in two intervention classes so that each teacher was observed with one control class and then with one intervention class. These were conducted over a period of five months at the rate of two days per visit, totalling six days of observations and two days in which we went to the study site but could not collect data as the teachers were not at the school. Since I sought to establish and describe the role of the peer-facilitators in facilitating the small-group discussions and answering the Primary Question, I collected data through audio and video recordings, structured lesson observations (see field notes-Appendix A [ii]) in which discussion elements were the main area of focus (see Control whole-class discussions and peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions-Appendix C [i], [ii] and [iii]). During the observation, I collected handwritten notes, which were converted into computer files within 24 hours or at least the following morning, so that I wrote whilst I still remembered what transpired in the field. Participant activities like spontaneous interviews and observations formed the field notes (Mack et al., 2011) (see Appendix A [ii]). These notes can be used to provide additional information in bringing out meanings of what was happening in the video recordings. I took down notes on social interactions and how they contributed to these active dialogues’ effectiveness. Students were seated in groups of seven or six during the QT lesson, while a standard classroom set up was maintained for the control classes (see photos Appendix A [i]). I observed the peer-facilitators’ interaction with the group members, and how the group members interacted amongst themselves and the language they used for interaction, both during the QT lesson and outside the classroom. Audio and video



recorded information was transcribed and coded to establish the patterns of communication during the discussions. The type of questions, as well as the types of responses, were also coded.

### **3.6.2 Face to Face Semi-structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from two different types of informants; teachers and peer facilitators (see Appendix B[i] and B [ii]). Semi-structured interviews allow for a more relaxed atmosphere between the interviewer and the interviewee as there is no strictly predetermined order of questions followed. This allows for a more natural conversational flow of the discussion that permits the interviewee to give richer and more detailed information on the subject (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). Since all our face-to face interviews with peer-facilitators were conducted on the same day, I interviewed eleven of the peer-facilitators while the other co-researcher assisted me by interviewing the remaining two peer-facilitators. These were 15–20-minute interviews were conducted at the most convenient time for the participants. The interviews were held on a one-on-one basis to allow students to freely express their perceptions of the peer-facilitating a small-group discussion during the reading comprehension discussions following an interview guide on their experiences in peer-facilitated discussions. Also, interviews were conducted with the two teachers to respond to Question 4 on the teachers' perceptions of the impact of the peer-led facilitated discussions. The question at the end of the discussion, "How did the discussion by peer-facilitators go" by peer-facilitators to the group members brought out the group members' experiences of participating in a peer-facilitated small-group discussion. While the present study concentrated on peer-facilitation of small-group discussions that are based and drawn from a written passage. The comparison between the control classes and the intervention were employed to describe the differences in the teacher-led whole class discussions and the peer-facilitated small-group discussions. The other co-researcher's study looked at the implementation enablers and constraints of a school-based intervention in a rural context and the other was on the use of teacher discourse moves and pedagogical principles in promoting analytic thinking in a rural school.

## **3.7 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

The data collected through field observation notes, transcribed interviews and transcribed whole class and peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions was organised and coded leading to identification of categories resulting from the patterns they presented that led to the formation

of the major themes (Saldana, 2009). The section below gives a detailed explanation of how the thematic content analysis was used.

### **3.7.1 Inductive Thematic Content Analysis**

Inductive thematic content analysis was used to identify the key emerging issues from the data, which defined the themes, as guided by the research questions. Braune and Clarke (2016) defined thematic analysis as the process of data identification, analysing and reporting of the emerging patterns and themes within the data. The process minimally organises and describes the data set in (rich) detail. Lapadart (2016, p.2) opines that thematic data analysis is used in analysing qualitative data with the researcher pinpointing “themes or patterns of cultural meaning”. These are then coded and classified “according to themes, and the results are then interpreted following the resultant thematic structures”, by “seeking commonalities, relationships, overarching patterns, theoretical constructs or explanatory principles”. Themes are patterns across sets of data, and these are associated with a particular research question.

The data collected from the lesson observations for the primary research question attempted to establish the role of peer-facilitators in small-group, text-based English discussions, looking at how the peer-facilitators make use of discussion elements to encourage maximum participation of all the group members. A comparison was made between the control and the intervention classes to establish the role played by the peer-facilitators creating dialogical space in collaborative learning when compared with the teacher-led discussions in the control class. This qualitative case study provided evidence that could help to improve the teaching (Tasshakori & Teddie, 2010) and learning of the students as peers facilitated the small-group, text-based discussions in developing critical-analytic thinking.

The generated qualitative data was analysed using Creswell’s (2014) seven steps in qualitative data analysis as shown in Fig 3: 2 below:

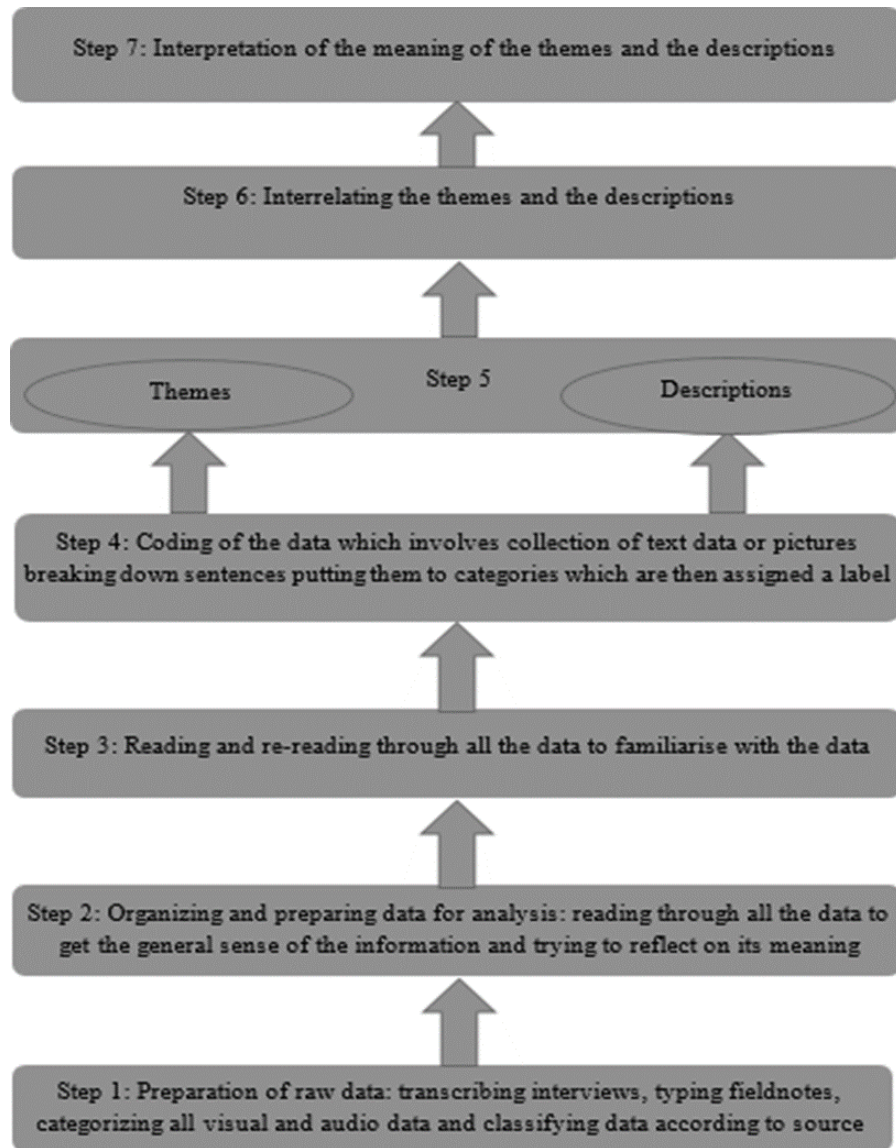


Figure 0.1: Data sources Adapted from Creswell (2014, p.247).

Guided by Creswell's steps in analysing data, I had to familiarise myself with the data. Working with one of the PhD students, who was a co-researcher, apart from having someone transcribing the data for us, we also transcribed the data and agreed on the final transcripts for analysis for the interviews and the small-group peer-facilitated and control classroom discussions. I listened several times to the audio and then went through the videos several times to make sure I was not missing important information from the participants. This process led to the careful preparation and organisation of data in preparation for analysis. I separated the transcripts for the control classes and that of the intervention classes. Through reading and re-reading the transcribed data, I managed to come up with codes and categories as I went through each line highlighting

important information and writing notes. I was also guided by the research questions to identify the themes and categories, and interpret the meanings of the themes for my report.

### **3.8 QUALITY CRITERIA**

A study can only be considered trustworthy if the reader of the research report judges it to be trustworthy. It is also considered trustworthy if it conforms to credibility, confirmability and transferability standards. Member checking, peer checking, triangulation, detailed description of the research process, detailed transcriptions, systematic plan and coding, all contribute towards the trustworthiness of the research study (Gunawan, 2015, p.10, 11). Member checking was done to ensure the trustworthiness of the present study. Peer checking was also done as I was co-working with a colleague who was a year ahead of me in this project. Triangulation, and detailed description of the research process was provided as part of this chapter, while detailed transcriptions were done and cross-checked with my colleague. A systematic plan and coding following the Quality Talk Coding protocol was also done.

In order to ensure rigour and quality in the current study, I adhered to the standard operating procedures that are common in qualitative research. I discuss authenticity, credibility, confirmability, dependability, transferability and trustworthiness and the importance I gave to these aspects during the study in the sections below.

#### **3.8.1 Authenticity**

Authenticity and trustworthiness replace the positivists' criteria of internal and external validity (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Authenticity according to Denzin & Lincoln (1994, p.114), is the criteria of fairness and ontological authenticity leading to enlarged personal constructions and educative authenticity resulting in improved understanding of other people's constructions while catalytic and tactical authenticity stimulate and empower action respectively (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). To guarantee authenticity, I ensured that I was consciously reflexive about not allowing my own beliefs and assumptions to intrude onto research participants' views. Use of semi-structured interviews allowed for guarding against projecting my own views and perceptions on the subject of research (see Appendix A[ii] and B).

#### **3.8.2 Credibility**

Lodico et al., 2006) define credibility as the capacity of the researcher's report to clearly capture, portray, and articulate the participant's perceptions of the setting and the event. Credibility seeks to establish whether "the researcher accurately represented what the participants think, feel, do

and the processes that influence their thoughts, feelings and actions” (p. 273). This is equated to the criteria for validity in quantitative research. While quantitative researchers would discuss extraneous variables in assessing credibility, qualitative researchers would “look at whether the researcher’s methods are likely to yield accurate and deep pictures of the research setting and participants” (Lodico et al., 2006, p.273). To ensure credibility, Creswell (2014, p.252) and Lodico et al. (2006, p.273) suggest that the researcher should use different sources of data for data triangulation and spend a reasonably prolonged time for meaningful interaction with participants to develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. Lodico et al., (2006) further emphasise that for all qualitative research the time spent in the field and how the researcher established rapport with participants should be indicated. They also argue that since participants do not share the same perspectives, it is important to make an effort to present a balanced view of all participants’ perspectives. In the current study, the time spent doing field work at the study site between May and September 2017 was long enough to enable me to develop a good rapport with the research participants. Two initial visits for program installation, which lasted two days each were undertaken in May 2017. This was then followed by two more visits in August and then a week-long visit in September were made to the school (see Section 3.5 Table 1.)

To take care of the above suggestions since my research required time for training participants in the Quality Talk approach to reading comprehension, this allowed enough time for the creation of rapport with my research participants before conducting the lesson observations and the interviews. I was in the field for my data collection for five months. As we were working as a team of three researchers, we constantly had time to debrief and reflect as a team, and I also kept a reflexive diary to continuously reflect on my role as a researcher. Member checking was also conducted, and several methods for data collection were used for data triangulation.

### **3.8.3 Confirmability**

Confirmability requires that I ensure that my findings do not interfere with my inclinations, and I should make sure that the findings are the ideas and experiences of the research participant. To achieve this, I had to reduce bias through the use of data triangulation methods. This can be achieved through the researcher’s “admission of assumptions beliefs, recognizing the shortcomings of the study’s methods and their potential effects, and an in-depth methodological description to allow integrity of research results to be scrutinized” (Shenton, 2004, p.73). To achieve confirmability for the present study, I triangulated data collected through classroom observation interview transcriptions and video and audio recorded lessons to reduce bias. I also

provided a detailed description of my methodological processes, and I kept a diary of my reflections on my role as a researcher in this study (see Appendix A [ii]).

Reflexivity, as defined by Patnaik (2013, p.101), involves “a constant awareness, assessment and reassessment by the researcher of the researcher’s contribution/influence/shaping of inter-subjective research and the consequent research findings”. The researchers thus, according to Patnaik, has to turn the investigative lens towards themselves. To achieve reflexivity in qualitative case studies, Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 445.) argue that qualitative researchers have to spend extended times on the research site so that they can personally be in contact with the operations and activities of the case to revise meanings of what is going on by “placing their best intellect into the thick of what is going on”. Denzin and Lincoln also emphasise the need for a case researcher to ascertain the local foreshadowed, and readers’ consequential meanings reflectively. As alluded to by Creswell (2014, p. 235) it is important for the qualitative researcher to reflect on the how their role in the study, personal background, culture and experiences can shape interpretations of the gathered data and shape the direction of the study.

It is with the above highlighted facts in mind that I consciously and continuously reminded myself of my role as an outsider. To achieve that, I would be on the study site and try to get rich and thick descriptions of the case from my participants as opposed to allowing my personal background and experiences as a classroom teacher to shape their interpretations of the phenomenon under study. However, I should admit that it is very difficult as the teacher in me would always want to shape these interpretations, hence the need for me to reflexively observe what was going on. As such, in my reflexive journal, I would note points of interest on one side as field notes and write my reflections on the other side (see appendix A [ii]).

#### **3.8.4 Dependability**

Dependability allows for replication of a similar study in a similar setting with the possibility of coming out with similar results, so it has to do with reliability. Lodico et al., (2006) suggest that detailed explanations of how the data was collected and analysed, which is a thorough explanation of methods, should be provided. To adhere to this, I provided a detailed explanation of how I conducted the data collection and analysed it under the research design, making it possible for a similar study to be conducted in a similar context. I also captured detailed step-by-step explanations of the data collection process (see Appendix A, B, and C). Since I recorded

visual and audio data which has been preserved and stored with the University repository, this data can be available for review.

### **3.8.5 Transferability**

Lodico et al., (2006, p.274) posit that transferability has to do with “the degree of similarity between the research site and other sites as judged by the reader” and can be assessed through the richness of descriptions provided in the study and “amount of content within which the study occurred”. In the absence of these rich descriptions about the similarity of things like the school, the participants, and resources, it would be difficult for the reader to judge transferability. Transferability enables the reader to judge whether similar processes can also be used in their communities. To achieve transferability, in Section 3.6.2 above, I gave a detailed description of the context under study, how I collected the data and analysed it (see Section 3.7 and 3.8) to allow the readers to see if they can also conduct a similar study in a similar context.

## **3.9 Ethical Considerations for Protecting Participants**

Hitchcock et al., define ethics as values of beliefs, judgments and personal viewpoints, which include “assumptions about right and wrong and good and bad” (1995, p.44). It also refers to the specific set of guidelines, principles, values, and norms that a research community has decided are fair and appropriate in conducting research (Gollardo, 2012, p.100). Research ethics protect the participant’s rights (Murphy and Dingwall, 2001, as cited in Gollardo, 2012).

In all qualitative research dealing with humans, it is important to consult ethical guidelines to guide the researcher as soon as the research study begins to include the selection of participants, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of the findings. In the case of this study, I adhered to the American Psychological Association Ethical guidelines. These included getting consent from the school authorities, the principal, teachers, and parents. Issues of anonymity, beneficence, non-maleficence and protection from harm as briefly explained below guided this study regarding confidentiality and informed consent, as clearly outlined to the participants. In addition, before conducting the research, since I was joining this research project as a co-researcher, I applied for permission from the University of Pretoria’s Research Ethics Committee, and permission was granted.

### **3.9.1 Autonomy and Informed Consent**

Gillion (2003, as cited in Townsend, Cox, and Li, 2010) defines autonomy as “the capacity to think, decide and act based on a freely made decision”. Capron (1989, in Orb & Wynaden. 2001,

p. 95) upholds the view that respect for people is shown by recognising their rights which includes the right to inform a participant about the study, the right to decide whether or not to participate in the study, and the right to freely withdraw any time without any punishment for doing so. Thus Kvale (1996) argues that this principle in qualitative research requires informed consent. This then allows the participant to “exercise their autonomous rights to voluntarily accept or refuse to participate in the study” (Townsend et al., 2010, p. 95).

The above principles were adhered to in this study. Consent was sought from both parents and students as some of the students were below sixteen. Both the parent and caregiver signed the consent form, and it included an opt-out option. The two teachers also signed consent forms as participants in the study (see Appendix D [v]).

### **3.9.2 Anonymity and Confidentiality**

Because of the conversational nature of qualitative studies, researchers gather a lot of information from the participants. Still, there should be a clear boundary between what researchers tell participants and what they get from them. There is a need to avoid the pitfall of wanting to share as one may share information from one participant with the other participant, resulting in participants losing trust in the researcher. Although the researcher knows all that the participant said, the participant’s identity in reporting findings should be kept a secret. It is important to note that participants should be told of shared confidentiality in the event of a participant divulging information that may put the participant or others at risk (Gollardo, 2012).

To ensure anonymity and confidentiality in my study, I explained this to the research participants. Also, I made sure that even in the final reporting of the findings of my study, I used code names such that no real names were attached to any information related to this study. I also used a password-protected file to store all the data gathered for this research project.

### **3.9.3 Non-maleficence and Beneficence**

While the principle of non-maleficence calls for ensuring that a participant is safe from any harm that the research process may cause, its mirror principle, beneficence, requires that the research outcome be positive and beneficial and that the benefits should outweigh the potential to cause harm. It is with this in mind that issues of anonymity and confidentiality, as discussed earlier, also play an important part in ensuring that the researcher takes care of emotional or social harm the research may cause (Murphy & Dingwall, 2001, as cited in Gollardo, 2012).



To adhere to the principles of non-maleficence and beneficence, I made sure that I maintained a healthy working relationship with the participants throughout the study. I also ensured that the knowledge gained through this research would benefit the participants and that the study's contribution to the research community was worthy of any emotional risk if any, that the study could have caused to the participants.

#### **3.9.4 Protection from Harm**

Hammersley and Traianou (2015, p.6) identified the potential threats of harm in qualitative research as falling under categories such as pain, physical injury, and disability. They also included psychological damage, for example, emotional distress, material damage, damage to reputation, and damage of the project to which participants belonged. They argued that in participant observation and interview-based data collection methods, the researcher would be working in a context over which they had limited control, and it is these contexts in which the different types of dangers of harm to the participant could occur (Hammersley & Traianou, 2015, p.8).

With the above in mind, I tried to ensure that my encounter with the participants during the data collection process would not expose them to such harm. I tried to ensure that they were free from physical, psychological, and emotional harm.

#### **3.10 MY ROLE AS A RESEARCHER**

As this study was a qualitative research study in which research methods employed involved social interaction of the researcher and the participants to obtain rich descriptions of the phenomenon under study, I also assumed the role of a research instrument. In this regard, Creswell (2014, p.235) recommends the researcher's need to reflect on "how their role in the study and their personal background, culture, and experiences hold potential for shaping their interpretations, such as the themes they advance and the meaning they ascribe to the data". Mason (2002) argues that in self-scrutiny and reflexivity, the researcher needs to constantly take stock of their role in the research process, subjecting this to the same scrutiny they should with r data. I had to reflect on my current role as a researcher in comparison to my previous role as a teacher to ensure the credibility of my research findings and in adherence to prescribed guidelines. Mason's argument is that a researcher can't be "neutral, objective and detached from the knowledge and evidence they are generating". To achieve this, the researcher has to continuously ask herself difficult questions in the research process, which is part of reflexivity (2002, p.7, Orb et al., 2001). Therefore, I made an honest reflection about those values as a

teacher, which could affect my interpretation of the data, so I tried to remain objective throughout the study. I exercised self-control to try and eliminate bias and continuously focused on my participants' experiences, although this was not an easy task.

Creswell also argues that it is the researcher's role to consider how to gain entry into the research site. To take care of this issue, letters to seek approval from the Department of Basic Education and the Principal of the School had already been sought when i assumed the role of co-researcher in the intervention period of the research project.

It is also the researcher's role to ensure anonymity and gaining informed consent from research participants as part of the ethical considerations, and I did this through the use of code names for my research participants and seeking their consent before the lesson observations and interviews were conducted.

### **3.11 CONCLUSION**

Chapter three has provided an overview of the methodological planning and processes followed in conducting this qualitative study. I was, therefore guided by guidelines from the literature on how to conduct a qualitative research study. Detailed explanations of my philosophical stance, a detailed description of the research approach, study design, sampling techniques employed, the methods used for data collection and data analysis procedures were outlined in this chapter. I also discussed how to ensure quality and trustworthiness in this qualitative research and the ethical guidelines that I had to adhere to in conducting this study. I concluded the chapter by looking at my role as a researcher as this helped in eliminating bias and ensuring trustworthiness in my study.

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## CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I present an analysis of the results and findings of the current study. These results are organised and discussed under three major thematic areas based on analysis of data gathered from transcribed interviews, video and audio recordings, field and reflexive notes from the observed control and intervention class discussions and transcribed small-group text-based English discussions from the Intervention Classes in response to my research questions.

In the current and subsequent chapter, I present a thematic analysis of the results and the findings. The purpose of the thematic data analysis employed seeks to explain how insights from peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions can inform discourse-intensive pedagogical practices in developing critical-analytic thinking skills in a rural South African secondary school. I situate the current study within ongoing debates to highlight the worthiness of the current study within the existing body of knowledge. An interpretation and discussion of the findings are made as part of the two chapters.

*“The greatest gift is not being afraid to question.”-Ruby Dee*

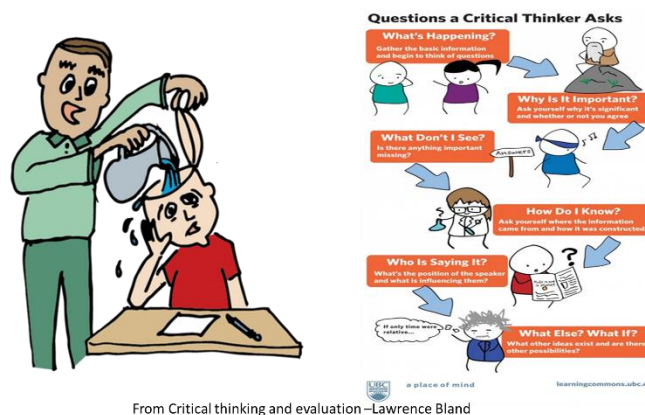


Figure 0.1: Developing critical-analytic thinking

The use of open-ended authentic questions – the key to discourse-intensive pedagogical practices in developing critical-analytic thinking. (Source – Critical Thinking and Evaluation - Lawrence Bland).

## 4.2 RESULTS

Below, I provide an overview of the results generated from the transcribed interviews, group discussions, field and Reflexive Notes generated from the classroom observations at the research site. The results that speak to the experiences of the process of peer-facilitation of small-group, text-based English discussions are grouped into three major themes, with corresponding sub-themes and categories.

The three major themes that emerged from the results are:

- the role of peer-facilitators in facilitating small-group, text-based English discussions;
- perceptions of peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions;
- perceived challenges of peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions.

Table 4.1 below presents an overview of themes and subthemes emerging from the analysis of data.

Table 0.1: Overview of Themes and Subthemes

<b>Theme 1: The role of peer-facilitators in facilitating small-group, text-based English discussions.</b>	
<b>Subtheme 1.1: Peer-facilitators support learning</b>	<b>Subtheme 1.2: Peer-facilitators as intermediaries between the teacher and the students</b>
<b>Theme 2: Perceptions of peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions.</b>	
<b>Subtheme 2.1: Peer-facilitators' perceptions</b>	<b>Subtheme 2.2: Group members' perceptions</b>
<b>Subtheme 2.3: Teachers' perceptions</b>	
<b>Theme 3: Perceived challenges of peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussion</b>	
<b>Subtheme 3.1: Perceived challenges of facilitation</b>	<b>Subtheme 3.2: Perceived challenges of participation</b>

The results recount insights from peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions that inform discourse-intensive pedagogical practices in developing critical-analytic thinking skills in a rural South African secondary day school.

### **4.3 THEME 1: THE ROLE OF PEER-FACILITATORS IN SMALL-GROUP, TEXT-BASED DISCUSSIONS**

Theme 1 presents results relating to the utility of peer-facilitators in facilitating small-group, text-based English discussions to develop critical-analytic thinking skills in students in a resource-constrained rural South African secondary school. It should be noted that the classes constituted mixed ability students, as students are not screened according to their ability. With SiSwati being the home language of most of the students, they speak SiSwati both in class and out of class which could help explain why they find it difficult to express themselves in English, the language of learning and teaching (LoLT). In addition, as indicated by the teachers, most of the students live with grandparents who can neither read, write nor speak English, and as a result, students have very limited opportunities to practice speaking in English outside the classroom context. The students in the same class also vary in ages as some of the students are quite mature since the school is an inclusive school. It is against this background that I noticed the effort the students put into trying to grasp the content of the QT training and the effort made to use authentic questions, the effort made me to come up with what I would call “near elaborated explanations” (NEEs) and make use of “near cumulative talk” (NCT) during the discussions as I analysed their discussions. The NNEs are those that may only have a claim and sometimes just one reason or evidence and NCT is when the speakers are building positively but uncritically on what others are saying but then they may not have enough confirmations or elaborations I however, coded these as elaborated explanations and cumulative talk in appreciation of the understanding that they were showing given the short period of training and exposure to QT. I am quite convinced that with extended periods of training, they would perform even better. I discuss the results from the peer-facilitated small-group discussions below.

As was observed from the peer-facilitated discussions, which began with a revision of the ground rules for conducting small-group discussions, all members from the various groups participated. Two distinct trends were evident. My first observation pertained to the comparative amount of student-talk versus teacher-talk. Specifically, I observed an increased amount of student-talk as well as the decreased amount of teacher-talk in the peer-facilitated small-group discussions. The increased amount of student-talk is exactly an opposite feature of what happens in the teacher-centred classroom where the teacher talked the most, and few students raised hands to respond here and there. Students were talking as they took turns to ask questions, thereby controlling the flow of the discussion. The second observation pertained to the quality and nature of the students’ talk. Unlike prior experiences in the classrooms where teachers asked fact-based test questions

like: “So can someone tell us what is happening in the story after they told him they wanted to kill the pet? What happened next? What happened next? Anyone?” (*Teacher A-Grade 8A-Control class whole class discussion Appendix C (i) line 22*), students in the Intervention Class asked mostly open-ended, authentic questions. In particular, students asked various kinds of connection questions (CQ) (the type of questions that we had trained them on): “How would you feel if your friend was deaf?” (*Peer-facilitator 1-Grade 8A Group 2 Peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussion Appendix C (ii) line 9b*)

There were also a few test questions. Importantly, students had learned about authentic and test questions to better understand the different types of questions. The category of connection questions includes shared and inter-textual questions and the affective/personal experiences. It is worth noting that the role played by peer-facilitators can be clearly appreciated as evidenced by the amount of productive talk, in terms of both quantity and quality, and active participation in the small-group, text-based discussions conducted under the leadership of the peer-facilitators in the Intervention Classes. This theme is supported by two subthemes:

(1.1) Peer-facilitation plays an instrumental social role of supporting other peers to learn, and

(1.2) Peer-facilitation bridges the discourse power gap between teacher and students.

In Table 4.2. below, I present the themes and sub-themes and their categories detailing the overarching inclusion and exclusion criteria I employed.

Table 0.2: Theme 1–Role of peer-facilitators in facilitating small-group, text-based English discussions

<b>Theme 1</b>		
<b>The role of peer-facilitators in facilitating small-group, text-based English discussions.</b>		
<b>Subtheme and categories</b>	<b>Inclusion criteria</b>	<b>Exclusion criteria</b>
<b>Subtheme 1.1: discourse patterns (questioning, responses), engagement, confidence</b>	Includes data that relate to the social role of peer-facilitators and use of discourse elements in supporting other peers to learn	
<b>1.1.1: Promotes students' critical-analytic thinking</b>	This category includes data related to the use of discourse elements to promote students' critical-analytic thinking	This category excludes data that relate to test questions and their responses as they do not promote students' critical-analytical thinking
<b>1.1.2: Promotes students' high-level thinking</b>	This category includes data related to high-level thinking as evidenced by the use of analysis, generalization or speculation questions and exploratory talk.	This category excludes data that relates to teacher's scaffolding moves during the small-group discussion
<b>1.1.3: Enhances students' cognitive engagement</b>	This category includes data related to actively and interactively co-constructing knowledge through engagement in an authentic dialogic conversation.	This category excludes data that do not relate to active participation for cognitive engagement outside the peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions.
<b>1.1.4: Helps students to develop confidence</b>	This category includes data related to how peer-facilitation builds confidence in students.	This category excludes data that do not relate to confidence-building in students during peer-facilitated small-group discussions.
<b>Sub-theme 1.2: Peer-facilitation bridges the gap between teacher and students.</b>		
<b>1.2.1: Use of code-switching in learning</b>	This category includes data related to the use of code-switching in peer-facilitated small-group discussions.	This category excludes data that do not relate to the role played by the student's home language in scaffolding the learning of a second language.
<b>1.2.2: Peer-facilitation creates a common learning ground</b>	This category includes data related to how peer-facilitation of small-group, text-based discussions create a common learning ground for students.	This category excludes data that do not relate to a collaborative peer to peer social interaction atmosphere.

#### **4.3.1 Subtheme 1.1: Peer-facilitators Take the Social Role of Supporting Other Peers to Learn**

This subtheme includes data pertaining to the role of peer-facilitators in facilitating small-group, text-based English discussions that inform discourse-intensive pedagogical practices in

developing critical-analytic thinking skills in a rural South African secondary school. The subtheme comprises four categories, peer-facilitation of small-group, text-based English discussions:

- (1.1.1) promotes students' critical-analytical thinking,
- (1.1.2) promotes high-level thinking;
- (1.1.3) enhances students' cognitive engagement; and
- (1.1.4) helps students to develop confidence.

#### **4.3.1.1 Category 1.1.1 Promotes Critical-analytic Thinking in Students**

This category includes data that is related to the use of discourse elements to promote students' critical-analytic thinking as the students' ability to generate interesting, authentic questions can lead to an open discussion where group members co-construct knowledge, where their prior knowledge or lived experiences can be shared through elaborated explanations, exploratory talk or cumulative talk.

I noted that peer-facilitation contributed to the promotion of critical-analytic thinking among group members. Evidence from the study shows that Quality Talk promoted students' high-level comprehension by encouraging students to "think and talk about, around, and with the text" as students used exploratory talk, elaborative explanations and cumulative talk when responding to authentic questions. This type of examination of the text through talk fostered students' deep analysis of the text under discussion. The following extracts from Intervention Classes 8A and 9B show students responding to open-ended authentic questions "Authentic Questions" (AQ) with "Exploratory Talk" (ET), "Cumulative Talk" (CT) Near Cumulative Talk (NCT) and "Elaborative Explanations" (EE)/ Near Elaborated Explanation (NEES) or Sound Reasoning (SR).

Table 0.3: A typical example of elaborated explanation - Appendix C (iii)

How could you feel if your friend was deaf?
I will feel bad because he can't hear what I said to him.
<i>Group discussion member 13 Grade 8A Group 5 turn 11 Elaborative Explanation</i>
Why do you say so?
<i>Group discussion member 14 Grade 9B turn 47 Uptake Question</i>
Because in the novel when use the pronoun of Horace they use 'he'.
<i>Group discussion member 18 Grade 9B turn 48 Elaborated Explanation</i>



Below are further examples of the use of the different discourse elements:

*What will you do if it was you facing these situation? (Authentic Question-Affective Question-Intervention Class Grade 8A, Group 1, Appendix C (iii) turn 35, Group member 3).*

*Quietly I couldn't understand, but as friends that I get like Tom, he could understand. And yeah, the coach teacher didn't understand and I the deaf boy, if I was the deaf boy I would understand. Cause my friends could understand me. (Elaborative Explanation, Intervention Class Grade 8A Group 1, Appendix C (iii) turn 36, Group member 14).*

*What will you do if you were Florence? (Authentic Question-Connection Question, Intervention Class 9B Group 1 Appendix C (iii) turn 32, Peer-facilitator 10).*

*I feel sorry for Florence because Florence was younger than Lawrence. (Sound Reasoning, Intervention Class 9B, Group 1 Appendix C (iii) turn, Group member 18).*

With results from peer-led small-group, text-based discussions above in Class 8A, it can be noted that students were using authentic questions as a tool for thinking and inter-thinking in creating dialogue in collaborative learning. Primary evidence shows how authentic questions in peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions can lead to the development of critical-analytic thinking in the section below. The following diagram shows an extract from Intervention Class 8A presenting students responding to “Authentic Questions” with one of the types of responses, “Cumulative Talk” (CT), thus helping students in developing critical-analytic thinking in discourse-intensive pedagogical practices.

Table 0.4: A typical example of cumulative talk - Appendix C (iii)

Do you think it is necessary to have sign language teachers in our schools?
<i>Peer-facilitator 15 Grade 8A Group 1 turn 56-Authentic Question-Connection Question</i>
Yes, I think it is necessary. Yes, I think it is necessary for us to have a sign language teacher because we all not the same we all not born the same and God , and God created us differently.
<i>Group member 5 Grade 8A Group 1 turn 57 Cumulative talk</i>
And it help us to talk with deaf people.
<i>Group member 10 Grade 8A Group 1 turn 58 Cumulative talk</i>
I think that is a good idea because in other places they are deaf ...deaf children who wish to understand us when we speak.
<i>Group member 14 Grade 8A Group 1 turn 59 Cumulative talk</i>

The above discussion illustrates how, through a rule governed, peer-facilitated turn-taking system, a small-group discussion generates cumulative talk in response to open-ended authentic questions. The dialogical space for “Quality Talk” created positive student learning outcomes in text-based English discussions, thus, enhancing high-level comprehension and critical-analytic thinking skills. In contradiction to the *modus operandi* in traditional teaching practices, peer-facilitated small group discussions allowed students to collaboratively learn and develop high-level comprehension and critical-analytic thinking skills as they learn to read, understand and make sense of a text. This lessens the achievement gap of rural day secondary school students and their urban counterparts. In the control classroom, where the traditional teaching is steered by the “knowledgeable” teacher, test questions are asked, (usually because they require one-word answers or responses emanating only from the text under discussion), they do not allow for more talk and reasoning. I captured the passive nature of students in the control class Grade 8C in my observation notes:

*The students raise their hands and teacher nominates who to respond. Test questions do not allow room for discussion as they somehow train students to just identify answers from the text without much reasoning. Very few hands are raised and the rest of the class just sits quietly.....Are the quiet students thinking since they are not actively taking part? Students are being taught in a language that they do not*

*understand hence the failure to express themselves in English that will also make them shy to speak.* (Field Notes-Appendix A (ii)).

Table 4.3 below displays transcribed, Control Classroom 9C, English lesson observations for the “Red kite in a pale sky” story. The table shows the absence of students’ engagement which decreases the students’ intellectual space as evidenced by the number of words for the teacher against the students’ words in the teacher dominated discussion, hence, students have limited critical-analytic space as their answers are confined to one possible response as shown below.

Table 0.5: Transcription of a whole class English lesson discussion - Appendix C (i)

Participant	Verbatim	No of Words
Teacher	So we are going to read the story on page 165, page 165, it is an extract that is coming from the novel, the name of the novel is called the red kite in a pale sky, its called the red kite in a pale sky if you can look at the .... There is a cover page of our novel, red kite in a pale sky, can we all see the picture	73
Learners	Yes	1
Teacher	So uhm by just uhm mere looking at uhm the cover page who do you think this extract will be talking about, before maybe we can read our extract or our story, the extract that is coming from a novel what do you think this extract is talking about by just mere looking at the cover, what do you think. You just.... No.....can you all see that picture	68
Learners	Yes	1
Teacher	.....are almost saying almost the same things you are saying a man holding a branch trying to save himself because of what you see from the picture from the cover page of the book, now we are going to read the extract and find out what the extract is talking about but then before we read lets read instruction number 1. This extract comes from the section near the beginning of the novel, number 1 read the extract quietly to yourself it begins with m... the maths teacher speaking to the class remember that the use of 3 dots shows that some text has been left out words that are not in the original text a written in square brackets to show what happens in the ...bits that have been left out. Do you understand that one	137
Learners	Yes	1

The whole class discussion illustrated above is quite different from the peer-facilitated small-group discussions that employ open-ended authentic questions which offer the chance for students to generate connections between the text being discussed and their lived experiences as individuals. I observed that peer-facilitation allowed room for reflection on personal experiences in relation to

text under discussion which allowed students to bring in prior knowledge from the group members which enriched the discussions, thus allowing the students more room for critical thinking. It can be argued that schools and teachers in a rural school can make use of peer-facilitated small-group discussions to ensure maximum participation of students in an environment that allows them to ask questions, offer support to each other and allow social construction of knowledge in the zone of proximal development and develop critical-analytical thinking skills in a collaborative group learning environment.

#### **4.3.1.2 Category 1.1.2 Promotes High-level Thinking**

This category includes data related to high-level thinking as evidenced by the use of analysis, generalisation or speculation questions and exploratory talk during the peer-facilitated small-group discussion. When students use authentic questions, room is created for student-talk and greater reflection, which generates reasoning and high-level thinking. Results from the study indicate that high-level thinking can occur through the use of affective connection questions between the reader and the text in the small-group, text-based discussions. High-level thinking questions enable students to develop “the ability to make connections as well as make meaning of the world around them” (Nappi, 2017, p.30) thus new ideas and evidence can be prompted during the discussions as evidenced in the current study. From the excerpts below, high-level understanding is evident in small-group, text-based English discussions facilitated by peers as peer-group members respond to a high-level thinking question through exploratory talk.

Table 0.6: Exploratory Talk - Example 1 - Appendix C (iii)

So what do Ee... do you think all the learners it was scared and the teachers it was scared ? we think about the water spirit?
<i>Peer-facilitator 12 Grade 9B Group 7 turn 44-Authentic Question-Connection Question</i>
The teachers I think the teachers grow up in the olden days, rain used to fall down and I don't think that they were that scared because they were used to it and the learners obviously were scared because even if it can be rain or storm or anything or heavy rain today we will be scared and some of us we even hide under desks
<i>Group member 27 Grade 9B Group 7 turn 45 Exploratory talk</i>
I think all the learners and the teachers were very scared because the rain was heavy and the water turned into a brown
<i>Group member 24 Grade 9B Group 7 turn 46 Exploratory talk</i>

Peer-facilitated discussions, as evidenced by the above excerpts, promote higher-level thinking processes, as signified by considerably more elegant and complex responses, compared to teacher-led discussions. Participating in peer-led small-group, text-based English discussions provided greater opportunities for students to verbalise, which is key to promoting conceptual change and high-level thought processes also evidenced by good argumentation skills. In peer-led discussions, the use of open-ended questions that are student-generated increased the amount of talk as students explain, elaborate and defend their positions to peers. The extract below shows an exploratory talk from peers who were responding to an open-ended authentic question asked by another peer in the small group discussion.

Table 0.7: Exploratory talk - Example 2 - Appendix C (iii)

Do you think Roy was going to win the race?
<i>Peer-facilitator Grade 8A Group 4 turn 35-Authentic Question-Connection Question</i>
No, because he didn't hear the whistle of the race.
<i>Group member 2 Grade 8A Group 4 turn 36 Exploratory talk</i>
In my opinion, I say that if Roy knew how to speak sign languages and the teacher knew he would have won the race because he was the fastest learner.
<i>Group member 22 Grade 8A Group 4 turn 37 Exploratory talk</i>
Yes because if Roy have heard what the teacher was saying he could have won the race.
<i>Group member 38 Grade 8A Group 4 turn 38 Exploratory talk</i>

As evidenced from responses, the group members' use of open-ended authentic questions created room for extended periods that students held the floor allowing the incorporation of a high degree of thinking into the discussion resulting in well-structured and focused productive discussions. Application of rules learnt and applied to the small-group discussion where students learnt not to argue with a person but to argue with the idea as they gave each other time to talk helped students to develop argumentative skills. I noticed that indeed the frequency of student talk and the detailed explanations they gave during the peer-facilitated small-group discussions played a crucial role in eliciting high-level thinking and critical-analytic responses.

#### ***4.3.1.3 Category 1.1.3 Enhances Students' Cognitive Engagement***

This category includes data related to active and interactive co-construction of knowledge through cognitive engagement in an authentic dialogic conversation. Evidence from the study indicated that working in peer-facilitated small-groups promotes cognitive development in students as students genuinely engage in a back-and-forth discussion. The student-centred approach that shifts attention from the teacher and focuses it on peer-facilitation in learner-centred approaches has proved that apart from critical-analytic thinking and high-level thinking, students psychologically benefit from the small group discussions. Primary evidence has shown that peer facilitated small-group, text-based discussions can lead to cognitive engagement in students, better understanding of text under discussion and acquisition of concepts through social interaction. The following excerpts from Intervention Class 9B provide evidence of a peer-facilitated discussion in which students use the different discourse elements to talk about, around and with the text as they think and interthink to co-construct knowledge and make sense of the text under discussion.

Table 0.8: Co-constructed responses, Cumulative talk - Grade 9B - Appendix C (iii)

So what do we think about the water spirit?
<i>Peer-facilitator 44 Grade 9B Group 6 turn 50-Authentic Question-Speculative Question</i>
Eh... I think it's true because sometimes it happens that the water spirit starts the... to have storms and heavy rain when its angry
<i>Group member 15 Grade 9B Group 6 turn 51 Cumulative talk</i>
Like I think that the heavy rain is there if you say the snake that stay underwater when it is going to the other water, when it is coming up, like it is like a tornado, like here in the... plus in the river... in the dam it is always round and round in the middle of the water it is rotating there is a snake
<i>Group member 25 Grade 9B Group 6 turn 52 Cumulative talk</i>
To add into what have said I think that snake that stays underwater was wanting to go to another sea so if that snake want to go to another sea become so difficult for that snake to go just if the sun is there so the heavy rain that's why it comes, it comes really fast so that that snake can go faster than the rain so that people cannot see it, if you see it you cannot sleep properly because it is very scary ...Eish....
<i>Group member 22 Grade 9B Group 6 turn 53 Cumulative talk</i>

The above verbatim transcription from Intervention Class Grade 9B shows that peer-facilitated small group discussions can promote cognitive engagement as students negotiate meaning with peers to deliver their opinions and ideas and in that way, students learn better. In response to the open-ended authentic question, students link the text under discussion to their lived experiences, collaboratively bringing in their prior knowledge to give an interpretation to the real story, evidence of high-level thinking and critical-analytic thinking through cognitive engagement. Through peer-facilitated discussions of the text, students can learn to ask the authentic type of questions and critically look at each other's responses and such cognitive engagement is evidence of students taking responsibility for their own learning.

#### **4.3.1.4 Category 1.1.4: Helps Students to Develop Confidence**

This category includes data related to how peer-facilitation of small-group discussions build confidence in students. Evidence from the current study confirms the effectiveness of peer-facilitated small-group text-based discussion in promoting confidence among students. Results indicate that an increase in students' active participation during the discussion helps to develop confidence in students, as opposed to traditional classroom discourse where students passively listen to the knowledgeable teacher with little or no contribution. Below is a reflection I had after a discussion with teacher B (Class teacher for Intervention Class 9B) concerning the use of peer-facilitated small-group discussions in classroom discourse.

*For the students to speak, it appears they should be talking in their home language. Outside class and back home they will be speaking in their home language and it then becomes difficult to switch over to the language of instruction. But on a positive note, teacher B mentioned that ever since they started the Quality Talk lessons you can also hear them talking to each other in English even outside class. I think it is important to allow use of students' home language to help them learn the second language because the moment we continue to look down upon the home language instead of using it as a resource for learning the second language, we continue to marginalize all those who are not competent enough to express themselves well in English (Field Notes-Appendix A (ii)).*

As the teacher gradually releases responsibility for the facilitation of the small-group discussion to the peer-leader as in this case, the relationship of peer-group members and their peer-leader creates an environment where this social interaction enables students to participate confidently and increases the student-to-student talk. It removes barriers to participation often characteristic of the conventional pedagogy where the teacher does most of the talking. Table 4.4 below shows verbatim transcriptions from the peer-facilitated small-group discussion in Intervention Class 8A; students code-switch, and this happens spontaneously. This is not something that I noticed happening in the whole class discussion as students just did not respond despite several invitations from the teacher to talk since they were not allowed to speak in their home language in class, thus enabling greater group member participation. I noticed that this could be because the group member viewed the peer-facilitator steering the discussion as one of them and the resultant atmosphere thus created was quite different from that in the teacher-facilitated whole-class discussion. The table below shows the free flow of the open discussion from all corners in the small-group discussion as students freely contributed to the discussion.

Table 0.9: Individual responses, Elaborated explanation - Grade 8A - Appendix C (iii)

What will you do if you were the sport teacher?
<i>Peer-facilitator 44 Grade 8A Group 1 turn 15-Authentic Question-Speculative Question</i>
<i>I will try to understand the condition of the deaf boy</i>
<i>Group member 31 Grade 8A Group 1 turn 16</i>
How will you understand that?
<i>Group member 10 Grade 8A Group 1 turn 17 Uptake Question</i>
<i>I will try to..., I will do communicate with the deaf boy. I will use sign because he can't hear anything.</i>
<i>Group member 31 Grade 8A Group 1 turn 18 Elaborated explanation</i>



What is the name, what do I telled you that Roy was feeling sad and scared when you went to the headmasters?
<i>Group member 14 Grade 8A Group 1 turn 19 Authentic question-Connection question?</i>
It showed the way he was because he didn't understand anything what the sport teacher was talking about at all.
<i>Group member 5 Grade 8A Group 1 turn 20 Exploratory talk</i>
I disagree with you because I think that he knew exactly what the teacher said to him but not exactly cause he had plans to ... <i>Whispering in SiSwati.</i>
<i>Group member 3 Grade 8A Group 1 turn 21 Exploratory talk</i>

The high-level of interaction in the student-to-student talk as evidenced in the above discussion is exactly the opposite of what I observed happening in the Control Classes. Students were quite active before the lesson started however, as soon as the lesson started, they became very quiet. This was in contrast to behaviour of most of the students in the Intervention Classes who were very active and freely contributed during the lesson in the peer-facilitated small-group discussion. Students could even challenge the other group members' opinions as evidenced in the above excerpt. Below are my reflexive notes during the lesson observation in the control classroom relating to the possible explanation as to why students were passive in the control classes.

*I noticed though that the students who were quite active and alive before the lesson started just went very quiet when the lesson started and throughout the lesson as they would not even respond to the teacher's questions despite teacher's efforts to encourage them to speak. The issue of language as a barrier to communication may also be coming in to play in that, they are reading an English text which they may not be understanding. They are expected to speak in English a language that they cannot express themselves in and so keeping quiet would be the only option (Reflexive Notes-Appendix A (ii)).*

#### **4.3.2 Subtheme 1.2: Peer-facilitation bridges the gap between Teacher and Students**

Subtheme 1.2 relates to data pertaining to the role of peer-facilitators in bridging the gap between 'knowledgeable' teachers and "unknowledgeable" students when facilitating small-group, text-based English discussions in a rural South African secondary school. The subtheme consists of two categories:

(1.2.1) use of code-switching creates a common learning ground and

(1.2.2) peer-facilitation creates a common learning ground for students.

The pictures below, showing the traditional classroom set-up in the control classes as compared to the set-up in the peer-facilitated small-group discussions in one of the Intervention Classes as observed, have a contributory role on the gap created between the teacher as an authority figure in the classroom and the powerless passive student on the other end. The small group set-up sitting arrangement where students face each other enabled the students to whisper comfortably in their home language as they help each other understand the text under discussion thus creating a common learning ground for the students.



Picture 0-1: Conventional Class sitting arrangement



Picture 0-2: Small Group Sitting arrangement

The pictures above illustrate the contrasting sitting arrangements in the control class and the intervention class respectively.

#### 4.3.2.1 **Category 1.2.1: Use of Code-switching**

This category includes data related to the use of code-switching in peer-facilitated small-group discussions. The data shows that students can work together to accomplish a common goal through the use of their home language. In peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions, verbalisation involving code-switching between home language and the language of instruction plays a crucial role in the development of critical-analytic thinking and high-level thinking in discourse-intensive teaching practices. Below is an extract from Intervention Class peer-facilitated discussion, wherein students whisper and code-switch to SiSwati to help each other explain something and then switch back to English.

*How do Tom and Roy communicate with each other? (Someone whispering in SiSwati). How do Tom and Roy communicate with each other?*

*(A discussion in SiSwati)*

*How.... Okay. How do Sihle Nkosi communicate each other?*

*By using sign language and I could understand some of it but not all of it because I don't know sign language.*

*(Someone whispers in SiSwati about mouthing)*

*And she also uses mouthing*

*(Whispering in SiSwati)*

*(A discussion in SiSwati).*

*What was the friend, what was the friend of Sipesihle?*

*What was the.... whispering in SiSwati) (Intervention Class-Grade8A, Group 1 turn 49-54 Appendix C (iii).*

The above excerpt gives evidence of how student-to-student talk helps students understand through participation the text in contrast to the teacher-dominated talk in the control class, where the teacher does all the questioning, and a few students respond to the questions. I noted an incident where I conducted an informal discussion after the lesson with the teacher about code-switching done by students during the peer-facilitated discussion, the teacher acknowledged that some of the students could not even construct an English sentence; hence, code-switching helped the students understand. Then I noted the following:

*With the peer-facilitator encouraging group members to speak, I noticed the relaxed atmosphere in which the group members were as they discussed. I talked to the teacher after the lesson as I wanted to find out if she also noticed that they were speaking in their home language (code-switching to respond or ask questions for most of the time) and the teacher actually indicated that some of them cannot even construct a sentence in English. I then began to wonder if they were getting anything from the teacher dominated lessons that are taught in English. It somehow perhaps shows why they do not speak during whole class discussions since they will be expected to speak in English. The teacher also indicated that she sometimes had to code switch in order to help the students understand (Field Notes- Appendix A (ii)).*

Quite noticeable were whispers whenever the students were speaking in their home language to express themselves, which might show that the environment instils fear of using their home language. However, the use of the home language could be used as a resource for mastering the additional language.

*For the students to speak, it appears they should be talking in their home language. Outside class and back home, they will be speaking in their home language and that it then becomes difficult to switch over to the language of instruction. I think it is important to use a students' home language to help them learn the second language because the moment we continue to look down upon the home language instead of using it as a resource for learning the second language we continue to marginalise all those who are not competent enough to express themselves in English (Field Notes, 22/08/2017 Appendix A (ii)).*

In control class 8C, during a discussion with teacher A after the lesson, I learnt that it is mandatory for the students to speak in English both during lessons and out of the classroom.

*After the lesson I talked to the teacher about what she thinks contributed to the passiveness of the rest of the class and the teacher indicated that they are sometimes shy to speak in class since they find it difficult to express themselves in English. On asking if they allow them to speak in their home language during an English lesson, she said the students are not allowed to speak in their home language during the lesson and even after the lesson. "The rule was English is the language of learning and communication", the teacher said (Field Notes-Appendix A (ii)).*

One peer-facilitator who thought that the peer-facilitated discussions could help students to improve their English language, admitted that some learners were scared of speaking and had this to say in appreciation of the peer-facilitated small-group discussions:

*Yes, it helps the other learners who are scared of speaking but as we are working as a group they can speak, and they are not afraid to speak anything, and it can help us to improve English language*

Semi-structured interview, Peer-facilitator 12, line 200-202 Appendix B (i).

Peer-facilitator 15 also suggested that students' reason for not speaking could be that they were afraid to speak in English and at one point she had to ask her group member to write down in SiSwati what the group member wanted to ask so she could then translate it for him from SiSwati into English:

*Maybe I can say that he is afraid to talk... English..... Yes, then I have to translate in English and read it out for them... Yes, there's only one member who told me her question in SiSwati then I had to translate it into English then I written it down and gave it to her*

Structured interview, Peer-facilitator 15, line 354-361 Appendix B (i).

While students found it difficult to code-switch and participate in whole-class discussions where the teacher has the authoritative interpretation of the text, evidence from the current study shows that in peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions students code-switch without fear of being reprimanded to help each other understand the text. The evidence thus suggests that the home language provides important scaffolding for critical-analytic thinking and forms the basis of learning as social interaction. Students in peer-facilitated small-group English text-based discussions used their home language as a resource for mastering the additional language.

#### **4.3.2.2 Category 1.2.2: Peer-facilitation Creates a Common Learning Ground**

This category includes data related to how peer-facilitation of small-group, text-based discussions create a common learning ground for students. Since peers are people at the same level as the rest of their classmates, evidence from the current study indicates that with peer-facilitation the small-group discussion resulted in high-levels of active participation. As the teacher as a fading facilitator gradually releases responsibility to the students leaving the peer-leader to facilitate the discussion, the students could be observed taking responsibility for their own learning as the

discussions progressed productively towards the understanding of the text. The following extracts from the peer-facilitators show the benefits of the different environment created through peer-facilitated small-group discussion:

P-F 42	<p>What I other liked from this Quality Talk is that people are happy and they are now getting more knowledge.</p> <p>They get this knowledge by answering answers even if it's wrong or right, we understand each other.</p> <p><i>Semi-structured interview, Peer-facilitator 42, line 44, 46 Appendix B (i)</i></p>
P-F 12	<p>Yes, it helps the other learners who are scared of speaking but as we are working as a group they can speak and they are not afraid to speak anything and it can help us to improve English language.</p> <p>Yes, there is a difference cos when we are studying like not in pairs some learners are scared to speak but as we are working as a group they can speak, yes.</p> <p><i>Semi-structured interview, Peer-facilitator 12, line 16, 22 Appendix B (i).</i></p>
P 23	<p>Is that in the Quality Talk class we share the ideas, but in other subjects we don't answer questions, we just be shy, we disrespect members, we disrespect the teachers, we are not listening but in the Quality Talk we discuss as members and respect others, share ideas on the staff</p> <p><i>Semi-structured interview, Peer-facilitator 23, line 24 Appendix B (i).</i></p>
P 19	<p>What I like is because as the group members we bring together the ideas to get to understand more about the text and be able to answer questions, the comprehension questions.</p> <p><i>Semi-structured interview, Peer-facilitator 19, line 42 Appendix B (i).</i></p>
P 40	<p>Uuumm ...our classes where we've had a Quality Talk it is more active and everybody is speaking but the other classes if they ask you, you ask them question what they have read about today in the story they won't tell you but if you ask our class they tell you more.</p> <p><i>Semi-structured interview, Peer-facilitator 40, line 36 Appendix B (i)</i></p>

The above excerpt is evidence of how the shift from the teacher-centred pedagogy to Quality Talk in peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions create a common learning ground where students can genuinely discuss and exchange ideas in the classroom, thereby developing critical-analytic thinking. It is hoped this will help students improve their comprehension skills as they socially interact and make meaning of text-based content. Allowing students to ask questions and discuss in small groups provides them with opportunities that lead them to think critically through dialogue with others, enabling them to reflect about their own thinking and become aware of their thinking processes in their natural setting.

*Using expressive response, in a natural set up, students encourage each other to talk about their lived experiences to the text under discussion and in an efferent stance, retrieve information as they discuss. A basic understanding of the text can lead to opportunities of connecting text to lived experiences or some read text thereby allowing students to broaden their understanding of the text. The turns students take as they ask questions and respond in an open discussion where through the use of authentic questions and elaborated, exploratory and cumulative responses students can share what they have understood from the text with someone of their age facilitating the discussion. It became easy to ask questions where students had not understood unlike what happens in the whole class discussion where most of the talking is done by the teacher (Field Notes and Reflexive Notes-Appendix A (ii)).*

The peer-facilitator as the gate-keeper of the laid down rules of the small-group discussion ensures the prevalence of a common environment that encourages all to participate, allowing the other students to take the major task, for example, the task of asking questions as was in this case. Since the peer facilitator's role was not being judgemental, it was evident that each student's different view was valued. Asked on how the group discussions went; group members had the following to say:

P-F 1	How did the discussion went?
G-M 39	It went nice because we were answering questions
G-M 8	It went nice because we were, we were explaining our ideas, and listening to each other and we respect others opinion and we give others time to speak
G-M 39	We followed the rules well, and I think it's a good idea having the Quality Talk because I was scared talking in group, but now I am not scared
G-M 33	We have learnt things, and now we are not ashamed of ourselves answering questions we respect others opinion we don't argue about with people but to argue about the ideas
G-M 23	The discussions went nicely because we were not struggling to answer questions, and it was easy for us to answer questions
G-M 43	It was fantastic we give reasons to explain our ideas w were respecting each other talking one at a time we were not harassing each other
	<i>Peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions turn 67-73 Appendix C (iii)</i>

It is evident from the above excerpt is the observation that as the peer-facilitators facilitate the discussion under an atmosphere where peers feel comfortable not only to ask to seek understanding but use the various types of questions and responses that characterise a productive discussion, students can develop high-level thinking and critical-analytic thinking skills.

One group member indicated that she is no longer scared to talk while another one indicated they were no longer ashamed of themselves. As group members abide by the discussion skills and rules like the group members indicated above, the common ground that has been set, allows for a free flow of information from all angles as students collaboratively co-construct knowledge as they interpret the text under discussion and take responsibility for their learning.

#### **4.4 LITERATURE CONTROL: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS RELATED TO THEME 1**

The above section of this chapter focused on Theme One, its subthemes and categories. In this section, I present the discussion and interpretation of the results of Theme One in relation to the existing literature. The following concepts guided my layout of the discussion:

(4.5.1) Confirmation referring to the corroboration of the current study's findings and the existing literature;

(4.5.2) Identified silences;

(4.5.3) Contradictions in comparing the current study with existing literature;

(4.5.4) Contributions, referring to the new knowledge the results of the current study has contributed.

##### **4.4.1 Confirmation of Knowledge in Existing Literature**

The findings of the current study substantiate findings in existing literature that peer-facilitators in small group discussions help students develop critical-analytic thinking and high-level thinking (Dalkou & Frydaki; 2016; Din & Wheatley, 2007; Kovalainen, 2013; Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009; Soter et al., 2008; Vygotsky, 1978). For example, the studies conducted by Soter et al., (2008), reported that when students hold the floor for a long time, they start to use open-ended authentic questions for discussing a text, incorporating a high degree of uptake leading to well-structured and focused productive discussions. Their findings concluded that authentic questions lead to high-level thinking. Findings further corroborated Bearison's (1982) conclusions which indicated that working in small-groups promoted critical thinking among peers.

Studies by Cook-Sather (2010) established that through peer-facilitated discussions of the text, students can learn to ask the authentic type of questions and critically look at each other's responses. The studies pointed out that for cognitive engagement to take place, students should also take responsibility for their own learning. Winter (2002), while studying ninth-grade peers on guided reciprocal peer questioning, concluded that students as social learners could actively



construct meaning and knowledge as they interact with their cultural and social environment through dialogue which aids them in cognitive development. According to Winter (2002):

*other peer learning tasks demand higher, more complex, levels of cognitive processing. These include working together to solve ill-structured problems and problems with several possible solutions, peers analysing and integrating ideas to go beyond presented material to build new knowledge, group decision making, peer assessment of learning products, and peer tutoring. These more complex learning tasks lead to high-level cognitive development. (Winter, 2002)*

From a Vygotskian perspective (Vygotsky, 1978), learning is socially constructed during interaction and activity with others. Studies by Koh et al. (2020) on New Zealand's cultural landscape, with university students, findings indicated that the interaction between and among the learners in a group influence the cognitive activity that is therapeutic; and it is this cognitive activity that accounts for learners to develop confidence in the classroom. When learners develop confidence, "thinking and interaction within the group will be of a high cognitive level, characterised by the exchange of ideas, information, perspectives, attitudes, and opinions" (Cohen, 1994).

In a study by Hung (2019), students engaged in high-level thinking about the authentic text questions. To generate their specific questions, students not only had to identify the main ideas of the lesson, but they also had to consider how those ideas related to one another and their existing knowledge – this stimulates active learning. When students engage in active learning, it increases participation, understanding as well as confidence among peers in a group (Huang et al., 2017; Kuh, 2009; Liu et al., 2011).

Scholarly literature on peer group learning from as far back as the 1980s has concluded that code-switching improves comprehension for the individual doing the explaining and other group members. Code-switching not only promotes understanding between peer group members but also stimulates the construction of high-level thinking (Bearison, 1982; Webb, 1989). Some of the high-level question starters are designed to go beyond explaining the material presented to requiring that new knowledge be constructed; in some instances, this can be achieved by code-switching. In line with the above-cited scholars as well as studies by Chval and Khisty's (2009)

findings of the current study tended to confirm the significant contribution that code-switching has made to the development of critical thinking skills in learning situations where the language of instruction happens to be different from the language of instruction.

In a study on peer-to-peer training in the US army, Costanza et al. (2009) argued that peer-facilitated small-group discussions foster a mutual learning environment in which students can socially interact with each other in the target language, negotiate meanings, learn from each other and share experiences while receiving important practice in using their English skills. In peer group discussions where the language of instruction is different from the learners' home language, learners pro-actively participate in classroom discourse where the peer-facilitator is on the same level with them, not only to improve learners' critical-analytic skills but to cultivate social interaction as well. Current study findings agree with several recent studies in this area that support the assertion that peer learning facilitates learners' common learning ground (Baghdasaryan, 2012; & Normann, 2011; Lee, 2014; Nishioka, 2016;).

#### **4.4.2 Silences Related to Existing Knowledge**

In sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.2, I discussed the role of peer-facilitators in facilitating small-group, text-based English discussions in a rural South African secondary school. Yet, no reference was made to the role played by teachers in mentoring peer-facilitators in small-group, text-based discussions. Both the interview and the observation data were silent on the views of teachers on the selection and training of peer-facilitators. Lin (2015) cautioned that it is important to consider the perception of teachers in the selection and training of peer-facilitators to achieve the learning goals. Lin (2015) posits that through collaborative learning with more capable peers, the interaction between students and teachers and amongst students helps students to advance to the zone of proximal development to achieve the potential level of development that an individual cannot achieve on their own. Related literature has shown a nexus between peer-facilitators' performance and teacher involvement in training peer-facilitators (Anto & Coenders, 2019, Rawana et al., 2015). The study has been silent on teacher involvement because its main focus was on the role played by peer-facilitators in facilitating small-group, text-based discussion and not the teacher.

Also absent from this study as well as existing literature is conclusive evidence of how or whether the use of code-switching by learners systematically enhances or retards proficiency in the target language of classroom instruction. Notwithstanding the pragmatic uses of code-switching in bolstering class participation and social relationships in class (Azlan & Narasuman 2013;

Simasiku 2016; Maluleke 2019; Mkonto, 2018), research evidence on whether code-switching enhances second language learning at best remains sketchy and inconclusive. The findings revealed that teachers were equally divided on the issue of whether code-switching aided learners' English language proficiency or not. As Rios and Campos (2013) point out in their study, research respondents were of the view that code-switching can have both useful and harmful effects for second language learning. "The findings", Simasiku, Kasanda and Smit (2015, p. 572) argue, "revealed that teachers were equally divided on the issue of whether Code-Switching aided learners' English language proficiency or not".

#### **4.4.3 Contradictions between Data and Existing Knowledge**

In Subtheme 4.4.1.1, Category 1.1.4, I reported that peer-facilitated small-group; text-based English helps to develop confidence in classroom discourse.

Research findings in this study indicated that students develop confidence in peer-to-peer discussions which promotes critical and high-level thinking among students. Some scholars disagree with this view. For example, Double et al. (2019) state that peer group discussions may improve communication among students but not build confidence per se. In his view, through feedback, students are likely to become better reviewers in peer discussions. Double et al., (2019) went on to point out that peer discussions have tended to conclude that when students develop critical-analytic skills during a discussion, confidence is also developed; whereas it may not be the same in all discussions since not all participants freely speak during peer-facilitated discussions. Griffin and Griffin (1998) studied the effects of reciprocal peer-tutoring (RPT) on achievement, self-confidence, and test anxiety of 47 undergraduates. The findings indicated that the RPT procedure had no statistically significant effects on either achievement or self-confidence but did increase test anxiety. A major flaw of the results was in the procedures used, telling the students how they were going to study, and there was limited time for peer-interaction. In studies by Griffin and Griffin (1998), researchers controlled the operation of RPT in a tightly regimented manner with little opportunity for students to share their thoughts about quiz questions. In this study, students were given the freedom to share and engage in conversation through trial and error to gain acceptance with their peers and feel a sense of accomplishment. This boosted their confidence, as explained in the findings above.

#### **4.4.4 Contribution to New Knowledge**

Although the current study reports findings mostly affirming existing knowledge on the subject, its major contribution is in providing insights to how peer facilitation interacts with the deployment of

discourse elements to enhance learning in small group text-based English discussions. Data from interviews and direct observation point to sharp dissimilarities between intervention and control classes in terms of levels of learner participation in the learning activities. The chosen study site, that of a resource-constrained, rural day secondary school, also marks the current study as different from earlier studies, most of which focused on urban elite schools or colleges. For example, studies by Gurung and Landrum (2013) with undergraduate medical students at Manchester Metropolitan University on the “Use of student peer-facilitators for asynchronous online discussion to extend professional development amongst undergraduate medical students”; the study was an online study and focused on university students. The current study adds to the existing body of knowledge on the role of peer-facilitators in promoting critical-analytic thinking in small-group, text-based English discussions in severely-resource constrained school settings with rural South Africa as an example. These findings indicate that:

- Peer-facilitation of small-group, text-based discussions are effective in promoting critical and high-level thinking in students as they actively participate in the co-construction of knowledge and meaning-making.
- The use of home language in code-switching, evident in the peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions help the students to have a deeper understanding of the text through increased amounts of student talk as they use authentic questions, elaborated responses and cumulative talk, leading to the development of critical-analytic thinking in English based discussions.
- The use of peer-led small-group, text-based English discussions in rural, resource-constrained schools effectively promotes critical thinking as students inter-think in talking “about, around, and with the text”.
- Peer-facilitated small-group discussions allow students to collaboratively learn and develop high-level comprehension and critical-analytic thinking skills as they learn to read, understand and make meaning from a text, lessening the achievement gap of rural day secondary school students and their urban counterparts.
- Peer-facilitated small-group discussions as a teaching-learning strategy can effectively deal with the challenge of poor or limited learner participation in large classes.

#### **4.5 THEME 2: PERCEPTIONS OF PEER-FACILITATED SMALL-GROUP, TEXT-BASED DISCUSSIONS.**

Theme Two focuses on perceptions of peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions. There are three subthemes that support theme two, namely:

- (2.1) peer-facilitators' perceptions of the peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions;
- (2.2) small-group discussion members' perceptions of their participation in the discussions; and
- (2.3) teachers' perceptions of the peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions.

Table 14 below summarises the three subthemes and their categories as well as providing the inclusion and exclusion criteria as they emerged from the collected data analysis

Table 0.10: Theme 2. Perceptions of peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions

<b>Theme 2: Perceptions of peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions.</b>		
<b>Subtheme and categories</b>	<b>Inclusion criteria</b>	<b>Exclusion criteria</b>
<b>Subtheme 2.1: Peer-facilitators' perceptions</b>	Includes data that relate to the perceptions of peer-facilitation of small-group, text-based English discussions.	
<b>2.1.1 Interpersonal and communication repertoire</b>	This category includes data related to interpersonal and communication skills in peer-facilitation	This category excludes data that is related to my observations and reflections
<b>2.1.2 Steered debate</b>	This category includes data related to the use of discourse elements and ground rules to steer the debate	This category excludes data that is related to my observations and reflections
<b>2.1.3 Supported learning</b>	This category includes data related to use of discourse elements and ground rules to steer debate	This category excludes data related to my observations and reflections
<b>Subtheme 2.2: Group members' perceptions</b>	Includes data that relate to the perceptions of group members' perceptions on their participation in peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions.	
<b>2.2.1 Engagement with text</b>	This category includes data related to the group members and who also include peer-facilitators as group members' perceptions of how the group discussions increase members' understanding of the text.	This category excludes data that relates to my observations and reflections on the perceptions on participation in peer-facilitated small-group discussions.
<b>2.2.2 Acquired debating skills</b>	This category includes data related to the group members and who also include peer-facilitators as group members' perceptions of how the group discussions help in developing argumentative skills	This category excludes data that relates to my observations and reflections on the perceptions on participation in peer-facilitated small-group discussions.
<b>2.2.3 Encouraged productive talk</b>	This category includes data related to the use of discourse elements that lead to cognitive engagement	This category excludes data related to peer-facilitators and teachers' perceptions
<b>2.2.4 Encouraged critical analysis of text</b>	This category includes data related to the use of discourse elements in small-group discussions	This category excludes data related to peer-facilitators and teachers' perceptions

<b>Subtheme</b>	<b>2.3:</b>	Includes data that relate to teachers' perceptions of peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions in developing critical-analytic thinking	
<b>Teachers' perceptions</b>			
<b>2.3.1</b>	<b>Increases student engagement</b>	This category includes data related to teachers' perceptions of how peer-facilitation increases students' participation	This category excludes data that relates to peer-facilitators and group members' perceptions of how peer-facilitation increases student participation
<b>2.3.2</b>	<b>Promotes independent learning</b>	This category includes data related to teachers' perceptions of how peer-facilitation of small-group discussions promote students' critical-analytic thinking	This category excludes data that relates to peer-facilitators and group members' perceptions of how peer-facilitation of discussions promote students' critical-analytic thinking

#### **4.5.1 Subtheme 2.1: Peer-Facilitators' Perceptions of Peer-facilitated Small-group Text-based Discussions**

Table 4.6 above summarises evidence that relates to perceptions of peer-facilitation of small-group, text-based English discussions. Peer-facilitators play a crucial role in small-group text-based discussions. This subtheme includes data pertaining to the perceptions of peer-facilitators on their role of facilitating small-group, text-based discussions. The subtheme is supported by three categories:

(2.1.1) interpersonal and communication skills repertoire;

(2.1.2) steered debate; and

(2.1.3) supported learning.

##### **4.5.1.1 Category 2.1.1: Interpersonal and communication skills repertoire**

This category includes data related to peer-facilitators' perceptions of their role in peer-facilitated small-group discussions. Evident from the peer-facilitator transcribed interviews, peer-facilitators used a repertoire of interpersonal and communication skills to ensure maximum participation of group members. Among the skills they mentioned are patience, open-mindedness, respecting their group members and paying attention to their group members. The peer-facilitators who are part of the small-group discussion benefit through facilitating the group discussion as well as through participation as a peer group member of the small-group. Below are excerpts from the transcribed Grade 8A and 9B peer-facilitator interviews to illustrate the peer-facilitators' evident use of the interpersonal and communication skills employed during the peer-facilitation of the small-group, text-based English discussions.

P-F 23	I don't care, I say they must keep laughing but I will, <i>I will not be angry</i> with them. <i>Grade 8A Peer-facilitated small-group, text based English discussions turn 38-Appendix B (i)</i>
P-F 15	What I like about Quality Talk is that (sigh...) most of the time is spend my mind... I spend the time my mind...my mind is always open I can think different things...then tell them, tell my group members, guide them, I like being a team leader. <i>Grade 8A Peer-facilitated small-group, text based English discussions turn 58-Appendix B (i)</i>
P-F 17	Is that it teaches us, it teaches us about other people that we may be patient for them and let them talk not be shy for them to talk to us. <i>Grade 8A Peer-facilitated small-group, text based English discussions turn 20-Appendix B (i)</i>
P-F 42	What I liked most about Quality Talk is that it will make me to know how to be a leader and make me know how to rule people in life. <i>Grade 8A Peer-facilitated small-group, text based English discussions turn 42-Appendix B (i).</i>
P-F 19	Yes, and I thought, all, all in is my hands as a group leader so now I realized, when time goes on I realized that it's for all of us in the group and yaah. <i>Grade 9B Peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions turn 38-Appendix B (i).</i>
P-F 43	Eehh... some others used to, used to start talking by jokes, maybe if you make a joke they will laugh and start talking and some others you need to just give them your attention. <i>Grade 9B Peer-facilitated small-group, text based English discussions turn 26-Appendix B (i)</i>
P-F 44	Eehh being a learner leader in the group makes you to know how other people think and it makes you to be able to communicate. I experienced that if you, if you communicate with people it makes you to improve your, your wellbeing. The difference is that the other classes just do not do Quality Talk they don't have the communication skills as the classes that is there Quality Talk. The communication skills I think the being able to talk to other people and understand what they want to say and the meaning of what they are saying. <i>Grade 9B Peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions turns 24, 30, 34 and 38-Appendix B (i)</i>

One peer-facilitator mentions the difference that she notices between their class, the class participating in peer-facilitated discussions and the other classes that are not in the Quality Talk project in terms of communication skills that they now have:

#### **4.5.1.2 Category 2.1.2: Steered debate**

This category includes data related to the perceptions of peer-facilitators that they steered the debate during the small-group discussions. Working in peer-facilitated small-groups, according to the peer-facilitators, provided opportunities for participating in highly active debates in connection

with the text under discussion without disrespect from peers, both high and low-achievers. Evident in the testimony of the peers is the fact that since peer-facilitators are also group members, there is no egalitarianism, according to the peer-facilitators, this is evident of the unique feature of peer-facilitated small-group discussion in that they create a comfortable work atmosphere. The peer-facilitators noted the active participation evident in the group discussion and stated that this was due to the use of questions that peers were responding to, which helped them to understand the text. Students actively participated in classroom discussion without fear of failure as discussions were among peers of the same cognitive age. Students, therefore, learn to ask the authentic type of questions and critically look at each other's responses, at the same time giving feedback to the response. Peer-facilitators playing their role contributed to the success of the discussion with almost everyone participating. The use of discourse elements contributed towards the active discussions, thus promoting critical-analytical thinking in learners. The following excerpts from the peer-facilitator interview transcripts confirm the peer-facilitators' perceptions on how peer-facilitation steered debate as students take the interpretative authority and own responsibility of their learning:

P-F 20	<p>We read stories with an understanding and we, we were asked test questions and effective questions</p> <p>Yes, it made, it increase me by using my vocabulary and dictionaries so that I can find words that are difficult for me to say.</p> <p>I like most, what I like most about Quality Talk is that we do not argue with people but the opinions of the people.</p> <p><i>Grade 8A Peer-facilitated small-group, text based English discussions turn 26.32 and 34-Appendix B (i).</i></p>
P-F 19	<p>What I like is because as the group members we bring together the ideas to get to understand more about the text and be able to answer questions, the comprehension questions.</p> <p>Yes, it helps because in the group we ask questions that may sometimes appear in the comprehension questions and that helped very much because we even relate the story with the outside world and in the comprehension question they also ask those.</p> <p><i>Grade 9B Peer-facilitated small-group, text based English discussions turns 38,42 and 44-Appendix B (i).</i></p>
P-F 17	<p>What I like most about Quality Talk is that when we talk to the people, to our group members we can understand them and how they feel about this talk, we ask them how discussions went and they told us that and others can speak where it went wrong is that some questions are difficult and we can't answer them so the solution of that we need to do this and that as a group it's like am a group member too as a leader, yes that's what I like about it.</p>



	<i>Grade 8A Peer-facilitated small-group, text based English discussions turn 36- Appendix B (i).</i>
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P-F 15	<p>Being a learner leader in quality made me become open before I never knew how to be open to other people coz I was not given to share information with others, it helped me to learn more about English, it also helped me to be a leader and lead and do the right things to other people. Quality Talk helped me to... ooh but firstly it helped me not to be shy coz I was very shy but now I am less shy (laughing)</p> <p>but (laughing) then it was .... very fun doing Quality Talk most good thing was that I was a learner leader leading others showing them what's right, doing the best I could.</p> <p>It made me more open, now I could think of more ideas to share them with my group members before, I was...I am a very clever leaner(indistinct) but I didn't know how to share information with others. When somebody asked me a question I don't know how to explain it but I know the answer but I don't know how to explain it. Quality Talk made me feel very open coz I Know I can share information with others tell them what to do and what not do and that's all.</p> <p>it helped me coz, it helped in other way cos and it helped other learners coz they were all afraid of me I didn't ... like they were afraid cos I didn't share the information with them that I have and they didn't know how to share the information that they know, to give it to me cos I can't say am perfect, I know everything but now I can tell them, they also assist me, that's all.</p> <p>What I learnt is they are also not that dump coz some other leaners when you ask them a question they feel a little bit shy so and I will be like okay what you have to do is this and this and this so the learner now must me that no So and so here and here it wasn't supposed to go like this it goes like this and now I see that this learner is a clever learner but she's shy to show people that she or he is clever</p> <p>Like I said, it helps me to be open, it helps me and I believe that 2 is better than one. I always do my work alone, in English classes we have to be a group, talk, discuss something but I didn't want to discuss anything.</p> <p><i>Grade 8A Peer-facilitated small-group, text based English discussions turns 14, 16, 18, 22, 26 and 30-Appendix B (i).</i></p>
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P-F 40	<p>Uuumm ... there's many things that I like when we are doing these Quality Talk discussions like asking affective questions relating to our life experiences. Uuumm... talking, saying what you think, that there is no answer wrong or right everybody is right and that we must not argue to people, we must argue to the conversation we are talking about.</p> <p>Am happy that affective question experiences us, ask us about have we ever had experiences like this, people can say that they give reasons for their answer, they give proof, they tell us, that is what is I like in Quality Talk.</p> <p>Uuumm... I would say I would like to tell people to be serious about Quality Talk, to take Quality Talk serious it's helping very much because now I can understand much stories than when Mam was teaching us because I was afraid to raise a hand and tell Mam that I don't understand somewhere but now with my group i can tell</p>
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	<p>them that guys, help me I don't understand here even if they don't understand they can tell that they don't understand if I know I will tell them what they are supposed to do.</p> <p><i>Grade 9B Peer-facilitated small-group, text based English discussions turns 56, 58 and 64-Appendix B (i).</i></p>
P-F 23	<p>They say the Quality Talk is good, because now we share ideas they are not scared to answer questions, they say something if they are wrong we correct it, we don't laugh at them</p> <p>Yes, the whole team works.</p> <p>All of them.</p> <p><i>Grade 8A Peer-facilitated small-group, text based English discussions turns 67, 69 and 71-Appendix B (i).</i></p>
P-F 19	<p>What I like is because as the group members we bring together the ideas to get to understand more about the text and be able to answer questions, the comprehension questions.</p> <p><i>Grade 9B Peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions turn 42-Appendix B (i).</i></p>
P-F 40	<p>Uuumm... our classes where we've had a Quality Talk it is more active and everybody is speaking but the other classes if they ask you, you ask them question what they have read about today in the story they won't tell you but if you ask our class they tell you more.</p> <p>In the Quality Talk class people are more active and they are always speaking up a when they are speaking to teachers they are disciplined even in class you can see them now they have changed they are not like the first time they were not in Quality Talk class.</p> <p><i>Grade 9B Peer-facilitated small-group, text based English discussions turns 36 and 40-Appendix B (i).</i></p>
P-F 43	<p>Eeeh... it helps a lot because we gather the information all together and we have only one eeeh... thought, we only think one thing about the source hat we have read.</p> <p>Uuumm... the rules, the rules made work easy plus the learners were active they were having this hunger of learning about Quality Talk.</p> <p><i>Grade 9B Peer-facilitated small-group, text based English discussions turns 53 and 57-Appendix B (i).</i></p>
P-F 1	<p>Quality Talk is for helping, helping to understand to improve, to improve our understanding, yes and forget used for talking and not be silence. yes</p>

	<p>yes, it is because eeh... other subjects I was not talking sometimes they were asking, they were answering the questions that they were but I was not understanding, yes but in Quality Talk I understand everything</p> <p>P-F 1 Because, because when someone is answering the question that they have asked all of us as a groups we discuss that answer and see what does that mean what I appreciate most is that Quality Talk it make everyone to understand, make everyone to enjoy and not be bored and to get used to some, with some other learners and asking questions and so on</p> <p><i>Grade 9B Peer-facilitated small-group, text based English discussions turns 30,32, 34 and 52 Appendix B (i).</i></p>
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P-F 44	<p>What I like about Quality Talk is that it makes it easier for the teacher to teach and it help us the class to understand the text more than the teacher makes us to understand it.</p> <p>When we discuss in the group we ask more questions that the teacher doesn't ask.</p> <p>Yes, and we have time to listen to our ideas.</p> <p><i>Grade 9B Peer-facilitated small-group, text based English discussions turns 56, 58 and 60-Appendix B (i).</i></p>
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#### 4.5.1.3 Category 2.1.3: Supported learning

This category includes data related to peer-facilitators' perceptions of their role in peer-facilitated small-group discussions. Evident from the peer-facilitator transcribed interviews is the peer-facilitators' perception that supporting learners was another role that they played in peer-facilitated discussions. Encouraging peers to speak, helping them by translating questions they want to ask from their mother tongue to English and positively commenting on a peer's response are some of the ways peer-facilitators showed support to the learning of their group members. Below are excerpts from interviews with peer-facilitators on the evidence of their support for the learning of their peers:

P-F 20	<p>It was quite hard but at all the time I told my members that you are not going to get hard questions, you are just going to answer them and you are, you are not always the right answers must be taken, everybody will get a chance to speak.</p> <p>I told everyone that it's not always the right answer that occurs in the question.</p> <p><i>Grade 8A Peer-facilitated small-group, text based English discussions turns 6-Appendix B (i).</i></p>
P-F 42	<p>My responsibility in the Quality Talk leader is to make the others to know how to ask questions and answer some questions and to make others to do not argue with people and not shout at other people if the answer is wrong.</p> <p><i>Grade 8A Peer-facilitated small-group, text based English discussions turns 24-Appendix B (i).</i></p>

P-F 12	<p>As a group leader in Quality Talk my duty is to encourage the group members to speak and be serious about Quality Talk. It is a very nice project and it can help us in my things so it is such a wonderful project.</p> <p><i>Grade 8A Peer-facilitated small-group, text based English discussions turns 14-Appendix B (i).</i></p>
P-F 15	<p>They are shy, I always see them, it's like that person knows what to say but you, she wants to write it first and read out.</p> <p>Maybe I can say that he is afraid to talk... English</p> <p>Yes, there's only one member who told me her question in SiSwati then I had to translate it into English then I written it down and gave it to her.</p> <p>Yes, that did help cos just like I said some don't want to talk they just want to write it first and that things and they read it first down...what they written and I gave then the recorder to ask the question, some... (indistinct) it was difficult for them to answer so I said to them okay if she asks a question, write your answer down then I will give you the recorder and...say your answer aloud</p> <p><i>Grade 8A Peer-facilitated small-group, text based English discussions turns 14-Appendix B (i).</i></p>
P-F 43	<p>Uuumm... the other learners who were not used to speak English.</p> <p>I just taught them after school...I used to stay with them in class with my colleagues and we speak with them and told them how Quality Talk is important.</p> <p><i>Grade 9B Peer-facilitated small-group, text based English discussions turns 61, 63-Appendix B (i).</i></p>
P-F 47	<p>Aaah... it is nice cos I get to tell everybody to do something so that they can improve their thinking and I tell everybody to talk, like make them feel free so I like being a leader of Quality Talk.</p> <p>I tell them to calm down and then we start asking questions, I start cos maybe they are confused what to do so I start asking a question and the other one answers then they find it so easy just to continue with me.</p> <p><i>Grade 9B Peer-facilitated small-group, text based English discussions turns 26, 50-Appendix B (i).</i></p>

As peer-facilitators indicated, sometimes for them to encourage peers to speak, they ensured them “that it's not always the right answer that occurs”, to encourage everyone to participate. They had to be able to identify members who were showing signs of being hesitant and encourage them to talk. For example, Peer-facilitator 15 asks group member 19, “You have a question, do you?”, to which group member 19 responds by asking a test question, “Is Roy a boy or a girl?”. At least after the encouragement, he said something. It could be that he was really not too sure whether Roy was a boy or girl, and if the peer-facilitator had not probed, probably group member 19 would have just left the discussion not knowing the correct answer. Another example is when Peer-facilitator 1 in Grade 8A says to group member 19, “Number 19 can you speak because you

didn't speak anything?" and effectively group member 19 responded, "OK, I can talk..." Group members equally asked questions, and I observed responses were coming from any group member including the peer-facilitator and even comments from the group members after a response from another group member. For example, after group member 2 had given an elaborated response, group member 18 commended, "Wow! That's great! Isn't that so? That's good observation" From my observation this open participation cannot be seen in the control whole-class discussions. In an interview with teacher B in relation to how she had seen an improvement from her Intervention Class as she compared it with the Control Class, the teacher had this to say:

*I think they played a very important role especially that of making sure that peers adhered to the ground rules which made it easy for the discussions to flow. I also noticed that sometimes just by passing on the voice recorder to one quiet peer in an effort to bring the peer into the discussion, the quiet peer would end up contributing. Also, I noticed, the effort that they put to encourage their peers to speak really helped almost everyone to participate. Even the usually quiet peers in class had something to say during the discussion. And the way questions are asked and the way they respond in QT helps the students to think and inter-think about and around the text that they have read as they relate what they have read to their lived experiences and texts that they have read before (Semi-structured interview lines 9 Appendix B [i]).*

From the above excerpt, it was evident that the teacher acknowledged the role of peer-facilitators in steering the debate during discussions.

*You really struggle to have them talk in the other classes unlike what happens in these peer-facilitated small-groups. Sometimes they use their home language to express themselves when they fail to say it in English (Semi-structured interview lines 26-29-Appendix B (i))*

In the above excerpt from an interview with teacher B, as she explained how difficult it was to get students to talk when using the teacher-centred approach; she also noted that in peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussion, students could easily understand when they explained in their home language.

Observations with teacher B in class 9B in the control class are not different from what happened in control class A. There is a pre-discussion as the teacher asks students to look at the outside

cover of the book from which the story is coming, “By just mere looking at the picture, what do you think this novel is talking about?” She repeats, “By just mere looking at the cover page of the book, what does...the picture...what does the picture tells you about the story? What do you think the story is all about? What are your predictions about the story? Your predictions should have to be based on the cover of the book”. The teacher has to repeat the same question several times before she gets one student to respond (see Appendix A [ii] and Appendix C [i]). In the Intervention Class, I noticed the teacher encouraging students to talk in groups, speaking both in English and their home language. The following passage is the extract from Field Notes and Reflexive Notes:

*I even observed the peer-facilitators moving the audio recorder around to ensure everyone says something. Students were now active, sharing their teenage experiences and you could even hear the other students encouraging each other to “speak aloud” The teacher is moving around guiding the small-groups although because the groups are many she cannot wait until one group finishes a discussion so that she can also follow the discussion. She managed to have time for each group. I noticed though in one group some group members were raising their hands in order to speak but most importantly the students were giving each other an opportunity to speak (Field Notes: 22/08/2017-Appendix A [ii])*

*Peer-facilitation helps to bridge the gap between the teacher as an authority figure and the peers. All of a sudden, the students are alive; they have gained confidence to talk without fear of being laughed at with the whole class (Reflexive Notes-Appendix A (ii).)*

The use of peer-facilitators allows students to communicate effectively as they help each other to understand the text under discussion; this bridges the gap between the knowledgeable teacher and the students. In instances where the student fails to understand the topic under discussion, in peer-facilitator led discussion, the home language was used to help each other to learn the language of instruction, unlike the teacher-led discussion where less code-switching took place. The extracts below are evidence of the passiveness of students in the other classes compared with the Intervention Classes as noted by some interviewed peer-facilitators:

Is that in the Quality Talk class we share the ideas, but in other subjects we don't answer questions, we just be shy, we disrespect members, we disrespect the teachers, we are not listening but in the Quality Talk we discuss as members and respect others, share ideas on the stuff.

*Peer-facilitator 23 Grade 8A, turn 24-Appendix B (i).*

Because we, when we talk as a Quality Talk we are free sometimes other people can't speak for some reasons because they are shy of some people maybe in the class but we as Quality Talk we can make them and not be shy for us, for them to talk to us.

*Peer-facilitator 17 Grade 8A, turn 24-Appendix B (j).*

In the Quality Talk class people are more active and they are always speaking up a when they are speaking to teachers they are disciplined even in class you can see them now they have changed they are not like the first time they were not in Quality Talk class.

*Peer-facilitator 40 Grade 9B, turn 40-Appendix B (i).*

#### **4.5.2 Subtheme 2.2: Group Members' Perceptions of Peer-Facilitated Small-group Text-based Discussions**

Subtheme 2.2 provides evidence captured to indicate group members' perceptions of the peer-facilitated small group text-based English discussions. This subtheme is supported by four categories, namely:

(2.2.1) Engagement with text;

(2.2.2) Acquired debating skills;

(2.2.3) Encouraged *productive* talk; and

(2.2.4) Encouraged critical-analytic thinking of text.

##### **4.5.2.1 Category 2.2.1: Peer-facilitation of Small-group, Text-based Discussions Increases Students' engagement with text**

This category includes data related to the group members who also include peer-facilitators as group members' perceptions of how the group discussions increase members' understanding of the text. The study has shown how peer-facilitated small-group discussions can lead students towards a better understanding of the text under discussion and acquisition of concepts through social interaction. As opposed to the entire generic pedagogy, small-group discussions have smaller audiences, making it easier for students to negotiate meaning with peers and to deliver their opinions and ideas to smaller audiences, and in that way, students increase understanding. Below are extracts of responses from some of the group members on how they felt about participation in the peer-led small-group discussions:

G-M 28	The discussion went nice because <i>we learn things that we did not know about deaf people</i>
G-M 34	I have <i>more knowledge about deaf people.</i>

	<p>I learn about the boy that was deaf. His name was Roy. He wants a hearing aid, but he had a little accident. Then he..., he... he live to not put a hearing aid to his, in his ears.</p> <p><i>Peer-facilitated small-group, text based English discussions Grade 8A Group 2 turn 78-Appendix B (i).</i></p>
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G-M 15	<p>I think it went good because we were asking questions and answering them with evidence, yah I think this one is good.</p>
G-M 36	<p>The discussion was outstandingly good nee, because we were. Some of you were giving facts yes and we were telling stories with evidence, yah everything was good.</p> <p><i>Peer-facilitated small-group, text based English discussions Grade 9B Group 6 turn 69 and 70-Appendix B (i).</i></p>

The excerpts above indicate how peer-facilitation increases students' participation which leads to a better understanding of the text under discussion. Peer-facilitated classroom talk increases students' understanding, thus encouraging students to think and talk about and around the text, and with the text, as explained in the passage above. As the approach shifts students from a mechanical way of reading, which usually leads to failure to comprehend the read text as it lacks the student' engagement with the text achieved through thinking, inter-thinking and talking about text, around the text and with the text. Peer group discussion enhances interaction with the text, leading to high-level understanding. In small groups, students critically analyse the text through the use of authentic questions that elicit individual and co-constructed responses in the co-construction of knowledge based on the text under discussion. In addition to this, high-level understanding occurs through the use of affective connection questions between the reader and the text in the small-group, text-based discussions., Thus, working in small-groups provides opportunities for academic success for both high and low-achievers. Even the peer-facilitators, as members of the small-group discussions, explained how peer-facilitated discussions contributed to an understanding of the text:

P-F 42	<p>It is good because now I am enjoying how to question, answer all the things</p> <p>Yes, there is a difference in some other lessons people argue with... people argue each other but in Quality Talk we do not argue, we argue with questions and people thinking about that.</p> <p>It helps people to gain more knowledge</p> <p><i>Grade 8A Peer-facilitated small-group, text based English discussions turns 26,28 and 30-Appendix B (i).</i></p>
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The peer-facilitated approach to learning redirects attention and focus away from the teacher-led to student-led discussion groups about texts, students better understanding the text under



discussion; a smaller audience in peer-led group discussions making it easier for students to negotiate and reason with peers and delivering their opinions and ideas to smaller audiences. In that way, students learn better.

#### **4.5.2.2 Category 2.2.2: Acquired debating skills.**

This category includes data related to how a peer-facilitated small-group discussion helps in developing argumentative skills. Evidence of effective and productive talk in the Intervention classes is testimony to the fact that through the use of debating skills, students' epistemic cognition can be enhanced. I observed that as students used the open-ended authentic type of questions, they increased their chances of active participation as they tried to use elaborated explanations, cumulative talk and exploratory talk in their responses. As they did so, they made great effort to provide reasons or evidence for their responses, and as they pointed out, they remembered not to argue with the person as was said, but to argue with the idea. This clearly came out from what the group members said as shown in the excerpts below:

G-M 8	<i>It went nice because we were, we were explaining our idea, and listening to each other and we respect others opinion and we give others time to speak</i>
G-M 33	<i>We have learnt things and now we are not ashamed of yourself answering questions we respect others opinion we don't argue about with people but to argue about the ideas</i>
G-M 43	<i>It was fantastic we give reasons to explain our ideas we were respecting each other talking one at a time we were not harassing each other</i>  <i>Peer-facilitated small-group, text based English discussions Grade 8A Group 2 turns 69, 71 and 73-Appendix B (i).</i>

In this shared learning activity, students are provided with space for participating in the discussion, developing debating skills which are crucial in the development of critical-analytic thinking.

#### **4.5.2.3 Category 2.2.3: Encouraged productive talk.**

This category includes data related to how a peer-facilitated small-group discussion encouraged productive talk during the discussions as perceived by group members. Evidence of effective and productive talk includes how group members indicate how they can now use reason to justify their responses. The use of discourse elements in the discussions enabled the group members to link their discussions to personal experiences, shared knowledge and intertextual experiences and bring out their feelings in response to connection questions (See Appendix C (iii) Peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions) as evidence of the productive talk students had during the

discussions. Excerpts from group members as evidence to their perception of how peer-facilitated small-group discussions encouraged productive talk are also reflected below:

G-M 36	The discussion was outstandingly good nee, because we were. Some of you <i>were giving facts yes and...we were telling stories with evidence</i> , yah everything was good.
G-M 43	<i>It was fantastic we give reasons to explain our ideas we were respecting each other talking one at a time we were not harassing each other</i>  <i>Peer-facilitated small-group, text based English discussions Grade 8A Group 1 turns 70 and 73-Appendix B (i).</i>

#### 4.5.2.4 Category 2.2.4: Encouraged critical-analysis of text

This category includes data related to how a peer-facilitation of small-group, text-based discussions encourage critical-analysis of text as perceived by group members. Evidence from the excerpts of what group members said about the peer-facilitated small-group discussions show that group members engaged in critical analysis of the text they were discussing. The use of open-ended authentic questions together with the individual and co-constructed responses created dialogic space that gave room for a critical analysis of the text. (See Appendix C (iii) for the peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions). Evidently, group members mentioned how they “explained their idea” as they also listened to each other, how they told stories with evidence and how they were asking questions and answering them with evidence as shown in the extracts below:

G-M 8	It went nice because we were... we were explaining our ideas and listening to each other and we respect others opinion and we give others time to speak.
G-M 36	The discussion was outstandingly good eeheh... because we were. Some of you were giving facts yes and...we were telling stories with evidence, yah everything was good.
G-M 19	Ok... I can talk. The discussion went well because we listen to people were talking and we get some answer what they are asking questions... we are ashamed of people who are in the group but now we are happy to be with them. The talk help us think.  <i>Peer-facilitated small-group, text based English discussions Grade 8A Group 1 turns 69, 70 and 80-Appendix B (i).</i>
G-M 15	I think it went good because we were asking questions and answering them with evidence, yah I think this one is good.  <i>Peer-facilitated small-group, text based English discussions Grade 9B Group 6 turns 69-Appendix B (i).</i>

### **4.5.3 Subtheme 2.3: Teachers' Perceptions of the Peer-facilitated Small-group, Text-based Discussions**

Subtheme 2.3 provides evidence as data on teachers' perceptions of the peer-facilitated small group text-based English discussions. This subtheme is supported by three categories, namely, such discussion:

2.3.1 Increases student engagement in learning and

2.3.2 Promotes independent learning, as discussed in the next section.

#### **4.5.3.1 Category 2.3.1: 1 Increases student engagement in learning**

This category includes data related to teachers' perceptions of how peer-facilitation increases students' engagement with learning. Empirical evidence suggests that teachers perceived that peer facilitation of small-group, text-based discussions increase students' engagement with learning. During the small-group, text-based discussion the peer-facilitator ensured that everyone participated by giving even the quiet members of the group an opportunity to say something. I noted the following passage in an interview with a teacher.

*I think peer-facilitators played a very important role especially that of making sure that peers adhered to the ground rules which made it easy for the discussions to flow. I also noticed that sometimes just by passing on the voice recorder to one quiet peer in an effort to bring the peer into the discussion, the quiet peer would end up contributing. Also I noticed, the effort that they put to encourage their peers to speak really helped almost every one to participate. Even the usually quiet peers in class had something to say during the discussion. And the way questions are asked and the way they respond in QT helps the students to think and interthink about and around the text that they have read as they relate what they have read to their lived experiences and texts that they have read. (Teacher Interview Lines 9-21-Appendix B (ii).)*

The teachers encouraged the group members to participate as she moved around assisting each group.

#### **4.5.3.2 Category 2.3.2: Promotes independent learning**

This category includes data related to teachers' perceptions of how peer-facilitation of small-group discussions promote students' critical-analytic thinking. Teachers commented on the use of the

student-centred small-group discussion, in which one of the students takes the role of a facilitator, and student-initiated questions take centre stage, unlike the teacher-initiated questions. The teachers commended the use of peer-facilitators in promoting critical-analytic thinking and high-level understanding. In an interview with Teacher B, she said the following concerning her perception on the role of peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions on critical-analytic thinking.

*And the way questions are asked and the way they respond in QT helps the students to think and interthink about and around the text that they have read as they relate what they have read to their lived experiences and texts that they have read.*

*What I have observed with eeh... i Quality Talk... more especially with comprehension is that learners were able to work on their own, to work independently, aaah... just with the teachers' guidance. It really helped a lot as students can share ideas on their own helping them to think. And also, for the learners to be able to realise that they can make it on their own, they can be able to work on the comprehension to go through to read and also to work through the answers. They also talk quite a lot during the Quality Talk classes which is something they find difficult to do in the other classes (Teacher interview lines 17-21 and 33-41-Appendix B (ii)).*

It was evident that the teachers found peer-facilitated small-group discussions fruitful, as they explained the advantages of Quality Talk to both the teacher and the students. Both teachers were delighted that students were now able to work on their own as peer-facilitators and assumed the important role of ensuring that almost every group member participated, as I also observed.

## **4.6 LITERATURE CONTROL: DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS OF THEME 2**

The above section discussed Theme 2 findings looking at the perceptions peer-facilitators, peer-facilitated small-group members, and the teacher have on the peer-facilitated small-group discussions. The following sections discuss literature control concerning confirmations, silences, contradictions and contributions on peer-facilitated small-group text-based discussions.

### **4.6.1 Confirmation in Data of Existing Knowledge**

In sections 4.6.1, 4.6.2, and 4.6.3, I reported on peer-facilitators', group members' and teachers' perception towards peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions. Findings have shown that peer-facilitators, group members and teachers concur with existing literature that peer-

facilitated small-group discussions promote engagement with the text, high-level thinking and critical-analytic thinking (Gallagher, 2015; Hammond et al., 2019; Jordan & Massad, 2004).

Hammond et al., (2019), while studying the implications for school and classroom practices of an emerging consensus about the science of learning and development, concluded that peer-learning bridges the gap between a knowledgeable teacher and the students. Thus peer-facilitators and group members would prefer peer-facilitated small-group text-based discussions rather than the conventional teaching practice that is teacher-centred. They went on to say peer-facilitation involves collaborative thinking activities which increase students' understanding of a text and societal issues as well as promoting a willingness to read. This supports Gallagher (2015), who argued that peer group members play numerous roles while participating in group discussion. These roles include asking and answering questions, responding to the ideas of others while synthesising those ideas with their own, contributing their perspectives, making interpretations or inferences, using textual evidence to support their inferences, and using a variety of comprehension strategies to increase their understanding of a text.

In further corroboration of the findings of this study, Dalkou and Frydaki, (2016) highlighted that working in small-groups provides opportunities for academic success without disrespect from peers for both high and low-achievers. Studies by Choy and Cheah (2009) have shown evidence of how these discussions can lead students toward engagement with the text under discussion and acquisition of concepts through social interaction. Small groups provide smaller audiences, making it easier for students to negotiate meaning with peers and to deliver their opinions and ideas to smaller audiences, and in that way students learn better.

#### **4.6.2 Silences Related to Existing Knowledge**

Analysing Theme 2, the research was silent on the perception of students in the control class regarding peer-facilitated discussions. From the observation, the perception about the role of peer-facilitators was deduced from Intervention class where peer-facilitated small group discussions were conducted. Literature from other scholars shows a comparison between the two classes, one being the control class and another being the Intervention class. The perception of students from the control class was not presented in this study because they could not comment about the role of peer-facilitators since their class used the traditional classroom pedagogy, which is teacher-centred.

#### **4.6.3 Contradictions between Data and Existing Knowledge**

In my review of existing literature, I found studies that contradicted the current study, particularly with regard to active learning (Category 2.1.3). Studies by Bennet et al., (2009) on the use of small-group discussions in science teaching, found that peer-facilitated small-group discussions do not promote active learning in all group members as opposed to the study findings that peer-facilitated small-group discussions promote active learning. Bennet et al., (2009), on the use of small-group discussions in science teaching, concluded that peer-facilitated learning does not promote active learning in all peer group members. A meta-analysis of peer-facilitated small-group discussions in science demonstrated increases in student retention while maintaining rigour on active learning (Bennet et al., 2009). In contrast, this study found that peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions promote active learning. The reason for this contradiction may be linked to the geographical location of the study as well as the study participants in both studies. This study was conducted in a rural secondary school where peer group discussions were introduced for the first time to them. Students may have been excited about this new classroom discourse which yielded a positive response on active learning among study participants

#### **4.6.4 Contributions to New Knowledge**

This study makes a significant contribution to new knowledge by reporting evidence on insights from peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions in developing critical-analytic thinking. Though the current literature reports on findings similar to the current study; such evidence does not present perceptions of students and teachers in rural South African secondary schools towards peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions. The current study adds to the existing body of knowledge on the perceptions of peer-facilitation in small-group, text-based English discussions in promoting critical-analytic thinking in a rural South African secondary school through the lens of the peer-facilitators, the peer-facilitated small-group members and the teachers. Studies by Gallagher (2015) and Boud (2001), indicate that students learn a great deal by explaining their ideas to others and by participating in activities from which they can learn from their peers. They develop skills in organising and planning learning activities, working collaboratively with others, giving and receiving feedback and evaluating their learning. The current study focuses primarily on the effectiveness of peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussion in promoting critical-analytic thinking. Peer learning is becoming an increasingly important part of many courses, and it is being used in a variety of contexts and disciplines in many countries. More specifically, its contribution is on how the rural South African secondary

school students and teachers perceive peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions.

#### 4.7 THEME 3 PERCEIVED CHALLENGES OF PEER-FACILITATED SMALL-GROUP, TEXT-BASED ENGLISH DISCUSSIONS

Theme three discusses the challenges of facilitating small-group, text-based discussions in the English language class. Two subthemes support Theme 2, namely:

(3.1) Perceived challenges of peer-facilitation' and

(3.2) Perceived challenges of participation.

Table 4.6 provides definitions of the two themes and two subthemes and their categories as well as a summary of their inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Table 0.11: Theme 3. Perceived challenges of peer facilitated small-group text-based English discussions

<b>Theme 3: Perceived challenges of peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions</b>			
<b>Subtheme categories</b>	<b>and</b>	<b>Inclusion criteria</b>	<b>Exclusion criteria</b>
<b>Subtheme 3.1: Perceived challenges of peer-facilitation</b>		Includes data that relate to the challenges faced by peer-facilitator in leading small group text-based English discussions.	
<b>3.1.1 Experiencing a cultural shift</b>		This category includes data related to challenges related to students' exposure to the learner-centered from the teacher-centered approaches.	This category excludes data that do not relate to students' experiences that are linked to dialogic and discourse-intensive pedagogical practices.
<b>3.1.2 Relationship issues</b>		This category includes data related to perceived relational issues in peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions.	This category excludes data that do not relate to other perceived challenges in peer-facilitation of small-group discussions.
<b>Subtheme 3.2: Perceived challenges of participation</b>		Includes data that relate to the challenges faced by group members participating in peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions.	
<b>3.2.1 Fear of failure to express themselves in English</b>		This category includes data related to group members' fear of failure.to express themselves in English	This category excludes data that do not relate to other fears group members face in peer-facilitated discussions

##### 4.7.1 Subtheme 3.1: Perceived challenges of peer-facilitation

Table 4.3 above summarises the evidence that relates to challenges of facilitating small-group text-based discussions in the English language class. The subtheme includes data pertaining to the challenges faced by peer-facilitators in facilitating small-group, text-based discussions in an English language class. Under the current subthemes are two categories supporting the subtheme:

(3.1.1) experiencing a cultural shift and; and

(3.1.2) relationship issues as discussed below.

#### **4.7.1.1 Category 3.1.1: Experiencing a Cultural Shift**

This category includes data on challenges related to students' exposure to the learner-centred, peer-facilitated small-group discussion from the teacher-centred approaches. The norm in the traditional teacher-centred classroom is to sit quietly as students listen to the "knowledgeable" teacher and only raise their hands when a teacher asks a question which is usually factual or text-based, and it is the teacher who talks the most in this classroom. The collaborative, dialogic discourse intensive, peer-facilitated small-group discussion really introduced a different approach to teaching and learning for the students. In the new approach, the students were expected not to wait for the teacher to ask a question, but they were supposed to ask the questions and use reason to respond to the questions since the open-ended authentic questions were employed. Evidence from the current study shows that some peer-facilitators had challenges in making every group member participate in this new set up.

P-F 15	<p>To make them talk</p> <p>They are shy, I always see them, it's like that person knows what to say but you, she wants to write it first and read out.</p> <p>Maybe I can say that he is afraid to talk... English</p> <p>Yes Mam</p> <p>Yes, then I have to translate in English and read it out for them</p> <p>Yes, there's only one member who told me her question in SiSwati then I had to translate it into English then I written it down and gave it to her.,</p> <p><i>Structured interview, Peer-facilitator 15 Turn 42, 44, 46, 48, 50 and 52-Appendix B (i).</i></p>
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P-F 17	<p>Because we, when we talk as a Quality Talk we are free sometimes other people can't speak for some reasons because they are shy of some people maybe in the class but we as Quality Talk we can make them and not be shy for us, for them to talk to us.</p> <p><i>Structured interview Peer-facilitator 17 turn 24-Appendix B (i).</i></p>
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P-F 19	<p>Uuumm... it was not exactly the Quality Talk but it was managing the group and getting everyone to talk it was quite difficult for me because it was the first time and now am all right with it and I didn't exactly know the question I need, I need to ask and ...yaah...</p> <p><i>Structured interview Peer-facilitator 19 turn 36-Appendix B (i).</i></p>
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Other peer-facilitators had this to say:

P-F 43	<p>Eish, being a leaner leader is difficult, you face many challengers in our members because some others can't to talk, you need to convince them to talk and that is a hard job but we made, we make it through.</p> <p><i>Structured interview Peer-facilitator 43 turn 22-Appendix B (i).</i></p>
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Empirical evidence shows that getting all group members to participate is one of the challenges with which peer-facilitators have to deal. Extracts from interviews which showed how other peer-facilitators managed to get explorative group members to participate are reflected below.

P-F 44	<p>There, some of the group members they didn't want to answer the questions that I asked and I didn't...I continued asking questions and then they answered me.</p> <p><i>Structured interview Peer-facilitator 44 turn 50-Appendix B (i).</i></p>
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P-F 47	<p>Eish... is when the learners find difficulties to answer the questions or ask cos when they are so nervous they can't even talk so you must make them feel comfortable first and tell them what to do so that was so difficult for me.</p> <p><i>Structured interview Peer-facilitator 47 turn 46 Appendix B (i).</i></p>
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The above excerpts show that the challenges of passive participants were sometimes faced by the peer-facilitators because of the students' shyness and failing to say what was in their minds even when it was correct.

#### **4.7.1.2 Category 3.1.2: Relationship Issues**

This category includes data related to perceived relational issues in peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions. Among peers of the same age, some group members may fail to respect the peer-facilitator; this was so among some of the group members who did not respect

their peer-leader. This makes it difficult for peer-facilitators to effectively carry out their duties. Below are the excerpts from the data findings.

P-F 20	<p>It make it...It make difficult for me because at first the group members did not respect me.</p> <p><i>Structured interview Peer-facilitator 20 turn 20-Appendix B (i)</i></p>
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Another peer-facilitator reported that some peers do not respect her because they also want to facilitate. She then feels helpless when bullied, thus hindering her from carrying out her duties well as can be seen from the excerpts below:

P-F 15	<p>And I thought that you should tell... cos when I say to somebody okay, now you, talk something, say something...they will just go like any how... I know everything like I am... they will say silly things about me, so...</p> <p><i>Structured interview Peer-facilitator 15 turn 66- Appendix B (i).</i></p>
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In peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussion where learning takes place through discussion, failure to respect the peer-facilitator reverses the positive gains of small-group discussion. Peer-facilitators have indicated how they were affected by disrespect from their peers during the small-group discussion.

#### **4.7.2 Subtheme 3.2: Perceived Challenges of Participation**

The value of peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions as an effective learning strategy is convincing, however, there are a few challenges cited in the study that hinder the learning process. This subtheme includes data pertaining to the challenges faced by group members participating in the peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions in an English language class. The subtheme is supported by one category, namely:

(3.2.1) Fear of failure to express themselves in English

##### **4.7.2.1 Category 3.2.1: Fear of Failure to Express Themselves in English**

This category includes data related to group members' fear of failure to express themselves in English. It emerged from the data that group members did not fully participate in the small-group, text-based discussions due to fear of failing to express themselves in English. Some members

indicated that they were shy and this could be because of the fear that if they failed to express themselves, then, like one student mentioned, the other would then laugh at them. The following excerpts highlighted these fears:

*I was scared that we was not to speak wrong answers so others could laugh at me at some time* (Peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions-Appendix C (iii)).

Other students said;

*Is that, I thought that they will laugh at me saying that the thing that am doing is stupid, all the stuff* (Peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions - Appendix C (iii)).

*it can be coz some other people are shy to talk but they are trying others can't provide their... their voices to speak louder, they are just shy to talk when you are giving them the recorder they just feel like we are discriminating them* (Peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions - Appendix C (iii)).

## **4.8 LITERATURE CONTROL: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS OF THEME 3**

This section discusses the confirmations, silences, contradictions and contributions of Theme Three presented above. Theme three discussed the challenges of facilitating small-group, text-based discussions in an English language class.

### **4.8.1 Confirmation in Data of Existing Knowledge**

The results of the current study validate the findings of Bulte et al. (2007); Van Driel et al. (2007) and Torre et al. (2016) who acknowledge the existence of challenges in the implementation of peer-facilitated small-group discussions in the classroom context. The current study indicates that challenges associated with peer-led small group discussions include a cultural shift, relationship issues and fear to express themselves in English. Similarly, the findings of this study corroborate with existing knowledge that peer-facilitators may have difficulties taking control of the group as group members may fail to respect them and take them less seriously as argued by Bulte et al., (2007), Van Driel et al., (2007) and Torre et al., (2016) in their studies. Van Driel et al., (2007) purport that the planning and implementation of peer teaching may unveil potential pitfalls, which may hinder peer-facilitators in motivating group members to participate in the group, with other group members being afraid that participants in the discussion will laugh at them. To avoid some of these pitfalls, it is important to arrange appropriate stakeholders, pay attention to training the peer-facilitators and to clarify practical arrangements. A study by Bulte et al., (2007) discovered

that “despite the fact that learning was enhanced by the social and cognitive congruence; students were still concerned that peer-facilitators may not reflect the knowledge of an experienced expert in the field”, thus failing to make group members participate in the group.

#### **4.8.2 Silences Related to Existing Knowledge**

The study was silent on issues related to what led to motivation costs from the group members’ perception. Bandiera et al., (2013); Gulpinar and Yegen, (2005) and Sukrajh (2018) described the causes of passive participation by some group members. According to these researchers, passive participation may be because group members may not want to appear unprepared or ignorant in front of their peers. To Gulpinar and Yegen (2005), many groups encountered difficulty with integrating this knowledge they have learnt and contribute in group discussion; this integration is an essential process of learning as it assists in the development of higher-order thinking. This study was silent on this matter because participants who were silent during peer group discussions had already stated the reasons they were silent; thus, there was primary evidence on the cause of fear in speaking English. Information from secondary sources was excluded from the study findings as it did not express the views of the passive group members.

#### **4.8.3 Contradictions between Data and Existing Knowledge**

Findings from some research studies indicate that group members participating in peer-facilitated group discussions sometimes lack confidence in the peer-facilitators facilitating the discussions and would rather learn from the teacher as they fear peer-facilitators may provide erroneous information as peer-facilitators according to the students, do not know more than they also do. (Anderson & Rourke, 2002; Moore, 2017; Schermerhorn, 1976). In Moore’s study of peer-facilitated small-group discussions, some students expressed discomfort caused by the uncertainty of failing to know the correct answer “in the absence of a faculty tutor as ‘expert’” (2017, p.328). However, the findings from the present study do not confirm Schermerhorn’s and Moore’s findings as group members participating in the current study did not show any such sentiments (see Sections 4.6.1-3). Group members mentioned that the small-group discussion went well, and they learnt quite a lot from the peer-led discussions. They engaged with the text leading to a better understanding of the text. They actively participated in productive discussions as they also learnt the use of authentic questions and debating skills in response to the open-ended questions they were asking each other.

#### **4.8.4 Contributions to New Knowledge**

The current study's findings add to existing knowledge by providing new insights on the challenges faced in peer-facilitation of and participation in small-group, text-based English discussions specifically in a resource-poor setting. The findings indicate how these challenges affect successful implementation of peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussion in rural secondary schools. For example, the difficulty in motivating students to participate in small group discussions will have the same outcomes as orthodox teaching practices where the teacher dominates the discussion in the classroom. In this case, a few students dominate the small group discussion since others will be passive participants. (See section 4.7.1; Subtheme 3.1; category 3.1.1).

Furthermore, the study suggests that relationship issues do affect the successful implementation of peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions. Peers (of the same age) may not give their peer-facilitator the same respect as they may give their teacher who will be regarded as the expert in the field of study. These relationship issues may cause the peer-leader to be ineffective in his duties. (See Section 4.7.1; Subtheme 3.1; Category 3.1.2). On the other hand, the group members expressed their contentment as they felt the discussions went well, citing the ability to ask each other questions and responding, "giving reasons to explain our ideas", as one group member had to say.

#### **4.9 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER**

Chapter Four presented the current study's research findings in three themes, their related subthemes and categories that speak to the use of peer-facilitators in facilitating small-group, text-based discussions in developing critical-analytical thinking skills in students' learning in a rural South African secondary school. The three themes which emerged from the analysis of the research data and were discussed in detail in this chapter were (i) the role of peer-facilitators in facilitating small-group, text-based English discussions; (ii) perceptions of peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions and (iii) challenges of facilitating small-group text-based discussions in an English language class. The three themes highlighted the important role that peers as facilitators of small-group, text-based discussions play to develop critical-analytic thinking in students in discourse intensive pedagogical practices. Learning from their lived experiences as peer-facilitators revealed the benefits and challenges of peer-facilitation of small-group discussions.

In conclusion, the current chapter responded to the secondary research questions to answer the main research question. The findings presented here were derived from themes that I got through a thematic analysis of the raw data guided by the inclusion and exclusion criterion stated for each category in response to those research questions. Verbatim transcriptions and my Field and Reflexive Notes were used as evidence to authenticate my findings. The next chapter discusses conclusions drawn from the findings to provide recommendations for further study.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study investigated discourse-intensive pedagogical practices in English (as the First Additional Language) classes in a rural high school. The study focused on describing the utility of peer-facilitation during small-group discussions as a learning support resource to develop the critical-analytic thinking of students. Contextual barriers constraining teaching and learning in rural schools include a high student-teacher ratio per classroom, built environment limitations, limited quality and quantity teaching and learning materials, limited teacher professional development opportunities, and students' low overall literacy levels.

The study sought to inform pedagogical practices that develop critical-analytic thinking in students. It was hoped that the findings from the current study would improve the teaching and learning of students to help them develop critical-analytic thinking through the use of peer-facilitation to cover the gap in the literature on the utility of peer-facilitation in discourse-intensive pedagogical practices. Chapter five provides a summary of the chapters of this study and the conclusion for further study. It will provide a brief discussion that summarises answers to the research questions and then align the research findings with the theoretical lens that guided the current study. I will end the chapter by explaining the limitations of the current study and then provide recommendations for further study.

### 5.2 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

Chapter one provided an introduction to the study. In the section following the introduction, I provided the contextual background and a preliminary literature review. To justify the gap in the research, I explained the problem under investigation in the statement of the problem followed by the rationale of the study in which I posited that among the causes of poor academic performance of students and lack of English proficiency is lack of high-level comprehension and lack of critical-analytic thinking skills in reading comprehension. I then explained the purpose of the study was to inform knowledge on interventions that enable education in schools in remote rural areas by describing how peer-facilitators partnered in developing discourse-intensive pedagogical practices when using small-group, text-based English comprehension discussions in a South African remote secondary school setting. To determine how peer-facilitation can help in developing critical-analytical thinking in students, I thereafter indicated the primary and secondary

research questions to which this study set out to find answers. The following section provides the key concepts in this study, and then Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, the theoretical framework for this study, was discussed. The use of the paradigmatic lenses, which is the interpretivist paradigm for this study, the methodological paradigm and the research design and the thematic data analysis used for this study were explained. The strategies to ensure rigour, the ethical considerations and limitations of this study were discussed towards the end of chapter one. Lastly, the chapter is concluded by a summary of the chapters that make up the current research report and then the conclusion.

The literature review section forms the second chapter of the current study. The review of related literature helped me to identify the gaps from the ongoing debates on the use of discourse-intensive pedagogical practices and how these practices develop high-level and critical-analytic thinking in students. After the introduction, the chapter begins by making an effort to situate the problem at hand into debates on literacy as poor academic performance of students leads to low literacy levels globally, regionally, nationally, and even in the context in which the study was conducted, the rural area. In the first section of the chapter, I briefly looked at literacy and how multilingual education and rurality are some of the factors that contribute to low literacy levels. I then also discussed how such inequalities in education become a social justice issue to justify the need for an intervention to improve literacy outcomes.

The next section explained Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory as a suitable lens through which the current study could be understood. This was followed by a description of the Quality Talk model, the model that was used for the current study, the Inkhulumo South Africa. I later discussed school-based interventions, looking at the strengths and weaknesses of the conventional recitation approach versus the collaborative and dialogic approach and the use of small-group discussions. The section then introduced the core theme of the present study, the use of peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English intervention that aims to improve high-level thinking and development of critical-analytic skills in comprehension reading, including its merits and demerits. In conclusion, the chapter explored the literature on perceptions of peer-facilitation and participation.

Chapter Three gave a detailed explanation of the philosophical standpoint of the current study which is situated in the interpretivist paradigm and employed the qualitative methodological paradigm using the descriptive case study design, which allowed the use of qualitative data collection tools. The sampling techniques for the selection of the research case and the research participants were explained in detail. The shortcomings of the selected techniques were also



explained. The chapter also describes the methods of data collection that I employed, the data analysis process and how I adhered to quality criteria and the ethical considerations for protecting my research participants. This was followed by the conclusion of the chapter.

Chapter four presented the gathered data, which was thematically analysed and discussed. Three major themes emerged from the data analysis, namely the role of peer-facilitator in small-group, text-based discussions, the perceived benefits of peer-facilitated small-group discussions, and the perceived challenges of peer-facilitation and participation in small-group, text-based discussions. Verbatim transcriptions from audio-recorded peer-facilitated small-group discussions, peer-facilitator interviews, teacher interviews, field and reflexive notes from classroom observations were thematically analysed, coded, and then categorised, and major themes were drawn from the categories. During the presentation of results, direct quotes from the research participants and notes from the field notes and reflexive notes were provided as evidence of the findings. I used the reviewed literature from chapter two to substantiate the discussion of the themes, subthemes and categories, highlighting resemblances, contradictions, and silences when comparing my findings to the reviewed literature. Through an analysis of the identified resemblances, contradictions, and silences, the literature gaps on how to develop high-level and critical-analytic thinking in students, even in resource-constrained settings, were identified.

### **5.3 ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This section addresses the primary research question and the five secondary research questions the current study sought to answer. Findings of the secondary questions serve as building blocks to address the primary research question:

How can insights from peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions to develop discourse-intensive pedagogical practices inform knowledge on interventions that enable education in schools in challenged spaces?

The *secondary questions* which will help me to address the primary question are:

- 1). To what extent and in what ways are peer-facilitators useful at facilitating small-group, text-based discussions in English classrooms in a remote secondary school?
- 2). How do the peer-facilitators perceive their role in facilitating small-group, text-based discussions?
- 3). How do discussion group-members perceive the peer-facilitated small-group discussions?
- 4). What are the perceptions of teachers on the use of peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions?

5). What are the challenges of facilitating a small-group, text-based discussion in an English language class?

The following section discusses the findings of each of the secondary research questions.

### 5.3.1 Secondary Research Question 1

Secondary Research Question 1 was: **To what extent and in what ways are *peer-facilitators useful* in facilitating small-group, text-based discussions in English classrooms in a remote secondary school?**

The current study adds to existing knowledge on the utility of peer-facilitators in developing critical-analytic thinking by providing evidence that peer-facilitators are useful to address barriers in a severely constrained Global South space, as in the case of a South African rural school. Students engaged in critical-analytic thinking despite the high student-teacher ratio per classroom, built environment limitations, limited quality and quantity teaching and learning materials, limited teacher professional development opportunities, and low overall literacy levels of students. Evidence of peers navigating around *language* barriers to mobilise linguistic diversity as a resource includes peers using code-switching between English and their home language to facilitate small-group text-based discussions. The use of code-switching assisted scaffolding, enabling students to help each other understand the text and develop critical-analytic thinking.

Evidence of increased student engagement as a result of participation in peer-facilitated small-group discussions include the increased amount of student-to-student talk as shown by active participation in the discussion which is evidently different from what happens in whole class discussions. Since dialogue was between student-to-student, the discussion was held at an equal level compared to dialogue with a teacher. There was also evidence of students taking interpretative autonomy with student-to-student turn-taking control, which resulted in open participation (Murphy et al., 2016) as the small-groups were acting semi-autonomously in the absence of the teacher who, because of the large number of classes, could not be present to see one group through its entire discussion.

Instances of students demonstrating high-level comprehension include their use of exploratory talk, elaborative explanations, and cumulative talk when responding to authentic questions, which allowed them to have a deep analysis of the topic under discussion. According to Soter et al., (2008), the generation of such exploratory and elaborated talk indicates cognitive processes and that processing envisages high-level comprehension and critical-analytic thinking. Instances of

cognitive engagement with the text help to deepen internal links to the text leading to a better understanding of text under discussion and acquisition of concepts through social interaction.

The findings from the current study support Nystrand et al. (2001 p14), who argue that, "by allowing an indeterminate number of acceptable answers, authentic questions open the floor to students' ideas. As such, they invite students to contribute something new to the class interaction, which in turn holds the potential for altering the trajectory of discourse in the classroom". This view is reiterated in Soter et al. (2006) who found that if a question cannot be answered through the use of ordinary information acquired earlier; high-level thinking questions can give rise to new ideas and evidence rather than old information. Evidence from the study indicated that peer-facilitated small-group text-based discussions could promote confidence among students. From the results of the peer-led small-group discussions, it has been noted that students were using open-ended authentic questions as a tool for thinking and inter-thinking in creating dialogue in collaborative learning. Primary evidence shows how authentic questions in peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions can lead to the development of critical-analytic thinking.

The study contends that the peer-facilitation of small-group, text-based discussions can increase student participation as students develop confidence, resulting in well-structured and focused productive discussions. This concurs with the studies conducted by Soter et al., (2008), reporting on findings from a meta-analysis of nine small-group discussion approaches, which suggest that when students hold the floor for extended periods in a discussion, open-ended authentic questions are evoked during the discussion, and when a high degree of uptake is incorporated into the discussion, the result is a well-structured and focused productive discussion. Findings by Soter et al. (2008) indicated that reasoning and high-level thinking are generated through the use of authentic questions that led to longer periods and longer incidences of student talk and greater elaboration. The fact that in the peer-facilitated small-group discussions, students openly gave their opinions and shared their ideas for longer periods, unlike what happens in the control classes, indicated the confidence that the students had developed by participating in the peer-facilitated small-group discussions.

In terms of the usefulness of peer-facilitation to enable student confidence, contradictions with the existing literature were observed. There are studies that show no significant gains using a peer-facilitation strategy in the classroom impacting a student's self-confidence. Griffin and Griffin (1998) studied the effects of reciprocal peer-tutoring (RPT) on achievement, self-confidence, and test anxiety of 47 undergraduates. Their findings showed that reciprocal peer tutoring had no statistically significant effects on either achievement or self-confidence but did increase test

anxiety. Roscoe and Chi (2007) conducted a study in which they wanted to find out if learning is affected when teachers are engaged in explaining and questioning or peer-teaching knowledge telling (memorisation of facts and concepts) or knowledge building. Their findings indicated that peer-facilitated learning has some permeating knowledge-telling bias, even after extensive training in various strategies.

In summary, this research's findings add to the current body of knowledge, which indicates that peer-facilitators are useful in promoting critical-analytic and high-level thinking in small-group, text-based English discussions. The use of home language as students code-switch in classroom discourse helps the students to understand and develop critical-analytic thinking in English-based discussions. The use of peer-led small-group text-based English discussions in rural schools effectively promotes critical thinking as students “think and talk about, around, and with the text”. Students use elaborative explanations and cumulative talk when responding to open-ended authentic questions, which allows them to have an in-depth analysis of the topic under discussion. Peer-facilitated small-group discussions allow students to collaboratively learn and develop high-level comprehension and critical-analytic thinking skills as they learn to read, understand and make meaning from a text, thus lessening the achievement gap between rural secondary day school students and their urban counterparts. Evident from the findings is the observation that as the peer-facilitators facilitate the discussion under an atmosphere where peers feel comfortable not only to ask to seek understanding but to use the various types of questions and responses that characterise a productive discussion, students can develop high-level thinking and critical-analytic thinking skills. This study brings out the usefulness of peer-facilitation in successfully addressing barriers to teaching and learning even in severely resource-constrained settings, the remote rural context, the study’s contribution to the existing body of knowledge.

### 5.3.2 Secondary Research Question 2

Research Question 2 was: **How do the *peer-facilitators* perceive their role in facilitating small-group, text-based discussions?**

This study adds to the existing body of knowledge, the perceived role of peer-facilitators in small-group, text-based discussions. From a peer leader's perspective, they privileged the role of leaders using a repertoire of interpersonal communication skills to steer debates that enable and support learning. From the peer-facilitators’ story, their communication and interpersonal skills are evident in the way they would persuade or encourage their peers to participate, took the responsibility using the ground rules to keep discussions focused. Open-mindedness was evident

when they would tell group members that they should share ideas and know that “not every answer can be correct”, but peers should speak. They said they would be patient even when peers sometimes failed to respect them, and they continued to show respect to group members during discussions. This is evidence of interpersonal and communication skills demonstrated by the peers.

From the peer-facilitators’ perspective, there is evidence of steered debates, including how they said they made use of authentic questions to which group members would respond either using individual or co-constructed responses. The peer-facilitators also evidently mentioned the use of the rule of not arguing with a person but with the idea and respecting other people’s opinions to help them to steer the debates during the discussions.

Evidence of supporting learning as the other perceived role of peer-facilitators is when a peer-facilitator takes the task of ensuring active participation during the group discussion by assuring peers that they “will not get hard questions” and that it is “not always the right answers must be taken” and “everybody will get a chance to speak” as a way of encouraging them all to talk. One peer-facilitator indicated that to help a peer who would find speaking in English difficult, she would ask her to write what she wanted to say in their home language, and then she would translate it into English and then ask her to read the translated contribution to the discussion.

Evidence of strengthened leadership skills includes enforcing ground rules during text-based discussions, keeping the discussions focused on the text under discussion, being patient and controlling emotions (not getting angry, even when others would laugh at them), encouraging peers to talk and participate in discussions and stimulating active learning. The perceived role of peer-facilitators contributes to promoting critical-analytic thinking in students.

Findings on peer-facilitation concur with existing literature that peer-facilitated small-group discussions promote high-level thinking and critical-analytic thinking (Murphy et al., 2016; Nurhilza, 2018). These findings validate existing knowledge that peer-learning bridges the gap between the knowledgeable teacher and the students thus peer-facilitators find small-group text-based English discussions much more effective in promoting high-level thinking than the traditional classroom discourse which is teacher-centred. Nurhilza (2018, p.74) posits that collaborative learning helps develop students’ ability to think critically, and “through the process of critical-*analytic* thinking, self-confidence and the ability to interact with friends and the social environment”, students are enabled to master material concepts. Peer-facilitation of the group discussions provides the social environment that involves collaborative thinking activities that

increases students' understanding of the text under discussion. The study carried out by Casallas and Castellanos (2016) validates that argumentation outlines and peer assessment can promote learners' awareness and ability to engage in argumentation processes. Psychological studies carried out by Nussbaum and Sinatra (2003) showed that argumentation skills are associated with high-order cognitive skills, such as conceptual change and nonverbal reasoning, as well as with argumentative skills. Fayaz and Nisar (2017) argue that peer-learning is associated with many benefits, including developing critical skills, improving argumentative skills, enhancing conceptual understanding, and improving students' academic performance.

However, a study conducted by Grosser (2011) contradicted the current study, particularly with regard to active learning. Grosser (2011) found that peer-facilitated small-group discussions do not promote active learning in all group members. Grosser's meta-analysis of peer-facilitated small-group discussions in chemistry demonstrated increases in student retention while maintaining rigour on active learning (Grosser, 2011). However, contrary to Grosser's findings, the current study's findings reveal that students actively participated in the small-group discussions without fear of failure as the discussions were among peers of the same cognitive age. Evidently, students learned to ask the authentic type of questions and look critically at each other's responses while giving feedback on each other's responses. Peer-facilitators contributed to the success of the discussion, with almost everyone participating. The use of discourse elements contributed towards the active discussions, thus promoting critical-analytical thinking in learners. In summary, the study has also shown that peer-facilitators bridge the gap between the knowledgeable teacher and students through code-switching, thereby creating a common learning ground for students, which gives room for passive students to participate. Peer-facilitation impacts pedagogical principles that promote high-level English text comprehension among students (Murphy & Wei, 2017). The study's contribution to the body of knowledge is the student-centred approach not only in the implementation of the discourse-intensive pedagogical practice but using the voices from below, who are not even "the knowledgeable other", the students themselves, to tell their story to bring out the benefits and challenges of peer-facilitation and participation.

### 5.3.3 Secondary Research Question 3

Secondary Research Question 3 was: **How do discussion *group-members perceive participation in peer-facilitated small-group discussions?***

From a student perspective, different from when a teacher leads classroom discussions, students engage both with text and in productive talk during peer-led, text-based discussions. In addition, authentic (affective, shared knowledge and inter-textual) questions in small-group discussions encourage students to critically analyse text – generating both individual and co-constructed responses. Lastly, students appreciated gaining debating skills because of peer-led small-group discussions.

The small-group members admitted that because of participation in the discussions, they now had “more knowledge about deaf people” and had “learned things that they did not know about deaf people”, as evidence of perceived engagement with the text. One of the group members even tried to narrate the story as evidence to show he had understood the text, while one group member compared the understanding they now had with what usually happens when the teacher explained the text. He mentioned that it helped the class “to understand the text more than the teacher makes us to understand”.

Evidence of productive talk as another perception of the small-group members includes what one group member indicated as the ability to “ask more questions that the teacher does not ask”. The group discussions, characterised by a variety of authentic questions to which students responded individually or co-constructively, evidently led to productive discussions with, about, and around text. Other group members mentioned that some of the group members were “giving facts and telling stories with evidence” and “gave reasons to explain our ideas”, which is evidence of productive talk that was taking place during the peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions.

There was evidence of encouragement of students to analyse text critically. This was shown by another group member’s appreciation in a peer-facilitated small-group discussion of discourse elements, the open-ended authentic questions which include the connection questions (affective, shared knowledge and inter-textual), high-level thinking questions and the individual and the co-constructed responses the questions elicited.

The group members highlighted gaining debating skills as another perception of the peer-facilitated small-group discussion as evidenced by being able to argue with a person’s idea and not with the person, giving reasons or evidence in support of their answers. The group members

admitted they also learned to listen to each other and give each other time to speak and respect other people's opinions. This, according to the group members made it easier for them to participate without fearing other participants laughing at them. The findings have shown that group members concur with existing literature that peer-facilitated small-group discussions promote participation. This is evidenced by discussion group members indicating that in the past, they were scared to talk in a group but this had since changed as they were no longer scared.

Some indicated that they are no longer ashamed of answering questions and were no longer struggling to answer questions. They even gave reasons to explain their views, which is evidence of high-level thinking and critical-analytic thinking (Jordan & Massad, 2004). These findings validate existing knowledge that peer-learning bridges the gap between the knowledgeable teacher and the students; thus, group members would prefer small-group, text-based discussions rather than the conventional teaching method that is teacher-centred. Group members felt that they could play numerous roles while participating in group discussions such as asking and answering questions, responding to the ideas of others while synthesising those ideas with their own, contributing their perspectives, making interpretations or inferences, using textual evidence to support their inferences, and using a variety of comprehension strategies to increase their understanding of a text (Jordan & Massad, 2004).

In summary, peer group members' and teachers' perceptions on peer-led small-group discussions confirmed the development of critical-analytic thinking among students, as well as influencing positive behaviours in the classroom, for example, participation and moral development (Francois, 2016). The use of code-switching in classroom discourse also contributed to promoting high-level comprehension and understanding of English content and text in the resource-constrained rural school, evidence that pedagogical translanguaging is a possibility in learning English as an additional language.

#### **5.3.4 Secondary Research Question 4**

Secondary Research Question was: **What are the *perceptions of teachers on the use of peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions?***

Evidence of increased student engagement in learning from a teacher perspective includes an increased amount of talk. According to the teachers, most of the students, even the usually quiet ones taking an active part as almost all members of the peer-facilitated small-group discussions had an opportunity to say something. The teachers felt the use of the open-ended questions contributed to the high-level participation. Students asked authentic questions and even used



their lived experiences to support their responses, which they agree helped develop high-level, critical-analytic thinking in students.

Evidence of teachers appreciating independent learning includes noticeable students' ability to work on their own as could be seen from the successful discussions around, with text and about text that were a result of peer-facilitation, as the teacher could not be present to see each group discussion through given the high teacher-student ratio.

The findings have shown that teachers concur with existing literature that peer-facilitated small-group discussions are effective in promoting students' participation, high-level thinking, and critical-analytic thinking (Boyd, 2012; Gallagher, 2015). However, peer-led discussions need to be properly managed so that discussions remain within the context of the study, as supported by Boyd (2012), who argues that teachers need to be willing to sometimes go beyond the intended context of their lesson based on individual student's responses and questions for effective peer-led discussion to occur. The study's contribution to the body of knowledge is that even with the large classes in resource-constrained settings, peer-facilitation can be used as a resource in developing high-level thinking and critical-analytic thinking by gradually releasing responsibility and extending interpretative authority to students through the peer-facilitator.

### 5.3.5 Secondary Research Question 5

Secondary Research Question 5 was: **What are the *challenges of facilitating and participating in a small-group, text-based discussion in English language class?***

Enabling uniform participation in discussions was problematic because of a range of factors, including leaders lacking knowledge on how to encourage participation, traditional classroom management behaviours, inhibiting participation in a new form of discussion, and a lack of confidence to talk in English. Another challenge was socialising students into roles where a peer assumes a different power position in teaching and learning.

The research findings have shown that there are challenges faced by peer-facilitators in facilitating small-group text-based discussions in an English language class which include experiencing a cultural shift and relationship issues. The evidence indicated that peer-facilitators had challenges to make every group member participate; as indicated by some peer-facilitators who indicated that it was difficult to make some of the discussion group members talk. Some group members passively participated in the group due to the cultural shift, which hindered the

effective implementation of small-group text-based peer group discussion by peer-facilitators. The norm in a traditional classroom is that students only speak when they have been chosen by the teacher to speak and the rest of the time they are passively listening to the teacher. In contrast in this case, they are being asked to speak without even raising a hand but by just giving each other a chance to speak. In some groups, I observed some group members were still raising their hand and the peer-facilitator had to nominate them to speak.

It emerged from the data that some group members did not fully participate in the small-group, text-based discussions due to fear of failing to express themselves in English. Group members highlighted that the group members would laugh when someone made a mistake, mainly due to failure to express themselves in English, thus inhibiting their free participation in the small-group text-based discussion.

There is evidence of constraints in uniform participation by all group members. Some peer-facilitators indicated that it was difficult to make some of the discussion group members talk. Students are used to the traditional setup in which a “good student” should be quiet and only talk when the teacher nominates them to speak, and peer-facilitators do not have the requisite skills to make the other students participate.

Evidence of the challenge of changed power roles in the teaching and learning roles include a concern with relationship issues, where some group members failed to respect the peer-facilitator, making it difficult for peer-facilitators to carry out their duties effectively. Another peer-facilitator reported that some peers did not respect her because they also wanted to facilitate. She felt helpless, which affected her performance in peer-facilitation of the group discussion. In a peer-led small group where learning takes place through text-based discussion, failure to respect the peer-facilitators reverses the positive gains of the small-group discussion. Peer-facilitators have indicated how they were affected by disrespect from their peers during small-group discussions. It emerged from the data that some group members did not fully participate in the small-group, text-based discussions due to the fear of failing to express themselves in English. Group members highlighted that other members of the group would laugh when someone made a mistake, mainly due to a failure to express themselves in English, thus inhibiting them from freely participating in the small-group text-based discussion.

The results of the current study validate the findings of Bulte et al., (2007), Aggarwal (2008) and Torre et al., (2016), who acknowledge the existence of challenges in the implementation of peer-facilitated small-group discussions in the classroom context. In concert with the findings of the

current study, these researchers indicate that challenges associated with peer-led small-group discussions include group members' failure to express themselves and relationship issues. Similarly, this study's findings corroborate existing knowledge that peer-facilitators may have difficulties taking control of the group as group members may fail to respect them and take them less seriously. This also impacted their objectivity when evaluating and assessing their peers (Bulte et al., 2007).

The study findings indicated that the peer-facilitators have challenges in making every group member participate. This assertion is contrary to Gulpinar and Yegen (2005), Bandiera et al., (2013), and Sukrajh (2018)'s description of the causes of passive participation by some group members. According to these researchers, replacing the traditional teacher-centred approach by peer-facilitated small-group discussions which are collaborative, dialogic and discourse-intensive introduced a different approach to teaching and learning for the students. In the new approach the students were expected to ask questions and use reason to respond to the questions, since the open-ended authentic questions are used. Passive participation may be caused by group members not wanting to appear unprepared or ignorant in front of their peers and receive guidance where students provided wrong or incorrect information to their peers (Sukrajh, 2018). In peer group discussions, many group members have difficulties expressing themselves in English (Gulpinar & Yegen, 2005).

In summary, the findings show that peers of the same age may not give their peer-facilitator the same respect as they may give their teacher, who is regarded as the expert in the field of study. The current study provided new insights into the challenges faced in peer-facilitated small-group text-based English discussions in a rural secondary school. The study indicates how these challenges can affect the successful implementation of peer-facilitated small-group text-based English discussions in rural secondary schools. The study revealed that difficulty in motivating students to participate in small-group discussions has the same outcomes as traditional classroom discourse where the teacher dominates the discussion in the classroom. In this case a few students dominate the small-group discussion since others will be passive participants.

#### **5.4 POSITIONING THE PRESENT STUDY WITHIN THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

It is known that (1) small-group, text-based discussions work to develop critical-analytic thinking, and (2) that peer-led discussions enable the development of critical-analytic thinking. This study adds to this knowledge base by describing the utility of peer-led small-group discussions as a learning support tool that buffers against contextual constraints characteristic of the challenged

Global South education space – as in the case of a South African rural school. Despite these constraints (high student-teacher ratio per class, built environment limitations, limited quality and quantity teaching and learning materials, limited teacher professional development despite the development opportunities, and low overall literacy levels of students), students engaged in critical-analytic thinking. This study also adds to the knowledge base by describing the utility of peer-led small-group discussions as learning tools that enable better-than-expected positive education outcomes (which is not what is predicted, given the extreme contextual constraints).

The outcomes were systemically reported (leaders, students, teachers) and include:

- ALL perceived motivated learning-engagement (text and interpersonal) and thinking critically (reading comprehension);
- Peer-facilitators and students perceived “safe space” - comfortable and confident;
- Peer-facilitators perceived navigation around barriers - language and reasoning, improved confidence in English (English proficiency); and
- Learning/cognitive capacity - debate (leaders and students), independent learning (teachers)

Leaders use a repertoire of interpersonal communication skills to steer debates that enable learning. The utility of peer-led small-group discussions is obstructed by barriers that (i) constrain uniform participation in discussions (leaders lacking the knowledge on how to encourage participation, with traditional classroom-management behaviours inhibiting participation in a new form of discussion, as well as lack of confidence to talk in English and (ii) teaching and learning power dynamics amongst students (roles where a peer assumes a different power position).

The findings from this study suggest that successful implementation of peer-facilitation of small-group text-based discussions require the use of discourse elements during the text-based group interaction for the discussions to lead to high-level and critical-analytic thinking in students in such discourse-intensive pedagogical practices. The social interaction taking place in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the discovery space requires a competent adult or knowledgeable peer to provide scaffolding.

Chapter two provided the theoretical framework that guided the current study. Vygotsky's (1978a) Sociocultural Theory was used as a lens for conducting my study, and insights into this framework will inform recommendations from the current study. Key to Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory are the following connections to my study: (i) the important role played by community in the process of meaning-making, that is the role of social interaction in cognitive development, (ii)

the role of peer-assisted learning which I referred to as peer-facilitation in the current study and, (iii) the importance of language as in the use of “talking as a tool for thinking”. I discuss these three key areas in relation to my study in the following sections.

Through his concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), Vygotsky (1978a) refers to the ZPD, the discovery space, as the distance between the first level, the level in which an individual can learn on their own, and the second level, the level in which the individual needs the assistance of a more capable peer for guidance or work in collaboration with more capable peers for them to learn. Vygotsky points to the big difference in terms of development when the child, for example, is in the company of a knowledgeable other where the difference can be as a result of the active learning the child is subjected to through the peer-to-peer scaffolding (Pathan, Memon, Memon Khoso & Bux, 2018) as in the case in the present study. According to Vygotsky, collaboration with more expert others leads to social learning and development through interaction with a more competent peer (Chalaye & Male, 2011). In the present study, the trained peer-facilitator facilitated the social interaction amongst small-group discussion peers. As the group authentically made use of discourse elements, namely the open-ended and the individual and co-constructed responses, they co-constructed knowledge and made meaning of the text under discussion. The group members under the leadership of the “knowledgeable peer”, in this case, knowledgeable because they have been trained and are in charge of the group and therefore can organise and keep the group on the task, learn through social interaction leading students to think and inter-think during group discussions. This cognitive engagement creates discourse intensive encounters that enhance students’ understanding of the text and develops critical-analytic thinking in students.

The current study, conducted in a rural poorly resourced setting where the classes are very large, had to be broken down into small groups of between six and eight students per group. The teacher, who is supposed to gradually release responsibility as a fading facilitator while making sure to listen to the discussion up to the end, could not practically do so as there were six to seven groups in the class, and she would have to provide scaffolding for each group. In an effort to have each group continue to work even in the absence of the teacher, an arrangement of training peer-facilitators was then put in place so that the facilitators would be in charge of the group and organising and keeping the group on the task. The findings from the study confirmed that students could learn in peer-facilitated small-group discussions. Discussion group members even admitted that they were free to ask questions, something they would find difficult to do in whole-class discussions. Where they did not understand something, the atmosphere allowed for open bi-

directional participation, and as they mentioned, they were even relating the text read to the outside world. There was an increase in the student-to-student talk, unlike what happens in the traditional classroom. Despite the fact that students find it difficult to express themselves in English, they made an effort to help each other understand the text through code-switching.

Although English is the LoLT in the school and as such it is mandatory for students to speak in English both in and out of class, this is rarely what practically happens. Students made an effort to speak in English, and whenever they found it necessary to seek clarification and failed to say it in English, they whispered in their home language, thus code-switching to their mother tongue. According to Vygotsky (1978a), it is through internalisation of language that cognitive developments occur. The current study's findings indicate that through social interaction in peer-facilitated small-group text-based discussions, students acquire new knowledge. However, for this interaction to take place, the role language plays cannot be underestimated since language as a social practice is used in our everyday life to make meaning and interpret the life around us. According to Vygotsky (1978a), language is used in everyday life for the establishment and maintenance of personal and social relationships. Research findings from the current study revealed how through code-switching in the peer-facilitated small-group discussions, group discussion members interchangeably used their home language and English, enabling students to use their home language as a scaffolding tool to help each other to understand the text under discussion and leading to more student-to-student talk and the development of critical-analytic thinking in students. Vygotsky's SCT brings meaning into how students, through social interaction while using talk as a tool for thinking in their learning communities, can construct knowledge through classroom discussions and, as in the present study, in peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions. The research findings of this study indicated that peer-facilitators can bridge the gap between knowledgeable teachers and passive students when facilitating small-group, text-based English discussions in a rural South African secondary school. The findings showed that students could work together to accomplish a common goal through the use of the basic language.

## **5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Few limitations were encountered during the conduct of the present study. These included the methodological process used in conducting the current study. I employed the qualitative paradigm aligned to the descriptive case study perspective and, as such, had to use qualitative data standard operational procedures for data collection. The research approach allows the use of smaller samples. In the case of the present study, I used one school, only four classes and two

teachers making it difficult to generalise my research findings to larger populations. Because the presence of an observer can sometimes make research participants change a response (Shai, 2002), the problem of reactivity and over-identifying with research participants may happen. These are amongst some of the limitations of the qualitative approach. Reactivity is when a researcher tries to get a research participant's trust to obtain an "accurate, complete, and rich set of responses" (Queirós et al., 2017) To deal with reactivity, since my research was based on participant observation and I also interviewed the research participants, I made sure I made my participants feel at ease, maintaining a respectful and friendly relationship while remaining objective. I made sure I was non-judgmental, and I kept confidentiality throughout the data collection and analysis process as suggested by Queirós et al. (2017). Adhering to ethical guidelines in conducting research also helped me deal with this limitation (see Sections 1.11 and 3.10).

The other limitation of the qualitative approach is the possibility of researchers over-identifying with research participants, leading to a bias in the researcher's interpretation of the findings. To deal with this limitation, I used semi-structured interviews to collect data (Kinman & Jones, 2005), and I employed two independent trained raters for the coding of the results (Narayanan et al., 1999). I also adhered to the criterion used to determine the trustworthiness of my findings (see Sections 1.10 and 3.9).

## **5.6 CONTRIBUTION TO THE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE**

There has been an increasing number of studies confirming the successful use of discourse elements for developing high-level and critical-analytic thinking in students in small-group discussions. (Murphy et al., 2019; Nystrand et al., 2003; Reninger & Wilkinson, 2010; Soter et al., 2006, 2008; Wilkinson et al., 2010). The current study contributes to the growing body of knowledge about the extended use of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and using a knowledgeable peer in the co-construction of knowledge in meaning-making through social interaction in the Zone of Proximal Development. The present study also describes the success story of the utility of peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions in strengthening discourse-intensive pedagogical practices in schools in challenged spaces in rural secondary schools. In this process, discourse elements, namely open-ended authentic questions, individual responses and co-constructed responses, were used. The peer-facilitation of small-group, text-based intervention adds insights into pedagogical practices that enhance the development of

high-level and critical-analytic thinking in rural schools to lessen the achievement gap in English proficiency and academic performance between rural secondary school students and their urban counterparts, to ensure that no one is left behind.

## **5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES**

Findings from the current study revealed the utility of peer-facilitated small-group discussions as both a learning and support tool in the development of critical-analytic thinking in students. In terms of practice, this study recommends rotation of peer-facilitatorship amongst all group members and peer-facilitation of small groups across the curriculum in secondary schools.

The current study recommends that similar research should be conducted with primary school students to try to catch them young in the development of critical-analytic thinking. Training students at a younger age could go a long way in reducing the achievement gaps of students in the global south as the problem of poor academic performance and lack of English proficiency continues to haunt our schools, maintaining the big achievement gap between rural and urban schools.

Research participants indicated that they would need more time for the peer-facilitated small-group discussions as they felt one hour of a normal lesson was not enough. From observation, I also felt that the one hour, which was meant for a normal lesson, could suffice if the teacher-centered approach is being used since there is more of teacher-talk and less student talk. The current study recommends that in trying to implement such discourse-intensive pedagogical practices, more room should be allowed for additional student talk as the students indicated that they needed more time to think and talk about the text under discussion.

From my research and observation of participants, I recommend that research on peer-facilitated discourse-intensive small-group discussions should be conducted in all the other subject areas. As the students indicated, it was only in the Quality Talk intervention classes that they talked; they could notice the big difference between the traditional teacher-centred approach and the peer-facilitated discourse intensive approach. The present study revealed how the students enjoyed the discovery space in the ZPD.

Through peer-facilitation, the peer-facilitator has an opportunity to learn as they lead, and research could be conducted to establish the effect of rotating the peer-facilitator role amongst the discussion group members.



The issue of the strict use of English as LoLT when students continue to learn in a language that they do not understand, as the use of their home language is not allowed in school, remains an area that needs serious consideration. The current study recommends research into how a student's home language can be used as a resource to scaffold students in learning English as a second language.

I finally recommend that since the present study employed a qualitative approach in seeking to seek to understand how the use of peer-facilitation could develop critical-analytic thinking when participating in small-group, text-based discussions, further studies employing a mixed-method approach on a larger population could be employed to determine the effectiveness of this discourse-intensive pedagogical practice and allow generalisability of the findings.

## **5.8 CONCLUSION**

The focus of the present study was to describe how insights from peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions to develop discourse-intensive pedagogical practices inform knowledge on interventions that enable education in challenged spaces. The findings from the study point to the fact that even in challenged spaces like resource-constrained rural secondary schools where students have to walk long distances from home to school, have inadequate textbooks and where there are large teacher-pupil ratios just to mention a few, students can develop high-level and critical-analytic thinking through peer-facilitation and the use of discourse-intensive pedagogical practices. As students use discourse elements, they create more intellectual space. As they respond to open-ended authentic questions using individual and co-constructed responses, the cognitive engagement helps them to think and inter-think as they co-construct knowledge and participate in meaning-making through social interaction in their learning communities.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A. CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

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### (i) Pictures

#### Whole class discussion settings



In picture 1: Grade 8 whole class discussion the whole class reads out the comprehension passage first followed by teacher reading out to the class again. Picture 2 shows teacher explaining the story to the class with a few questions that teacher asks in the process of explaining the story.

In picture 3: Grade 9 teacher asks volunteers to read the passage followed by picture 4: teacher trying to get students to respond to questions that she is asking.

### Peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussions



In picture 1 and 2: setting up in preparation for the discussions.

Pictures 3 and 4 showing how crowded the classroom is due to the large numbers characteristic of rural schools which even makes it challenging for a teacher to manage the groups as they are so many given the one hour that is timetabled for a lesson.





Pictures 1-4 showing two groups from Grade 8 and two groups from Grade 9 students in peer-facilitated small-group discussions. I was impressed by the way the students managed to conduct productive discussions in the absence of the teacher but with a peer-facilitator leading the discussion as the teacher gradually releases power giving students the interpretive authority. Students in independent learning as they take ownership of their learning in peer-led small-group discussions.



Picture 1 and 3 shows teachers A and B respectively walking around as students are busy with their discussions and in 2 and 4 the teachers are offering guidance where needs be as they take the role of teacher as a fading facilitator.

(ii) **Field Notes and Reflexive Notes - (Sample)**

**My Field Notes and Reflexive Diary**

**For Control Classes**

Date	Field Notes	Reflexive Notes
30/05/17	<p><b>My first visit to the school.</b> This was already during the implementation phase of the project and I was coming in as a co-researcher into the project. The setting of the school which is not very far away from the shopping center, about 10km from the shopping complex, along the highway leading to the school. The school is well fenced offering security from the very close location as the houses and the school are separated by the tarmac road leading to the school. There are security officers at the main gate and visitors log in on entry and log out when leaving. My first impression on getting to the school was this a 'better off' rural secondary school (I was comparing it to rural schools from where I come from). The school has very neat infrastructure with a very neat administration blocks as well as ablution blocks with taped water and it is also electrified (although sometimes there is no water).</p> <p>Since we arrived around break time, when the siren rang learners queued for something to eat at some central point in the school. When I later asked about the feeding scheme from the teachers on my second visit, they told me that most of their students were staying with their grandparents who survive on a government grand which is not enough to cater for the family needs. They also indicated that some of the students come from distant homes from the school and some come hungry to school and this feeding scheme came in quite handy for the disadvantaged learners, the teachers said. I was taken round the school, introduced to the Principal of the school, the HOD and the participant teachers who looked very happy with the project. We passed through the "library", where some old books are just heaped in shelves. One of the teachers during an interview had this to say about the library, "Generally, as</p>	<p>As we were going back I reflected on the wasted resources on coming to the school and failing to accomplish a mission. Yes...this is one of the challenges that are part of the research process. Since the research was being conducted in a school setting in which there are certain activities that we as researchers have no control over. This necessitated rescheduling of our visits.</p>

	<p>for now here in our school we don't have a a what can I say library, in such a way that I wouldn't say they take books...". We then went to the "computer lab" ... again some old computers that are not functional and this confirms what the other teacher participant said during an informal talk on my second visit that "the rural schools are not well catered for when compared to those in urban areas". We just walked down the block of classes which from outside are very intact and then down through the sporting ground to the newly constructed block of toilets situated on the western end of the school.</p> <p>It was unfortunate we could not conduct lesson observations as planned as the teachers were on strike and were attending a meeting that was being held at the shopping center that we get to before getting to the school. We therefore had to reschedule for our next visit.</p>	
<p><b>14/08/17</b></p>	<p>After the long drive from Pretoria we got to the school after lunch. We met the teachers who helped us prepare for the lesson observations which we were going to conduct the following day. The preparations involved ensuring that the furniture was arranged according to the sitting plan that we used for the small-group discussions for the intervention classes that is Grade 8A and Grade 9B. Some students from the intervention classes who looked forward to the following day's discussions helped us to arrange the furniture. In Grade 9B the first two columns had two rows of desks while the third column had three rows to accommodate the 49 students in this class. The desks were arranged in such a manner that two desks would be facing each other while the third desk faces the first two desks. In Grade 8A, we had two columns of two rows each to accommodate the 45 students. The sitting arrangements was such that the two seater desks would either accommodate two or three students at most and they would sit facing inside the horse shoe formed as illustrated in the diagram below. The research team helped me to set the cameras since this was my first time.</p>	

<p>15/08/17</p>	<p><b>I conducted my first lesson observation in Grade 8C, a control class with teacher B.</b> A neat environment, desks arranged in four columns of five rows in each column. Students are sitting in pairs and it appears they can sit with anyhow with most of the students preferring to sit boys alone and a few sitting as a boy and girl pair. <b>The class of 45 is fully packed.</b> At the back of the classroom is an <b>old blank notice board</b> whose bottom right hand corner as you approach it from the door is getting torn. As they got in the class all students were facing sitting facing the front and in front is a chalk board with a few scribblings from previous lesson' notes dated 10 August.</p> <p>As they come in students sit down and <b>talk to each other on top of their voices in their home language.</b> As the lesson begins the <b>teacher asks the students to sit where there is a book.</b> There are only six textbooks for the 45 students to share. As a result, when the teacher asks them to sit where there is a book there is a movement of furniture as students try to reorganize themselves into groups in an effort to find where there is a textbook. The haphazard manner in which the furniture ends up in makes it difficult for teacher to move in between when she wants to supervise the students. I observed this could explain why she only moves in front from the right hand corner to the left hand corner during lesson delivery</p> <p><b>There is a scramble for textbooks, for example one boy snatches the textbook from an almost formed group of three girls and one boy sitting on one bench behind his desk. A quarrel in their home language between the girls and the boy ensues but eventually the boy gets the book. Some more boys come to join him to form a group of about four boys but again one of the boys grabs the book away from the group and I was afraid they could tear the book. The other boy successfully returns the book to the group of girls behind such that all the students left without a books join the girls.</b> In the meantime, the teacher has gone out, and some students are coming in and out while some continue to look for where they can get a book.</p>	<p>No learning or teaching aids on the notice board to add on to the lack of reading material for the students.</p> <p>During a discussion with teacher A after the lesson I learnt that it is mandatory for the students to speak in English both during lessons and out of the classroom.</p> <p>I noticed though that the students who were quite active and alive before the lesson started and as the lesson started they just went quiet... and not even respond to the teacher's questions. The issue of language as a barrier to communication may also be coming in to play in that, they are reading an English text which they may not be understanding. They are expected to speak in English and since they cannot express themselves in English the only option is to keep quiet.</p> <p>I was just thinking aloud, with all this that is happening as students <b>scramble for a textbook and the greater half of the lesson taking place amidst this noise</b></p>
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<p>I noticed there was no pre discussion as the teacher went on to read a passage about the story from her text book. She then asks someone from the back to read the passage “At the back, can someone read for us at the back, Rhino rescue...one girl starts reading from the back..(As she is reading, four late girls trickle in...They look for space to sit as a group and one more girl stands up to join them...More and more late students come in and make noise as they move desks and chairs in an effort to sit somewhere where there is a textbook... Teacher moves from the front right hand corner to come and make order as she confronts and just stares at one of the students moving around. The student in turn turns back finding somewhere to sit where there is textbook. The other students start laughing.... In the meantime, the student who has been chosen to read is still reading amidst all this noise).</p> <p>I also observed that as the student assigned to read is reading, teacher stops her so that words that they can look at the <b>bolded words</b> in the passage. The whole class is asked to read the definition of the word from the glossary but no further explanation is made. Also there was no chalkboard work during the lesson.</p> <p>Generally, the lesson was teacher dominated. It is the teacher who asks questions and she mostly uses test questions and procedural questions to which the whole class normally just responds with a “Yes” answer. She nominates students to respond but very few spoke during the lesson except for chorus answers where “all” but not all would read the answer from the textbook. One text book for six or seven students who are crowding over the book means only those from one side are able to see properly and read as the others have to crane their necks in order to see but it can be noticed that some end up giving up as they can be seen either standing up right, some playing with their pens others laughing facing down as the lesson progresses. At some point the teacher managed</p>	<p>only better explains the challenges of learning in resource constrained rural schools.?</p> <p>The way the students are now sitting with six or seven students crowding over one textbook, furniture haphazardly arranged leaving the room too congested for her to move around supervising or monitoring what is happening in the small-reading groups that have been created, ...challenges of the conventional classroom set up. Even disciplining the class also becomes a problem</p> <p>The teacher in me asked, “so after this chorus reading have all the students understood the definition of this word?” without an further elaboration especially given the fact that the students do not have enough books so that the student may have read the story alone at home or could go and read again alone when they got home.</p> <p>In this case there is no ownership of the learning by the students. I also guess when you did not understand anything there is no need for any effort to ask ask. I could read some indifference to the lesson from a number of students as could be noticed even from the sitting posture.</p>
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	<p>to pick one such student who was busy playing and asks him to stand up. But right in front, the third column from the door in the first row one student who was giving the teacher his back was busy playing and laughing and making other students to laugh throughout the lesson.</p>	
<p>15/08/2017</p>	<p><b>I conducted my first lesson observation in Grade 9C, a control class with teacher A.</b> A very clean classroom environment, with a few broken windows with a total of 47 students sharing two students per textbook. Neatly dressed students attentively awaiting the lesson to start. They are seated in pairs with mostly boys or girls sitting together and a few boy and girl sharing a double desk seater. Again just like in the other control class, at the back of the classroom is a notice board that has nothing on it, no teaching and learning aids. There is a chalkboard in front of the class but there the chalkboard was not used during the lesson. Only some writings from a previous undated lesson are on the chalkboard.</p> <p>During lesson delivery I observed that the teacher makes an effort to talk to both the boys and the girls. For example, both during the prediscussion and the discussion of the text a total of seven girls and eight boys responded to the few authentic questions and mostly test questions the teacher asked. I observed that they were all responding in English. (After the lesson I talked to the teacher about what she thinks contributed to the passiveness of the rest and the teacher they are sometimes shy to speak in class since they find it difficult to express themselves in English. On asking if they allow them to speak in their home language during an English lesson, she said the students are not allowed to speak in their home language during the lesson and even after the lesson. "The rule was English is the language of learning and communication". the teacher said). The lesson again is teacher dominated as the teacher talks more and again it is the teacher who asks questions throughout the lesson. As the lesson progresses it can be noted that the other students are not taking part in the discussions. They are just quiet despite that teacher's effort to invite them to talk.</p>	<p>A remote school characterized by a resource constrained setting.</p> <p>Again with the scarce learning and teaching resources in the school, would teaching and learning aids for the chalkboard and even the use of the chalkboard during the lesson the students with some reading material?</p> <p>The students raise their hands and teacher nominates who to respond Test questions do not allow room for discussion as it somehow trains students to just identify answers from the text without much reasoning. Are the quiet students thinking since they are not actively taking part???</p> <p>Students are being taught in a language that they do not understand hence the failure to express themselves in English that will also make them shy to speak</p>

## My Field Notes and Reflexive Diary

### For Intervention Classes

Date	Field Notes	Reflexive Notes
21/08/17	<p>The Monday drive to the school was as mentioned earlier on meant for the preparations for the observations that we would conduct the following day. We arrived after lunch and with the help of the teachers and the students from the intervention classes we laid our desks to accommodate the group discussions. Three columns of two rows each for Grade 8A which has 45 students and Grade 9B two columns of two rows each and one column of three rows to accommodate the 49 students. We also identified and marked positions for our cameras so that we would not waste time the following day trying to map up these positions since each group had its own camera and then one for the whole class.</p>	
22/08/17	<p><b>I conducted my first lesson observation in Grade 8A, an intervention class with teacher A.</b> Again the bare walls and a notice board in this classroom. No learning and teaching aids. Tables had been arranged in group layouts the previous day and the different groups knew where they were supposed to sit. The teacher immediately became busy trying giving out identification cards that we used for the participant students for anonymity. <b>I noticed there were sort of very active group leaders assisting her and I was sure these must be the peer-facilitators I had been told about.</b> To supplement the shortage of text books she was also distributing photocopies of the story they were going to discuss on this day. As all this was happening just like what was happening in the control class last week, the students though in their small groups were making noise speaking in their home language.</p> <p>The moment the teacher began to speak, the students kept quiet paying attention. When the teacher asks them to answer the two questions that are written on the papers that they have, <b>in very low voices students start talking to each</b></p>	<p>One of those challenges with the big classes, with six groups in a class with one teacher in a lesson of fifty minutes or one hour it would be difficult for the teacher successfully listen to a discussion to the end in order to offer guidance to the group as she will be having the other groups to attend to. It is</p>



	<p>other about the questions. Some speaking in English while others speaking in their home language but in very low voices. The teacher and one of the researchers were moving round assisting the students. I however noticed two students from the second and third column from the door who were not paying attention to what was happening in the group and yet the teacher could not notice it...managing the big classes.</p> <p>As soon as the students are asked to discuss in their small-groups, I noticed the peer-facilitator immediately taking over. To begin with no serious discussions were conducted but towards the end of the discussion the group members were now participating although they were literally speaking in their home language as they code-switched in response to the question asked or to ask questions during the discussion. The only questions they asked in English are those from the text or the ones on their papers. Although the students mostly used test questions, I noticed there was more student-student talk than teacher talk in the small group discussions as students operating at the same level can confidently and freely ask questions and share ideas. However, I also observed is the way peers cooperate with their peer-facilitators which led to the participation of all group members in most of the groups. Also the group members adhere to group rules like not speaking when the someone else is speaking and respecting each other's opinion. The teacher also admits that there is a big difference in the way the students are participating in the Quality Talk classes as opposed to the quietness that prevails in the non-Quality Talk classes.</p>	<p>then easy to find the few students who may not be taking part in the discussion without constant monitoring.</p> <p>With the peer-facilitator encouraging group members to speak, I noticed the relaxed atmosphere in which the group members were as they discussed. I talked to the teacher after the lesson as I wanted to find out if she also noticed that they were speaking in their home language (code-switching to respond or ask questions for most of the time) and she actually indicated that some of them cannot even construct a sentence in English. I then began to wonder if they were getting anything from the teacher dominated lessons that are taught in English. It somehow perhaps shows why they do not speak during whole class discussions since they will be expected to speak in English. The teacher also indicated that she also sometimes had to code switch in order to help the students understand.</p>
22/08/15	<p><b>I conducted my second lesson observation in 9B, an intervention class with teacher B.</b> A very neat and well organized environment with bare walls though and one chart on one side of the notice board. However, the class looks over crowded because of the class has 49 students and we had to create seven groups as we</p>	

<p>wanted to have at most seven students per group. We ended up with three groups with eight students. The students already know where each group sits for the lesson so as soon as they have taken their places upon instruction from the teacher they put on their badges. <b>At least each pair has a text book as the teacher has made an effort to borrow from the other class.</b></p> <p>The teacher really makes an effort to engage her students as she tries to speak to both boys and girls as could be observed during the pre-discussion. She uses the spaces left in between the groups to walk to the end of the class as <b>she encourages the students to “speak aloud”</b>. The teacher speaks in English and so does all the students who responded. However as soon as teacher goes out to quieten other students making noise outside, <b>the students also start talking to each other but in their home language.</b> To involve her students the teacher asks volunteers to read the poem and she picks from <b>those who have raised their hands although it was just less than ten hands up.</b></p> <p>After the poem has been read the teacher then invites students to a discussion. The effort that the teacher puts to make students talk with only a few hands then coming up. Surprisingly when she asks a procedural question, they all chorus respond “Yes”. Yet like what the teacher says the topic under discussion is about growing up and the stage that they are in right now, and teacher says, “What are the challenges you are being faced with, as teenagers? There is a lot...Isn’t it?” “Yes” a chorus answer. “...It’s happening with you guys. <b>So let’s discuss”</b>. <b>Quietness follows</b> and the Researcher M tells teacher to allow them to discuss in their groups. <b>Teacher urges them to discuss, to talk, to be open and says, “You do not have to be afraid of</b></p>	<p>It could be lack of confidence that makes them speak softly</p> <p>For the students to speak, it appears they should be talking in their home language. Outside class and back home they will be speaking in their home language and that it then becomes difficult to switch over to the language of instruction. <b>But on a positive note, teacher B mentioned that ever since they started the Quality Talk lessons you can also hear them talking to each other in English even outside class.</b> I think it is important to use a students’ home language to help them learn the second language because the moment we continue to look down upon the home language instead of using it as a resource for learning the second language we continue to marginalize all those who are not competent enough to express themselves in English</p> <p><b>Peer-facilitation helps to bridge the gap between the teacher as an authority figure and the peers. All of a sudden the students are alive, they have gained confidence to talk without fear of being laughed at with the whole class</b></p>
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your co... of your classmates...” Also encourages the students to ask each other questions about the poem. Some buzzing starts from the groups and eventually the students are talking...speaking both in English and in their home language. I even observed the peer-facilitators moving the audio recorder around to ensure everyone says something. Students were now active, sharing their teenage experiences and you could even hear the other students encouraging each other to “speak aloud” The teacher is moving around guiding the small-groups although because the groups are many she cannot wait until one group finishes a discussion so that she can also follow the discussion. She managed to have time for each group though. I noticed though in one group some group members were raising their hands in order to speak but most importantly the students were giving each other an opportunity to speak.

After the lesson I engaged the group members from the two classes in an informal discussion. I just wanted to hear their views about the peer-facilitated group discussions as I was thrilled to see how they were active participating in the discussions. The group members raised very important points. Amongst the raised points were: how Quality Talk had helped them to develop confidence in talking during the small group discussions. I asked them if there was any difference with the way they participate in other non-QT classes to which they agreed that there was a big difference as students do not talk in the other classes as they do in QT classes. On asking why they do not talk in the other classes, the answers were not very clear though although a few indicated that there was no time to discuss like they do in QT lessons. They also indicated that when one of them is the group leader they are not afraid to ask questions and they help each other to understand. I asked them why it is that they sometimes speak in their home language in an English lesson to which one group member said, “Sometimes you know the answer and you do not know how to speak in English”.

Similarly, the teachers also admit that the peer-facilitated discussions have really helped the

	students to speak during class discussions. They even wish these small group discussions could be introduced to all the other subjects and not English only.	

## APPENDIX B. INTERVIEWS

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**(i) Semi-structured Interviews– Peer-facilitators Interview Questions**

1. Tell me the story of being a learner-leader in Quality Talk?
2. How are the Quality Talk discussions different than what you experience in other classes?
3. What made Quality Talk
  - a) Easy?
  - b) Difficult?
4. What do you like about Quality Talk?
5. How would you improve Quality Talk?

## (ii) Semi-structured Interviews– Peer-facilitators Interview

Key: R 1/R 2 Researcher 1/Researcher 2

P-F Peer-facilitator

Table 0.1 Grade 8A Peer-facilitator 20

Turn	Participant	Verbatim
1	R 1	My name is Sipikelelo Mugari, I am with the University of Pretoria and the University of Pretoria is going to be conducting this Quality Talk project with your school, ..... school here ...right? And this is the reason why you have been seeing us here. I have a consent form with me here, I will be conducting this interview with you and I just wanted to know if you would be comfortable aaah... for us to continue with the interview, if you are not comfortable you are free to say so and you also should know that any information that we discuss here is just for my research it's not going to be made public aaah... with your name to say so and so said, it's just for my research and also I will be recording, will you be comfortable for me to continue interviewing you as well as record this interview?
2	P-F 20	Yes
3	R 1	You will be comfortable?
4	P-F 20	Yes
5	R 1	It's okay so I will go ahead with asking the questions, the few questions.... It's just about 5 questions that I have for you here. Can you tell me your story of being a learner leader in this Quality Talk project?
6	P-F 20	It was quite hard but at all the time I told my members that you are not going to get hard questions, you are just going to answer them and you are, you are not always the right answers must be taken, everybody will get a chance to speak.
7	R 1	Great, ah I, I really appreciate the work you have been doing with your group you were saying aaah...it was difficult to begin with what exactly made it difficult to begin with?
8	P-F 20	I was scared that we was not to speak wrong answers so others could laugh at me at some time.
9	R 1	Okay, okay sometimes people laugh when people give wrong answers? Is that so? Okay. Now, thank you so much I also want to know aaah... how this Quality Talk discussions are different from your experience with what happens in the other classes?
10	P-F 20	You,... everybody gets knowledge and other classes not get knowledge like us, as grade 8A.
11	R 1	you are mentioning that in Quality Talk everybody gets knowledge, how do they get this knowledge?
12	P-F 20	Because everybody gets to learn, gets to learn what Quality Talk is about and the questions that Quality Talk asked us.
13	R 1	Okay, and you are saying everybody, everybody, can you exactly say how everyone gets involved in Quality Talk?

14	P-F 20	If one person asks a question, everybody must answer it
15	R 1	Okay, okay, okay, how did you manage to do that as a group mam... as a learner leader?
16	P-F 20	I told everyone that it's not always the right answer that occurs in the question.
17	R 1	Okay
18	P-F 20	Yes
19	R 1	Oh, that is great. Aaah... I would want to just find out what made Quality Talk easy for you and what made it difficult? so eeeh... start with what made it difficult for you?
20	P-F 20	It make it, It make difficult for me because at first the group members did not respect me.
21	R 1	Okay, okay you mean they didn't respect you?
22	P-F 20	Yes
23	R 1	Okay, so that made it difficult for you?
24	P-F 20	Yes
25	R 1	Okay and what made it easy for you?
26	P-F 20	We read stories with an understanding and we, we were asked test questions and effective questions.
27	R 1	Okay
28	P-F 20	Yes
29	R 1	Okay and this actually helped you as you were discussing with your group members?
30	P-F 20	Yes
31	R 1	Anything else that you would want to share with me on how this made, this Quality Talk made it easy for you?
32	P-F 20	Yes, it made, it increase me by using my vocabulary and dictionaries so that I can find words that are difficult for me to say.
33	R 1	Thank you so much and the fourth question is, what do you like most about Quality Talk?
34	P-F 20	I like most,... what I like most about Quality Talk is that we do not argue with people but the opinions of the people.
35	R 1	Okay great and so you take that as an opportunity to share with your colleagues without arguing with them as individuals but arguing with ideas.
36	P-F 20	Yes
37	R 1	Thank you very much aaah... how would you improve Quality Talk?
38	P-F 20	I can improve Quality Talk by telling others to take part in it and take it as a good result of improving our understanding.
39	R 1	So you would actually want to have all the others also included instead of just a few?
40	P-F 20	Yes
41	R 1	Thank you very much, by the way your name and class?
42	P-F 20	My name is 20 my surname is XXXXX, my class is 8A.
43	R 1	8A, eeeh... thank you so much aaah... it has been a pleasure talking you, thank you so much.



44	P-F 20	Yes
45	R 1	And I will be talking to the others as well, thank you.

Table 0.2 Grade 8A Peer-facilitator 42

Turn	Participant	Verbatim
1	R 1	Good morning
2	P-F 42	Morning
3	R 1	How are you
4	P-F 42	Am fine?
5	R 1	How is home?
6	P-F 42	Aaah... it's great. Home is great
7	R 1	Home is great? Ah
8	P-F 42	Yes
9	R-1	This morning I will be interviewing you, am coming from university of Pretoria, Sipikelelo Mugari, we are conducting this Quality Talk... aaah... project in South African rural schools just to make sure learners develop thinking skills and improve their comprehensive skills as well. And this morning I would like to interview you as a learner leader but you are comfortable if you are not, you are comfortable to say if you do not want us to continue with the interview and also since I will be recording if you don't want us to record the interview you can say so. Is that okay?
10	P-F 42	Yes
11	R-1	Ooh, may I know if you are comfortable to continue with the interview?
12	P-F 42	Yes
13	R-1	Can I record?
14	P-F 42	Yes
15	R-1	Okay, thank you so much. Uuumm... and from this conversation whatever we are going to discuss here is just for my research study is not something that will be written with your name somewhere is just for my research study so no one will need to know who this one I was speaking to is, is that okay?
16	P-F 42	Yes
17	R-1	My first question for you is,..., oh by the way today is the 14th of September, is that all right?
18	P-F 42	Yes
19	R-1	Okay and you are from grade
20	P-F 42	8A
21	R-1	8A and your code number?
22	P-F 42	42
23	R-1	42, thank you. My first question for you is, would you like to tell us your story as a learner leader in the Quality Talk project?
24	P-F 42	My responsibility in the Quality Talk leader is to make the others to know how to ask questions and answer some questions and to make others to

		do not argue with people and not shout at other people if the answer is wrong.
25	R-1	Okay, that's great. And aaah... I just want to know, how has it been like being a learner leader?
26	P-F 42	It is good because now I am enjoying how to question, answer all the things.
27	R-1	oh, that's great aaah... and during all those Quality Talk discussions which you are conducting in the Quality Talk Uuumm... classes if you would compare them with how you learn in the other classes is there is any difference?
28	P-F 42	Yes there is a difference in some other lessons people argue with,... people argue each other but in Quality Talk we do not argue, we argue with questions and people thinking about that.
29	R-1	They really are helping. Okay and how does this help? You are talking about people arguing with... Uuumm... ideas and not with people, how does this help?
30	P-F 42	It helps people to gain more knowledge
31	R-1	Oooh... so it helps, so when people ask questions and then people get to know from the answers that are(indistinct) people being in as the group?
32	P-F 42	Yes
33	R-1	Thank you very much, aaah... I just also want to know what made Quality Talk to be easy for you?
34	P-F 42	What made Quality Talk to be easy for me is that my group members listen to me and they respect me.
35	R-1	Oh, they do? what do you mean when you say they respect you?
36	P-F 42	They do not do anything silly they always respect, put some questions, answer, they do not make noise, listening to me.
37	R-1	Okay, do they also listen to each other when they are talking?
38	P-F 42	yes, they listen to each other
39	R-1	Aaah... that's great. I also would like to know what made Quality Talk difficult for you?
40	P-F 42	What made Quality Talk to be difficult to me is that I didn't know about Quality Talk, I didn't know what to say, what to do and I didn't think that it's gonna be easy like this.
41	R-1	Really? So when you just heard about it and then you said what is this? This can actually be difficult for me. Aaah..., thank you so much and I also would want to know what you liked most about Quality Talk?
42	P-F 42	What I liked most about Quality Talk is that it will make me to know how to be a leader and make me know how to rule people in life.
43	R-1	(laughing) so you are actually getting this experience to say in future how can you lead other people aaah... is there anything else that you also liked most from this Quality Talk?
44	P-F 42	What I other liked from this, Quality Talk is that people are happy and they are now getting more knowledge.
45	R-1	Okay, how do they get this knowledge from Quality Talk?
46	P-F 42	They get this knowledge by answering answers even if it's wrong or right, we understand each other.

47	R-1	Okay, aaah... that great, that's very good. If Quality Talk were to improve what would you improve it? Are there certain things that you think should,... that you could do to improve Quality Talk?
48	P-F 42	I will say that in a group there must be two leaders or more and they must...The learners must be in a large number.
49	R-1	You want them to be in a large number and then you want also two leaders , how will this help you?
50	P-F 42	It will help me if am concentrating for this one, the other leaders will be concentrating to the other.
51	R-1	Okay I see, I see that's a great idea, thank you very much, thank you .
52	P-F 42	Okay

Table 0.3 Grade 8A Peer-facilitator 12

Turn	Participant	Verbatim
1	R-1	Good morning
2	P-F 12	Good morning
3	R-1	How are you
4	P-F 12	Am fine
5	R-1	am ok, am Sipikelelo Mugari, I hope you now know. I am a student at the University of Pretoria and the University of Pretoria will be conducting a Quality Talk project for South Africa's rural schools and we are coming here at Chief Jerry school ah because of this project ah I will be interviewing you but you are still comfortable to say whether or not you want to continue with this interview and also you are also free to say whether or not you won't want me to record this because I want to record our conversation so, ah may I know if I may continue with this interview with you?
6	P-F 12	Yes Mam, you may continue?
7	R-1	And can I record it?
8	P-F 12	Yes?
9	R-1	Yes, ok. Today is the 14th of September 2017, isn't that so? And you are coming from which class by the way?
10	P-F 12	Am coming from Grade 8A, am number 12?
11	R-1	Okay, that's your code number?
12	P-F 12	Yes
13	R-1	Thank you so much, eh I have a few questions for you as a learner leader. Can you tell me your story as a learner leader in Quality Talk?
14	P-F 12	As a group leader in Quality Talk my duty is to encourage the group members to speak and be serious about Quality Talk. It is a very nice project and it can help us in my things so it is such a wonderful project.
15	R-1	Thank you so much, you are saying it can help you in my many things, do you want to tell me exactly what things it helps you in?

16	P-F 12	Yes, it helps the other learners who are scared of speaking but as we are working as a group they can speak and they are not afraid to speak anything and it can help us to improve English language.
17	R-1	thank you, great. So you can actually see the difference here where you are saying the others who couldn't speak because of this small groups they can also now be speaking?
18	P-F 12	Yes
19	R-1	ah great, I will move on to the second question. How are this Quality Talk discussions different from your experience of the other classes?
20	P-F 12	Uuumm... can you please repeat the question? I didn't understand it.
21	R-1	Ok, you are. Eeeh...having Quality Talk discussions in this Quality Talk project when you compare with how you learn in the other classes is there any difference? Or it's just the same?
22	P-F 12	yes, there is a difference cos when we are studying like not in pairs some learners are scared to speak but as we are working as a group they can speak, yes.
23	R-1	Okay, so you can actually notice that difference?
24	P-F 12	Yes
25	R-1	Ah, great. I want to know from you, what made Quality Talk easy for you?
26	P-F 12	Working as a group is such a wonderful thing many people can do better if they are working as group so it is easy for us to do this Quality Talk.
27	R-1	ok, so you are continuously appreciating this working together as a group?
28	P-F 12	yes
29	R-1	Ah, so at least if people are in smaller groups I can see from what you are saying there is quite a difference as opposed to working with the whole class.
30	P-F 12	Yes Mam
31	R-1	Okay, but what made Quality Talk difficult for you?
32	P-F 12	Uuumm... sometimes my group members are not taking this Quality Talk serious they are losing their behaviour sometimes they like laughing so it has been difficult for us cos we are serious about this and some are serious and some are not so it's making it to be difficult for us.
33	R-1	Ooh I see, so how do you cope with this situation?
34	P-F 12	I read them the rules and am so glad that after reading the rules for them they are trying to change their behaviour?
35	R-1	Ah great, so you are using the rules to remind them whenever you see that they are no longer being serious? <i>laughing</i>
36	P-F 12	Yes, yes Mam.
37	R-1	That's great, ah lets go to the 4th question, what do you like about this project?
38	P-F 12	It is such a wonderful project, it makes to improve our language and it helps us in many things Mam.
39	R-1	Uuumm... okay, okay your language for example, what else?
40	P-F 12	Uuumm... it helps the other learners to speak because they are not being afraid if they are working as a group.
41	R-1	Okay, okay

42	P-F 12	yes
43	R-1	Okay, thank you very much, if you were to improve Quality Talk how would you improve it?
44	P-F 12	I will be serious and ... who, laughing....
45	R-1	yes, you mean as an individual?
46	P-F 12	Yes
47	R-1	Okay, what about the whole thing about the discussions that you will be conducting, is there anything you that you think you could actually do to improve Quality Talk?
48	P-F 12	Asking questions is improving our Quality Talk. They are asking questions a lot and that's very good and we are working as a good team so if they are asking questions and arguing about the ideas it is being very nice.
49	R-1	Ah great, so I can see from what you are saying that you would want people to ask more questions?
50	P-F 12	Yes
51	R-1	So that they can argue about ideas. It has been nice being with you. Thank you very much.
52	P-F 12	Thank you.
53	R-1	Okay

Table 0.4 Grade 8A Peer-facilitator 15

Turn	Participant	Verbatim
1	R 2	I am going to help Sipikelelo, do some interviews for her and what we want to do is I am going to ask you a couple of questions and but before I ask you the questions and I want to make sure that you're doing this on your own free will, okay? So If you don't want to be part of the interview then you must just say, that's fine and I will give you a form to fill in to say you don't want to be part of the interview and if you wanna be part of the interview and then that you also agree that we can record the interview, is that okay?
2	P-F 15	Yes
3	R 2	So I can interview you?
4	P-F 15	Yes.
5	R 2	Perfect. So, I want you to think carefully of this questions and remember that there is no right or wrong answer, okay. What are the questions. And then... But before we start I want you to tell me your name, your grade and you remember your number?
6	P-F 15	Yes
7	R 2	Cool
8	P-F 15	Yes
9	R 2	Let's go.
10	P-F 15	(Clearing throat) My name is ....., surname....., I am a team leader for group 1 my batch number is number 15.
11	R 2	Very nice and today's date?

12	P-F 15	Today's date is 14 September 2017
13	R 2	Perfect, okay. So, can you tell me the story of being a leader learner in Quality Talk?
14	P-F 15	Being a learner leader in quality made me become open before I never knew how to be open to other people cos I was not given to share information with others, it helped me to learn more about English, it also helped me to be a leader and lead and do the right things to other people. Quality Talk helped me to... oooh... but firstly it helped me not to be shy cos I was very shy but now I am less shy (laughing)
15	R 2	laughing .....
16	P-F 15	but (laughing) then it was .... very fun doing Quality Talk most good thing was that I was a learner leader leading others showing them what's right, doing the best I could.
17	R 2	Okay, I just wanna understand, when you say open, can you explain to me what you mean by open? that made you more open?
18	P-F 15	It made me more open, now I could think of more ideas to share them with my group members before, I was, I am a very clever learner(indistinct) but I didn't know how to share information with others. When somebody asked me a question I don't know how to explain it but I know the answer but I don't know how to explain it. Quality Talk made me feel very open cos I know I can share information with others tell them what to do and what not do and that's all.
19	R 2	So, has it made it very easy for you to share information? Not just to know the information, are you able to better share now?
20	P-F 15	Yes, Mam.
21	R 2	Is it? And do you think by sharing it's helped you in any way?
22	P-F 15	It helped me cos, it helped in other way cos and it helped other learners cos they were all afraid of me I didn't ...like they were afraid cos I didn't share the information with them that I have and they didn't know how to share the information that they know, to give it to me cos I can't say am perfect, I know everything but now I can tell them, they also assist me, that's all.
23	R 2	Did you learn anything from the other learners?
24	P-F 15	Yes Mam
25	R 2	When you share?
26	P-F 15	What I learnt is they are also not that dump cos some other learners when you ask them a question they feel a little bit shy so and I will be like okay what you have to do is this and this and this so the learner now must me that no XXXXX here and here it wasn't supposed to go like this it goes like this and now I see that this learners a clever learner but she's shy to show people that she or he is clever
27	R 2	Okay, all right. How are Quality Talk discussions different from what you experience in other classes?
28	P-F 15	Quality Talk questions?
29	R 2	The discussions? So how is what you do in quality, the discussions in Quality Talk class in your English class Quality Talk different from What you do in other classes? The discussions, just how you talk about the text or stuff in your class?

30	P-F 15	Like I said, it helps me to be open, it helps me and I believe that 2 is better than one. I always do my work alone, in English classes we have to be a group, talk ,discuss something but I didn't want to discuss anything.
31	R 2	Okay
32	P-F 15	Yes
33	R 2	And in your other classes what other subject do you take, like life orientation, SiSwati, what are the discussions like there, are there any discussions?
34	P-F 15	No, I don't discuss with anyone.
35	R 2	So, is it only in the Quality Talk class that you do discussions? That you talk about the text?
36	P-F 15	Yes Mam .
37	R 2	Okay, and what made Quality Talk easy for you?
38	P-F 15	Quality Talk make a lot of things easy for me, I now can read and understand the text, ask questions there's a lot but Quality Talk made easy things for me, for me to like I said for me to able to share information, it really helped me cos before people said that I am selfish, I didn't, I never knew like when they asked a question and I know the answer and or I can say that I understand like I was afraid to tell somebody that oh this and this and this is correct and but aaah... I felt like they will say eeeh... you are wrong and something like that, that's why but now I know that there is no right answer you have to discuss, a learner must share his views and I share his views, mix them together and see what comes out.
39	R 2	Very nice, and what was difficult for you to do Quality Talk?
40	P-F 15	What was difficult, it's only one thing...
41	R 2	Uuumm...?
42	P-F 15	To make them talk
43	R 2	(Laughing...) why do you think that?
44	P-F 15	They are shy, I always see them, it's like that person knows what to say but you, she wants to write it first and read out.
45	R 2	Why do you think they wanna write it first?
46	P-F 15	Maybe I can say that he is afraid to talk... English
47	R 2	Is he afraid to talk...., sorry is he afraid to talk English?
48	P-F 15	Yes Mam
49	R 2	So they would talk in SiSwati not in English, is that what you are saying?
50	P-F 15	Yes, then I have to translate in English and read it out for them
51	R 2	okay, do they ever..., do they write questions in SiSwati first?
52	P-F 15	Yes, there's only one member who told me her question in SiSwati then I had to translate it into English then I written it down and gave it to her.
53	R 2	Do you think that helped her?
54	P-F 15	Mam?
55	R 2	Do you think that helped her that you read it for her and translated it for her?
56	P-F 15	Yes Mam, cos now she knows how to translate her words into English

57	R 2	Okay, good. What do you like about Quality Talk?
58	P-F 15	What I like about Quality Talk is that (sigh...) most of the time is spend my mind.., I spend the time my mind.., my mind is always open I can think different things , then tell them, tell my group members, guide them, I like being a team leader
	Intr	Both laughing....
59	R 2	If you had to tell us., give us advice because you have now done this for a few weeks and all that, if you had to give us advice what do you think we can do to improve it?
60	P-F 15	To improve it?
61	R 2	Uuumm..., and this is a very important question okay, you can think aa little bit about it.
62	P-F 15	What you can do to improve it is that some like there's a girl in my, that's my group member he always wants to be a group leader so I thought that if you could add more group leaders but I didn't know if that was going to be possible.
63	R 2	That's a good point, maybe rotate the group leaders?
64	P-F 15	Yes
65	R 2	Okay
66	P-F 15	And I thought that you should tell... cos when I say to somebody okay, now you, talk something, say something they will just go like any now I know everything like I am... they will say silly things about me, so...
67	R 2	Are they nasty to you?
68	P-F 15	Some of them, when I tell them that this is wrong some respect me that. okay this is wrong, okay then they ask how am I going to get it right? cos I want to ask the question and so I tell them that okay put this and this and this to make a perfect sentence cos I love perfect sentences
69	R 2	laughing.....
70	P-F 15	Then so when I told this girl that, the one who wants to be a team leader when I tell.., them she always looks at me in silly ways she thinks that I know everything
71	R 2	So what do you tell her?
72	P-F 15	I just keep quiet, there's nothing I can do.
73	R 2	Anything else that we can do, to make it better?
74	P-F 15	To make Quality Talk better?
75	R 2	Uuumm?
76	P-F 15	Put more hours cos some of the learners must know how to think a very long time.
77	R 2	Can you explain what you mean by more hours, tell me?
78	P-F 15	When you come in our classes usually your classes sometimes are short, read the text, ask questions that, you're done, maybe I will like it if we read the text, ask questions and you ask us questions and have a lot of fun and so other learners to know how to think a very long time.
79	R 2	So the way we did it the last 2 weeks where we did the text., the text the one week and you prepared the questions and the next time you did the discussions. Did that work better than doing it all, all in the one session?
80	P-F 15	Yes, that really worked better.



81	R 2	Do you still want more time to talk?
82	P-F 15	Yes,
83	R 2	When you say more time to talk, do you want more time to talk in that lesson or do you want more talk time, more often?
84	P-F 15	In our discussions?
85	R 2	In one week, each week you must have it, how do you mean it?
86	P-F 15	No, I mean it even if you came once a week it doesn't matter but I would like it if a class, every classes that we attend for Quality Talk the time of it is a little longer.
87	R 2	okay, did it help to prepare the questions the day before?
88	P-F 15	The day before ?
89	R 2	You drew up the questions then the next day you did the talk? Did that help?
90	P-F 15	Yes, that did help cos just like I said some don't want to talk they just want to write it first and that things and they read it first down what they written and I gave then the recorder to ask the question, some... (indistinct) it was difficult for them to answer so I said to them okay if she asks a question, write your answer down then I will give you the recorder and say your answer aloud.
91	R 2	Very good, okay. Anything else?
92	P-F 15	No, Mam
93	R 2	Okay, Perfect. Thanks very much

Table 0.5 Grade 8A Peer-facilitator 23

Turn	Participant	Verbatim
1	R 2	So, eh we have asked for an interview about Quality Talk but first am gonna ask you, if you don't feel comfortable being interviewed you can say you don't want to be interviewed okay, so you don't have to be interviewed if you don't want to be interviewed.
2	P-F 23	Okay
3	R 2	Are you okay to be interviewed?
4	P-F 23	Yes
5	R 2	And then, the other thing is that do you mind if we video record the interview?
6	P-F 23	Yes
7	R 2	You.... you don't mind, we can record it?
8	P-F 23	Yes, you can
9	R 2	Okay, all right, what I want you to do to tell me, the other kids practiced yesterday to tell me the date, your name, your grade and do you remember your batch number ?
10	P-F 23	Eehh...
11	R 2	Okay
12	P-F 23	Today's date?

13	R 2	Uuumm...
14	P-F 23	today is the 4th of September and Grade 8A, code number is 23 my name is XXXXX
15	R 2	all right, so what we want to do is, am gonna ask you 5 questions and the 1st one is, tell me the story of being a learner leader in Quality Talk? When you are ready you can tell me.
16	P-F 23	Can you please repeat the.....
17	R 2	Tell me the story of being learner leader in Quality Talk.
18	P-F 23	Sigh... okay, being a leader in Quality Talk I assist my members about how share ideas, to be not scared if they answer questions , answer questions if they ask them and don't be scared to share ideas with others and we, I tell them to respect others opinion
19	R 2	Anything else?
20	P-F 23	And I tell them not disrespect others.
21	R 2	If you look.., how are Quality Talk discussions different than what you experience in other classes?
22	P-F 23	Is that there must be Quality Talk.
23	R 2	So if you look at Quality Talk class, you know where they talk about the text, that happens in English now if you look at your SiSwati, life orientation, those other classes hey the discussion there, what's... what's different between how you talk in those classes and how you talk in English Quality Talk now?
24	P-F 23	Is that in the Quality Talk class we share the ideas, but in other subjects we don't answer questions, we just be shy, we disrespect members, we disrespect the teachers, we are not listening but in the Quality Talk we discuss as members and respect others, share ideas on the staff
25	R 2	Can you please just explain to me what you mean by disrespect?
26	P-F 23	Is when you...
27	R 2	It's fine, don't worry....
28	P-F 23	It's when you... talk with someone and just talk, Eish...
29	R 2	Is it when you kind of like, do I understand it if you say that you don't listen to the teachers?
30	P-F 23	Yes, you don't listen to the teachers, you talk njee, talk..
31	R 2	Is that what you mean? I just wanna make sure we understand each other. What made Quality Talk easy for you?
32	P-F 23	It's just now we know how to answer questions, we are not scared for people that they will laugh at us and we share ideas.
33	R 2	Okay, so was it easy for you to talk to people?
34	P-F 23	No.
35	R 2	Okay....
36	P-F 23	Because I was scared now am not scared. If they ask me something, I tell them if they say I must explain, I explain and they respect my opinions.
37	R 2	And when they laugh at you? you said sometimes they laugh at you when you talk, what do you do now?
38	P-F 23	I don't care, I say they must keep laughing but I will, I will not not be angry with them

39	R 2	So what was, what did you find really easy to do , that you could do very well when you did the Quality Talk discussions? was there something easy for you?
40	P-F 23	Yes, is that now I know how to answer questions and not be scared of what people will say if I answer this questions and how will they act, how will they react about me, I don't care now what they will say.
41	R 2	What do you like about Quality Talk?
42	P-F 23	Is that we share ideas, we talk and not laughing at each other listening. We listen with... about ... others opinion, and we... we...
43	R 2	You can say it in SiSwati, talk in SiSwati. I'll get somebody to translate .Tell me in SiSwati
44	8A - 23	(both laughing)
45	P-F 23	SiSwati translation(now we respect each other, we don't laugh at each other when answering questions and again when we are asked questions we answer them)
46	R 2	Is that it? (laughing) okay, how would you improve Quality Talk, if there's anything you can think of that you could tell us that would make Quality Talk better for you as a learner leader or someone in the classroom? What would you tell us? that I think you can do this, this, this
47	P-F 23	We must have a Quality Talk to all the subjects.
48	R 2	You think so?
49	P-F 23	Yes
50	R 2	Will it help you?
51	P-F 23	Yes
52	R 2	Why?
53	P-F 23	Because in other subjects we're struggling and if there was a Quality Talk in other subjects we will be better.
54	R 2	okay....
55	P-F 23	And things will be better for us.
56	R 2	And the way the Quality Talk works with the team leader reading the rules and all that, do you think, Is there anything we can change there to make it better?
57	P-F 23	No
58	R 2	The way the process works now is fine?
59	P-F 23	Yes, it's fine.
60	R 2	Okay, perfect. Anything else you need to tell us about Quality Talk? What was your favourite thing about it?
61	P-F 23	We listen to stories, share ideas, yaah....
62	R 2	(indistinct) you were very nervous
63	P-F 23	sigh,,, I was, very nervous
64	R 2	What were you nervous about it?
65	P-F 23	Is that, I thought that they will laugh at me saying that the thing that am doing is stupid, all the stuff.
66	R 2	What do your team think?

67	P-F 23	They say the Quality Talk is good, because now we share ideas they are not scared to answer questions, they say something if they are wrong we correct it we don't laugh at them
68	R 2	Does your whole team talk?
69	P-F 23	Yes, the whole team works.
70	R 2	All of them?
71	P-F 23	All of them
72	R 2	That's good, okay. Thank you, anything else?
73	P-F 23	Nothing
74	R 2	(laughing) Okay, thank you.

Table 0.6 Grade 8A Peer-facilitator 17

Turn	Participant	Verbatim
1	R 1	Good morning
2	P-F 17	Morning Mam
3	R 1	How are you this morning?
4	P-F 17	Am fine
5	R 1	You are fine? How has been home?
6	P-F 17	Mam?
7	R 1	How has been home?
8	P-F 17	Am happy to be home
9	R 1	Okay, Uuumm... I am Sipikelelo Mugari, am coming from the University of Pretoria. I think you have been seeing us around here. It's because of this Quality Talk project that is being conducted in rural south African schools and that is why we have been coming here to Chief Jerry High School. I would like to interview you this morning but if you are comfortable. Let me know whether you would like us to continue with this interview and if you are not comfortable then you can let me know so that we cannot continue with the interview.
10	P-F 17	I am comfortable Mam
11	R 1	Thank you so much, and also I am going to be recording, is that okay with you? Can I record?
12	P-F 17	Yes
13	R 1	Okay, thank you so much, Uuumm..., you are? Your name and your grade?
14	P-F 17	I am XXXXXXXX and I am in Grade 8A at Chief Jerry High School
15	R 1	Okay, thank you so much and the date is the 14th of September 2017, is that okay?
16	P-F 17	Yes
17	R 1	All right, Uuumm..., I have this question for you Uuumm ...P-F 17, can you tell me your story as a learner leader Uuumm... in this Quality Talk project?

18	P-F 17	As a leader it's nice to be learner leader cos we care about the members in a group and happy about being a learner leader.
19	R 1	Okay, okay I can see. what exactly makes you happy to be a leader?
20	P-F 17	Is that it teaches us, it teaches us about other people that we may be patient for them and let them talk not be shy for them to talk to us.
21	R 1	Aaah... that's great, that's good Uuumm... when you compare what happens in your other classes is there a difference?
22	P-F 17	Yes, it is Mam.
23	R 1	Okay?
24	P-F 17	Because we, when we talk as a Quality Talk we are free sometimes other people can't speak for some reasons because they are shy of some people maybe in the class but we as Quality Talk we can make them and not be shy for us, for them to talk to us.
25	R 1	Okay, Okay that's great. So you can actually see this as an opportunity that is being created to help those who are less able to speak up so that they can at least speak up in smaller groups? Great. And may I ask, what made Quality Talk easy for you?
26	P-F 17	Is that we are helped by teachers and you as a Quality Talk members and the other members can respect us as in the group and they and some of the members in a group teaches us how to treat people and some of, some of the people in the group can speak to us while maybe someone can have better knowledge that we never thought he/she will not be having.
27	R 1	Okay, thank you and then you are mentioning that this teaches you how to treat other people, how exactly does Quality Talk do this?
28	P-F 17	When we ask questions there are some rules in the group that told us that one person at a time and so we don't need to raise hands, we don't argue about other people's ideas, we argue, oooh... We don't argue with the people we argue about ideas so what teaches me is that when someone is talking answer don't discriminate or laugh at him we need to have this patient and love for him/her to talk to us as we are a group Mam..., quality leaders
29	R 1	Thank you very much because I can see from the way you are talking that you really appreciate how those rules that have been said about the Quality Talk can help you as you lead your members. May I know, could there be anything else that made Quality Talk difficult for you?
30	P-F 17	Yes, it can be cos some other people are shy to talk but they are trying others can't provide their... their voices to speak louder, they are just shy to talk about when you are giving them the recorder they just feel like we are discriminating them. Others, others can't even respect us as leaders but we are trying to make them respect us we....
31	R 1	Okay, thank you so much, how have you been dealing with these problems that you have just mentioned?
32	P-F 17	Uuumm... me as a group leader I have deal, I have dealt with this problem I've told them the group rules or the quality rules and read for them, read for them that we don't need to do something bad or what.
33	R 1	Thank you so much and this has helped, huh?
34	P-F 17	Yes

35	R 1	Okay, thank you. Then the last question what is it that you like most about the Quality Talk?
36	P-F 17	What I like most about Quality Talk is that when we talk to the people, to our group members we can understand them and how they feel about this talk, we ask them how discussions went and they told us that and others can speak where it went wrong is that some questions are difficult and we can't answer them so the solution of that we need to do this and that as a group it's like am a group member too as a leader, yes that's what I like about it.
37	R 1	Uuumm ... so you are saying you actually talk to your group members and then share then you share the solutions to the problems you are having.
38	P-F 17	Yes
39	R 1	I have saved the last questions, I am sorry, we still have just one more to say if you were going to improve how would you do that? How would you improve Quality Talk?
40	P-F 17	Mam?
41	R 1	If you were going to improve Quality Talk discussions how would you improve them?
42	P-F 17	I would continue with the Quality Talk about be the leader about them understand why we need to talk or not, don't be shy when we talking cos we are the people, we need to have the love to talk about and what I love about Quality Talk is that we as a group we talk and discuss the questions that we don't understand and the other thing is that when we are talking in a class nobody like, nobody disrespects me. We're all respecting each other.
43	R 1	Okay, thank you very much, it has been nice talking to you, oh thank you and good day

### (iii) Data sets for Peer-facilitators

#### Grade 8A -Peer-Facilitator Interview-Data Sets

##### Key:

- a) **Purple**- (The Experience of peer-facilitating a small-group text-based discussion)-The role of a peer-facilitator
- b) **Turquoise blue** (What did you Like about QT) – Benefits of the peer-facilitated small-group discussion
- c) **Red**- (What made it difficult) –Challenges of peer-facilitating
- d) **Brown**- (What made it easy) –The use of discourse elements
- e) **Green** (Difference with other classes) Teacher-centered versus Learner-centered learning
- f) **Yellow** (Suggestions for improving QT)

##### Key for categories 1.1.1 -1.1.4:

Critical-analytic thinking  
 High-Level Thinking  
 Confidence building  
 Cognitive engagement with text

**HLT**  
**CE**  
**CAT**  
**CEwT**

Lines	Participant No and Quote	Margin notes	Axial Code	Category
6	P 20 It was quite hard but at all the time I told my members that you are not going to get hard questions, you are just going to answer them and you are, you are not always the right answers must be taken, everybody will get a chance to speak.	Peer-facilitator role – how to build confidence in peers so that they not are afraid to participate	Challenge Perception of their role	CE
8	P 20 I was scared that we was not to speak wrong answers so others could laugh at me at some time	Fear of being laughed at for wrong answers	Challenge	
10	P 20 You,... everybody gets knowledge and other	Believes that there is more learning in QT	Benefit	CEwT

	classes not get knowledge like us, as grade 8A			
12	P 20 Because everybody gets to learn, gets to learn what Quality Talk is about and the questions that Quality Talk asked us.	Shows appreciation of the use of questions which is absent in non-QT Classes	Benefit	
14	P20 If one person asks a question, everybody must answer it	Ensuring maximum participation of all-peer facilitator role	Perception of their role	Stimulate active participation= CEwT
16	P 20 I told everyone that it's not always the right answer that occurs in the question.	Her role as a peer-facilitator	Perception of their role	Encouraging active participation
20	P 20 It make it, It make difficult for me because at first the group members did not respect me.	Relational issues	Challenge	
26	P 20 We read stories with an understanding and we, we were asked test questions and effective questions.	Effect of the student-centered dialogic approach -Use of discourse elements	Benefit	CEwT
32	P 20 Yes, it made, it increase me by using my vocabulary and dictionaries so that I can find words that are difficult for me to say.	Increased vocabulary	Benefit	Increase in vocabulary
34	P 20 I like most,... what I like most about Quality Talk is that we do not argue with people but the opinions of the people	Learned argumentative skills	Benefit	Debating skills= CEwT
38	P 20 I can improve Quality Talk by telling	QT for other classes		CEwT



	others to take part in it and take it as a good result of improving our understanding.	An appreciation of the effect of the dialogic approach	Benefit	
24	P 42 My responsibility in the Quality Talk leader is to make the others to know how to ask questions and answer some questions and to make others to do not argue with people and not shout at other people if the answer is wrong.	Acknowledgement of peer-facilitation role Use of argumentative skills	Perception of their role Benefit	Debating Skills= CEwT the use of discourse elements leading to CAT
26	P 42 It is good because now I am enjoying how to question, answer all the things.	Participation as opposed to being passive.	Benefit	Use of discourse elements leading to active participation
28	P.42 Yes there is a difference in some other lessons people argue with,... people argue each other but in Quality Talk we do not argue, we argue with questions and people thinking about that.	Learned argumentative skills	Benefit	Debating skills-leading to CEwT
30	P 42 It helps people to gain more knowledge.	Believes that there is more learning in QT	Benefit	CEwT
34	P 42 What made Quality Talk to be easy for me is that my group members listen to me and they respect me.	Relational issues -Listening and respecting	Benefit	Interpersonal skills
36	P 42 They do not do anything silly they always respect, put some	Relational issues	Perception of their role	

	questions, answer, they do not make noise, listening to me.			
38	P 42 yes, they listen to each other	Relational issues- team work???	Benefit	Interpersonal skills
40	P 42 What made Quality Talk to be difficult to me is that I didn't know about Quality Talk, I didn't know what to say, what to do and I didn't think that it's gonna be easy like this.	Lack of exposure group facilitation skills	Challenge	
42	P 42 What I liked most about Quality Talk is that it will make me to know how to be a leader and make me know how to rule people in life.	Learned leadership skills	Benefit	Leadership skills
44	P 42 What I other liked from this Quality Talk is that people are happy and they are now getting more knowledge.	Free learning atmosphere, More learning happening	Benefit	CEwT
46	P 42 They get this knowledge by answering answers even if it's wrong or right, we understand each other.	Getting knowledge through answering question	Benefit	CEwT
48	P 42 I will say that in a group there must be two leaders or more and they must, The learners must be in a large number.			
50	P 42 It will help me if am concentrating for this one, the other leaders will be concentrating to the other.			

14	P 12 As a group leader in Quality Talk my duty is to encourage the group members to speak and be serious about Quality Talk. It is a very nice project and it can help us in my things so it is such a wonderful project.	Acknowledgement of peer-facilitation role	Perception of their role	
16	P 12 Yes, it helps the other learners who are scared of speaking but as we are working as a group they can speak and they are not afraid to speak anything and it can help us to improve English language.	Helps in developing confidence amongst students, helps them to “improve English language”	Benefit	CB
22	P 12 yes, there is a difference coz when we are studying like not in pairs some learners are scared to speak but as we are working as a group they can speak, yes.	Students speak freely in small-group discussions	Benefit	CB
26	P 12 Working as a group is such a wonderful thing many people can do better if they are working as group so it is easy for us to do this Quality Talk	Appreciation of small-group discussions	Benefit	Social interaction leading to CEwT
32	P 12 Mhmm, sometimes my group members are not taking this Quality Talk serious they are losing their behaviour sometimes they like laughing so it has been difficult for us cos we are serious about this and some are serious and some are not so it's making it to be difficult for us.	Lack of seriousness during small-group discussions	Challenge	

34	P 12 I read them the rules and am so glad that after reading the rules for them they are trying to change their behaviour?	Role of a peer-facilitator-Leadership skills	Perception of their role	
38	P 12 It is such a wonderful project, it makes to improve our language and it helps us in many things Mam.	Improves language	Benefit	CEwT
40	P 12 Mhmm it helps the other learners to speak because they are not being afraid if they are working as a group.	Students are confident when working in small-groups	Benefit	CB
48	P 12 Asking questions is improving our Quality Talk. They are asking questions a lot and that's very good and we are working as a good team so if they are asking questions and arguing about the ideas it is being very nice.	Appreciation of the use of questions and learnt DEBATING skills	Benefit	Debating Skills and Use of discourse elements CEwT
14	P 15 Being a learner leader in quality made me become open before I never knew how to be open to other people cos I was not given to share information with others, it helped me to learn more about English, it also helped me to be a leader and lead and do the right things to other people. Quality Talk helped me to.. ooh but firstly it helped me not to be shy cos I was very shy but now I am less shy (laughing)	Opportunity to "learn more English" Learnt leadership qualities Gained confidence	Benefits	CB

16	P 15 but (laughing) then it was .... very fun doing Quality Talk most good thing was that I was a learner leader leading others showing them what's right, doing the best I could.	Maximum effort being put to execute her duty as a peer-facilitator	Perception of their role	
18	P 15 It made me more open, now I could think of more ideas to share them with my group members before, I was , I am a very clever leaner(indistinct) but I didn't know how to share information with others. When somebody asked me a question I don't know how to explain it but I know the answer but I don't know how to explain it. Quality Talk made me feel very open cpos I Know I can share information with others tell them what to do and what not do and that's all.	Gained confidence to speak	Benefit	Self-confidence
22	P 15 it helped me cos, it helped in other way cos and it helped other learners cos they were all afraid of me I didn't .. Like they were afraid cos I didn't share the information with them that I have and they didn't know how to share the information that they know, to give it to me co I can't say am perfect, I know everything but now I can tell them, they also assist me, that's all.	Created an opportunity for open participation for all	Benefit	Open participation leading to <b>CEwT</b>
26	P.15 What I learnt is they are also not that dull coz some other leaners			

	<p>when you ask them a question they feel a little bit shy so and I will be like okay what you have to do is this and this and this so the learner now must me that no XXXXX here and here it wasn't supposed to go like this it goes like this and now I see that this learners a clever learner but she's shy to show people that she or he is clever</p>	<p>Shy learners can participate actively in the peer-facilitated small-group discussions</p>	<p>Benefit</p>	<p>Active participation=  <b>CEwT</b></p>
30	<p>P.15 Like I said, it helps me to be open, it helps me and I believe that 2 is better than one. I always do my work alone, in English classes we have to be a group, talk, discuss something but I didn't want to discuss anything</p>	<p>In whole class discussions she was not free to participate like she does now</p>	<p>Benefit</p>	<p><b>CE</b></p>
38	<p>P 15 Quality Talk make a lot of things easy for me, I now can read and understand the text, ask questions there's a lot but Quality Talk made easy things for me, for me to like I said for me to able to share information, it really helped me coz before people said that I am selfish, I didn't, I never knew like when they asked a question and I know the answer and or I can say that I understand like I was afraid to tell somebody that oh this and this and this is correct and but aah... I felt like they will say heee you are wrong and something like that, that's why but now I know that there is no right answer you have to</p>	<p>Appreciates the importance of small-group discussions. Sees the benefits of the discussions towards helping them to share and thus leading to understand the text under discussion as they "share views" and "mix them together"</p>	<p>Benefits</p>	<p><b>CEwT</b>  <b>CAT</b></p>

	discuss, a learner must share his views and I share his views, mix them together and see what comes out.			
42	P 15 To make them talk	How to get peers talk in small- group discussion	Challenge	
44	P.15 They are shy, I always see them, it's like that person knows what to say but you, she wants to write it first and read out	Language barrier	Challenge	
46	P 15 Maybe I can say that he is afraid to talk... English	Language barrier	Challenge	
50	P 15 Yes, then I have to translate in English and read it out for them	Helping her peers talk-Leadership role	Perception of their role	Ensure participation of all members
52	P 15 Yes, there's only one member who told me her question in SiSwati then I had to translate it into English then I written it down and gave it to her	Helping her peers talk-Leadership role	Perception of their role	
56	P 15 Yes Mam, coz now she knows how to translate her words into English.	Effects of working in small groups	Benefit	
58	P 15 What I like about Quality Talk is that (sigh...) most of the time is spent my mind..., I spend the time my mind..., my mind is always open I can think different things , then tell them, tell my group members, guide them, I like being a team leader.	Helps in making her think and share, "my mind is always open I can think different things , then tell them, tell my group members"	Benefit	CAT

62	P 15 What you can do to improve it is that some like there's a girl in my, that's my group member he always wants to be a group leader so I thought that if you could add more group leaders but I didn't know if that was going to be possible.	Rotating peer-facilitatorship		
66	P15 And I thought that you should tell... coz when I say to somebody okay, now you, talk something, say something they will just go like any now I know everything like I am... they will say silly things about me, so...	Some peers do not respect her	Challenge	
68	P 15 Some of them, when I tell them that this is wrong some respect me that... okay this is wrong, okay then they ask how am I going to get it right? cos I want to ask the question and so I tell them that okay put this and this and this to make a perfect sentence coz I love perfect sentences	Relational issues Some peers do not respect her	Challenge	HLT
70	P 15 Then so when I told this girl that, the one who wants to be a team leader when I tell., them she always looks at me in silly ways she thinks that hee... I know everything.	Failure to respect because they also want to facilitate	Challenge	
72	P 15 I just keep quiet, there's nothing I can do.	Feeling helpless to a bully	Challenge	



76	P 15 Put more hours coz some of the learners must know how to think a very long time.	Suggests more time needed to allow the slow learners time to think- A very good point ..She says to allow for time for students to think..For recommendations ...consider that the same time 40 minutes allocated to the normal lesson is enough for the lecture method and not enough for fruitful discussions		
90	P 15 Yes, that did help coz just like I said some don't want to talk they just want to write it first and that things and they read it first down what they written and I gave then the recorder to ask the question, some... (indistinct) it was difficult for them to answer so I said to them okay if she asks a question, write your answer down then I will give you the recorder and say your answer aloud.	Language barrier, hence more time to discuss	Perception of their role	
18	P 23 Sigh... okay, being a leader in Quality Talk I assist my members about how share ideas, to be not scared if they answer questions , answer questions if they ask them and don't be scared to share ideas with others and we, I tell them to respect others opinion	Learned to share ideas with the others in an environment where they are not scared, playing the role of a peer-facilitator	Perception of their role	

20	P 23 And I tell them not disrespect others.	Encouraging peers to adhere to QT rules	Perception of their role	
24	P 23 Is that in the Quality Talk class we share the ideas, but in other subjects we don't answer questions, we just be shy, we disrespect members, we disrespect the teachers, we are not listening but in the Quality Talk we discuss as members and respect others, share ideas on the staff	Passiveness in the non-QT class as opposed to the active participation in QT class	Teacher-centered versus the learner-centered learning	CE and CEwT
30	P 23 Yes, you don't listen to the teachers, you talk nje, talk....	Students not paying attention and talking any how	Indiscipline in other classes	
32	P 23 It's just now we know how to answer questions, we are not scared for people that they will laugh at us and we share ideas.	An atmosphere that allows them to share ideas without fear of being laughed at	Benefit	CEwT
36	P 23 Because I was scared now am not scared. If they ask me something, I tell them if they say I must explain, I explain and they respect my opinions.	An atmosphere that allows them to share ideas without fear of being laughed at	Benefit	CE
38	P 23 I don't care, I say they must keep laughing but I will, I will not be angry with them.	Leadership skill	Perception of their role	
40	P 23 Yes, is that now I know how to answer	Learnt how to "answer questions"	Benefit	

	questions and not be scared of what people will say if I answer this questions and how will they act, how will they react			
42	P 23 I... that we share ideas, we talk and not laughing at each other listening.. We listen with...about others opinion, and we... we...	Sharing of ideas, respect for each other, use of argumentative skills	Benefit	CEwT
45	P 23 SiSwati translation(now we respect each other, we don't laugh at each other when answering questions and again when we are asked questions we answer them)	Skills of asking and responding to questions, respect for each other	Benefit	
47	P 23 We must have a Quality Talk to all the subjects.	QT approach for all subjects	According to student's evaluation, this would be a good project for all	
53	P 23 Because in other subjects we're struggling and if there was a Quality Talk in other subjects we will be better.	Struggling in subjects without QT	According to student's evaluation, this would be a good project for all	
61	P 23 We listen to stories, share ideas , yaaah ....	"share ideas"	Benefit	CEwT
65	P 23 Is that, I thought that they will laugh at me saying that the thing that am doing is stupid, all the stuff.	Fear of being laughed at	Challenge	

67	P 23 They say the Quality Talk is good, because now we share ideas they are not scared to answer questions, they say something if they are wrong we correct it we don't laugh at them	QT is "good, we share ideas" without fear of being laughed at	Benefit from the group members' perspective	CEwT
69	P 23 Yes, the whole team works	Participation of all	Benefit	
20	P 17 Is that it teaches us, it teaches us about other people that we may be patient for them and let them talk not be shy for them to talk to talk to us.	Learnt leadership skills	Perception of their role	
24	P 17 Because we, when we talk as a Quality Talk we are free sometimes other people can't speak for some reasons because they are shy of some people may be in the class but we as Quality Talk we can make them and not be shy for us, for them to talk to us.	Passiveness in non-QT classes	Teacher-centered versus learner-centered learning	HLT and CAT
26	P 17 Is that we are helped by teachers and you as a Quality Talk members and the other members can respect us as in the group and they and some of the members in a group teaches us how to treat people and some of, some of the people in the group can speak to us while maybe someone can have better knowledge that we never thought he/she will not be having.	Training on how to conduct the discussions and use ground rules during peer-facilitation	Peer-facilitation training	

28	<p>P 17 When we ask questions there are some rules in the group that told us that one person at a time and so we don't need to raise hands, we don't argue about other people's ideas, we argue, oooh... We don't argue with the people we argue about ideas so what teaches me is that when someone is talking answer don't discriminate or laugh at him we need to have this patient and love for him/her to talk to us as we are a group mem..., quality leaders</p>	<p>Training of peer-facilitators to make use of the ground rules during facilitation</p>	<p>Peer-facilitation training</p>	
30	<p>P 17 Yes, it can be coz some other people are shy to talk but they are trying others can't provide their... their voices to speak louder, they are just shy to talk about.. when you are giving them the recorder they just feel like we are discriminating them. Others, others can't even respect us as leaders but we are trying to make them respect us we....</p>	<p>Making shy students to participate Lack of respect from some of them</p>	<p>Challenge</p>	
32	<p>P 17 uhmmmm, me as a group leader I have deal, I have dealt with this problems I've told them the group rules or the quality rules and read for them, read for them that we don't need to do something bad or what.</p>	<p>Enforcement of the ground rules to aid peer-facilitation Leadership skills</p>	<p>Perception of their role</p>	
36	<p>P 17 What I like most about Quality Talk is that when we talk to the people, to our group</p>	<p>Open participation leading to</p>	<p>Egalitarianism is a special feature of the peer-</p>	

	<p>members we can understand them and how they feel about this talk, we ask them how discussions went and they told us that and others can speak where it went wrong is that some questions are difficult and we can't answer them so the solution of that we need to do this and that as a group it's like am a group member too as a leader, yes that's what I like about it.</p>	<p>understanding each other</p> <p>A peer-facilitator is also a peer-group member</p>	<p>facilitated small-group discussions</p>	
42	<p>P 17 I would continue with the Quality Talk about be the leader about them understand why we need to talk or not, don't be shy when we talking cos we are the people, we need to have the love to talk about and what I love about Quality Talk is that we as a group we talk and discuss the questions that we don't understand and the other thing is that when we are talking in a class nobody like, nobody disrespects me. We're all respecting each other.</p>	<p>Appreciates the discussion using questions that helps them to understand</p> <p>Relational issues are key to the success of these discussions</p>	<p>Open participation with use of discourse elements in an environment controlled by the use of ground rules</p>	<p>Productive Talk</p> <p>CEwT</p> <p>=Use Of discourse elements</p>

**(iv) Semi-structured – Teachers Interviews**

### Semi-structured Interview with Teacher B (Sample)

Line No	Verbatim	Margin notes	Code
1 2	R S: Afternoon Tr B...So my first question is: What is your home language and what is the home language of you learners?		
3 4	Tr B: My home language is Chi Venda and the home language for the learners is SiSwati.	The teacher and the students do not share the same home language.	Language barrier
5 6 7 8	R S: Thank you Tr B. As you know during the QT lessons we were making use of the Peer-facilitators who were facilitating the small-group discussions, how do you view their role in the Quality Talk process?		
9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21	Tr B: I think peer-facilitators played a very important role especially <b>that of making sure that peers adhered to the ground rules</b> which made it easy for the discussions to flow. I also noticed that sometimes just <b>by passing on the voice recorder to one quiet peer in an effort to bring the peer into the discussion, the quiet peer would end up contributing.</b> Also I noticed, the effort that they put to <b>encourage their peers to speak really helped almost every one to participate.</b> Even the usually quiet peers in class had something to say during the discussion. <b>And the way questions are asked and the way they respond in QT helps the students to think and interthink about and around the text that they have read</b> as they relate what they have read to their lived experiences and texts that they have read.	Peer-facilitators playing their role contributed to the success of the discussion with almost everyone participating.  -Use of discourse elements contributed towards the active discussions -Promotes critical-analytic thinking in learners	Peer-facilitation role  Use of discourse elements to enhance learning Promotion of critical-analytic thinking
22 23 24 25	R S: Thank you Tr B. I notice you mention that there are some learners who are usually quiet, is there any difference in the levels of participation when you compare the Quality Talk classes and the non-Quality Talk classes?		
26 27 28 29	Tr B: Ooh yes. <b>You really struggle to have them talk in the other classes unlike what happens in these peer-facilitated small-groups. Sometimes use their home language to express</b>	Teacher centered versus the learner-centered learning  Language as a barrier for communication	Tr centered versus the learner-centered learning



	themselves when they fail to say it in English.		Challenge
30 31 32	R S: Thank you Teacher B. The other question is What noticeable improvements if any has the Quality Talk approach brought to your comprehension classes?		
33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41	Tr B: Hi Sipikelelo... What I have observed with eeh... i Quality Talk... more especially with comprehension is that learners were able to work on their own, to work independently, ahh... just with the teachers' guidance. It really helped a lot as students can share ideas on their own helping them to think. And also for the learners to be able to realise that they can make it on their own, they can be able to work on the comprehension to go through to read and also to work through the answers. They also talk quite a lot during the Quality Talk classes which is something they find difficult to do in the other classes.	Helps students to develop independent learning  Students actively taking part in the small-group discussions as they respond to questions they are asking	Students' ownership of their learning  Highly interactive environment and the use of discourse elements
42 43	R S: Thank you Tr B...the third Question is: Did you meet any challenges in trying to implement the Quality Talk approach?		
44 45 46 47 48 49	Tr B: Hi Sipikelelo... It was a bit of a challenge when we started, when the learners were not used to... this Quality Talk. They were not used to talking in class. But when as learners get used to the Quality Talk, it wasn't much of a challenge. And another challenge was the sitting arrangement because our classes are overcrowded ...just that but it was not much of a challenge.	Getting students to talk even in the small groups was difficult as this was something new to them The large numbers in the classes would make it difficult to move around the different groups	The teacher-centered versus the learner-centered approach Space for managing the large numbers broken into small groups
50 51	R S: Tr B do you have any suggestions on how we could improve Quality Talk?		
52 53 54 55	Tr B: Hi Sipikelelo, what I would suggest is if Quality Talk was also done in all the learning areas not only in English. That would assist our learners a lot since they were now used to work on their own in English.	"Quality Talk to be introduced to all areas not only in English"	Teacher recommends QT for all classes
56	R S: Thank you very much Teacher B.		

## APPENDIX C. CLASSROOM DISCUSSIONS

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**(i) Control Class Whole class Discussions**

Table 0.7 Grade 9C-Control Class-Whole Class discussion

Line Number	Participant	Verbatim	Number of words
1	Tr	So we are going to read a story on page 165... page 165. It's an extract from a novel. The name of the novel is called A red kite in a pale sky. If you look at the back of this side, there is a cover page of our novel: Red kite in a pale sky. Can we all see the picture?	. 62
2	Learners	<i>Response</i>	.
3	Tr	So umm by just umm mere looking at umm the cover page, who do you think this extract will be talking about talking about, before maybe we can read our extract or our story, the extract that is coming from a novel what do you think this extract is talking about by just mere looking at the cover, what do you think. You just... no.... can you all see the picture?	. 71
4	Learners	<i>Response</i>	.
5	Tr	Yes. You have to speak aloud so that everyone can hear you	12
6	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
7	Tr	Floods? Why do you say that? Why do you think maybe this extract is talking about floods, why? What do you see?	22
8	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
9	Tr	Who is diving in water?... He says maybe this extract is talking about floods because this picture is showing a man who is diving kin water. Your hand was up what is it you wanted to say?	. 37
10	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
11	Tr	You see a man holding a brunch looking like his drowning...Yes. Speak aloud	13
12	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
13	Tr	Heavy rain, why?	3
14	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
15	Tr	You see the picture... what do you see in the picture?	11
16	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
17	Tr	The drain?... We are talking about rain. Yes	8
18	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
19	Tr	You are saying the story is talking about the rain and floods.... Being caused by heavy rains? Yes	18
20	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
21	Tr	They are almost saying almost the same things you are saying a man is holding a branch trying to save himself because of what you see from the cover page of the book now we are going to read the extract and find out what the	

		extract is talking about but before we read let's read instruction number 1. this extract comes from the section near the beginning of the novel, read the extract quietly to yourself it begins with Mr... the maths teacher speaking to the class. remember that the use of three dots shows that some text has been left out words that are not written in the original text are written in square brackets to show what happens in the bits that have been left out. do you understand that one?	133
22	Learners	<i>Response</i>	.
23	Tr	...Almost after each and every paragraph there are 3 dots meaning that there is some information... there are some texts that have been left out. Discuss anything you don't understand with your friend...listen attentively... <i>Teacher reads...</i> so what we are going to do for now, we are going to... aaah if you can check at the sides, there is a glossary... some of the words in other paragraphs. If you... read those paragraphs and discuss them, before we discuss what the story is talking about. you read the first paragraph and you explain these words that i have... for you. Like the first one which says... let me do the first one and then you can do the others. <i>Reads from extract.</i> Can you do the second paragraph	127
24	Learner	<i>Reads from paragraph</i>	.
25	Tr	Yes, meaning that the rain was pouring down in huge amounts... the meaning of pelting down means the rain was falling down in huge amounts. Then the next line. The same paragraph, paragraph number 2	35
26	Learner	<i>Reads from paragraph</i>	.
27	Tr	Yes, those... are referring to the... that are close. That are close by what?	14
28	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
29	Tr	Yes, Lawrence always followed after me. Then... He doesn't particularly...	10
30	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
31	Tr	Yes, thank you very much. Let's discuss while I was reading I believe you all were listening very attentively. So let us discuss linking it to what we have discussed from the cover page. Is it related? Let's talk. I'm not saying go back and read. When you were listening. Yes, uuuhm. Let us talk class. Yes speak aloud.	58
32	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
33	Tr	Two boys who...	3
34	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
35	Tr	With heavy rains?	3
36	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
37	Tr	Yes. He said he thinks the story is talking about two boys who were faced with heavy rains. Then he also continued	.

		to say they were released... not chased, they were released from school because of these heavy rains. Of which it's correct. Let's talk, lets discuss	. . 47
38	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
39	Tr	Did hear at the back, did you hear... speak aloud	10
40	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
41	Tr	She said after they have been released from school they didn't go home they decided to go to their special place of which is the river. She is still on the right track. Let's talk, let's add, let's share what we understand... You are so quiet I don't know what is going on. it's not like the first time you are nervous, you are afraid, it's not the first time. You have just decided to keep quiet. then i have to talk.	. . . . . . . 82
42	Learner	<i>Response</i>	
43	Tr	Speak aloud	2
44	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
45	Tr	Yes Lawrence is afraid of water or heavy rains.	8
46	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
47	Tr	Inside the water?...Come again, how did you start?, I missed the first part	13
48	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
49	Tr	What he said uhm he said these boys had a plan to go to the river. They wanted to go inside the river and swim, so that was a problem as the river was full with the heavy rains. Still on the right track. Yes.	. 45
50	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
51	Tr	come again...	.
52	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
53	Tr	Yes. Any other additions before we move on?	8
54	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
55	Tr	He said that these two boys have their own special things where they use hanging them from trees. So everything they used to use when they get to the river it's no longer there because of the heavy rains. So they ended up going back home. Yes... where are the girls in this class? x2 Girls Girls...you just can't listen to the boys only. They also volunteer to read. Let's talk. If you can't talk you will stand, you will write your work standing. Don't tell me since i started reading from the first paragraph you didn't pick up anything you have learned, is that what you are trying to tell me? Let's share	. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 114.
56	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
57	Tr	What is it they found?	5
58	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
59	Tr	At their private place?	4
60	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.

61	Tr	At least you have said something	6
62	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
63	Tr	Speak aloud	2
64	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
65	Tr	Ok at least you have said something. ... what you have learnt from the story. Say something before we discuss the questions	. . 21
66	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
67	Tr	We can't hear you	4
68	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
69	Tr	Please stand at the back until you learn to speak aloud... What is the main idea of the story?x3 what is the whole idea behind the text?	. . 27
70	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
71	Tr	What did you say the main idea was? Come again	10
72	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
73	Tr	Ok I guess what he is trying to say is the whole idea behind this is teaching us something to say uhm some people are afraid of water and uhm when there are heavy rains, these boys have been released from school isn't it? They were at school when the rain started then they decided to release them. Instead of going home they decided to go to the river. What is it they wanted to do to the river. What is it that they wanted to see? What do you think?... Yes	. . . . . . . . 92
74	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
75	Tr	Yes, they wanted to see their swing so that they could do what they used to do, but what's the unfortunate part? Speak aloud	. . 24.
76	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
77	Tr	Yes, everything they used, the trees were gone the rocks were gone, there was nothing they could do and it was scary and other Lawrence, he was mention that he is afraid of what? What kind of person is Lawrence is? How can you describe Lawrence? What kind of a person is Lawrence? It's also mentioned in the text. Based on the text how can you describe him? Alright according to this text, yes	. . . . . . . . . . 74
78	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
79	Tr	Seems to be...	3
80	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
81	Tr	Why, why do you think he is nervous?	8
82	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
83	Tr	Yes... Lawrence is afraid of water and heavy rains. He asked a lot of questions... is water going to get inside the house? Let's look at the questions. <i>Teacher reads question from the text book.</i> Listen to the question	. . . . 39

84	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
85	Tr	That's the one that does not describe Lawrence? What kind of person is Lawrence you are, saying afraid?	. 18
86	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
87	Tr	Brave, yes because he is not brave. Another one. Yes	10
88	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
89	Tr	Anxious...Anxious... so the writer of this... very good... the writer of this text use the relationship between the language and the power to show us how it works... for example when Florence said that he gets tired of being with Lawrence, he used the word...the use of this word shows us that he has power over his younger brother. On paragraph uhm i guess on the second last paragraph he says "but i get so tired of babying you," what does he mean... i get so tired... which word is it coming from? x2 Look at the second last paragraph "but i get so tired of babying you," what does he mean? Second last paragraph from your text. The last line. What does he mean when he says i get tired of babying? Which word is it coming from?	. . . . . . . . . . 139
90	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
91	Tr	Yes. Looking after him or you can say...	8
92	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
93	Tr	Not babysitting necessary. What can you say? Yes.	8
94	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
95	Tr	Yes. He is tired of treating him like a small baby. The question continues to say "does the narrator always use the power he has over his brother Lawrence? Use an example of his language to explain your answer. Does he use the power he has over his brother and why do you say that?"	. . . . 55
96	Learner	<i>Response</i>	.
97	Tr	He said yes because he always uses the words that would make him to calm down. So without any waste of time let's write an activity... but before we write, is there anyone who would like to ask a question about the story... So you all understand	. . . . 48

## (ii) Key to Discourse elements

### Question types

Authentic Question	AQ
Uptake Question	UT
Test Question	TQ
High-Level Thinking Question	HLT
Speculation	SQ
Connection Question	CQ
Personal Experience	PE
Affective	AF

### Response Types

<i>Individual responses</i>	
Elaborated explanations	EE
<i>Co-constructed responses</i>	
Exploratory Talk	ET
Cumulative Talk	CT





26	G-M 31	Yaah are worried and sad	CT
27	G-M 14	I feel m I feel angry	CT
28	G-M 31	Why, why will you feel angry?	UQ
29	G-M 14	Because I'm scared of swimming x2	EE
30	P-F 10	What will you do if you were there?	AQ-CQ
31	G-M 47	I would cry for help until I get it	EE
32	P-F 10	What will you do if you were Horace?	AQ-CQ
33	G-M 18	I feel sorry for Horace because Horace was younger than Lawrence	SR
34	P-F 10	Why you feel sorry for him? x2	AQ-CQ
35	G-M 37	Because Horace was a young boy and Horace doesn't know how to swim	SR
36	P-F 10	Horace and Lawrence they get help from, Horace and Lawrence get help when?	TQ
37	G-M 47	Horace and Lawrence they like to go to the river because they want, because at the river was their special place down there but one day there was heavy rain and they decided to tie the rope from the branch of a flat and tall tree so that they could swim	.
	T-R	What will you do if you found yourself in the same situation as these brothers?	AQ-AF
	Intr	Chorus response	.
38	P-F 10	I was going to cry for help	EE
39	G-M 47	Horace and Lawrence had a special place down there .Horace and Lawrence liked to go to the river because in the river was their special place one day a heavy rain came and they planned to tie a rope to the branch of a flat tall tree so that they can swim over and over the river then they let go and jump in	.
40	G-M 14	How does this novel makes you feel?	AQ-AF
	T-R	Speak louder	.
41	G-M 14	How does this novel makes you feel ?	AQ-AF
42	G-M 31	It makes me feel angry	.
43	P-F 10	Why? Remember these are affective questions. You need to give reasons.	UT
44	G-M 31	Because Horace was young and he don't know how to swim	EE
45	G-M 14	Was Horace a girl or a boy ?	TQ
46	G-M 18	A boy	.
47	G-M 14	Why do you say so?	UT
48	G-M 18	Because in the novel when use the pronoun of Horace they use 'he'	EE
49	P-F 10	When you read the phrase what does cascading down means?	TQ
50	G-M 37	Cascading down is to... Yaah...	.
		<i>Whispering in SiSwati</i>	

51	G-M 31	If this happens to you what you were going to do ?	AQ-CQ
52	G-M 47	If this happens to me I would cry for help	EE
53	P-F 10	What do scooping away soil means? X2	TQ
54	G-M 31	Scooping means moving the soil away from the water	.
55	P-F 10	What does pelting down means?	TQ
56	G-M 14	Pelting down means falling down in huge amounts	.
57	P-F 10	These two boys get the lesson from that day that playing in the river is not good. If the water reach us what can we do ?	.
58	G-M 18	There was these boys their names is Horace and Lawrence they like to go to the river and the river was their favourite place they used to go there and swim then one day a heavy rain come and they decided to tie a rope from a branch of a flat tall tree so that they could swim over to the river	.
59	P-F 10	How many new words did you see after reading the novel new words like these words like pelting down that I didn't know but when I read the novel I understand that pelting down means falling down in a huge amounts. What does duration mean?	TQ
60	G-M 37	Duration means falling in a great quantities	.
61	G-M 47	What banks mean?	.
62	G-M 31	.....slopping.....	.
63	P-F 10	Do you like playing in a river like these boys, do you like playing in the river like Horace and Lawrence?	AQ-CQ
64	G-M 14	No	.
65	G-M 31	Why?	UT
66	G-M 14	Because it is dangerous playing in the river	EE
67	P-F 10	If you look at the word Horace and Lawrence do you think they are twins or not?	AQ-CQ
68	G-M 18	Because their names are rhyming almost the same	.
69	G-M 47	Horace ask Lawrence what if the river reach us	.
70	P-F 10	How does this novel make you feel?	AQ-AF
71	G-M 37	Angry	.
72	P-F 10	Because why?	UT
73	G-M 37	Because even I... I don't like what the boys get in the situation.	CT
74	G-M 18	The house of Lawrence and Horace was too high and the rain is going to stop as soon as it comes	CT
75	G-M 14	I think Horace and Lawrence were too clever	CT
76	P-F 10	Why do you say Lawrence and Horace were too clever?	UT
77	G-M 14	Cause they tried to get help and they take a rope and tied it on a tree	EE

Table 0.9 Grade 9B Group 2 Peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussion

Turn	Participant	Verbatim	Discourse Element
1	P-F 46	G2 FLOOD A1. Today's date is 13 September 2017 its Monday the group number is 2 the title the text title is the red kite in a pale sky the page number is 165 to 166 my badge number is 46	.
2	G-M 45	I'm 45	.
3	G-M 7	number 7	.
4	G-M 5	5	.
5	G-M 21	21	.
6	G-M 29	29	.
7	G-M 49	my badge number is number 49	.
8	P-F 46	What will you have done if you were these two boys, affective question what will you have done if you were these two boys?	AQ-AF
9	G-M 29	I was going to shout and wake up because the dream was scary	EE
10	P-F 46	What would you do if you were with Lawrence and his friend?	AQ-CQ
11	G-M 7	After school I would go and stay at home	.
12	P-F 46	How would you feel if you were Lawrence's friend?	AQ-AF
13	G-M 45	Scared	.
14	P-F 46	And why?	UT
15	G-M 45	Because the rain is falling because the flood is coming	EE
16	G-M 21	Do you know how to swim?	TQ
17	G-M 45	Yes	.
18	P-F 46	Test question do you know how to swim?	TQ
19	G-M 45	Yes I do	.
20	G-M 49	Who taught you how to swim?	TQ
21	G-M 45	My friend Zwakele	.
22	P-F 46	Ok, affective questions what will you do if your questions were ignored like Rolland's?	AQ-CQ
23	G-M 29	I would just shut up because my question were ignored no one could hear me out	EE
24	P-F 46	Affective question have you had a similar experience if you were like the two boys?	AQ-CQ
25	G-M 21	No because all the bell rings from school I go straight home	EE
26	P-F 46	Affective question how will you feel if you were dreaming real?	AQ-AF
27	G-M 49	I feel scared because the rain was heavy and there were floods outside	EE
28	P-F 46	Did Lawrence and his friend go home that day? test question, this is a text question	TQ

29	G-M 7	No they didn't they go to the river	.
30	P-F 46	Did they die or what?	TQ
31	G-M 45	No they didn't	.
32	G-M 21	Why do you say so because this question left us with many questions?	UT
33	G-M 45	If they were dead they wouldn't say that Lawrence was just asking a question to make Horace not to be scared	EE
34	P-F 46	Why did Horace ask so many questions?	AQ-CQ
35	G-M 29	Because he was scared	EE
36	P-F 46	What is the message in the story?	AQ-CQ
37	G-M 21	The message of the story is .....	.
38	P-F 46	Why do you say that?	.
39	G-M 21	Because .....	.
40	P-F 46	How is the story?	.
41	G-M 29	The story was so nice	.
42	P-F 46	Why do you say that?	UQ
43	G-M 29	Because the story told us what happened at the first and then how the story ends	EE
44	P-F 46	How ....., Did you learn something from the story?	AQ-CQ
45	G-M 49	I learnt that eeh, respect your younger brothers like you respect yourself,	CT
46	G-M21	I learn that when the school is out you must go straight home	CT
47	G-M 7	I learn that you must not go to the river	CT
48	P-F 46	Why?	UT
49	G-M 7	Because they almost die	EE
50	P-F 46	What will you do if you were the one drowning in the water?	AQ-CQ
51	G-M 29	I wouldn't have been so sad because no one was going to save my life <i>vele</i>	CT
52	P-F 46	Yes that's the true you only live once	CT
53	G-M 21	Me thinking it is good to go to the river now because it is summer	CT
54	P-F 46	Why?	UT
55	G-M 45	Because its summer you see its hot you must go to the river to cool	EE
56	G-M 7	What if you die?	UT
57	G-M 45	No I will not die	.
58	P-F 46	What if you die ?	UT
59	G-M 45	No I will not die I know	.
60	G-M 7	How?	UT
61	G-M 45	I know	.
62	P-F 46	How?	UT

63	G-M 45	I know because I am able to swim I know how to swim I know when something is coming I know how I can protect myself	ET
64	G-M 29	No my friend I don't agree with you nowadays at the rivers are so dangerous there are many enemies many things happens there children get killed there so please don't go to the river you must go to the swimming pools because you are safe	ET
65	G-M 45	In your place were there floods?	AQ-CQ
66	G-M 29	No, I have never heard of floods here	.
67	P-F 46	Have you ever swim?	TQ
68	G-M 29	No	.
69	G-M 45	Do you know how to swim?	AQ-CQ
70	G-M 29	No I don't, why do you ask me this question?	UT
71	G-M 45	Because I want to know what if this thing happens to you what are you going to do because you don't know how to swim	EE
72	G-M 29	My family is going to help me	.
73	P-F 46	How ?	UT
74	G-M 29	Cause my family know how to swim, my brother know how to swim and my younger sisters. We will be in one place when the floods come in our house	EE
75	G-M 7	No, ok what if you are coming from the school and then you go straight you don't even go to your home you go straight to the river?	UT
76	G-M 29	There will be people seeing me so they will come and save me definitely	EE
77	P-F 46	Can the third person swim ?	TQ
78	G-M 29	Yes	.
79	P-F 46	How?	UT
80	G-M 29	I never heard of floods because I'm new here, I come from	EE
81	G-M 29	Where do you come from?	UT
82	G-M 29	I come from, here I only arrived last year I don't know about what was happening the other years I was coming from another place	EE
83	G-M 21	Which place?	UT
84	G-M 29	I was coming from Witbank	.
85	G-M 49	Do you have friends here?	TQ
86	G-M 29	Yes I do have friends	.
87	P-F 46	Test question have you ever been in a river ?	TQ
88	G-M 45	Yes I've been there before	.
89	P-F 46	How many times?	UT
90	G-M 45	More than ten times, I like to swim	.
91	G-M 21	I have been there many times because I was in the river and sometimes I bath in the river when the sun is too hot	EE

92	P-F 46	There are no taps where you stay?	UT
93	G-M 21	There are many taps but sometimes the water isn't coming out so I have to go to the river to wash my clothes. I always go to river because in our place there is no water	CT
94	P-F 46	I don't go to the river	CT
95	G-M 21	Why don't you go to the river?	UT
96	P-F 46	Because it's dangerous. I don't know I've never been in the river because at home we have swimming pool and if there is no water we call the ..... to come and service us with water	CT
97	G-M 49	Yes I do go to the river because I use water on the river for washing and doing stuff like that	CT
98	G-M 21	What is the name of the river?	UT
99	G-M 49	Noni River	.
100	G-M 21	I don't know the river shame...	.
101	G-M 7	You don't know the river what if you find yourself in the river what will you do seeing floods and stuff like that?	AQ-CQ
102	G-M 21	I am going to shower .....	.
103	P-F 46	What if it starts to rain now and the teachers tell us to go straight to our homes what are you guys going to do?	AQ-CQ
104	G-M 29	I'm going to go home	CT
105	G-M 7	I was going to go to Mmandidawe shop	CT
106	G-M 46	I will wait until the river....	CT
107	P-F 46	What if it becomes night?	UT
108	G-M 46	I would go to home'	.
109	P-F 46	While it's raining?	UT
110	G-M 46	I'll ask for a lift home	CT
111	P-F 46	I will call a taxi to come and fetch me	CT
112	G-M7	How are you going to call because cell phones are not allowed her at school?	AQ-CQ
113	P-F 46	I will use my teacher's cell phone	CT
114	G-M 7	I will tell my..... to call my parents	CT
115	G-M 21	There's nothing I can do I can do such thing	CT
116	P-F 46	I will tell anyone to borrow his phone	CT
117	G-M 49	Is babe maybe your relative?	TQ
118	G-M 29	Uuumm... I don't know	.
119	G-M 49	I will ask.... To borrow me her phone	.
120	P-F 46	What if she is not having airtime?	UT
121	G-M 49	The only thing that I will do is that, I will go to Mr. Sakuti and ask him to call my parents to come and fetch me here from school because it will be raining very very hard.....	EE
122	G-M	Of course yes they survive but they were scared	.
123	P-F 46	Who helped Horace and his friend?	TQ

124	G-M 7	No one	.
125	P-F 46	How would you feel if you were Horace or his brother ?x2	AQ-AF
126	G-M 7	I would feel every sad	.
127	P-F 46	Why?	UT
128	G-M 7	Because it is dangerous when it is raining and you are busy playing with water or you are the river it is very dangerous	EE
129	G-M 29	How do you know?	UT
130	G-M 7	I know my parents taught me, my grandparents taught me that I must not play with water whilst it's raining and the lightening is dangerous	EE
131	P-F 46	Where would you go if your home was locked and you are coming from school and the rain is hard raining very hard?	AQ-CQ
132	G-M 49	I would go to the next house	.
133	P-F 46	Would they let you in ?	UT
134	G-M 49	Yes	.
135	G-M 21	How do you know? Some of them are really nice, some of them are not nice.	UT
136	G-M 49	I would knock and knock and knock up until they open cause Eish... they are begging sugar from our home	EE
137	P-F 46	How would you feel if you were those neighbors, how would you feel if you were your neighbors ?	AQ-AF
138	G-M 7	Have you ever seen a kite ?	.
139	G-M 45	Yes	.
140	G-M 7	Where?	UT
141	G-M 45	I used to play with kites when I was young when I was about 5 years old	.
142	G-M 7	I love kites	.
143	G-M 49	Why?	UT
144	G-M 7	I love poppies very much	.
145	P-F 46	How would you feel if you were Horace?	AQ-AF
146	G-M 7	So scared	.
147	G-M 29	Why ?	UT
148	G-M 7	Cause it's a scary, I'm scared of lightning	EE
149	G-M 45	What are you going to do.....?	.



Table 0.10 Grade 9B Group 3 Peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussion

Turn	Participant	Verbatim	Discourse Element
1	P-F 20	Today is 13 September 2017 I'm leader of group number 3, badge number 20	.
2	G-M 30	Group 3, badge number 30	.
3	G-M 33	Group 3, badge number 33	.
4	G-M 35	Group 3, badge number 35	.
5	G-M 45	Group 3, badge number 45	.
6	G-M 47	Number 47	.
7	G-M 35	But you can't you don't know it's your father and you find her in the great danger	.
8	P-F 20	Come again, come again. And were you going to cry ?	.
9	G-M 35	Yes	.
10	G-M 47	Me too	.
11	P-F 20	Why were you guys going to cry?	AQ-CQ
12	G-M 35	Because I would lose my father and I only have one father in the life	EE
13	P-F 20	So you were going to cry for your father not for yourself?	TQ
14	G-M 47	Definitely not	CT
15	P-F 20	But you have said that before that you were going to cry for your father	CT
16	G-M 47	Eeeh... and I will ask anyone to help me to know how to swim so that one day when I get into the situation like him so that I can swim	CT
17	P-F 20	Here's a text question what would you do if you are the one in the water ?	AQ-CQ
18	G-M 45	I will swim	.
19	P-F 20	Do you know how to swim?	UT
20	G-M 45	No I will try my best. I will ask for help to anyone around	.
21	P-F 20	If there was no one around what were you going to do?	AQ-CQ
22	G-M 45	I will hold that that that would until someone comes	.
23	P-F 20	Ok, what do you think guys?	AQ-CQ
24	G-M 33	I think when you in the water you runaway	.
25	G-M 30	How can you run away in water?	UT
26	P-F 20	Speak up please don't be shy. I don't know this is a test question or but I want to ask are you think this man got alive or he died in the water ?	AQ-CQ
27	G-M 47	I think he died you cannot survive in such full water like this one	ET
28	G-M 35	I think he survived	ET
29	P-F 20	Why ?	UT
30	G-M 35	Because his kite was a magic kite he prayed to God and God brought this kite and....I think some people save her because I saw I'm seeing the kites some boy were	ET

		playing with the kite and the kite was running away and they followed the kite and they found that man	
31	G-M 45	I think the man didn't survived because the water is too full and it looks like it is a river	ET
32	G-M 33	I also think the man didn't survive because the water pushed him away and he left the tree he was holding	ET
33	G-M 47	Why do you think this if you are a boy playing with the kite you can't follow it?	UT
34	G-M 35	I was going to follow it because I have make it	EE
35	G-M 30	Eeh... I think he survived because the boy decided to follow it and he found that man	.
36	P-F 20	What were you going to do if you were the man in the picture?	AQ-CQ
37	G-M 30	I was going to hold a tree strong I was going to cry out for help until someone hears me	CT
38	G-M 35	I was going to shout for some help	CT
39	G-M 33	I was going to go out and run away. I was going to run away	CT
40	P-F 20	How can you run in water?	UT
41	G-M 33	Because in the water I will die and no one will help me	ET
42	G-M 35	I was going to jump through the rope until I got to the river	ET
43	G-M 30	Maybe this water is not deep enough for the man to die	ET
44	P-F 20	I was going to let the water flow away with me because there is nothing that I was supposed to do and I would hold the branch until the water was half	ET
45	G-M 30	What if the water is not deep enough for the man to die and he can go ?	UT
46	P-F 20	But the water looks deep for me	CT
47	G-M 45	Yes it does look deep	CT
48	G-M 30	Why do you say so?	UT
49	G-M 47	Because it covers all the mountains I cannot even see a single rock on the river	EE
50	P-F 20	If you survived what were you going to do? x 2	AQ-CQ
51	G-M 33	I was going to warn all people that they must not play near the water	CT
52	G-M 45	If he survived I would give him a round of applause because me by myself I cannot survive in a water that's high like this holding a small branch like this	CT
53	G-M 47	I will need to know how did he get out of the water	CT
54	P-F 20	Guys do you think that it is possible that he can get out of the water ?	AQ-CQ
55	G-M 35	Yes it is possible because once the rain starts it will end	ET
56	G-M 45	No because the water is too full	ET
57	P-F 20	When looking at the cover do you think this might be about a red kite or a man ?	AQ-CQ
58	G-M 30	I think it will be about a man	ET

59	G-M 47	I think it will be about both the red kite and the man	ET
60	P-F 20	Why do you say so?	UT
61	G-M 47	Because I can see a red kite and a man holding a branch and there is a river full	CT
62	G-M 45	I think this water is very deep and full down there	CT
63	P-F 20	I think the water is very deep than the man because the water is too high. What are you going to do if you find the man?	CT AQ-CQ
64	G-M 30	I was going to go home and tell my father that I saw a man in the river and that they have to go and help him he's drowning	EE

Table 0.11 Grade 9B Group 4 Peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussion

Turn	Participant	Verbatim	Discourse Element
1	P-F 1	I'm a group leader of number 4, my badge number is number 1	.
2	G-M 26	I'm a member of the group number 4 my badge number is 26	.
3	G-M 41	I'm the member of group 4, number 41	.
4	G-M 38	I'm member of group 4, number 38	.
5	G-M 17	I'm the member of group 4, number 17	.
6	G-M 2	I'm the member of group 4, number 2	.
7	P-F 1	Affective question have you experienced.....what will you do if you are.....?	AQ-CQ
8	G-M 26	I will do as Mr. Martins do to I will do as Mr. Martins she do to send her children home because of the rain	EE
9	P-F 1	Do you think Martins is a boy or a girl?	TQ
10	G-M 41	I think Mrs. Martins is a boy	ET
11	G-M 17	I think martens is a girl cause if when I'm looking at the story they say Mrs. Martin...	ET
12	P-F 1	The did I will ask the question point number 3 in the test question did it rain in the story. Did it rain in the story?	TQ
13	G-M 2	Yeah it is raining	.
14	G-M 38	Yes, because there is a photo that is showing a river that is a river in some floods there	.
	Karen	What about in the story does it say anything about raining	TQ
15	G-M 2	Yes	.
	Karen	As in you can say where it says anything about raining	.
16	G-M 2	Read from here	.
	Karen	Sure, how do you know that it is raining?	AQ-CQ
17	G-M 26	We feel that there is a possibility of the school being isolated if it continues like this you are all going you are all to go home without any delay	CT

18	G-M 2	Yes it was raining because in the story they say the rain was pelting down which means belting down means it was falling down in a huge amounts the rain was strong	CT
19	P-F 1	What is the river called in the story, what is the river called in the story?	TQ
20	G-M 38	The River called Umhlantuzana?	.
21	P-F 1	How do we know that it was Umhlantuzana	UT
22	G-M 38	Because Umhlantuzana wasn't a river anymore that is my reason	EE
23	P-F 1	How do you feel when you are it you were Mr. Martin ?	AQ-AF
24	G-M 17	I I would feel ashamed because of the two boys whom the rain	EE
25	P-F 1	Let me ask you this question let me ask this its affective question what were you going to do if Horace was your brother?	AQ-CQ
26	G-M 41	I was going to help him as my brother cause, cause he, cause Horace is the only brother I have	CT
27	G-M 26	If I was Horace's brother I was going to help cause he was my only brother that I think ....	CT
	Karen	Did you hear me	.
28	G-M 2	If I was Horace's brother I was going to help him because Horace is more eeh... and I am her older brother	CT
29	P-F 1	Let me ask you affective question how will you feel if you are in the same situation as ?	AQ-AF
30	G-2	I was going to feel scared and yeah that's how I was going to feel	.
31	P-F 1	Someone else?	.
	Karen	Why scared?	UT
32	G-M 2	Because the rain was because the rain was heavy and it means we have housed a is...	EE
33	G-M 38	What is scaring you?	AQ-CQ
34	P-F 1	How would you feel if you were in the same situation as?	AQ-AF
35	G-M 2	I was going to be scared and thinking of many options how to get myself out of those troubles because the rain can hurt and I can even die in the rain	EE
36	P-F 1	Can you give me one example like what you can get...	.
37	G-M 17	I think the only way to survive is to ride a tree or to be in the top of a building because sometimes when the water are destroying they cannot get higher	CT
38	G-M 26	I was going to swim and pray to God for helping me to get out of the problem	CT
39	P-F 1	How will you feel if you were in the same situation like this boy?	AQ-AF
40	G-M 2	You are repeating this one can you .....	.
41	P-F 1	Repeated? What... did it rain in the story?	TQ
42	G-M 41	Yes	.

43	P-F 1	Why?	UT
44	G-M 38	Because when we see in this page we see that there is lot of water there and there is a flood also there that is my reason	CT
45	G-M 41	Yes because the rain was still Pelting down and when the yes the step of the her stop	CT
46	P-F 1	Do you think that the rain was destroying the earth or it was just raining to give people some water?	AQ-CQ
47	G-M 26	No... it was not destroying the earth because it was just raining at that pale at that time	CT
48	G-M 17	It was not destroying the earth but it was just raining heavily some couldn't walk on the sand because when they are walking their legs got on the mud	CT
49	P-F 1	Eeh... do you think the boys survived?	AQ-CQ
50	G-M 17	I think the boys did survive because in this picture they are showing us the boy riding the tree	EE
51	P-F 1	Why did they send a kite at home?	AQ-CQ
52	G-M 38	I think it's because they can show that they are in trouble to tell at home that they are in trouble at the river	EE
53	P-F 1	How did the discussion went?	.

Table 0.12 Grade 9B Group 5 Peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussion

Turn	Participant	Verbatim	Discourse Element
1	P-F 15	I'm the group leader of group number 5, my badge number is 15	.
2	G-M 15	Badge number 15	.
3	G-M 8	Badge number 35	.
4	G-M 42	Badge number 33	.
5	G-M 23	I'm badge number 23	.
6	G-M 3	Number 8	.
7	G-M 43	Number 43	.
8	G-M 48	Badge number 48	.
9	P-F 15	As guys have read the story what was the main idea of the story, what was the main idea of the story what the story was about? It is about ...? Take your recorder?	TQ
10	G-M 8	I think the story was about the ring kite	.
11	P-F 15	Doing what?	UT
12	G-M 42	I think it's about the rainy day because it was a rainy day and the children went to school but they have to at school they tell them to get home fast they think that they should go to the river and see what's happening in the river because there was...	EE
13	P-F 15	So guys what would you do if you were Horace, what would you do if you were Horace in the story, anyone	AQ-CQ

		please, Horace you see, what will you do, XXXXX what will you do?	
14	G-M 23	I will swim in the river	.
15	P-F 15	If you were in the horror situation how will you feel.....number 42 how will you feel, how would you feel if you were in the horror situation? Because... Take your recorder. What is the name of the person in the story?	AQ-AF
16	G-M 42	Lawrence	.
17	G-M 48	Horace	.
18	P-F 15	Do you have anything to say number 3 about the story ?	AQ-CQ
19	G-M 3	Where?	.
20	P-F 15	What impressed you when you were reading the story?	AQ-CQ
21	G-M 3	It is the time when Horace was trying to sing in the river and he was scared but his brother was close to him that's what was impressive	EE
22	P-F 15	How did you feel after reading the story?	AQ-AF
23	G-M 3	A little scared	.
24	P-F 15	Why?	UT
25	G-M 3	Because I don't like to swim when there is raining. I feel scared because I almost die in the river	EE
26	P-F 15	Number 23. A question of. Answer the question.....	.
27	G-M 23	She said she will feel sad because she is not good for swimming in swimming yeah	EE
28	P-F 15	Why are you laughing?	AQ-CQ
29	G-M 3	It's because she said she's going to feel sad but her reason is said that she is scary in swimming they are not matching .....	EE
30	P-F 15	Any question guys? If you had a similar experience like in the story? Anyone want to answer the question? ok I didn't make the situation but I can see that it is difficult and I was going to try to swim because there is no other way. Have you ever had a situation like the one of Horace? Number 8	AQ-CQ
31	G-M 8	I don't have a question today	.
32	P-F 15	Did you find the story interesting did you find the story interesting?	AQ-CQ
33	G-M 8	No, because Horace almost died on the tree	EE
34	P-F 15	So that's makes you feel not interested in the story So do you think someone will die in the dreams and will die in reality? I'm asking, so that makes you feel sad so why makes you feel sad ?	AQ-CQ
35	G-M 8	Because he won't like swimming ever again because he will be scared about his dream	EE
36	P-F 15	Ok any question number 42?	.

37	G-M 42	Do you think parents were looking for him or they were just happy cherishing together without Horace?	AQ-CQ
38	G-M 48	They were just happy because they leave at school early because it was so rainy	EE
39	G-M 42	I think I think that ....	.
40	P-F 15	Eish they are quiet I don't know, they are not audible	.
	Karen	This is a loud group, what's going on today, have you asked a question?	.
41	P-F 15	Yes, I have asked a question to say what will you do if you are Horace in a river?	.
	Karen	And you answered that?	.
42	P-F 15	Yes we did	.
	Karen	What did you just answer?	.
43	P-F 15	It's not me	.
44	G-M 23	I was going to let myself die	.
45	G-M 3	Why?	UT
46	G-M 23	Because there were no trees and there was no rope so there was no life for me	EE
	Karen	What would you do?	AQ-CQ
47	G-M 23	I'll go back home because it's dangerous when there is rain	EE
	Karen	Like what, what is dangerous?	AQ-CQ
48	G-M 23	You can be caught by something..... when the river is raining or bitten by... by things (giggling)	.
	Karen	What else?	.
49	G-M 23	I will try to swim harder and harder and get out in the river	ET
50	G-M 43	I can't swim I don't know I was going to die	ET
51	G-M 8	Eish I will try to swim but Eish... you can swim, I can't swim	ET
	Karen	So what questions have you talked about so far?	.
	Intr	Whispering in SiSwati	.
52	P-F 15	Can I repeat the question? Did you find the story interesting after reading it?	AQ-CQ
53	G-M 8	No	.
54	P-F 15	Why?	UT
	Karen	You didn't like it, why didn't you like it?	.
55	G-M 8	Because I was in the river then I can't swim and get out in the river	EE
	Karen	Can you say that again, could you hear her?, did you hear what she said?, me either	.
56	G-M 8	No because I was in the river and I can't swim	EE
	Karen	You can't swim?	UT
57	G-M 8	I can't swim in the river	.
	Karen	So how will that make you feel to be in the river and not being able to swim?	AQ-AF

58	G-M 8	I feel scared because I don't know how to swim	EE
	Karen	I like how you gave a reason for that that's very nice	.
59	G-M 8	How do you feel if you were Horace?	AQ-AF
60	G-M 43	I will feel scared	.
61	G-M 42	Why would you be scared?	UT
62	G-M 43	Because I don't know how to swim and I don't like to go to river to swim	EE
	Karen	Have you ever been to a river?x2	AQ-CQ
63	G-M 43	Yes .... Yes	.
	Karen	Did you swim in the river?	TQ
64	G-M 43	No	.
	Karen	You just looked at the river?	.
65	G-M 43	Yes. Uuumm... I will feel very scared because I can't swim I really can't swim I was going to drown and die	.
66	P-F 15	If you had a similar experience like this in the story have you had a similar experience like this in the story?	AQ-CQ
67	G-M 3	Aaah no I never met this experience but I don't think I will meet because when they the students must go home I go home straight I'm not going to the river	EE
68	P-F 15	So what is the name of the guy in the text that they are talking about, yes the name of the guy?	TQ
69	G-M 23	I think the name of the guy is Horace, Horace	.
	Karen	What is the name of the guy, what is the name of the guy in the text?	TQ
70	G-M 23	Horace	.
	Karen	How did you know that?	UT
	Intr	Giggling	.
	Karen	Tell me how you know that, tell me how you know? How do you know?	UT
	Intr	Giggling	.
71	G-M 23	I saw his name	.
	Karen	Really, where does it say that's his name?	UT
72	G-M 23	Are you awake, what if the water reaches us Horace respond in a way that I knew he was scared	EE
	Karen	Very nice I like the use of text to support your answers I know his name is, here is where I found it in the text read out from the text you use that as evidence to support your answers, does that make sense?	.
73	G-M 23	Yes	.
	Karen	Very nice job now you ask a question	.
74	P-F 15	Have you ever had a situation like that of Horace ?	AQ-CQ
75	G-M 8	I know	.
76	P-F 15	Have you ever had ?	.
77	G-M 8	No	.



78	P-F 15	Ok do you think that Horace's parents were seeking for him while he was in the river?x2	AQ-CQ
79	G-M 8	No I don't think so, I don't think so because Horace was coming from school	EE
80	P-F 15	Did the story leave us with a message ?	AQ-CQ
81	G-M 43	I think they were not looking for him because she they think he was at school	CT
82	G-M 3	Ok so when the parent s were sawing other learners walking in the streets do you think they were not having a feeling that where is their kid that where is their kid?	AQ-CQ
83	G-M 42	I don't know because sometimes you think that they are just playing at the ground or;.....	EE
84	P-F 15	Do you think they had gone to search in the playground for him ?	AQ-CQ
85	G-M 42	No they were living until she he came back at home and ask him why where were you	EE
86	P-F 15	No vernacular. Did the story leave with us with a message?	AQ-CQ
87	G-M 48	No, no, no, because there is information left behind like .....	ET
88	P-F 15	It leaves me with a message because when your parent tells you to listen to them don't do you own thing because sometimes you will regret it .....	ET
89	G-M 48	It was boring because other learners did not want to respond	ET

Table 0.13 Grade 9B Group 6 Peer-facilitated small-group, text-based discussion

Turn	Participant	Verbatim	Discourse element
1	P-F 44	I am badge number 44 x 2	.
2	G-M 28	I am badge number 28	.
3	G-M 32	I'm badge number 32	.
4	G-M 25	Badge number 25	.
5	G-M 22	I'm badge number 22	.
6	G-M 15	I am badge number 15	.
7	G-M 36	I am badge number 36	.
8	P-F 44	Today's date is 13 September 2017, the text title is the red kite in the pale sky	.
	Intr	<i>Whispering in SiSwati</i>	.
9	P-F 44	Does anyone had a rain like this before?	AQ-CQ
10	G-M 28	For me its no.	.
11	G-M 32	For me no.	.
12	P-F 44	Does anyone seen a rain like this before?	AQ-CQ
13	G-M 28	For me no.	.
14	G-M 22	For me yes I...I've seen it.	.
15	G-M 32	You are saying you have seen the rain.	.
16	P-F 44	How was it like?	UT
17	G-M 22	Eish... It was very disgusting so it. It destroyed most of eeeh... property for the community and I think to fix that, that was eeeh 2014 ... the heavy rain, very many, it was very very bad, eeeh... that's all.	EE
	Intr	<i>Whispering in SiSwati</i>	.
18	P-F 44	So if you were the one who was attacked by this rain, what were you going to do to help yourself?	AQ-CQ
19	G-M 36	I was going to ask for help from those that can help us mean the eh the Konde police or the ones that I the wet rains you know, yes.	EE
20	P-F 44	Any other person?	.
21	G-M 15	I had to say that we have seen this happening where about when this happened, where was it happening, how did it get started?	AQ-CQ
22	P-F 44	It started by it was like coming from....	.
	Intr	<i>Phone rings.</i>	.
23	G-M 22	So I mean it was very heavy that rain so my parent decided to take me out of that city, so I decided to go with my parent because that rain was very heavy so we decided to go from Elimely to our grandmother's home because it was very heavy rain so we ran away.	EE
24	G-M 32	So how did you feel when the rain attacked you?	AQ-AF

25	G-M 22	Actually the rain didn't find me because we hired a taxi then the taxi approximately didn't waste so many times so we take the...	EE
26	P-F 44	What were your thoughts when the rain started?	AQ-CQ
27	G-M 22	I thought it was just a rain not a heavy rain so we simply just aaah it... it... won't so heavy like that so it started being icy.... Ko ko ko, at the homes so we started was started to see that this is heavy we run away.	EE
28	G-M 25	Do you think it was a good Idea to run away from you rain?	AQ-CQ
29	G-M 32	It was a good idea to run away because maybe someone was gonna die or... or get hurt by the rain so it was a good idea to run away from that place.	EE
30	P-F 44	So do you the think the boys in the story who were attacked by the rain felt comfortable in their homes? x2	AQ-CQ
31	G-M 15	No because the other one Praise was scared of the rain so they didn't feel comfortable, they were scared that the rain might come in the house.	CT
32	G-M 28	No because the other people were drowning.	CT
33	P-F 44	So what were you going to do to make yourself comfortable in your home? x2	AQ-CQ
34	G-M 32	I was going to run away to other base so that the rain cannot catch me then I was going to feel comfortable then in that place.	CT
35	G-M 25	And me too I would run to other neighbourhoods so that I can have help.	CT
36	P-F 44	Any other person? So I think if I was always I was going to run away and even another country where there wasn't a heavy rain.	CT
37	G-M 36	At which moment will you vacate from your place to another country?	AQ-CQ
38	G-M 22	The moment the rain was raining I was going to try my best to run.	ET
39	G-M 36	But you were not aware that the rain would destroy everything at the moment the rain has started to destroy everything.	ET
40	G-M 22	The rain , the rain started to rain a little bit and it went... be like be like... and it ended being a strong rain and destroyed everything.	ET
41	P-F 44	Any question... how do you think the heavy rain was caused by?, what caused the heavy rain?	AQ-CQ
42	G-M 15	I think it's because the hots of the sun, when the sun it is very too hot and evaporation just makes the clouds to be more darker and then the rain comes.	ET
43	G-M 32	I think in the village they like to start fires and all that thing that causes the rain.	ET
44	P-F 44	So what must the people of the community do to avoid the heavy rain?	AQ-CQ

45	G-M 36	To stop from doing firing on the other things that is the thing that makes rain.	CT
46	G-M 15	I think there is some snake they call Samkanyama so I think it's that starting the rain, it was very angry.	CT
47	G-M 25	Ok, I think the rain was caused by the water spirits and it is called Nyaminyami maybe it ... maybe it... maybe it was furious because sometimes they took its eggs and it came back and it found that its eggs was not there and then it started to be angry and that's when it makes rain and heavy storm.	CT
48	P-F 44	You are saying it was the water spirit that caused the rain, so have you seen it before?	AQ-CQ
49	G-M 25	Yes... yes... I've seen it in my country.	.
50	P-F 44	So what do we think about the water spirit?	AQ-SQ
51	G-M 15	Eh.... I think it's true because sometimes it happens that the water spirit starts the... to have storms and heavy rain when its angry.	CT
52	G-M 25	Like I think that the heavy rain is there if you say the snake that stay under water when it is going to the other water, when it is coming up, like it is like a tornado, like here in the... plus in the river... in the dam it is always round and round in the middle of the water it is rotating there is a snake.	CT
53	G-M 22	To add in to what have said I think that snake that stays under water was wanting to go to another sea so if that snake want to go to another sea become so difficult for that snake to go just if the sun is there so the heavy rain that's why it comes, it comes really fast so that that snake can go faster than the rain so that people cannot see it, if you see it you cannot sleep properly because it is very scary ...Eish....	CT
54	P-F 44	Any other person... so you are saying you won't sleep if you see it?, what happens if I see it?	UT
55	G-M 22	Actually in other time you sleep well but in other time you will... when you see it you shall be like you didn't see it, so when you see it you are not supposed to take a picture that's animal or snake because it can sense that there is someone who is taking picture of him of her that way that snake can come back with that heavy rain...no not to destroy that person but in order to make that person be scared of that snake	EE
56	P-F 44	What do you think about what he said?	AQ-HLT
57	G-M 32	Well the first time you saw it how did you feel? x2	AQ-AF
58	G-M 22	I didn't see it I saw the picture of it, someone has taken it with the camera so I decided to tell that person to delete that photo because it will not tell him anywhere.	CT
59	G-M 28	My parents would say that if you see that snake you will die, so is it true?	CT

60	G-M 22	Actually it can be true because that snake is not for people to see it or to have relationship with it because it very ...Eish... it doesn't have that care of other people.	CT
61	P-F 44	So...so do we think in the story the red kite in the pale in the sky... so do we think it was the snake or just rained?	SQ
62	G-M 32	Eh I think it was just a rain because people didn't die and they were not that much scared.	ET
63	G-M 25	I think it is a heavy rain cause if the water is flooded and I can see someone who's drowning in the water looking for something but no one can help him.	ET
64	P-F 44	So you say it was a heavy rain and do you think this rain caused much damage or it was just a little rain?	AQ-HLT
65	G-M 32	So after the rain what did you guys do when the rain was over what did you decided to do with that many property, did you decided to leave or stay you know?	AQ-HLT
66	G-M 22	We didn't do anything but there was this organization which came and help us, the red cross organization with disasters caused by rain of floods.	EE
67	G-M 32	So when it's comes again what are you going to do?	AQ-HLT
	Intr	Whispering in SiSwati	.
68	P-F 44	Attention group members... attention, how did the discussion went?	AQ-CQ
69	G-M 15	I think it went good because we were asking questions and answering them with evidence, yah I think this one is good.	CT
70	G-M 36	The discussion was outstandingly good nee, because we were. Some of you were giving facts yes and we were telling stories with evidence, yah everything was good.	CT

Table 0.14 Grade 9B Group 7 Peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussion

Turn	Participant	Verbatim	Discourse Element
1	P-F 12	It is the 23th of September 2017 group number 7 the title of the story is a red kite in a pale sky page number 165 in our textbook. 9B 12	.
2	G-M 25	9B 25	.
3	G-M 4	9B 4 eeeh...	.
4	G-M 9	9B 9	.
5	G-M 24	9B 24	.
6	G-M 11	9B 11	.
7	G-M 27	9B 27	.
8	P-F 12	Ok, where were the learners when the rain started on the story?	AQ-CQ
9	G-M 25	They were at school	ET

10	G-M 4	I think they were Uuumm... somewhere else	ET
11	G-M 25	But ok don't you think they were at school because Mrs. Martin, the text said we feel that there is the possibility of the school being isolated from your home if it continues like this we are all to go home without any delay, freely what do you think?	ET
12	G-M 11	I think they were at school but eeeh... I think the school was out because they were talking about going home	ET
13	G-M 9	Uuumm... I think that Uuumm they were at school but the school wasn't out because they had to Uuumm... let the learners go home because the rain was already, it was already raining and it was a heavy rain	ET
14	P-F 12	Uuumm... why these learners they tell them to go back home ?	ET
15	G-M 27	Because it was a heavy, because it was a heavy rain, it comes a heavy rain	ET
16	P-F 12	What was this rain doing ?x2	TQ
17	G-M 27	This rain was raining on a heavy way	.
18	G-M 12	Ok I think the pelting down of the rain was still pelting down and some of the learners were scared of the rain like Horace, Horace was, Horace didn't like water as much as the narrator did	.
19	P-F 12	Take the recorder. Uuumm... do you think the rain was going to kill them ?	AQ-CQ
20	G-M 25	Yes I think the rain was going to kill them because it was very strong	EE
21	P-F 12	How do you know that the rain was very strong?	UT
22	G-M 25	Because they tell us the... the... because they tell us this one is a heavy rain	EE
23	G-M 24	Aren't you scared at the heavy rain like Horace because we know that Horace was scared of the rain and he thought that the house would fall down because of this rain so do you think, are you scared like Horace	AQ-CQ
24	G-M 27	Yes I'm very scared because this rain was very strong it can make something that is very bad	EE
25	P-F 12	Have you experienced such in your real life?	AQ-CQ.
26	G-M 27	No	.
27	P-F 12	What made Horace to be so nervous?	AQ-CQ
28	G-M 11	Ok you know I think heavy rains. Eish... are scary I have experienced such in my real life but it was not as this one in the story because ...Uuumm... mine was a bit different from Horace and I was so scared because I thought the corrugated iron are gonna fall down and the house will and all the water from the skies will come into the house and many things were gonna be destroyed so I was very scared	EE
29	P-F 12	Eeeh what did, what the narrator said to Horace that made him calm?	TQ

30	G-M 24	The narrator said that their house was too far from the river	.
31	P-F 12	What did the narrator said to Horace that made him calm?	TQ
32	G-M 9	The narrator said to Horace ok the narrator was I think he was furious of what the questions that Horace asked and he said the river will never reach us our home is too high and the rain is going to stop soon in any case	.
33	P-F 12	What is the main idea in the story?	AQ-CQ
34	G-M 4	The main idea is to be careful when it is raining	EE
35	P-F 12	Eeeh.... how can you feel if they tell you that there is a possibility of the school being isolated from the homes if it continues like this?	AQ-CQ
36	G-M 9	Uuumm... I think Uuumm...maybe the school ok but the school is made up of hard bricks and so on so I don't think the school would fall there will be I don't think there will be a possibility that the school can fall but I think the teachers made it for the learners some because some learners are live far away from the school and some live closer to the school so I think they thought of the learners who stayed far from the school that's why they dismissed the school	EE
37	P-F 12	Eeeh do you think, do you think there water reach that boys?	AQ-CQ
38	G-M 25	Yes I think so because the water was still pelting down everywhere and at the schools and the .....we're being curved on the other side so I think it can't be that there must be rain but the water can't touch you or something	EE
39	P-F 12	Eeeh... do you think the Horace questions what do you think Horace questions did to the narrator, how did the narrator feel when Horace was busy asking the questions?	AQ-CQ
40	G-M 4	The narrator felt scared because Horace question was so difficult to him	EE
41	P-F 12	Why do you think that the narrator felt scared because the one who was scared was Horace?	AQ-CQ
42	G-M 4	Because he said that I felt bad Horace the river will never reach us our house is too high	EE
43	G-M 11	But don't you think he felt furious of the questions that Horace asked because they were...?	AQ-CQ
44	P-F 12	Eeeh... do you think all the learners it was scared and the teachers it was scared ?	HLT
45	G-M 27	The teachers I think the teachers grow up in the olden days rain used to fall down and I don't think that they were that scared because they were used to it and the learners obviously were scared because even if it can be rain or storm or anything or heavy rain today we will be scared and some of us we even hide under desks	ET

46	G-M 24	I think all the learners and the teachers were very scared because the rain was heavy and the water turned into a brown...	ET
47	P-F 12	Do you think that Horace know how to swim ?	AQ-CQ
48	G-M 9	I don't think Horace can swim because he is scared of water and someone who is scared of water doesn't like swimming or doesn't know how to swim, what you think XXXXX ?	CT
49	G-M 11	I think Horace doesn't know how to swim yah	CT
50	G-M 25	Why do you say that what makes you think that he can't swim?	UT
51	G-M 9	I think Horace couldn't swim because he was scared of water and could not swim	EE
52	P-F 12	What do you think number 24 ?	AQ-CQ
53	G-M 24	I think Horace did not swim because the narrator told us that Horace did not like water	EE
54	P-F 12	So do you think Horace liked bathing because they he doesn't like water ?	AQ-CQ
55	G-M 25	I don't think so. What do you think?	UT
56	P-F 12	I don't think Horace likes to bath because if you don't want water which means that you don't want to bath. Number 11 what do you think, do you think Horace liked to bath because....?	ET
57	G-M 11	I'm not sure but I think yeah he liked to bath	ET
58	P-F 12	But why do you think that because the narrator said Horace is scared of water?	AQ-CQ
59	G-M 11	Uuumm... because the water was coming so fast	CT
60	P-F 12	Oh because it was heavy rain?	CT
61	G-M 11	Yes	.
62	P-F 12	I can see you want to say something	.
63	G-M 9	Yeah I think Horace could bath but he's scared of the rain because it was coming very fast the heavy rain	CT
64	P-F 12	Say something x2 How can we describe Lawrence?	AQ-CQ
65	G-M 27	Horace?	.
66	P-F 12	Lawrence	.
67	G-M 27	Horace?	.
68	P-F 12	Lawrence sorry	.
69	G-M 12	Lawrence is the, Lawrence is Horace's brother he is a first narrator he told us the story about Horace	CT
70	G-M 25	Lawrence is the person who saw everything what happened in the story	CT
71	G-M 11	I think Lawrence is Horace's brother and he like water and he liked being with Horace and they are close	CT
72	P-F 12	What do you think learners what do you think? Say something. Do you think Horace stay behind when Lawrence goes ?	AQ-CQ



73	G-M 25	I think they are always together because Uuumm... I think Horace is used to his brother only I don't think he's someone who has friends I think they spend much most of their time with his brother I don't think he's someone forward	CT
74	G-M 24	I think they were close friends because they were being together spend lots of time together	CT
75	P-F 12	What kind of tone do you think Lawrence used when he tells Horace that the rain was going to stop soon ?x2	AQ-CQ
76	G-M	I think he was irritated and he used a irritate, ok a tone you use when you are irritated you know like ark man you know because Horace was making a nuisance to him	EE
77	P-F 12	Edward would you like to add something? Okay XXXXX.... How do other ideas support this main idea?	AQ-CQ
78	G-M 4	Ok that's in the text book	.
79	P-F 12	Ok guys I think we should relate the story to the outside world, have you ever been irritated with such questions like the ones Horace asked Lawrence, have you ever been irritated with such questions that Horace asked Lawrence like what if the rain is gonna wash away the all of the house and something else?	AQ-CQ  AQ
80	G-M 27	Yes	.
81	P-F 12	Take the recorder	.
82	G-M 27	Yes	.
83	P-F 12	Why?	UQ
84	G-M 27	Yee... because if... if... if... they make something some people they like to ask	EE
85	P-F 12	What made Lawrence Irritated?	AQ-CQ
86	G-M 9	Because of the Horace questions and it is make the person to become crazy	EE
87	P-F 12	Ok imagine you are Horace, you are Lawrence, you are in Lawrence's position how would you feel? what would you do what would you say to Horace? Number 25	AQ-SQ
88	G-M 25	I would have said to him he must go home	ET
89	G-M 24	they were already home	ET
90	G-M 25	they were not at home they were in their special place down at the river	ET
91	G-M 24	they were at home, ok I'm saying they were at home because Uuumm... in the text its written our house is too high ok Lawrence said to Horace ... man the river never reach us our house is too high that means they were at their house, they were at their house so what would you say ?	ET
92	G-M 25	I could have said go to bed or slap him	ET
93	P-F 12	But that would never make him feel better, that would never make him feel better	ET

94	G-M 25	Whatever I can say Horace will never fell any better because he's is afraid of the rain	ET
95	P-F 12	Ok guys so I close the discussion, how was the discussion ?	.

## APPENDIX D. CONSENT LETTERS

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(i) Request for Approval for planned changes to the existing project



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

Faculty Educational Psychology  
University of Pretoria  
Pretoria  
0001

10 February 2017

Attention: Research Unit  
The Head of the Department  
Private Bag x11341  
Nelspruit  
1200

Dear Mr [REDACTED]

**Approval for planned changes to the existing project for Professor Ebersöhn**

As part of the continued research partnership in your district we would like to request approval for the planned changes to the research project approved for Prof Ebersöhn. In this project, we would like to include an intervention research at [REDACTED] High School.

The title of the research is **Strengthening discourse-intensive pedagogical practices: the utility of peer-facilitated small-group discussions to develop critical-analytic thinking**. Quality Talk is based on research that classroom discussion can contribute to higher levels of understanding text and develops the reasoning skills of learners. The research will be a collaboration with two Senior Phase English educators at the school to partner in adapting the program for the South African rural classroom environment. Through this intervention study, it is hoped that the adapted program will assist educators to help learners better understand text and improve their vocabulary, reading fluency and reasoning in English. The adaption should be in line with the curriculum and complement what the educator does in the classroom.

The intervention will consist of three phases. The first phase in 2016 was on collecting data to determine the baseline of classroom discussions in the English literature lesson of the two selected teachers. The baseline data collection was from March 2016 to May 2016 which was made up of six school days over a three-month period with the two educators. These educators assisted in adapting QT in August 2016 over

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four afternoons or two weekend days at the school. Together lessons were designed with the educators to be implemented at the school in 2017. The lessons design will be in keeping to the curriculum requirements and to complement what is already done in the classroom.

The second phase which consist of implementing the developed lessons during the English literature classes is where my study is coming in. It is envisaged that this phase will be from March 2017 to October 2017, made up of 16 school days over an 8-month period. The help of the educators is very important during the adaption and implementation phase to advise on what works or does not work in the classroom. The third phase in 2018, will include training other educators on the program at the school. Dates for this phase still need to be confirmed and the process will be determined by the outcomes of Phase 2.

In each phase the data will be collected by video-recording and personally observing the English literature lessons of the two teachers. The lesson will then be discussed with the educators after school, or when convenient on the day of the observation. In 2017 data will be collected from both educators using the adapted QT approach and when necessary make revisions to the adapted QT program.

The data required from the learners in the selected classes will be an assessment of their comprehension skills at the beginning, middle and end of each phase. These assessments can be done during the lesson according to the CAPS guidelines, thereby not adding extra work for the educators or taking away from their instructional time.

The data required from the learners in the selected classes will be an observation of how classroom discussions are conducted in whole class discussions as compared to peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions. Observed lessons shall be audio and video recorded and photographs of the learning environment in the classrooms taken. Semi-structured interviews will also be conducted.

For this intervention consent from the SGB, the principal and the educators will be sought. The learners and parents/caregivers will receive a letter with an opting out choice (allowing them to choose not to participate). If some learners or parents/caregivers choose to opt out we will not include the information of these learners in the study.

It is hoped that this research will assist English teachers to help learners better understand and reason in English. Developing learners' language competence and comprehension skills in English should enable them to critically evaluate content and prepare them for their final exams and future roles as South Africa citizens.

Attached below is the Outline of intervention process.

Your approval for the changes in the existing project will be greatly appreciated and we look forward to extending the partnership with Mpumalanga Department of Education.

For any further information please contact one of the people listed below.

Yours sincerely



**Prof Liesel Ebersohn**  
University of Pretoria  
Co-Supervisor  
liesel.ebersohn@up.ac.za  
012 420 2337



**Dr Funke Omidire**  
University of Pretoria  
Supervisor  
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012 420 5508



**Prof Karen Murphy**  
The Pennsylvania State University  
Co-Supervisor  
pkm15@psu.edu



**Ms Siphelelo Mugar**  
University of Pretoria  
Research Student  
siphelelomugar@gmail.com  
+263 77 2 691 714

### Outline of intervention process

<b>PHASE 2: March 2017 – October 2017</b> <b>Pilot/Trial of adapted Quality Talk for South Africa</b> The second phase will consist of implementing a pilot/trial of QT for South Africa over eight months. In this phase the educators implementing QT will be observed during the English literature lessons of the participating classes. <i>(once a month for ten schooldays, total of 18 school days over eight months)</i>	
<b>Educator data</b>	<b>Learner data</b>
Implement QT in the selected classes.  Observe, audio and video-record the literature lessons in one class per Grade per educator. Review the lesson plan the day before the lesson is given.  Have 10 discussions based on a video-recording of the lesson after the lesson. Decide on changes in teaching strategies for the next QT lesson.  If necessary, change the QT lesson content that was implemented.  Conduct semi-structured face to face interviews with educators beginning of September.	Use the whole class discussions to compare with the peer-facilitated small-group discussions in control and intervention classes.  Beginning of May, end of June and end of September.  Compile field notes during classroom observations.  Conduct semi-structured face to face interviews with peer-facilitators beginning of September.  Audio and video record and take photographs of the learning environment throughout.
<b>PHASE 3: Train other educators on QT</b> Dates and process to be confirmed	

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## (ii) Approval letter

Response letter to the supervisor on application to conduct education research for Professor L. Ebersöhn  
Education Department: Education Mpumalanga Province  
Private Bag X 11341  
Nelspruit 1200  
Government Bould  
Riverside Park  
Building 5  
Mpumalanga Province  
Republic of South Africa

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Enquiries: AJH Baloyi (012) 706 5478  
Professor L. Ebersöhn  
Department of Educational Psychology  
Faculty of Education  
University of Pretoria

Re: Request for Permission to Conduct Research for Professor L. Ebersöhn

Your application (submitted on 10 February 2017) to conduct research was received. The objectives of your study are consistent with the department's Comprehensive Rural Development Strategy. Your request is approved subject to observing the content of the departmental research manual which is attached.

You are also requested to adhere to your University's ethics as spelt out in your research ethics document.

In terms of the attached manual (2.2. bullet number 4 & 5) data or any research activity can only be conducted after school hours as per appointment. You are also requested to share your findings with the relevant sections of the department so that we may consider implementing your findings if that will be the best interest of department.

For more information, kindly liaise with the department's research unit @ 013 766 5476 or a.baloyi@education.mpu.gov.za

The department wishes you well in this important project and pledges to give the necessary support you may need.

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Application to conduct Education Research for Prof. L. Ebersöhn

Approved/Not Approved

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) Consent letter: Principal



Faculty of Education

Faculty Educational Psychology  
University of Pretoria  
Pretoria  
0001

17 February 2017

Mr [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] School  
P. O. BOX 1  
ELUKWATINI  
1192

Dear Mr [REDACTED]

**Flourishing Learning Youth: Quality Talk intervention study with educators**

We are really looking forward to partnering with your school this year to build on our meetings held last year. By adapting Quality Talk (QT) for South African educators it is hoped that educators can use the program to help learners better understand text and improve their vocabulary, reading fluency and reasoning in English.

We believe in a consultative process. Please do contact us at any time if you would like further clarification, feedback or to meet with us (our contact details are provided at the end of this letter).

For this intervention we need consent from yourself, the educators and the SGB. The learners and parents/caregivers will receive a letter with an opting out choice (allowing them to choose not to participate). If some learners or parents/caregivers choose to opt out the data from these learners will not be included in the research.

The intervention will consist of three phases. In each phase the educators selected from the Senior Phase will have their English literature lesson observed and video-recorded. The lesson will then be discussed with them after school, or when convenient the day of the observation. Furthermore, the adaptations of QT will require for four weekday afternoons or a weekend with the educators.

The information required from the learners in the selected classes will be an assessment of their comprehension skills. These assessments can be done during the lesson according to the CAPS guidelines, thereby not adding extra work for the educators or taking away from their instructional time. We would like

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to document the learners' marks in English (two participating classes) and take photographs of the learners' English exercise books.

The data required from the learners in the selected classes will be an observation of how classroom discussions are conducted in whole class discussions as compared to peer-facilitated small-group, text-based English discussions. Observed lessons shall be audio and video recorded and photographs of the learning environment in the classrooms taken. Semi-structured interviews will also be conducted.

Below are the proposed dates for Phase 2 and Phase 3 activities:

**Phase 2:** March to October 2017

Pilot trial of the adapted QT in the classes plus further revision of QT 16 school days

**Phase 3:** Dates to be confirmed for 2018

Training of other educators to use the adapted QT

Below is the outline of the intervention process and the list of information we require at each stage and we kindly request that this be completed as part of the approval consent.

Yours sincerely



**Prof Liesel Ebersöhn**  
University of Pretoria  
Co-Supervisor  
liesel.ebersohn@up.ac.za  
012 420 2337



**Dr Funke Omidin**  
University of Pretoria  
Supervisor  
funke.omidin@up.ac.za  
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**Prof Karen Murphy**  
The Pennsylvania State University  
Co-Supervisor  
pkm15@psu.edu



**Ms Sipikeleto Mugar**  
University of Pretoria  
Research Student  
Sipikeleto Mugar  
+263 77 2 691 714

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### Consent

I \_\_\_\_\_ hereby agree to partner with Pretoria University to do research at my school as explained above during agreed upon dates.

Principal \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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### Outline of intervention process

PHASE 2: May 2017 – October 2017 Pilot/Trial of adapted Quality Talk for South Africa The second phase will consist of implementing a pilot/trial of QT for South Africa over eight months. In this phase the educators implementing QT will be observed during the English literature lessons of the participating classes. (once a month for two schooldays, total of 16 school days over eight months)	
Educator data	Learner data
Implement QT in the selected classes.  Observe, audio and video-record the literature lessons in one class per Grade per educator. Review the lesson plan the day before the lesson is given.  Have 10 discussions based on a video-recording of the lesson after the lesson. Decide on changes in teaching strategies for the next QT lesson. If necessary, change the QT lesson content that was implemented.  Conduct semi-structured face to face interviews with educators beginning of September	Use the whole class discussions to compare with the peer-facilitated small-group discussions in control and intervention classes.  Beginning of May, end of June and end of September.  Complete field notes during classroom observations.  Conduct semi-structured face to face interviews with peer-facilitators beginning of September  Audio and video record and take photographs of the learning environment throughout.
PHASE 3: Train other educators on QT Dates and process to be confirmed	

### Information Required with Consent

**Grade and class information:**

Grade \_\_\_ Class \_\_\_
 
 Grade \_\_\_ Class \_\_\_

PHASE 2: March 2017 – October 2017 Pilot/Trial of adapted Quality Talk for South Africa The second phase will consist of implementing a pilot/trial of QT for South Africa over eight months. In this phase the educators implementing QT will be observed during the English literature lessons of the participating classes. (once a month for two schooldays, total of 16 school days over eight months)	
Literature topics to be covered during observations:	Date:
	March 2017
	April 2017
	May 2017:
	Jun 2017:
	Jul 2017:
	Aug 2017:
	Sept 2017:
PHASE 3: Train other educators on QT Dates and process to be confirmed	

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(iv) **Consent Letter: SGB**



Faculty of Education

**SGB CONSENT FORM: [REDACTED] HIGH SCHOOL**

**Flourishing Learning Youth: Quality Talk intervention study with educators**

Quality Talk (QT) is a program that can be used in English literature classes to develop the reasoning skills of learners. The research will be a collaboration with two English educators to partner in adapting the program for the South African rural classroom environment. It is hoped that the adapted program will assist educators in helping learners better understand text and improve their vocabulary, reading fluency and reasoning in English. The research will consist of three phases during which no-one will be harmed and the identity of the participants will remain confidential.

In each phase the selected two educators of the Senior Phase will have their English literature lessons observed and video-recorded. The lessons observed will then be discussed with the educator after school or when convenient on the day of the observation. In the first phase, this information will be the baseline for the observation, adaptation, and research. After the baseline information has been collected the adaptation processes will begin. Over four weekday afternoons, or a two-day weekend, at the school, input from partnering educators will be needed to collaborate on the adaption process of QT and QT lesson preparation. In the second phase, the selected educators will implement QT in their classrooms. During the third phase other educators will be trained in using QT.

The required information needed about the learners in the selected participating classes will be an assessment of their comprehension skills. These assessments can be done during the lessons according to the CAPS guidelines, thereby not adding extra work for the educators or taking away from their instructional time. Ideally, the assessments should be done in the beginning, middle and end of each phase.

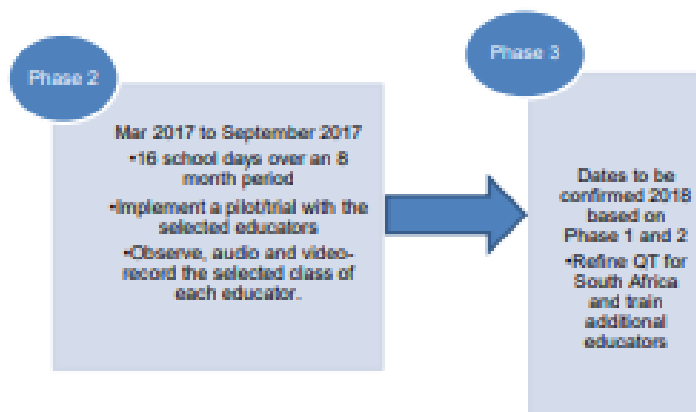
However, before we can do any research we need the consent of the SGB, the principal and the educators. The learners and parents/caregivers will be given a letter on which they can choose

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not to participate. Learners and parents/caregivers who chose to opt out will not have the learner's information included in the research.

The proposed dates for the research intervention are to be confirmed by the school and should fall within the following time frame:



For further information or any queries, the following people can be contacted:

- Dr Funke Omidire (Supervisor) on 012 420 5506 or [funke.omidire@up.ac.za](mailto:funke.omidire@up.ac.za)
- Prof Karen Murphy (Co Supervisor) at [kkm15@psu.edu](mailto:kkm15@psu.edu)
- Prof Liesel Ebersöhn (Co Supervisor) on 012 420 2337 or [liesel.ebersohn@up.ac.za](mailto:liesel.ebersohn@up.ac.za)
- Sipikelelo Mugar (Research Student) on +263 77 2 691 714 or [sipikelelomugari@gmail.com](mailto:sipikelelomugari@gmail.com)

**Permission to participate**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (SGB Chairperson) hereby agree to partner with Pretoria University to do research at the school as explained above during agreed upon dates by the principal of the school.

\_\_\_\_\_  
SGB Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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(v) Consent Letter: Educator



Faculty of Education

EDUCATOR CONSENT FORM: [REDACTED] HIGH SCHOOL

**Flourishing Learning Youth: Quality Talk intervention study with educators**

Quality Talk (QT) is a program that can be used in English literature classes to develop reasoning skills of learners. Through collaborative partnering with you we hope to adapt QT for the South African classroom environment to assist educators in helping learners better understand text and improve their vocabulary, reading fluency and reasoning in English.

The research will consist of three phases forming part of an intervention study to complement what you do in the English literature class in the Senior Phase. We aim to ensure that you remain within the guidelines set out in CAPS documents and will not be taking away from their instructional time.

Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw your consent to participate in this research project at any time. During the research no one will be harmed and the identity of the participants will remain confidential.

By signing this consent form you agree to the following:

- Collaborate and partner with the researcher to develop a baseline and be trained to implement QT in your classroom.
- Provide the researcher with information regarding the literature to be used during the observations.
- Provide dates for observations, assessments and the QT adaption.
- Provide feedback, at a convenient time on the same day of the observation, about the lesson observed to the researcher.
- Assess the learners at the beginning, middle and end of each phase on comprehension skills (these assessments can be done during the lesson according to the CAPS guidelines).
- Allow for the English literature lessons to be observed, audio and video-recorded.
- Allow the researcher to take field notes and take photographs of the learning environment.

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The process for the research intervention should fall within the following time frame:



For further information or any queries the following people can be contacted:

- Dr Funke Omidire (Supervisor) on 012 420 5506 or [funke.omidire@up.ac.za](mailto:funke.omidire@up.ac.za)
- Prof Karen Murphy (Co Supervisor) at [pkm15@psu.edu](mailto:pkm15@psu.edu)
- Prof Liesel Ebersöhn (Co Supervisor) on 012 420 2337 or [liesel.ebersohn@up.ac.za](mailto:liesel.ebersohn@up.ac.za)
- Sipikelelo Mugarí (Research Student) on +263 77 2 601 714 or [sipikelelomugari@gmail.com](mailto:sipikelelomugari@gmail.com)

**Permission to participate**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (Name & Surname of Educator) have read and understand the consent form and hereby agree to partner with Pretoria University.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Educator Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

(vi) **Consent Letter: Learner and Parent/Caregiver**



Faculty of Education

OPT OUT FORM: [REDACTED] HIGH SCHOOL

Dear Learner and Parent/Caregiver

**Flourishing Learning Youth: Quality Talk intervention study with educators**

My name is Sipikelelo Mugari and I will be conducting research at the [REDACTED] High School. The research will be on adapting a program called Quality Talk (QT) for South African rural schools with the help of the English class teacher. This program can be used in English literature classes and helps learners better understand what they are reading. If you want more information, Mr. [REDACTED] will give you my contact numbers.

I have consent from the principal, teachers and SGB to do my research at your school. The information I collect will be confidential and only used for research at the University of Pretoria and Penn State University. No one will be harmed during the research, as Quality Talk is a form of improved instructional practice using regular curriculum.

As part of the research we would also like to interview learners in Grade 8 and Grade 9 who took part in the research. The interview will be audio and/or video recorded.

If you do not sign this form it means that you agree that the learner can take part in my research and their information used in the study. If you do sign this form it means that you do not want the learner's information to form part of the study.

**Opt-Out Slip**

\_\_\_\_\_ must not be included in the research.  
Name and Surname of the learner

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Parent/Caregiver      Signature      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Learner      Signature      Date

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## APPENDIX E. TEXTBOOK LESSONS (Sample)

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(i) **Textbook Lessons:**

A Red Kite in a Pale Sky: Sample 9B on 13/09/17

9C on 14/09/17

**Activity 4 Read and answer the questions**

This extract comes from a section near the beginning of the novel.

- 1 Read the extract quietly to yourself. It begins with Mr Patel, the Maths teacher, speaking to the class. Remember that the use of three dots shows that some text has been left out. Words that are not in the original text are printed in square brackets to show what happens in the longer bits that have been left out. Discuss anything you don't understand with your partner.

***A Red Kite in a Pale Sky***

"Mrs Maartens and I have decided to send you home **on account of** the **torrential** rain." He liked doing that. Using big words. "We feel that there is the possibility of the school being isolated from your homes if it continues like this. You're all to go home without any delay." ...

The rain was still **pelting down** when we stepped off the stoep. The track back down the hill was a stream of grey running mud. Steep **banks** were being carved out on either side, and water was cascading down alongside the houses and scooping away soil around the walls. ...

All that water had to be going somewhere. And Horace and I raced down to the river to see what it looked like. We had a special place down there, where we'd tied a rope from a branch of a flat-topped thorn tree so that you could swing

continues ►



**on account of** – because of

**torrential** – very heavy, falling in great quantities

**pelting down** – falling in huge amounts

**banks** – piles of earth with sloping sides

Weeks 7–8

tagged along –  
followed  
particularly –  
specially

A Red Kite in a Pale Sky continued

out over the river, then let go and jump in. At least it was my special place. Horace always just **tagged along** after me. He doesn't **particularly** like water.

... I couldn't believe what I saw.

The rope was gone. The trees were gone. The motor car tyres that we'd stuck between the rocks to dam up the water were gone. Even the bank we'd jumped from was gone. The water was right over it. The Umhlatuzana wasn't even a river any more. It was just an enormously wide tumbling torrent of brown water that stretched far across. And in the middle of the boiling and foaming, trees and other bits and pieces were being swept by so fast that I didn't even have time to see exactly what they were.

Horace and I just stood there ... while the water thundered and ate away chunks of ground at our feet.

[That night the sound of the swollen river keeps the two boys awake.]

A deafening roar rose from it and still the rain beat down. ...

"Are you awake? ... What if the water reaches us?" Horace whispered in a way that I knew he was scared.

"It might."

"Go to sleep." ...

"But if it does what'll we do?"

Horace could drive anyone crazy with his questions. "We'll swim." Silence for a while. I suppose I shouldn't have said that, knowing how Horace feels about swimming. But I get so tired of babying him.

spurts – short bursts

I listened to the way he sucked in his breath in short, sharp **spurts**. And then I felt bad. "Ag man, Horace, the river'll never reach us. Our house is too high. And the rain's going to stop soon in any case." I said it in a way that would make him believe me, but in my heart I wasn't so sure.

Source: *A Red Kite in a Pale Sky* by Dianne Hofmeyr, Tafelberg, 2006 © NB Publishers

Now answer these questions with your partner.

- 2 What is the main idea in this text? How do other ideas support this main idea?

Activity 4 continues

### Activity 4 (continued)

- 3 Which of the adjectives in the box does *not* describe Horace? Use your dictionary if you need to.

afraid      anxious      brave      nervous

- 4 The writer of this text uses the relationship between language and power to show us how it works. For example, when Laurence says that he gets tired of babying Horace. His use of the word 'babying' shows us that he has power over his younger brother.
- a Does the narrator, Laurence, always use the power he has over his brother, Horace, kindly? Use examples of his language to explain your answer.
- b What kind of tone do you think Laurence uses when he tells Horace that the rain is going to stop soon? Choose two of the adjectives in the box to describe this tone. Use your dictionary if you need to.

angry      gentle      reassuring      irritable

- c The writer of this novel has Laurence tell us that Horace "doesn't particularly like water" and we learn that Laurence understands that Horace is scared. In both these examples Laurence is sympathetic towards his brother. Do you agree? Explain your answer.
- d Later on in this extract, we hear Laurence tell Horace that if the water reaches them they will swim. He says this to his brother because he is tired of Horace's questions even though he knows that Horace doesn't like water. What do you think has happened to Laurence's sympathy? What does the writer **infer** here about the relationship between Laurence's unsympathetic language and the power he has over Horace?
- 5 From the text itself, work out what the phrases 'cascading down' and 'scooping away' mean.
- 6 What effect does the cover picture have on you? Does it make you want to read this book? Does it frighten you? Does it excite you? Explain your opinions.
- 7 We read that Laurence 'wasn't so sure' about whether or not the rain would stop. Why do you think the author chose to tell us that he was unsure, but also chose not to tell us right away if Laurence had good reason to be unsure?
- 8 Summarise the extract from *A Red Kite in a Pale Sky* in about 60 words.

**infer** – lead you to think

**Activity 4 Read and answer the questions**

LB page 165

**Individual and pair work: 90 minutes**

**Activity guidance**

- The learners now read the extract quietly to themselves. They discuss any difficulties they might have with a partner. Then they work in pairs to answer the questions.
- Go through the questions with the learners and make sure that they understand what is required of them.

**Assessment suggestions**

Assess informally. Listen to the learners' discussions of the answers to the questions and join in as you think necessary. Give feedback. Assess whether the learners have understood the extract and if they have grasped the requirements of the questions.

**Answers**

- 2 The main idea in this text is that the pouring rain has caused the river to rise and Laurence and Horace are anxious about the safety of their house. The view from their special place on the river supports this idea and so does the loud roar of the swollen river.
- 3 Horace is not brave.
- 4 The writer of this text uses the relationship between language and power to show us how it works. For example, Laurence says that he gets tired of babying Horace. His use of the word *babying* shows us that he has power over his younger brother.
  - a Sometimes the narrator, Laurence, is unkind to his brother. For example, he talks about Horace tagging along and there is a tone of mockery in his statement that Horace doesn't particularly like water. He also complains that 'Horace could drive anyone crazy with his questions.'
  - b He is first irritable, then reassuring.
  - c In some ways both these examples could show that Laurence understands that Horace is scared, but he could be mocking Horace when he says that Horace doesn't particularly like water. Let the learners discuss these possibilities.
  - d At times Laurence gets tired of his brother's questions and this makes him less sympathetic. His language then shows us how he feels. The writer infers here that Laurence has much more power than Horace has.
- 5 'Cascading down' means pouring down like a waterfall. 'Scooping away' means that the power of the water was removing the soil from around the walls of the houses.
- 6 Open. Let the learners discuss this and offer their own opinions.
- 7 This is how writers build up interest in a text. They give us clues and hints and we have to read on to find out if we have understood these hints and clues correctly.
- 8 Here is a suggested summary: The learners are sent home because of the heavy rain. Laurence and Horace go to the river and discover that it is in flood. That night, the sound of the river keeps them awake. Horace is afraid and keeps asking Laurence questions about their safety, but Laurence reassures him and says that the rain will stop soon. [57 words]

## APPENDIX F. EXTENDED SUMMARY OF 2016 PIRLS REPORT

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(i) The unfolding reading crisis: The new PIRLS 2016 results

**Nic Spaul**

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” –  
Mandela



Today the PIRLS 2016 results were released by the Minister of Basic Education Ms Angie Motshekga. To say that they are anything but **devastating** would be a lie. 8 in 10 children cannot read for meaning. This new report provides the latest evidence helping us to understand the unfolding reading crisis. I received an embargoed

copy of the final report from the IEA last week late in the evening and battled to fall asleep after reading it. **78% of South African Grade 4 children cannot read for meaning in any language.** I think this was the most striking thing for me -that we had previously underestimated the number of South African children that couldn't read for meaning. Previously we thought the number was 58% (using prePIRLS 2011 Intermediate Benchmark) but it turns out that it is 78% (PIRLS Literacy Low International Benchmark). Basically we were using the wrong benchmark in the past. This is the first time that the easier PIRLS test (which used to be called prePIRLS and is now called PIRLS Literacy) was put on the PIRLS scale.

Apart from the horrifically low levels of reading achievement, South Africa also has the highest incidence of bullying among all 50 countries that participated in the study. 42% of Gr4 students indicated that they were bullied weekly (p226 in the report). Compared to 15% in the US and England.

I've summarized what I think are the main findings from the PIRLS 2016 report below. You can download the full report [HERE](#) and it is also available on the PIRLS website. The SA Summary reports are now also available ([SA PIRLS Literacy](#), [ePIRLS](#), [SA PIRLS](#)) The DBE's official response is [here](#).

Main findings:

1. **8 of 10 SA children cannot read:** 78% of SA Grade 4 students cannot read for meaning. That is to say that they could not reach the Low International PIRLS Benchmark in reading. They could not locate and retrieve explicitly stated information or make straightforward inferences about events and reasons for actions (PIRLS report page 55)
2. **SA scores last in reading of 50 countries:** South African Grade 4 children have scored the lowest mark in the latest 2016 round of the Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study released today. The study included mostly High Income Countries but there were a number of middle-income countries such as Iran, Chile, Morocco, and Oman.
3. **SA lags far behind other countries:** While 78% of SA Grade 4 kids cannot read, in America this is only 4% and in England just 3% cannot read. However, the study also included middle-income countries. In Iran only 35% of Grade 4 students could not read for meaning and in Chile it was only 13% (PIRLS report page 55).
4. **Reading crisis deeper than previously thought:** When South Africa participated in prePIRLS 2011 (an easier version of PIRLS) we thought that 58% of SA Gr4 children could not read for meaning. However, this was on a separate test and not on the PIRLS scale score (i.e. not the same metric). 2016 was the first time that prePIRLS (now called PIRLS Literacy) was put on the same scale score as PIRLS. **The true figure for children that cannot read for meaning is 78% – revealed today.** Note this does NOT mean that reading outcomes have gotten worse between 2011 and 2015. In 2011 77% could not read for meaning and in 2016 78% cannot read for meaning (this difference is not statistically significant, i.e. the difference is negligible).
5. **Some evidence of improvement in reading 2006 to 2011 but stagnant since 2011:** The only good news coming out of PIRLS 2016 is that there may have been significant improvements in reading between 2006 and 2011. Because the scale scores are now comparable we can compare the performance of Gr4's in 2006 and Gr4's in 2011 and 2016. This comparison seems to suggest quite a significant increase in reading scores between 2006 and 2011. Notably the Gr4 students in 2011 achieved higher scores than Gr5 students in 2006. Further analysis is needed but there does seem to be legitimate evidence of improvement between 2006 and 2011. Unfortunately, no evidence of improvement between 2011 and 2016.
6. **SA reading scores stagnant since 2011:** There has been no improvement in reading scores over the last five years (i.e. 2011 to 2016). Note that although the average scored declined from 323 to 320 this can NOT be interpreted as a decline. The standard errors overlap here so there is no certainty that there was any decline whatsoever (this is like taking your sitting heart rate 10 times and getting very tiny differences each time – they are not statistically significantly different) (PIRLS report page 29)
7. **SA gender gap in reading 2nd highest in the world:** Girls score much higher than boys in reading across the board. In Grade 4 girls are a full year of learning ahead of boys. This gender gap is the second largest among all 50 countries that participated. Only Saudi Arabia's is higher. (PIRLS report page 36).

The gap between boys and girls is also growing over time. The gap between boys and girls was larger in 2016 than in 2011 (PIRLS report page 43).

8. **SA boys scores seem to have declined between 2011 and 2016:** The average Grade 4 girl in SA scored 341 in 2011 and 347 in 2016 (unlikely to be statistically significant). The average Grade 4 boy in SA scored 307 points in 2011 and 295 points in 2016 (this is likely to be statistically significant but we cannot tell until the SA report is released (PIRLS report page 43).
9. **Declining number of SA students reaching high levels of reading achievement:** In 2011 3% of SA Gr4 students reached the High International Benchmark. In 2016 only 2% reached this same benchmark (PIRLS report page 58).

Results within South Africa:

1. **Massive provincial differences in percentage of Gr4s who can read.** 91% of Grade 4 children in Limpopo cannot read for meaning with equally high percentages in the Eastern Cape (85%), Mpumalanga (83%), Gauteng (69%), Western Cape (55%). Pg 5 of [this](#) report.
2. **Very large differences by test language.** 93% of Grade 4 students tested in Sepedi could not read for meaning with similarly large percentages amount Setswana (90%), Tshivenda (89%), isiXhosa (88%), Xitsonga (88%), isiZulu (87%) and isiNdebele (87%) Grade 4 learners. Pg 5 of [this](#) report.

**Background:** PIRLS is implemented by the Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA) at Pretoria University headed by Prof Sarah Howie. CEA press release [here](#). In 2016 it tested **12,810 Gr4 students** from **293 schools** across the country (PIRLS report page 309). The sample is nationally representative and can be generalized to the entire country. Students were tested in whatever language was used in that school in Grades 1-3, i.e. all 11 official languages were tested and children were generally tested in the language with which they were most familiar. The results were released by Minister Motshekga today (5 Dec) in Pretoria.

The full report is available [here](#) and also on the PIRLS website from 11am today:  
– <http://pirls2016.org/pirls/summary/>