

Using an English Language Club to Enhance the Learning of English at a High School in South Africa

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Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on how using an English Language Club can enhance the learning of English while empowering learners and encouraging them to take responsibility for their learning. A noticeable challenge at the site of the study, a school in Richards Bay, is that the existing approaches in a classroom may not be adequate in assisting second language learners to reach the desired proficiency in English due to the language background of learners and the overcrowded classrooms which prevents the use of more effective teaching and learning methods. The study adopted a critical pedagogy with aspects of Krashen's theory. Interventions of innovative and fun activities, including outdoor teaching and learning, were implemented in the four-cycle participatory action research study, concentrating on listening and speaking, spelling and vocabulary, reading, and writing. The study revealed that a comfortable environment that recognised learners' interests and the use of relatable and engaging activities not only enhanced the learning of English by reducing anxiety, but empowered learners to be involved in making the necessary decisions for the betterment of their learning. By the end of the study, participants were more conscious of their responsibility in their learning process. When they felt respected by their teacher and peers in the English Language Club, their fear of the language diminished, resulting in enhanced participation, giving learners a voice that was lacking in the classroom. The study also revealed the importance of critical reflection and dialogue in transforming learning. The use of entertaining activities, competitions and prizes were effective in motivating learners, and served as efficient methods in developing learner responsibility. This thesis adds to the discourses on educational methods, critical pedagogy and participatory action research. It contributes knowledge by showing that using participatory action research and critical pedagogy in an ELC is effective for empowering learners while enhancing their learning of English. Furthermore, the study fills a research gap and expands the current body of knowledge on the use of English language clubs by focusing on four skills of English, unlike other clubs, and provides a working model of the combination of critical pedagogy and elements of Krashen's theory to enhance the learning of English by creating a humanising environment and decreasing anxiety.

Keywords: critical pedagogy, language clubs, enhancing English learning, action research, engaging activities

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Chapter 1

Introduction

“I should be open to change and transformation on a personal level and use my research to enhance my knowledge and understanding in order to improve both myself and my practice”
(Loughran and Berry as cited in Flornes, 2007, p. 12).

1.1. Introduction

The environment created, along with the methods used, are crucial elements in teaching and learning. Second language learners who display fear while learning English are influenced by their surroundings and require empowering and engaging methods to alleviate anxiety related to learning.

In this thesis, I explore how an English Language Club (ELC) may be used to enhance learning and empower learners to take responsibility for their learning. I argue that a comfortable environment that allows learners to make decisions about their learning, with guidance from the teacher, and innovative and relatable activities can accompany classroom learning. Conventional classroom activities and assessment strategies may even be replaced by more creative methods including the use of the outdoors for more effective learning.

In this chapter, I will firstly discuss the rationale. Thereafter, the purpose of the study will be considered, paying attention to the problem and the knowledge gap in the field of study. Subsequently, the context and background will be outlined. An overview of the key studies dealing with the topic will be provided followed by the research objectives and questions, an overview of the research process and my stance on the study. Lastly, de-limitations will be discussed and the organisation of this thesis will be outlined.

1.2. Rationale/Motivation

The rationale for the study is based on professional and academic motivation. My professional motivation rests on the fact that I would like to develop and improve my teaching practices as

a teacher of English. While teaching English to grade 8 and 9 learners at the site of the study, which will be discussed later, I observed that some learners did not have the competence they needed to successfully progress with English in these grades due to difficulty with spelling and reading, which ultimately led to poor writing skills. Furthermore, most learners came from primary schools where English was taught as a second language.

Thus, entering a high school where English is taught as a Home Language can be a challenging transition. Based on this language background and the premise that almost all learners in the school did not use English as a Home Language, there was evidence through my interactions with them, of their being fearful of the language. Hence, learners needed to be empowered, motivated and further encouraged to take responsibility for their own language learning for any improvement in English (and subject performance as a whole) to occur. Therefore, I used an ELC to address the issue.

In terms of academic motivation, I desired a more extensive view regarding the strategies of empowerment and learner motivation and how transformation may occur in the classroom for optimum teaching and learning.

1.3. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore how an ELC may be used to enhance learning and empower learners to take responsibility for their learning.

In South Africa, and across much of Africa, English becomes the language of teaching and learning after three school years; in addition to this fact, the lack of texts and resources, and inadequate teaching of the language have a detrimental effect on learners' literacy development (Alexander et al., 2011). Additionally, achievement scores of grade 4 learners according to the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study of 2016, prove that learner achievement was significantly low among South African learners and was the lowest-performing country out of the 50 that participated in the study (Howie et al., 2017). Overall, the results achieved by grade 4 learners point to the unfortunate "lack of the most basic reading literacy skills" (Howie et al., 2017, p. 79). Although my study concentrates on grade 8 and 9 learners, it is important to consider the impact of the results in primary school as learners enter high school with the

language acquired in their primary school years, ultimately affecting how they progress in higher grades.

Also having taught grades 10 to 12, I learnt that some learners' attitudes towards English and their performance in the subject stems from their experiences learning the subject in grades 8 and 9. Hence, these grades needed to be concentrated on so as to form a better foundation for when they reach the higher grades.

The problem of the study is that what is done in the classroom may not be enough to assist second language learners to reach the desired proficiency in English, due to the language background of learners and the overcrowded classrooms which make more effective language learning strategies difficult to implement. As a result, I introduced another platform (in this study, this refers to the use of an ELC) to assist in addressing the English crisis at the school, which refers to the mediocre results (discussed in Chapter 5) due to learners' language backgrounds and overcrowding at the school which are two of the reasons for learner anxiety in the English classroom that influences the way they learn.

In the activity period, which is a session on Wednesdays allocated for sports and other extra curricular activities, the ELC was implemented to enhance language learning, empowering learners and encouraging them to take responsibility for their learning. In the ELC, learners and I adopted an empowering, inclusive and a welcoming and relaxed spirit, using innovative and unconventional methods to target listening and speaking, spelling and vocabulary, reading, and writing skills.

1.4. Context/Background

The site of the study is a secondary school located in Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, that has been operating for over 20 years. It is an urban school that uses English as a medium of instruction, offering English as a Home Language only. In terms of racial composition, the school is multiracial, with approximately 920 'black' and mixed-race learners, with only a few who speak English as a Home Language. With 16 classrooms, there are between 50-60 learners in each classroom, from grade 8 to 12, and an educator staff of 33. Despite the vast majority of learners not being English Home Language speakers, and for whom English is a second language, the school offers English as a Home Language.

According to South Africa's Constitution, there are 11 official spoken languages (Howie et al., 2017). Out of 51.7 million South Africans, the largest group of 24% speaks isiZulu, 16% speak isiXhosa, and 14% speak Afrikaans (Howie et al., 2017). English is spoken by 10% of the South African population yet is regarded as "the main language of business and government" (Howie et al., 2017, p. 18) and is an important, most accepted language worldwide that provides the opportunities for one to expand knowledge and skills, career opportunities, and improve salary and living standards (Dewi, Kultsum, & Armadi, 2017; Malu & Smedley, 2016). The majority of South Africans speak languages other than English; however, English remains a dominating language, often undermining the language rights as protected by the Constitution of South Africa, which goes against the promotion of multilingualism by the Language in Education Policy (Mkhize & Balfour, 2017).

Inherent in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) are evidence of knowledge transmission and reproduction that is contrary to the emancipatory nature stipulated in educational documents that were implemented after 1994 (Chetty, 2015). Though the 2011 CAPS reiterates the need to follow principles of social transformation, Chetty (2015, p. 1) argues that it "fails to enact" the principles. A reason for this might be because teachers are having challenges implementing the curriculum in a way that allows learners to be active agents, instead of passive recipients; in other words, teachers are encountering problems with applying constructivism in the classroom. Moreover, despite attempts at embracing liberation and avoiding rote-learning, there is evidence that education might be reverting to memorisation, that is "'learning' the contents of a single textbook for each subject" (Chetty, 2015, p. 1). Additionally, children are at a disadvantage when it comes to learning to read and write as information is delivered to them in a way that makes little sense (Alexander et al., 2011). This could be attributed to the fact that only 7% of learners reported having English as their home language, according to a 2007 annual school survey (Department of Basic Education, 2010).

The site of the study chose English as the medium of instruction, also referred to as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT), and is a single-medium school, even though the Language in Education Policy states that learners must choose their LOLT upon admission into a school, or request to be instructed in his/her language (Department of Education, 1997). This is hardly the case due to English being the language in power and providing more opportunities,

as discussed previously, and also due to the fact that the School Governing Body decides on the language of the school (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

The study was undertaken taking into consideration the abovementioned statistics surrounding language and the context of the school.

1.5. Overview of key studies dealing with the topic

This study draws and builds on various other research studies. However, the following have been identified and examined as key studies that informed my study. While these studies are explored in detail in the Literature Review chapter, the studies are mentioned at this point to contextualise the research related to the topic of this thesis.

An important contributing factor in learning is how learners feel about their classroom environment, as it plays a significant role in how they learn, their level of satisfaction and how they perform academically (Garibay 2015; Barr, 2016). Garibay and Barr also note that learners' feelings about their environments influences their motivation to learn and participate. Thus, it is helpful to create an atmosphere using strategies that are enjoyable and creative with the aim of reducing stress related to language learning (Alexander et al., 2011; Bojuwoye et al., 2014; Dewi et al., 2017). Therefore, the purpose of language clubs is to guide and facilitate those who join (Pereira et al., 2013; Malu & Smedley, 2016). Taking into consideration Krashen's Affective Filter hypothesis, a more relaxed environment allows for better acquisition of the language (Krashen, 1982; Xu, 2016; Nath et al., 2017).

From a critical pedagogy perspective, Giroux (as cited in Vargas, 2019) noted that learners must be provided with the platform to voice their opinions about how they learn, for teachers to be considered individuals of transformation. This can be achieved by encouraging learners into active dialogue with their teachers (Asakereh & Weisi, 2018). In addition, support from teachers is crucial; how learners feel and are treated is fundamental in the enhancement of learning (Hannah, 2013; Garibay, 2015).

Various activities can be used to enhance language learning and foster a critical pedagogy, which in turn lowers anxiety and increases input of the language, such as groupwork and social activities (Du, 2009), outdoor activities, which transform learners' perceptions of learning

(Aslam et al., 2015), or other playful activities that would optimise learning (Zosh et al., 2017). Turkmen (as cited in Yildirim & Akamca, 2017) noted that learning does not only occur in the classroom but may be attained in gardens, parks or playgrounds. Engaging learners in educational games may also be an effective strategy to enhance language learning as they motivate learning in a different manner (Mubaslat, 2012).

KEYWORDS:

The following definitions from the Department of Basic Education (2010, p. 3) are important to understand the study:

Home language: Refers to the language that is spoken most frequently at home by a learner.

First additional language: Refers to a compulsory language subject that learners have to study at that level.

Language proficiency: Refers to the level of competence at which an individual is able to use a language for both basic communication tasks and academic purposes.

Single medium school: Refers to a school that uses one medium of instruction (language) for all learners in all grades.

Preferred language of instruction: Refers to the (preferred) language of instruction indicated by a learner at the time of registration.

Language of learning and teaching (LOLT) “refers to the language or medium of instruction via which learning and teaching (including assessment) for all subjects is facilitated” (Department of Basic Education, 2010, p. 13).

In addition to the above definitions, in this study, the term ‘learning’ refers “to conscious knowledge of a second language” in terms of knowledge and awareness of the rules of the language (Krashen, 1982, p. 10). Similar defining terms for ‘learning’ are “formal knowledge” and “explicit learning” (Krashen, 1982, p. 10). Therefore, a second language, in the context of education, is the language spoken by learners which is not the native language they speak at home (Lan, 2005). These learners are referred to in this study as ‘second language learners’.

1.6. Research objectives and questions

The objectives of this study are to identify the strategies that may be used within an English Language Club to enhance the learning of the language, to understand the ways in which language learning strategies may enable learners to gain confidence linguistically, and to study how an English Language Club may engender motivation and responsibility in learners.

This thesis seeks to address the following questions:

- What strategies may be used within an English Language Club to enhance the learning of the language?
- In what ways may language learning strategies enable learners to gain confidence linguistically?
- How may an English Language Club engender motivation and responsibility in learners?

1.7. Overview of the research process

To answer the research questions outlined above, the study adopted critical pedagogy and elements of Krashen's theory (Input and Affective Filter hypotheses) as a theoretical framework. The study was underpinned by a critical paradigm, qualitative approach and participatory action research design. The research process involved participants and me, and the participatory action research design included four cycles (listening and speaking, spelling and vocabulary, reading, and writing). Each cycle was informed by the cycle that preceded it after thorough reflection on the interventions implemented in the cycle.

Each cycle included its own data generation strategies, for example, questionnaires, interviews, observations, visual representations and written texts. These were used to evaluate the proceedings of the cycle or to determine learners' experiences.

Prior to the commencement of the study, Gatekeeper permission from the school principal (Appendix 1) and ethical clearance were sought from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Appendix 2). Upon being granted permission to carry out said

study, consent forms were provided to participants (Appendix 3) and their parents' consent was also sought (Appendix 4). The consent forms explained the study, highlighted that participation was voluntary, reassuring them of their rights including that of being able to stop being part of the study without consequence, and guaranteeing their confidentiality. These aspects will be discussed in greater detail in my Methodology chapter.

1.8. Researcher's stance

Due to the nature of participatory action research and the contributions of learners during the study, it was important for me to learn how to be open to their suggestions, despite my opinions of the research process and of teaching and learning as a whole. In order to ensure the trustworthiness of data, I had to maintain my role as a teacher and researcher simultaneously without jeopardising the process with acts that may be considered biased.

Additionally, I needed to work collaboratively with learners in the ELC whilst mindful of power relations that may have existed due to being their teacher of English. My position as their teacher in the classroom and the teacher and researcher in the ELC may have impacted the study. For example, learners were willing to share their experiences of learning English since they were learners in my classroom and knew that I understood their needs from the experience of teaching them. Furthermore, being a PhD candidate and having read multiple sources on how to enhance learning from the literature review and theoretical frameworks, I was more knowledgeable about how to approach the study and how to help learners, and thus more sympathetic, leading to their comfort to voice their experiences of learning.

During dialogue with learners, which happened often during the participatory action research process, it was important for me to establish a sense of respect and understanding. Since learners were given responsibility along with the teacher in the ELC and its interventions, it was thus essential for me to ensure that reflections were considered truthfully and for the betterment of the learners as a whole. Ethical behaviour had to be maintained throughout to ensure data was not manipulated.

1.9. De-limitations

This study focused only on grade 8 and 9 learners as they were in their first or second year of high school and considered fairly new to the new environment. Additionally, English content

learnt in these grades forms the foundation for the higher grades. The study did not consider whether the ELC may have had an impact on their learning as they progressed to grade 10, and only concentrated on their learning of English whilst in their current grade.

The study did not aim to compare learners learning English as a second language to those whose home language is English. The study's aim was to use various activities and a safe environment (the ELC) to enhance the learning of English, irrespective of learners' home language or English language proficiency.

Other English teachers were not part of the action research process, nor did they contribute to the planning of the interventions in the ELC. In the process of enhancing the learning of English, I wanted to improve how I viewed learners' learning and transform my teaching practices.

1.10. Organisation of the thesis

The thesis is organised into eight chapters:

- Chapter One introduces the thesis by providing background information to the study, outlining the purpose and context, provides an overview of the key studies, and sets out the research questions that need to be answered.
- Chapter Two examines the theoretical framework that underpins the study.
- Chapter Three explores previous scholarship related to the main research questions of this study, focusing on various themes.
- Chapter Four discusses the methodology used for the purpose of this study. The research paradigm, research design and research approach are examined with reasons for choices. The site of the research is discussed along with sample. Data generation and data analysis strategies are outlined.
- Chapter Five focuses on the baseline information that was generated prior to the commencement of the study that informed the study further, which is important in participatory action research.
- Chapter Six is an analysis of cycles one (Listening and Speaking) and two (Spelling and Vocabulary).

- Chapter Seven continues from Chapter Five by analysing data that emanated from cycles three (Reading) and four (Writing).
- Finally, Chapter Eight concludes the thesis by discussing the main findings and evaluating the theoretical, methodological and professional practice implications of the study. Limitations are also provided in this chapter. The chapter concludes with recommendations for further research and contributions.

Chapter 2

Deliberating in the theory room

“Over the past 30 years, the critical “turn” in [English language teaching] has had notable accomplishments with much work yet to be done. The ambition has been to disrupt conventional practices and habits of thought, utilizing this newfound perspective for its transformative potential both within and beyond the classroom” (Chun & Morgan, 2019).

2.1. Introduction

This study, which explores how an English Language Club (ELC) may be used to enhance learners’ language learning and empower learners to take responsibility for their learning, is informed by a critical pedagogy theory and Krashen’s theory of second language acquisition, focusing mainly on the Affective Filter hypothesis that resonates with my study. An exploration of these theories is provided, together with a critical evaluation of the theories. Links between critical pedagogy and the Affective Filter hypothesis and my study will be dealt with throughout the chapter while engaging with the main elements of each. Firstly, the three important elements of critical pedagogy will be discussed, namely critical consciousness, dialogism, and humanisation and empowerment. Thereafter, Krashen’s theory will be considered, paying particular attention to the Affective Filter hypothesis. Lastly, there will be a discussion on how both theories work together to serve as a lens for my study.

2.2. Critical pedagogy

2.2.1. Overview

Critical pedagogy emerged as a theory in the 1960s and 1970s, a time during which there were significant expectations that issues in society will be solved by education; it is an approach to education that is based on transformation (Abraham, 2014). “Advocates of critical approaches to second language teaching are interested in relationships between language learning and social change” (Norton & Toohey, 2004, p. 1). The implication of this view is that language is not only seen as a method of communication or for one to express oneself, but it influences and is influenced by learners’ understanding of history, their social contexts, and understanding

themselves and their future prospects (Norton & Toohey, 2004). It is imperative for me to understand these notions of critical pedagogy and take them into consideration as a researcher and teacher of English as they will enable me to reflect on and reconsider classroom practices.

Critical pedagogy is political because the resources distributed, and the teachers' and learners' existence are a result of numerous political conclusions (Shudak, 2014). Therefore, it questions the existence of power relations in society and institutions, and between teachers and learners, and challenges the unequal power relations in such interactions, which ultimately shape the education process (Wink, 2005; Kuang as cited in Sarani, Alibakhshi, & Molazehi, 2014). Wink (2005) argued that there are social, historical, political and cultural influences on schools and that a relationship exists between issues of power and classroom situations. Freire, a Brazilian educator, is regarded as a seminal theorist of critical pedagogy (Chlapoutaki & Dinas, 2016; Zare-Behtash, Izadi, & Rezaei, 2017; Shih, 2018) and turned critical theory into critical pedagogy so that teachers may implement the ideas as a pedagogy in their classrooms (Freire, 1970).

In my study, the unequal power relations described above exist between the school and the second language learners, who are learning English as a Home Language only, despite the majority of them speaking other languages as their home language. The unequal power relations exist in the conventional English classroom between the teacher and learners where the teacher follows the stipulated curriculum and learners (despite the attempted learner-centred classroom) are unable to fully or freely participate in the lesson due to their fear of the language because of their language backgrounds. Therefore, I created the ELC to enable an environment that is very different from the environment in the English classroom. The ELC is a platform that has never been used at the school before, despite the English language challenges. More about the ELC in relation to critical pedagogy will be elucidated throughout the rest of this chapter.

Many researchers have argued that critical pedagogy is based on education serving a transformative and liberating function to create a more just and democratic society and provides guidelines and recommendations to address injustices in education (Abrahams, 2005; Giroux, 2009; Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011; Bohorquez, 2012; Perumal, 2014; Rajesh, 2014; Zare-Behtash et al., 2017). Transformation, within a critical pedagogy, does not refer to the change in one's perspective only, but a change in actions where learners are able to use their knowledge

for the transformation of themselves and the society (Jeyaraj & Harland, 2014). Freire's critical pedagogy has been influenced by the Frankfurt School's ideas of education that aims toward a revolutionary educational system which reinforces that both teachers and learners need to do their best to transform the situations that they feel are forms of discrimination or injustice (Freire, 1984; Mahmoudi, Khoshnood, & Babaei, 2014; Abraham, 2014). In my study, this refers to both me and learners in my ELC working collaboratively to enhance learners' English language competence, with our understanding that decisions taken collaboratively will prove more effective than decisions taken by me alone.

However, the enactment of this pedagogy may be a challenge for professionals in education, especially novice teachers who may be uncertain about the implementation process (Chlapoutaki & Dinas, 2016). Perumal (2014, p. 20) extends this criticism by adding that it is a "daunting" task for teachers to be transformative intellectuals (Giroux, 2009), as the training of most teachers lacks the necessary preparation in terms of "knowledge, dispositions, and capacities" to fully understand and respond to related challenges "with democratic wisdom." The pedagogy is also critiqued for its utopian and abstract nature that seems "out of touch" with teachers' daily practices (Ellsworth as cited in Ross, 2016). Additionally Guilherme (2017) contends that the framework may not fall in line with the trend of globalisation. Despite being a novice teacher who may have experienced said challenges implementing this pedagogy, my academic background was able to assist me to engage with the related scholarship to enhance my understanding of the theory and practice of critical pedagogy.

In spite of the limitations cited above, I aimed to use critical pedagogy to enable democracy, encourage critical thinking, and learning in creative ways rather than through the mere memorisation of material (Halabsaz & Hedayati, 2016). The main purpose of critical pedagogy is therefore to enhance learners' lives overall and foster a sense of emancipation (Mahmoudi et al., 2014; Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011). The transformation that critical pedagogy aims for does not end in the classroom but impacts the community outside (Jeyaraj & Harland, 2014). Therefore, teachers need to help learners develop the skills required to address the complexities of their lives (Zare-Behtash et al., 2017) by avoiding talking at and to learners, but rather encouraging them to participate by speaking for themselves, thus preparing them for a better future. It must be noted that critical pedagogy is ever-evolving, so teachers need to be critical intellectuals who will continuously engage in self-assessment and develop their pedagogies (Ross, 2016).

As a whole, this emancipatory pedagogy is based on the following crucial principles (Nouri & Sajjadi, 2014):

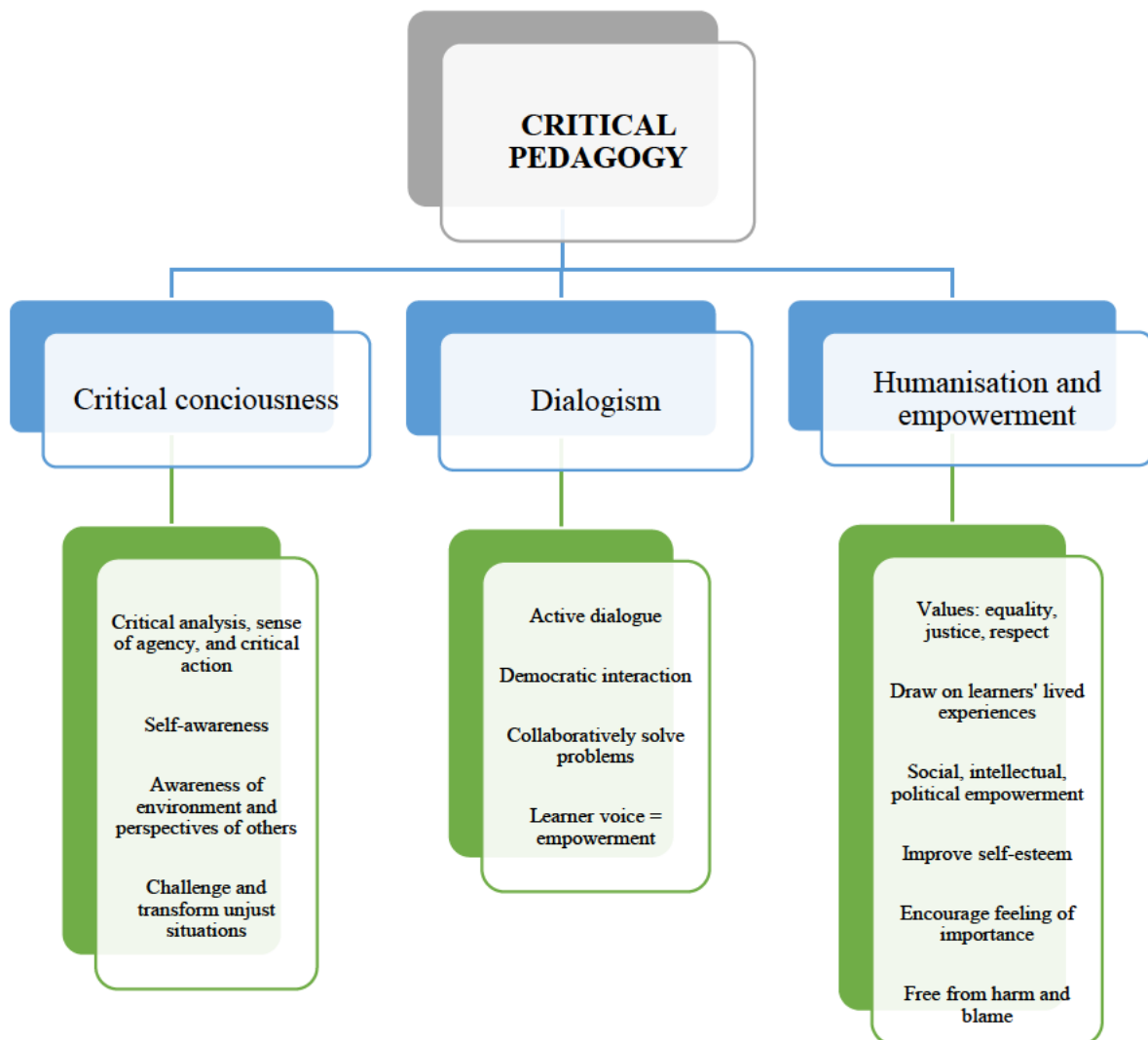
- Education enhances learners' views of reality
- Transformation is necessary in education
- Education has a political nature
- Empowerment is key in education
- Education should be based on dialogue

In terms of the abovementioned principles, the learners in my study who wanted their English language competence and motivation for learning to be enhanced needed to be made aware of their strengths and weaknesses when learning the language, as well as the reasons for these. This was only possible through constant communication (dialogue) and reflection that their realities were made visible.

Thus, the ELC was a means of transforming their realities by using innovative and unconventional activities, that were not easy to conduct in their overcrowded English classrooms, to provide them with opportunities to be involved in their own learning in terms of what they wanted or needed to learn and how they would like to learn it. This gave them a voice that they did not have before in terms of curriculum design and implementation at the school and encouraged active participation that was often lacking in an often overcrowded English classroom. By allowing them a different platform to voice their opinions, their challenges were better understood, and we were able to address their concerns and ultimately enhance their learning of English.

The main concepts of critical pedagogy, as I used them in my study, are presented in the diagram below and are then unpacked in the following section.

Figure 2.1: Main concepts of critical pedagogy



2.2.2. Critical consciousness

Critical pedagogy has been criticised “for not having a model for classroom implementation” (Abraham, 2014, p. 1). However, Abraham argues that despite this criticism, critical pedagogy implemented in education has the ability to empower those involved in the education sector, to enhance their conscientisation about society’s injustices and participate in changing them. Abraham further notes that this can occur through the transformation of the classroom, teacher, learner and the larger society.

Critical consciousness (also referred to as ‘conscientisation’) is an important aspect of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1999). Critical consciousness refers to being able to identify situations of

inequality and commit oneself to act against them (El-Amin et al., 2017). It is a developmental process where individuals are made aware of oppressive systems and where they are encouraged to engage with practices that espouse transformation, a sense of humanness, and democracy (Armitage, 2013; Squire, 2016).

Critical consciousness is necessary for liberation from inequity (Jemal, 2017). It is where people do not just accept reality for what it is, but are able to achieve awareness and the ability to change or transform those realities (Armitage, 2013). Abraham (2014) maintains that critical consciousness allows one to move from resistance to active agency by first understanding the flaws in society that need to be transformed. Thus, conscientisation follows the action against oppression (Freire, 2005; Squire, 2016). If people do not realise unequal practices or do not act against oppression, then it will be perpetuated (Jemal, 2017).

After working with peasants in Brazil and Chile, Freire challenged the “traditional adult literacy programmes” that propagated that “peasants were seen as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge” and termed this ‘banking education’ (Freire as cited in Vargas, 2019, p. 16). In the traditional banking approach, learners passively received knowledge from teachers who were known to be the ones who had all the answers; learners merely repeated knowledge that they memorised (Freire, 1970). The banking method where the teacher simply teaches learners the facts, prevents conscientisation (McDonough, 2015). The more learners internalise their passiveness, and depend on the knowledge imparted to them by the teacher, the less developed their critical consciousness will be (Freire, 1970). So, as transformative intellectuals, teachers ought to problematize the curriculum instead of “passively applying” it (Vargas, 2019, p. 23).

As much as we have theoretically moved away from the banking education system through the use of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) that encourages a learner-centred model, second language learners in my school still largely listen to the teacher and passively receive the knowledge imparted. From my teaching experience, I recognise that most of the learners in the English classroom are shy to ask questions or are afraid to because of the fear of being mocked by their peers, or because of the inability to express themselves effectively because of their lack of proficiency in the language, especially at grade 8 and 9 levels. I believe this contributes to learners’ inadequate academic performance in English as a whole at the school, especially in these grades. Thus, they needed a more enabling environment in which their critical consciousness may be raised.

The concept of critical consciousness is appropriate for this study as it is an integral concept underpinning language teaching and learning that aims to empower learners by exposing them to a learning environment in which they can question the problems they face, allowing them to learn critical thinking and becoming more active; as a result, they are able to be critically conscious of life conditions and are equipped to make the desired changes for a more just society (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011; Mahmoudi et al., 2014; Tabrizi & Rideout, 2017) as it enhances the ability to solve problems (Doughty, 2016). Furthermore, since the classroom is considered the ideal space for critical pedagogy to manifest, learners will be allowed to engage in knowledge construction instead of being passive recipients of the knowledge transmitted by the teacher; learners are considered active participants in the teaching and learning process (Sarroub & Quadros, 2015; Rajesh, 2014; Izadinia, 2011; Camangian, 2015).

Freire (as cited in El-Amin et al., 2017) argued that inequality could be ceaseless if people do not possess the ability to analyse their social situations; a cycle of conscientisation development was thus created that included gaining knowledge about the things that create inequality (*critical analysis*), developing the necessary capacity and power (*sense of agency*), and committing to acting towards the transformation of the situations that are seen as oppressive (*critical action*).

On the other hand, Cipolle (as cited in Alexander and Schlemmer, 2017, p. 8) noted “four dimensions of critical consciousness development.” These elements were enhanced by Alexander and Schlemmer (2017) by including indicators for each. Some of these enhancements are represented in Table 2.1.

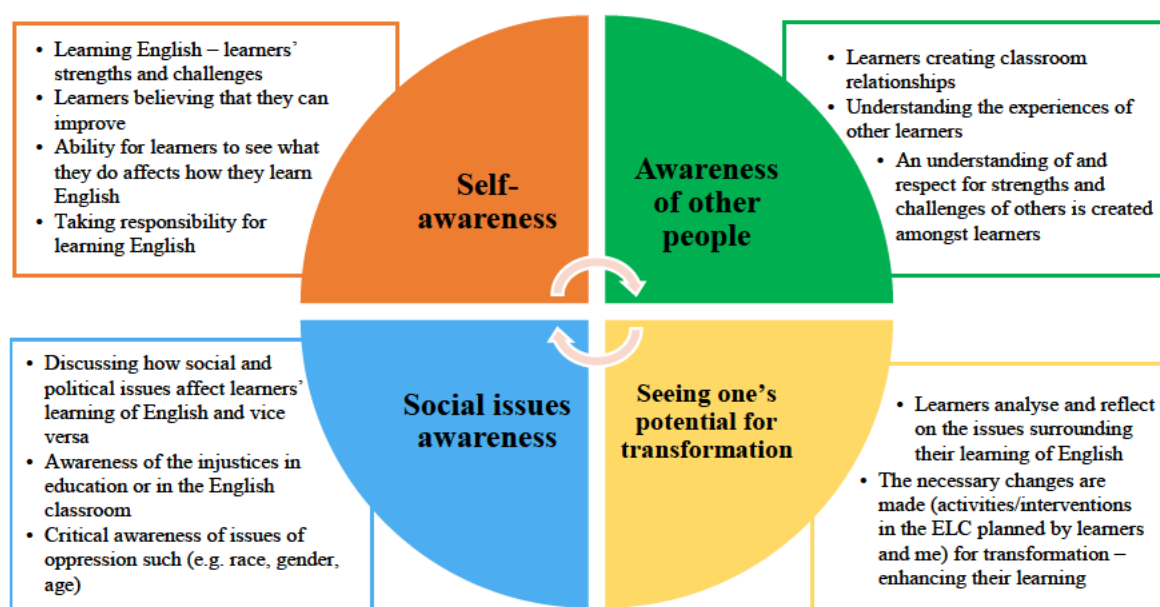
Table 2.1: Dimensions and indicators of critical consciousness development

(adapted from Alexander & Schlemmer, 2017, p. 9)

Dimension	Indicators
Self-awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transformation in awareness of strengths and challenges• Ability to sense the significance of actions• Developing a sense of competency and efficacy• Believing that change is possible• Fulfilling leadership roles• Sense of civic responsibility and moral obligation
Awareness of other people	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing relationships with people with differing life experiences• Understanding of ethnic or racial issues• Overcoming the fear of the unknown• Empathetic and compassionate towards others
Social issues awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dialogue about socio-political issues• Developing critical views of the world• Enhanced understanding of power and injustice in institutions
Seeing one's potential for transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion and analyses of social issues and embarking on effecting necessary changes• Commitment to the betterment of society

How each of the four dimensions resonated with my study is portrayed in the figure below.

Figure 2.2: Visual representation of how the dimensions and indicators of critical consciousness development resonated with my study



Fostering learners' critical consciousness is crucial as it enhances academic and social change (El-Amin et al., 2017) and the aim of my study was to enhance learners' language competence and empower learners to take responsibility for their language learning. Therefore, the above dimensions and indicators served as a guide for developing the critical consciousness of the English language learners in my study and were incorporated into the activities they engaged with in the ELC. These are described below:

- In terms of *self-awareness*, learners created mind-maps before the commencement of the first cycle to document their strengths and weaknesses so they were able to see what they needed help with and how they were also going to take responsibility for transforming their challenges with English, as both the teacher and learner are responsible for how English is learnt.
- Awareness of other people* resonated in the English language club as learners were exposed to an environment where they were able to share and understand experiences and challenges without fear of judgment which was an issue that occurred in most classrooms.

As a result, learners built a relationship with one another and felt comfortable working on their challenges together.

- The above two dimensions of critical consciousness allowed for learners to see their *potential for transformation* by analysing and reflecting on the issues that impacted their learning; then, the necessary changes were able to be made through the club's interventions that were planned by learners and me to enhance their learning accordingly.
- *Social issues awareness* was also evident in learners' analysis of their challenges learning English as they discussed how factors influence their learning. During discussions and activities, social issues relating to race, gender and age were dealt with as they arose.

Ultimately, critical consciousness can lead to enhanced engagement with and achievement in academics (Diemer et al., 2016; El-Amin et al., 2017). This notion is in keeping with my study as the purpose was to enhance learners' English language competence. Thus, the manifestation of critical consciousness in the ELC through the various activities is necessary because when critical consciousness is developed in individuals and they are encouraged to exercise it, they have the agency to question what goes on around them (Squire, 2016). For Freire, human agency is imperative to challenge exclusion and become transformative individuals (Ramis, 2018). In my study, learners were encouraged to continuously question and reflect on which activities and experiences helped them learn better and how, and what they would like to change to enhance their language learning and motivation as a whole.

Freire thought thoroughly about promoting one's critical consciousness for a sense of liberation (Shih, 2018). "Critical consciousness helps students understand that what they are learning is not only useful to them but also for a larger social purpose" (Camangian, 2015, p. 427) which is a result of being aware of their social environments (Halabsaz & Hedayati, 2016). It allows them to be more capable of transforming their unjust situations due to the self-awareness developed using such a critical pedagogy (Mahmoudi et al., 2014). Critical consciousness allows individuals to look at life critically and question the expectations that are passed on by oppressors who have power over them; as a result, this allows individuals to take control over their lives and become aware of their dispositions to liberate and take control through their challenging of practices that may be seen as oppressive (Abrahams, 2005; Armitage, 2013). In this study, this notion has been addressed by learners being part of the ELC in terms of designing the activities that enhanced their learning by discussing teaching and learning

methods that were more effective for them, instead of just being provided with activities by the teacher (who is seen as the person in power in a classroom context).

It must, however, be borne in mind that as much as the classroom is an opportunity for exposure to a range of perspectives about the world, not all learners may be willing to immediately accept it and this may be considered a limitation of critical pedagogy; therefore, teachers need to be strategic in addressing this challenge, particularly while trying to promote a critical perspective in oppressive environments (Chun & Morgan, 2019). For example, designing projects and assignments to examine local practices may be implemented; such project-based learning opportunities have significant transformative potential (Chun & Morgan, 2019).

In my study, the characteristics of critical consciousness as outlined above were embedded in the ELC, where learners were part of the planning and implementing of activities to improve not only their English learning but to empower them to be responsible for their own learning by thinking critically about their strengths and weaknesses related to the learning of the language. By questioning what works and does not work for them in the ELC, or in the English classroom, learners learnt critical thinking and developed critical consciousness which allowed them to be aware of what can be done to change their situation when it comes to learning the language (Abrahams, 2005; Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011; Riasati & Mollaei, 2012; Camangian, 2015). Thus, this act encourages a transformative teaching and learning process and helps to develop learners to be active citizens. Additionally, Leather (as cited in Asakereh & Weisi, 2018) stressed the importance of reading to raise learners' awareness of the various forms of inequality in society. Since the ELC included a reading cycle within the study, learners' critical consciousness about race, gender and ageism was raised through a range of reading activities and discussions along with the discrimination, inequalities and stereotypes that are attached to these issues.

However, another challenge with the notion of conscientisation is that being made critically conscious of issues of social justice may evoke responses from learners that may sometimes be emotionally complex (Vargas, 2019). Resultantly, learners may react with anger or choose to avoid situations of transformation (Zembylas as cited in Vargas, 2019). However, it is advised that a teacher should not compel a learner to voice their experiences if they are uncomfortable; rather, other methods may be used to encourage participation such as writing in journals or small group work tasks (Zimmerman as cited in Vargas, 2019). The ELC in my study

considered learners' individual, written reflective pieces to cater for those who may have felt unwilling to share something in larger group sessions.

Overall critical consciousness has two components, namely reflection and action; the deeper the reflection, the greater the action (Jemal, 2017). Freire (as cited in Armitage, 2013) argues that conscientisation is effectively acquired through dialogue and critical reflection, which will be discussed subsequently.

2.2.3. Dialogism

One of the important facets of critical pedagogy that Freire put forward is that learners need to be provided with opportunities to engage in dialogue, considered an act of freedom (Jackson, 2017). Freire believed that it is most effective to use the dialogic approach, identified as liberating and emancipatory, to expose learners' realities and free them from oppression (Law, 2015). Aiming for a humanised world is possible through dialogue (Nouri & Sajjadi, 2014) as "the power of word" enables one to become aware of the instances that will help one to move away from oppression (Freire as cited in Ramis, 2018, p. 280).

Dialogue based on the existence of inequality is a significant form of conscientisation; raising consciousness involves investigative ways of thinking which occurs during dialogue (Jemal, 2017). However, dialogue is not just a conversation or a discussion (Shudak, 2014), neither is it a mere discussion where everyone takes turns to speak (Halabi, 2017). Dialogism is the interaction between the teacher and learner and amongst learners who create new knowledge, share their personal experiences which exposes them to their realities and skills to analyse and challenge them to cause change (Halabi, 2017). It was important, therefore, for me as a teacher of English to have understood that learners' experiences differ and I needed to acknowledge all experiences in order for transformation to occur. Dialogue between teachers and learners, therefore, promotes critical consciousness as it contains reflection and action (Shih, 2018) and is essential for the implementation of critical pedagogy in the classroom (Shokouhi & Pashaie, 2015).

The concept of dialogism, a key tenet of critical pedagogy, is in contrast to banking education. Critical pedagogy was critiqued for this prospect not materialising, leading to discomfort for those in education (Guilherme, 2017). However, Freire addressed the issue of society's

transformation being a challenging process by pointing out that at the time banking education formed the foundation of teaching and learning which contradicted the aims of critical pedagogy (Guilherme, 2017).

In the traditional banking approach, learners were silenced and avoided dialogue as it was felt that what learners said was not considered important, cultivating oppression and dehumanisation in the classroom (Shokouhi & Pashaie, 2015). Freire, thus, developed an alternative approach to education that included dialogue and critical thinking (Guilherme, 2017) that acknowledged the “creative power” of learners (Vargas, 2019, p. 17). In Freire’s critical pedagogy, the banking education model where teachers know everything and learners merely receive information and repeat it is challenged. Rather, various scholars (Freire, 1970; Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011; Mazdaee & Maftoon, 2012; Rajesh, 2014; Mahmoudi et al., 2014; Vandeyar & Swart, 2016; Vargas, 2019) have reported that knowledge is created through active dialogue and developed through discussion amongst all those involved in the teaching and learning process, thus removing the teacher as the ultimate source of power and emancipating learners by developing their intellect in a more democratic way. This approach is known as ‘problem-posing education’ (Nouri & Sajjadi, 2014).

Problem-posing education is a learner-centred approach where learners “raise problems of the social world” (Kim & Pollard, 2017, p. 54). In my study, learners discussed and addressed the issues of learning English in the conventional classroom that they felt stifled their learning. Therefore, the ELC considered activities that addressed this problem. While the banking approach stifled creativity, problem-posing education encourages the discovering of realities and raises learners’ consciousness and critical thinking; it is then dependent on dialogue where both learners and the teacher participates (Nouri & Sajjadi, 2014).

Conscientisation and dialogue reduces oppression and disrupts power relations, which are key aims of critical pedagogy (Cooper, 2016) as it provides the opportunity for teachers and learners to share their experiences freely, “in a non-hierarchical manner” (Zare-Behtash et al., 2017, p. 210) where the teacher is not seen as having power over learners or having a different level of importance or status as compared to learners. One of the key problems with dialogue, however, is that learners’ opinions may not be equally heard “as some of them are imposed over the others due to their eloquence” (Chlapoutaki & Dinas, 2016, p. 91). I kept this in mind while engaging with learners in the ELC and in my own classroom teaching by ensuring that I

did not pay attention only to those who were more proficient in the language, or those who were able to express themselves better. Rather, I encouraged such learners to assist others and ensured that they were also participating in discussions by probing and questioning if I noticed a reluctance to speak. It was also significant to note that trust was important for dialogue to occur (Shudak, 2014); therefore, learners in my study needed to be made aware that nothing they shared would be used against them or their results in English and that all contributions were valued.

However, Freire (as cited in Vargas, 2019) noted that this dialogic practice does not place learners and teachers on the same platform; in a classroom that fosters critical pedagogy, the teacher and learners are considered equal, but they have different roles. Also, there is a difference “between authority and authoritarianism”, where the first is a teacher’s responsibility as a learning facilitator and the other is considered to be oppressive (Shor & Freire as cited in Vargas, 2019, p. 18). In my study, both the learners and I were involved in the activities of the ELC and discussed these along the way, though I (as facilitator) was the one to check and approve the relevance of their choice of activities against their English language learning needs. Thus, learners and I were considered equal, but I kept the authority as the teacher who facilitated the activities accordingly to enhance their learning of English.

Therefore, the principle of engaging in dialogue acts as a premise for empowering learners, involving them in their learning – a fundamental principle in education as a whole (Abrahams, 2005; Mazdaee & Maftoon, 2012; Rajesh, 2014). For that reason, it is crucial that teachers and learners engage in dialogue (Bohorquez, 2012) and should, together, be actively involved in meaning construction (Freire, 1970). Giving learners an active voice in the teaching and learning process enables the challenging of injustices (Vargas, 2019). Through dialogue, learners are asked questions, are involved in the process, and are provided with the opportunity to contribute to the lesson and as a result are involved in changing their approach to the learning of English (Mazdaee & Maftoon, 2012; Camangian, 2015; Rajesh, 2014).

Thus, this dialogic interaction allows for learners’ voices to be heard, encourages them to communicate their feelings and display respect for the opinions of others (Halabsaz & Hedayati, 2016). By talking and listening, sharing ideas, and approaching problems collaboratively, knowledge can be created and re-created; this collaborative social relation is considered to be democratic and speaks directly to the aim of education (Armitage, 2013;

Cooper, 2016). Additionally, a sense of authority is developed as learners share their experiences with one another (Tabrizi & Rideout, 2017). Shih (2018, p. 232) extends the concept of dialogue by indicating that it is not a “hostile argument” but needs to contain elements such as hope, humility, love, critical thinking, faith, and humour, which are also some of the attributes of a transformative intellectual (Giroux, 2009; Nouri & Sajjadi, 2014; Vandeyar & Swart, 2016; Shih, 2018). This teacher-learner interaction also encourages personal and social development (Halabsaz & Hedayati, 2016). These qualities were embedded in the strategies to enhance learning in the ELC, for example by focusing on the challenges the learners were facing, instead of the answer they may have gotten wrong – this provided them with the hope and faith they needed to improve their language learning. Additionally, the fun group activities that they participated in almost always led to laughter which decreased anxiety while learning.

However, due to being based on issues that may be considered sensitive by some, one of the limitations of critical pedagogy is that there may be resistance from learners; however, these disagreements must be seen as an opportunity to thoroughly understand learners’ perceptions, thereby providing the platform to discuss and reflect on ideas for a mutual understanding (Zare-Behtash et al., 2017). The only form of resistance came from Cindy in this study who refused to participate in the spelling competition initially, but this was based on her fear of spelling which was alleviated by the spelling activity on the beach. Furthermore, despite the presence of disagreements, this forms the dialogic relationship that is the foundation of critical consciousness; any debate reveals that learners are voicing opinions, and these need to be encouraged as it will develop critical consciousness when issues are understood and resolved (Zare-Behtash et al., 2017).

Critical pedagogy is also criticised for not indicating the ways in which to deal with the various power relations that exist in schools and it has been questioned whether effective dialogic co-operation can manifest in classrooms unhindered by power relations that may be seen as unequal (Vargas, 2019). Moreover, engaging in dialogue and debate about injustices and feelings of oppression may result in expressions of racist or biased comments by learners, but these need to be taken as opportunities to start a discussion. The reason for this is because resistance is necessary in critical pedagogy as it allows the learners to express themselves without censoring their feelings, thereby dealing with suppressed issues in the process (Zare-Behtash et al., 2017). In my study, there was a range of reflective activities, from individual

interviews to written reflections and group discussions which allowed learners to express themselves without fear. These will be discussed in detail in the analyses chapters.

Furthermore, while the dialogic approach may be difficult to implement, learners may be enriched when exposed to the principles of dialogue; the importance of respect for one another, the range of knowledge brought into the classroom and being open to different perspectives being shared that can be brought to the learners' attention through dialogue that they may not have been made aware of in other ways (Halabi, 2017). A dialogic form, therefore, is important for "critical and active language learning" and learners' active participation in the classroom can be enhanced through dialogue, allowing for platforms in which learners are able to solve problems (Halabsaz & Hedayati, 2016, p. 137).

In addition, for the effectiveness of critical pedagogy, learners must be given opportunities to question, discuss and debate learning materials provided to them (Tabrizi & Rideout, 2017). The learners in this study did have opportunities to reflect on the interventions used before planning the next set of interventions for the next cycle; they also showed interest in why certain activities were chosen over others and were very positive about the interventions that were not used in their classrooms prior to this study. Learners reflected on the methods of teaching English in my study and worked with me to come up with more favourable strategies to enhance their learning. What is important to consider is that education should involve action and reflection and not be solely an intellectual process; thus, reflective practices are an essential part of the process (Armitage, 2013). Since teachers have "enormous power in the classroom" (Masouleh & Jooneghani, 2013, p. 1840), my study gave way to social justice by creating a positive classroom environment and rapport with learners was established. If learners believe that the teacher cares, they will be more positive towards the learning process, thus regulating the power relationship (Masouleh & Jooneghani, 2013).

Reflection is a process that requires questioning, through dialogue, the personal and professional practices and the impact of these on everyone involved in the interaction (Armitage, 2013). Critical reflection encompasses the analysis of the relationship between one's personal context and the outside oppression, such as social, economic and political aspects, that may lead to some form of injustice (Jemal, 2017). The intention of dialogue is to develop critical thinking and reflection and motivate learners; this can be done through small group interventions to promote a sense of value amongst learners (Diemer et al., 2016). This is

important as critical thinking is a goal of education and is not confined to the classroom, but extends to real life (Halabsaz & Hedayati, 2016). Since oppression does exist in some forms in education, critical thinking needs to be encouraged to ensure a democratic society where individuals feel valued, have a sense of freedom and dignity, and feel heard (Mehta, 2017).

Reflection can take the form of a journal or class discussion (McDonough, 2015). Reflection, however, is not enough for transformation to occur; reflection needs to be coupled with a process of intervening (Jemal, 2017). In the same light, it is not enough to simply engage in dialogue without action as the act of reflection will also be excluded if there is no potential to act; therefore, one has to commit to the transformation process in order to overcome oppression (Freire as cited in Ramis, 2018).

Based on these conceptions, in my study, dialogue was encouraged during the activities and class discussions in the ELC as well as during interviews and reflective sessions where learners reflected on what they would like to learn and how, their journey through the different cycles, what helped them and what could be improved, instead of me merely planning and implementing activities on my own. This gave learners a voice that they did not have previously in many of their English, and other, classrooms.

2.2.4. Humanisation and empowerment

Another important principle of critical pedagogy is that of humanisation (Rajesh, 2014; Camangian, 2015). Humanisation derives from Freire's education for liberation, as he proposed an alternative approach to the traditional banking method which allowed learners to question, thus becoming humanised (Masouleh & Jooneghani, 2013). Humanising pedagogies are founded on aspects such as "compassion, care, respect, and love for others, their identities, histories, and experiences" (Delport, 2016, p. 8).

"Apartheid policies predestined the Black majority to servitude and dehumanization" (Perumal, 2014, p. 1). Humanising pedagogies, therefore, help learners to deal with their "unresolved historical grief" (Camangian, 2015, p. 426). Freire noted that it was necessary for people to challenge oppressive systems to gain back their humanity (Jemal, 2017). In order for education to function well, generous, moral and humble relationships are essential (Freire as cited in Abraham, 2014).

In my study, the idea of an oppressive system refers to English being the language in power as it is the language of teaching and learning at the school in which the study was conducted. Additionally, the lack of learners' choice of learning materials and methods in the conventional English language classrooms, resulted in their voices being silenced and ultimately led to their fear of the language, is also considered oppression.

Teachers ought to make their classrooms humane (Shudak, 2014). Critical reflection and action against oppression, or critical consciousness as a whole, facilitate liberation and humanness (Zembylas, 2018). The concept of humanisation is important for teachers who want to transform their contexts by developing values such as equality, justice and respect (Bohorquez, 2012). Children need to be given the opportunities to become responsible adults; the development of children's values is most likely to happen at school where they are taught values (Masote, 2016). However, learners are not the only ones that need to be humanised.

In order for learners to reach humanisation, teachers also need to be humanised (Masouleh & Jooneghani, 2013). Grundy (as cited in Masouleh & Jooneghani, 2013, p. 1838) noted that the approach to humanisation includes respect for learners and their autonomy and knowledge, acknowledging the emotional nature of learning, teaching in a way that is "enabling" which means that teachers are facilitators or enablers who encourage learners' self-discovery rather than being instructors who just impart knowledge. Teachers should adopt a range of qualities (some of which are represented in the figure below) in order to create humanising education (Freire as cited in Law, 2015).

Figure 2.3: The Freirean “indispensable qualities” of teachers

(adapted from Law, 2015, p. 29)

Humility	Joy of living	Decisiveness	Security
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-confidence • Self-respect • Respecting others • Listening to others without opposing views 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overcoming challenges • Embracing life • Defining humanity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate teacher decisions • Avoiding irresponsible practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honesty in terms of ethics • Competence • Clear vision: Political goals

The above qualities move away from the traditional teaching curricula, texts and methods and concentrate on human values (Law, 2015). In the South African context, the Constitution is used to underpin the idea of values; school governance and leadership in South Africa are guided by the same set of values stipulated in the Constitution, some of which are democracy, respect, equality, social justice and human dignity. These values need to be espoused in the school context (Department of Education, 2011).

The critical pedagogy is suitable for such attempts, as it is grounded in principles of ethics and morals that aim to reduce suffering and challenges (Perumal, 2014), thus aiming to empower and humanise learners (Tabrizi & Rideout, 2017). In view of the fact that teachers are responsible for fostering a pedagogy that will promote humanness and creating environments in which this may be effective (Zembylas, 2018), the qualities of teachers as portrayed above guided me as the English teacher and co-ordinator of activities in the ELC, making me aware of what I should do and how I should act as a teacher who intended to enhance learners’ language learning and empower them as English language learners by making the appropriate decisions.

It must be noted, however, that the oppressed are not the only ones who need to be humanised; the oppressor should also be liberated (Freire as cited in Bacon, 2015). Individuals that are made to confront their own privileges may resist critical pedagogy; therefore, they need to be encouraged to be in solidarity with the oppressed group, resulting in humanisation (Bacon, 2015). I could be considered as ‘privileged’ in my English classroom or the ELC as English is my home language and I am the teacher, thereby giving me power in the educational context

or in the study as a whole. Confronting my own privileges also requires regular honest reflection of my own biases and assumptions when it comes to teaching English. However, by conducting the study and showing learners through the ELC, that I was willing to listen to their challenges and that they were an integral part of the planning of activities, challenged this sense of power on my part. It also reinforced that I was in solidarity with them.

In light of the above, Bartolomé (as cited in Law, 2015) noted two approaches to humanisation that allows learners to be part of the teaching and learning process and respect their views, history, and realities. This communication or dialogic interaction encourages a sense of humanity amongst the learners (Matusov, 2009). Accessing humanity of this nature requires eliciting learners' prior knowledge and values (Bacon, 2015). A humanising pedagogy draws on learners' experiences and empowers them socially, emotionally, intellectually, and politically to convey knowledge, attitudes and skills they require to challenge the injustices in society (Riasati & Mollaei, 2012; Camangian, 2015). The fundamental purpose of education is to prepare learners to improve society (Halabsaz & Hedayati, 2016).

Furthermore, teachers who adopt critical pedagogy need to be aware of their roles in the classroom in empowering learners in order to avoid perpetuating inequality and unjust practices (Tabrizi & Rideout, 2017). An important factor that positively impacts the humanisation process within English language teaching is the language adopted by teachers that will essentially leave a permanent "impact on the psyche" of a learner (Masouleh & Jooneghani, 2013, p. 1841). This was important to consider in the ELC and in my teaching as the impact I made on learners would be carried by them to the next grade; the way their attitudes towards the language are moulded is a significant learning factor in their next grades with other teachers. More importantly, schools are not supposed to harm learners or blame them for their weaknesses and failures; rather, all problems that learners face need to be questioned and dealt with democratically, for the betterment of the learners' futures and to give learners a voice that they never had before (Rajesh, 2014). The learner is, thus, empowered because of the knowledge that s/he has a voice and that her/his voice can be exercised (Vandeyar & Swart, 2016). This voice is important to be given to those who were previously excluded from engaging in dialogue or participating in the classroom so that they are able to transform the oppressive situations they find themselves in (Ramis, 2018). It must be noted that 'voice' here is not restricted to a verbal nature, but can extend to participating actively in making decisions or influencing change.

Learners need to feel heard and important, and it is okay for them to be wrong or make mistakes (Bohorquez, 2012). However, implementing critical pedagogy in this regard proves to be a difficult task as obstacles may come from those who think that the pedagogy puts their dominance at risk; obstacles may also come from those who have conflicting perspectives or from those who may not accept the approach (Chlapoutaki & Dinas, 2016; Zare-Behtash et al., 2017). Though, this limitation has been positively interpreted by Chlapoutaki and Dinas (2016). They suggest that learners' doubts may be construed "as an indication of a realistic consciousness of social conditions" and this is the foundation of proceeding to decisions about learning that can be considered realistic (Belzer as cited in Chlapoutaki & Dinas, 2016, p. 90).

The ELC considered the humanising tenet by fostering a safe, comfortable and nurturing environment that encouraged learner participation and improved self-esteem when it came to the learning of the language, thus attempting to alleviate fear and feelings of inferiority. Learners were given reassurances that it was a safe space where they could make mistakes and learn from them, learn from one another and target issues they felt they were not able to in their classrooms. The environment created in the ELC allowed learners to feel free to learn without fear of being mocked by others; rather, they knew that everyone involved had the same aim – to enhance their learning of English – and this platform was, thus, humanising.

2.2.5. The roles of the learner and teacher in critical pedagogy

Although critical pedagogy posits that learners and teachers need to be considered equal, each has different roles to play during the implementation of the pedagogy that will contribute to its successful enactment.

One of the key roles of learners in critical pedagogy is to be autonomous individuals who are not merely filled with knowledge but to question and analyse not only what they are learning in the classroom but also what is happening in their societies; for example, in the unscramble the words competition, there were pictures that portrayed gender stereotypes, which learners pointed out: there was a female secretary and hairdresser, and there was a male painter and doctor, to name a few. Such conversations are necessary to develop themselves and better their societies by challenging oppression, thus creating social change (Izadinia, 2011; McLaren et al. as cited in Mahmoudi et al., 2014).

Learners also need to contribute to curricula and choose reading materials, justify and motivate their ideas, modify teaching and learning procedures, and learn how to change their lives through critical reflection (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011). An advantage of critical pedagogy in this regard is that it aims to provide opportunities for second language learners to challenge, make changes and take risks in and out of the classroom (Halabsaz & Hedayati, 2016). These roles of the learner speak directly to my study as it involves second language learners who appear to have challenges learning English, but that which were addressed through the introduction of the ELC that included activities that encouraged learners to challenge their fears of learning by making the necessary changes to improve.

Furthermore, both teachers and learners learn and the teacher becomes the facilitator who adopts a listening role (Bohorquez, 2012).

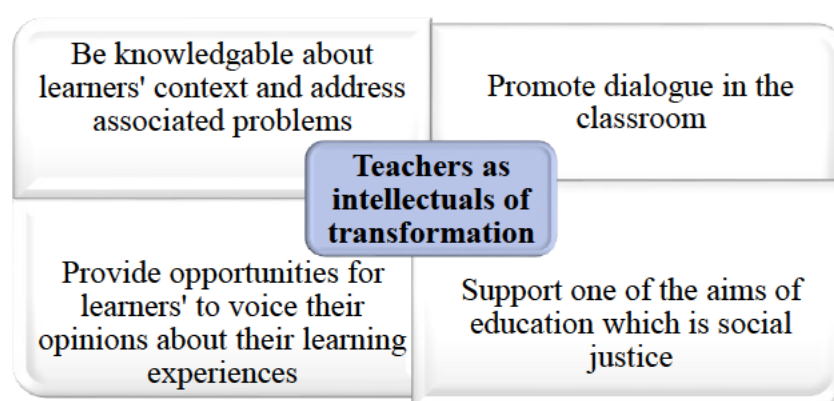
Critical pedagogy demands engaged and imaginative teachers who aren't afraid of leaving their comfort zones and taking risks in the classroom. Critical pedagogy demands teachers who are committed to their fields, teachers who will follow developments inside and outside their subject matter. Critical pedagogy demands teachers who will not knowingly fool themselves and their students (Shokouhi & Pashaie, 2015, p. 207).

In other words, teachers need to go further than the curriculum by extending learners' knowledge not only to meet curriculum demands but to extend outside the classroom. Teachers, therefore, need to relate what they teach to social issues in order to create aspirations for learners to transform society and make it a better place (Giroux & Giroux as cited in Abraham, 2014). Going further than the curriculum does not necessarily mean extra work; it could mean that you teach using methods that are more suitable for the type of learners in your classroom, thereby enhancing their language learning without having to repeat a lesson or going back to basic concepts. For example, in my study, writing was done outside the classroom (still within the school boundaries) but with snacks that learners brought to the lesson, which gave it a picnic feel – this encouraged their writing as it eliminated the stress of the classroom as it was a more comfortable environment for them. Having the same classroom activities on the school grounds, for example, allowed my learners to challenge and transform the idea that learning is more effective within classroom walls, which seemed to have been the culture at the school.

Perhaps some teachers do not completely understand the concept of ‘going further’ and therefore might avoid it. Going further than the curriculum is essential to ensure that learners are aware of the unjust situations they find themselves in and that teachers equip learners with the necessary skills to challenge and change these situations for the betterment of themselves and their societies, no matter how sensitive and uncomfortable the situation may be. Humanisation, therefore, involves recognising learners’ varying identities and knowledge, highlighting the crucial element of classroom participation (Fataar as cited in Zembylas, 2018).

Figure 2.4: Roles of teachers as transformative intellectuals

(adapted from Giroux, as cited in Vargas, 2019).



The role of the teacher is, thus, to shift towards a more liberating education where teachers do not provide all the knowledge, or where learners are not passive recipients of knowledge, but those who engage actively through dialogue with their teachers and think about the issues in reality, and are involved in the construction of knowledge in the classroom (Bohorquez, 2012; Batker et al., 2017; Sarroub & Quadros, 2015; Asakereh & Weisi, 2018). For this to occur, teachers need to have a thorough knowledge of the curriculum and be able to provide learners with opportunities to critically engage with the content being studied (Freire, 2009). Providing numerous opportunities for learners to share ideas and opinions will eradicate silence and oppression (Breunig as cited in Asakereh & Weisi, 2018). The various activities and interventions in the four cycles of this study, that focused on enhancing each skill of English, addressed the silence and oppression of learners that was evident in the English classroom.

The role of teachers is to be “problem posers” (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011, p. 80) who should create spaces in which learners can be empowered, by raising classroom awareness of issues

in society (Izadinia, 2011). Since Freire rejected education that espoused power relations where the teacher is more powerful than the learner, Freire encouraged teachers to transform the classroom into being more liberating where learners' views are heard and respected, and where teachers also learn from them, affecting a transformation of both teachers and their learners (Abrahams, 2005; Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011; Nouri & Sajjadi, 2014; Batker, Osucha, & Rohrbach, 2017). It also helps teachers to consider learners' contexts, what their interests are, and what and how they like to learn (Bohorquez, 2012).

Another role of the teacher in critical pedagogy is to help learners learn from each other and enable them to observe, question and challenge power relations in the classroom; to do this, teachers should create a classroom environment that allows learners to become active agents and develop critical consciousness in order to understand the issue of power and manipulation that interrupts society, causing inequality and injustice (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011; Sarroub & Quadros, 2015). Thus, teachers need to train learners to be critical thinkers and responsible for their own learning where they are encouraged to think and how to think, but not what to think (Halabsaz & Hedayati, 2016; Asakereh & Weisi, 2018).

Additionally, the teacher's role is to be a reflective practitioner who engages in self-reflection, questioning the position of authority and how it may influence learning (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011). This allows teachers to be transformative intellectuals who use the reflections to inform their own practices in order for making meaningful changes in education (Bohorquez, 2012; Vandeyar and Swart, 2016). In terms of reflection, teachers should also assist learners to reflect on their own problems and prepare them for using English (Asakereh & Weisi, 2018). This was crucial in my study as both the learners and I reflected on each cycle and worked collaboratively on solving the issues that remained in terms of learning English, thus planning the next cycle accordingly to address these issues.

Vandeyar and Swart (2016, p. 146) extend the abovementioned roles of a teacher by adding that passion and enthusiasm for teaching, learning, and for learners "is contagious" and that "critical pedagogy can be referred to as a pedagogy of love." The implication is that teachers should love who they are teaching, otherwise the opportunity to facilitate empowerment becomes futile (Vandeyar and Swart, 2016). This notion is extended by McDonough (2015) who argues that it is not possible to see how a pedagogy of love influences the teaching and learning process if it is only considered as an emotion; a pedagogy of love is not romantic or

sentimental but may be fostered as an action like in the case of dialogic engagement which should include aspects of love.

I needed to take the above concept of love and enthusiasm into careful consideration as I taught English in the classroom, and conducted the activities in the ELC. I was cautious of the impression I created and the feelings I imparted towards English and my learners. It must be noted, however, that this is not as easy as it seems (Allen & Rossatto, 2009).

As a result of heightened emotions and the hostile environment related to this subject matter in the classroom, teachers decided that it was a fatigable task to engage learners who fell under the privileged category; thus the critique of critical pedagogy is the question of whether it works with privileged learners and what the most effective approach is to transform their existing thinking (Allen & Rossatto, 2009). Fortunately, in my study, this was not a problem considering that all learners in the school are considered to require and themselves identify as requiring transformation and empowerment when it comes to the English language.

2.3. Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition with emphasis on the Affective Filter hypothesis

2.3.1. Overview

The second theory underpinning my study is Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition with emphasis on the Affective Filter hypothesis. The theory by Krashen, an American applied linguist, gave rise to various applications within English language teaching and provided an understanding of the principles of second language acquisition (Kakule, 2016). His theory has been enhanced over the years in his works (Lai & Wei, 2019). Though Brown critiques the theory for being "oversimplified" and claims "overstated" (Liu, 2015, p. 141) and McLaughlin argues that it lacks evidence and questions whether the hypotheses can be tested empirically for legitimacy (Liu, 2015), unlike other theories related to language learning, this theory is simple to understand and uses classroom examples (Abukhattala, 2013). Thus, it is very useful for novice teachers, especially, which is one of the motives for using it to inform my study. Furthermore, it is appropriate as it informs second language teaching and learning, and the participants in my study are second language learners of English.

Krashen's Theory explains second language acquisition and consists of five hypotheses and while I briefly outline the five hypotheses, the focus of this study is on the Affective Filter hypothesis, and that will be engaged with in more detail. However, I present the other hypotheses, and their critiques to contextualise Krashen's theory.

1. The Learning/Acquisition hypothesis – learners have two ways of developing second language skills: learning and acquisition (Abukhattala, 2013). *Learning* focuses on structure and learning language features and requires formal learning and a teacher; in classrooms, learning is prioritised and there is an emphasis on correct answers and correct use of grammar (Abukhattala, 2013; Kakule, 2016). On the other hand, *acquisition* refers to a subconscious process that concentrates on meaning and does not require a teacher. In reality, we are more concerned with meaning (Abukhattala, 2013; Liu, 2015; Nath, Mohamed, & Yamat, 2017).
2. Natural Order hypothesis – grammar is learnt in a specific order, regardless of how it may be presented. Language is taught in steps moving from simple to complex (Kakule, 2016). For example, the suffix '-ing' and the plural 's' in English are the first features learnt by learners. This hypothesis also accounts for errors made by learners (Nath et al., 2017). The Natural Order hypothesis is concerned with learning only and not acquisition as it focuses on grammatical structures (Kakule, 2016).
3. The Monitor hypothesis – learning is stored in a monitor (Abukhattala, 2013) that is in charge of editing and correcting errors in learners' output such as in speaking and writing; this is done by learners' knowledge of the rules of the language (Krashen, 1982; Kakule, 2016). The monitor is involved in learning and not acquisition, and it points out the inability of learners producing language without resorting to the monitor (Kakule, 2016).
4. Input hypothesis – a teacher needs to teach (input) before a learner can try or know how to use the language. Language can be best understood by receiving "comprehensible input" (Krashen, 1985, p.2). The input has to be relevant and interesting and go beyond what learners know for them to progress or improve (Abukhattala, 2013; Nath et al., 2017). "i + 1" is used where 'i' refers to learners' existing level, and '+1' refers to teachers providing materials that are a little beyond learners' existing level (Krashen, 1982; Liu, 2015; Xu,

2016; Kakule, 2016). The input provided by the teacher should enhance learners' linguistic competence (Kakule, 2016).

5. Affective Filter hypothesis – The Language Acquisition Device (LAD) is a conjectured organ of the brain that supposedly functions as a hereditary device used for learning languages; this LAD serves as a system entailing principles that children are born with and which assist in their learning of a language, the order in which this occurs, and the mistakes they make (Chomsky, 2009). Not all input reaches the LAD. Some input is filtered according to learners' moods (Abukhattala, 2013). Motivation and a relaxed environment open the filter and allow for more effective language acquisition (Krashen, 1982; Abukhattala, 2013; Kakule, 2016; Xu, 2016; Nath et al., 2017). It is this hypothesis that is used to underpin my study, together with critical pedagogy.

Two critiques based on the Learning/Acquisition hypothesis were noted by Kakule (2016, p. 331): Firstly, acquisition “underrates the validity of formal education which does not constitute the ultimate goal of language learning.” Moreover, formal learning and teaching are considered restrictive in that learning a language is an extensive process that classroom tasks cannot solely address. Secondly, the school setting is not sufficient in providing all materials of education – connecting with others and gathering experiences are also forms of teaching; both classroom and non-classroom environments impact learning as second language learning considers various environments. The school in which I teach does not consider this as it focuses mainly on ‘learning’ where learners depend on the presence of the teacher in the classroom. Therefore, the ELC addresses this gap in the school in order to incorporate different learning environments and activities that were not used to teach English before.

In terms of the Natural Order hypothesis, Zafar (as cited in Lai & Wei, 2019) holds that this hypothesis does not consider the influence of one's first language on acquiring a second; for example, second language learners of English who have different mother tongues may acquire language structures differently and it seems as if “this hypothesis ignores various factors in individual differences of second language learners by simplifying the process” (Lai & Wei, 2019, p. 1462).

The Input hypothesis was reviewed by Liu (2015, p. 139) who examined “three major arguments over the hypothesis, namely, the vagueness of the construct, the simplification of

input, and the overclaims that [Krashen] has made about the hypothesis.” In terms of vagueness, McLaughlin maintains that there is no clear definition by Krashen of what is meant by ‘comprehensible input’ (Liu, 2015). Furthermore, Krashen seems to offer conditions for how learners should progress but does not explain how a learner would move along a ‘stream of progress’ and therefore a lack of explanation of acquisition is evident in this case (Gregg as cited in Liu, 2015). More needs to be made known about how learners may move from comprehending input and acquiring the language successfully (Liu, 2015).

Though the above criticisms are discussed in various research studies as mentioned above, they have motivated second language acquisition scholars to “discover the mystery of second language acquisition” (Lai & Wei, 2019, p. 1463) thus adding to and developing research on this phenomenon.

Though Krashen’s five hypotheses were outlined, my study focuses mainly on the Input hypothesis, where I need to teach (input) before my learners can try or know how to use the language, and the Affective Filter hypothesis, which encourages teachers to create classroom environments that are favourable and motivate learners to participate in learning the language (Kakule, 2016) and is applicable to the aims of my study.

2.3.2. *Input hypothesis*

Language input plays a crucial role in filtering and is the main reason for language acquisition (Wang & Wu, 2020). Krashen defined a learner’s current understanding as ‘*i*’ and the next stage of developing the language as ‘*i + 1*’. So, the language that learners are exposed to should be just beyond what they already know (Chao, 2013). The input hypothesis states that it is necessary for a learner to move from ‘*i*’ to *i + 1* by focusing on the meaning and not only the form (Krashen, 1982). In other words, one only understands language when it goes beyond what one already knows.

Evidence supporting this hypothesis is provided using the notion of ‘caretaker speech’ which refers to simple talk that makes a child understand, and that which gets more complicated as a child grows (Krashen, 1982). In other words, parents do not talk to children the way they talk to adults and this allows children to move along one step at a time and a little at a time (Aljoundi, 2014).

In order to learn a new language effectively, the input material must be both interesting and relevant for learners to grasp the language. Additionally, teachers need to have multiple conversations with learners and a lot of reading for effective input to take place and to increase the chances of $i + 1$ (Aljoundi, 2014). Language inputs include things that you can hear, like radio and conversations and things that you can read, like reading books, textbooks and articles.

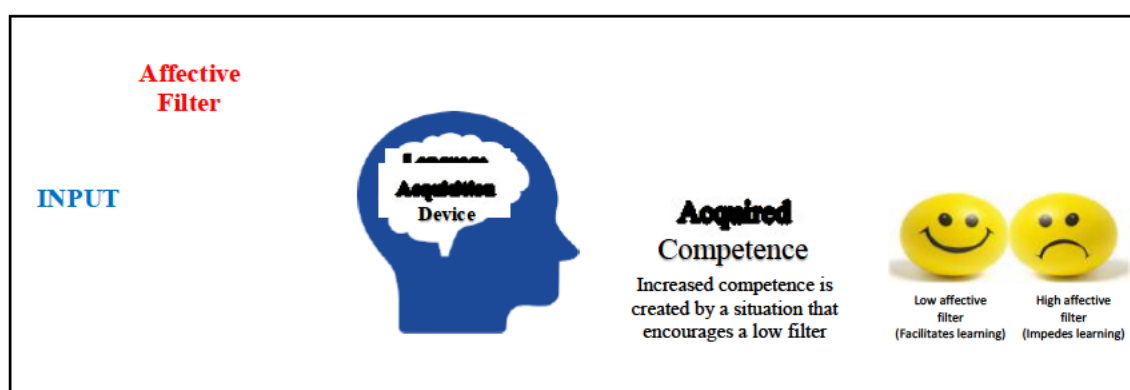
In my study, what learners already know was observed in the English classroom and through assessments, both formal and informal. The ELC was the means to enhance input by using existing knowledge and extending their knowledge and use of English through various fun and engaging activities to enhance English language skills such as listening and speaking, spelling, reading, and writing. The ELC was an extension to what was being done in the classroom and thus went beyond what students already learnt in the classroom, in a more relaxed environment, thus enhancing input.

2.3.3. *Affective Filter hypothesis*

The Affective Filter hypothesis refers to how factors relate to the process of second language acquisition (Krashen, 1982).

Figure 2.5: Operation of the affective filter

(adapted from Krashen, 1982)



The ‘affective filter’ prevents input for the acquisition of language; positive attitudes lead to ‘low’ affective filters (Dulay & Burt, 1977). There are three variables that relate to the success of second language acquisition, namely motivation, self-confidence and anxiety (Krashen, 1982; Du, 2009).

2.3.3.1. Anxiety

“Language anxiety is an affective experience and anxious state that describes the tension, anxiety, worry, and self-doubt of learners when learning and applying a second language” (Wang & Wu, 2020, p. 1235). Anxiety is associated negatively with language achievement (Teimouri, Goetze, & Plonsky, 2019, p. 363). Teimouri et al. (2019) also noted that younger learners are less able to deal with their anxiety and have challenges with coping with environmental factors that cause negative emotions.

There is an increase in anxiety from primary school learners to high school learners due to the educational context that might pose “new experiences and obligations” (Teimouri et al., 2019, p. 379). In my study, these experiences and obligations could refer to the amount of work related to English that needs to be done in grades 8 and 9 as compared to their primary school years, along with getting used to a new school where English is taught as a Home Language. Moreover, Etsenck (as cited in Zheng & Cheng, 2018) noted that there are two categories of anxiety: firstly, worry, for example comparing performance, thinking about failure and low confidence and secondly, emotionality which refers to feelings like dizziness, panic, nausea and heart rate. These aspects of anxiety can interrupt learning, taking of tests and thinking effectively (Covington as cited in Zheng & Cheng, 2018).

Acquisition of a language is not possible by only understanding messages; the LAD where input reaches depends on one being open to receiving the message (Abukhattala, 2013). The affective filter “is a mental block” that inhibits input (Nath et al., 2017, p. 1357). If the environment is stressful and creates anxiety, then less input reaches the LAD. A negative atmosphere impedes input and ultimately impedes learning; unfavourable learning conditions result in learners being unable to cope with the input (Abukhattala, 2013; Kakule, 2016), while optimum conditions elicit positive attitudes to learning (Kakule, 2016). In other words, the less the anxiety, the more learners will learn (Wang & Wu, 2020).

It is important to understand anxiety in order to provide the necessary support to second language learners (Zheng & Cheng, 2018). The idea is to eliminate a negative and fearful atmosphere by using joyful, relaxed and fun activities to motivate learners and lower anxiety as acquisition of a language is most effective with a lowered filter (Abukhattala, 2013; Kakule, 2016). Many learners would like their teachers to correct their mistakes, but ineffective corrective strategies adopted by teachers lead to learners’ anxiety (Wang & Wu, 2020). To

avoid this, learners could be encouraged to find their own errors and correct this, with help from the teacher.

Nath et al. (2017) argue for outdoor activities as most effective for lowering the affective filter. Groupwork and social activities are also important to lower anxiety and boost confidence (Du, 2009). Kakule (2016) notes that learners should be stimulated to make the effort and love learning through the use of competitions and rewards; this can be done by creating a relaxed atmosphere that is a place of joy and encourages togetherness, friendship and laughter instead of stress. These aspects were to enable second language acquisition.

2.3.3.2. Motivation

Motivation is one of the key factors influencing second language learning (Wang & Wu, 2020). Motivation refers to a learner's desire to learn while obtaining satisfaction while learning (Gardner as cited in Nath et al., 2017). Motivation is important in language learning and the higher the motivation the lower the affective filter, and the more successful learners are as more input reaches the LAD (Krashen, 1982; Du, 2009; Abukhattala, 2013).

Motivation is significant in learning a language (Mantiri, 2015; Alizadeh, 2016; Alshehri & Etherington, 2017). It provides learners with an aim to follow and offers direction which is important in learning a language as a lack thereof may result in challenges and learning is unlikely to occur (Alizadeh, 2016). In language learning, motivation may either lead to the success or failure of learners and plays a significant role in mastering the language (Mantiri, 2015; Dincer & Yesilyurt, 2017). Panagiotidis et al. (2018) agree with this notion and extend the view by indicating that both motivation and engagement are fundamental factors in learning a language, and that could yield better results.

Studies have shown that although some learners are enthusiastic about learning a language, other learners need teachers to stimulate, inspire, and challenge them in order for learning to be successful; thus, the teacher plays an important role in motivation (Mantiri, 2015; Alshehri & Etherington, 2017; Dincer & Yesilyurt, 2017). Therefore, teachers need to research methods to address their motivational processes and be aware of the impact of motivation and what changes to make to ensure motivation is increased (Alizadeh, 2016).

While some learners get inspired to learn through challenging activities, others need teachers' approval to be motivated (Mahdi, 2015). In a different vein, 458 participants in Saudi Arabia revealed in interviews and questionnaires that learners are more concerned with the social aspects of motivational strategies such as participating in the classroom and being involved and interacting with one another (Alshehri & Etherington, 2017). Mahdi (2015) notes, however, that it is challenging to get learners to participate in speaking classes and such may only be effective in a setting where learners are able to communicate effectively in English; nonetheless, enhancing communicative competence is an aim of students studying English (Mahdi, 2015).

To address the problem above, teachers' strategies for encouraging learners to speak include carefully listening to them, conducting appropriate tasks, being aware of strengths, weaknesses and progress of learners, encouraging classroom participation, providing necessary feedback, and instilling respect and freedom of expressing opinions (Dincer & Yesilyurt, 2017). Furthermore, to cater for reluctant learners, self-assessment strategies may be used, such as a questionnaire, where they are ultimately motivated to share their strengths and weaknesses in learning in a way that reduces embarrassment (Mahdi, 2015). Thus, teachers will still get to know the learners and will work accordingly, thus increasing the reluctant learners' motivation to learn.

Technology also motivates learning. Traditional methods have become unpopular after the introduction of technology which includes the use of visual animation and audio, as it is more appealing to learners' interest and motivation to learn and participate in class activities; multimedia technology gives a teacher access to sounds and pictures that can work interdependently, enhancing the content learnt and this is effective in developing learners' interest in learning English (Shyamlee & Phil, 2012). The use of computer technology increases motivation for learners who like to complete tasks on their own, using the internet at their own pace while accessing information in various ways (Wu & Marek, 2010; Graziano, 2011; Gaines, 2015; Mahdi, 2015). Mahdi (2015) adds that schools should also ensure that books are updated as illustrations are significant factors in terms of making learners feel good about the topics in order to be motivated to learn.

2.3.3.4. *Self-confidence*

Self-confidence refers to the self-evaluation of one's competence (Nath et al., 2017). Self-confidence plays a significant role in education; learners considered to be self-confident “are enthusiastic, study harder, have higher motivations and do not quit when difficulties confront them” and can thus be seen as a positive influence on achievements (Bong as cited in Tunçel, 2015, p. 2575).

Traits such as a lack of anxiety, self-esteem and a sociable personality influence the acquisition of a second language (Krashen, 1981). A self-confident person who feels secure will be more allowing of input and thus have a lower filter (Krashen, 1981). Brown (as cited in Krashen, 1981, p. 23) states:

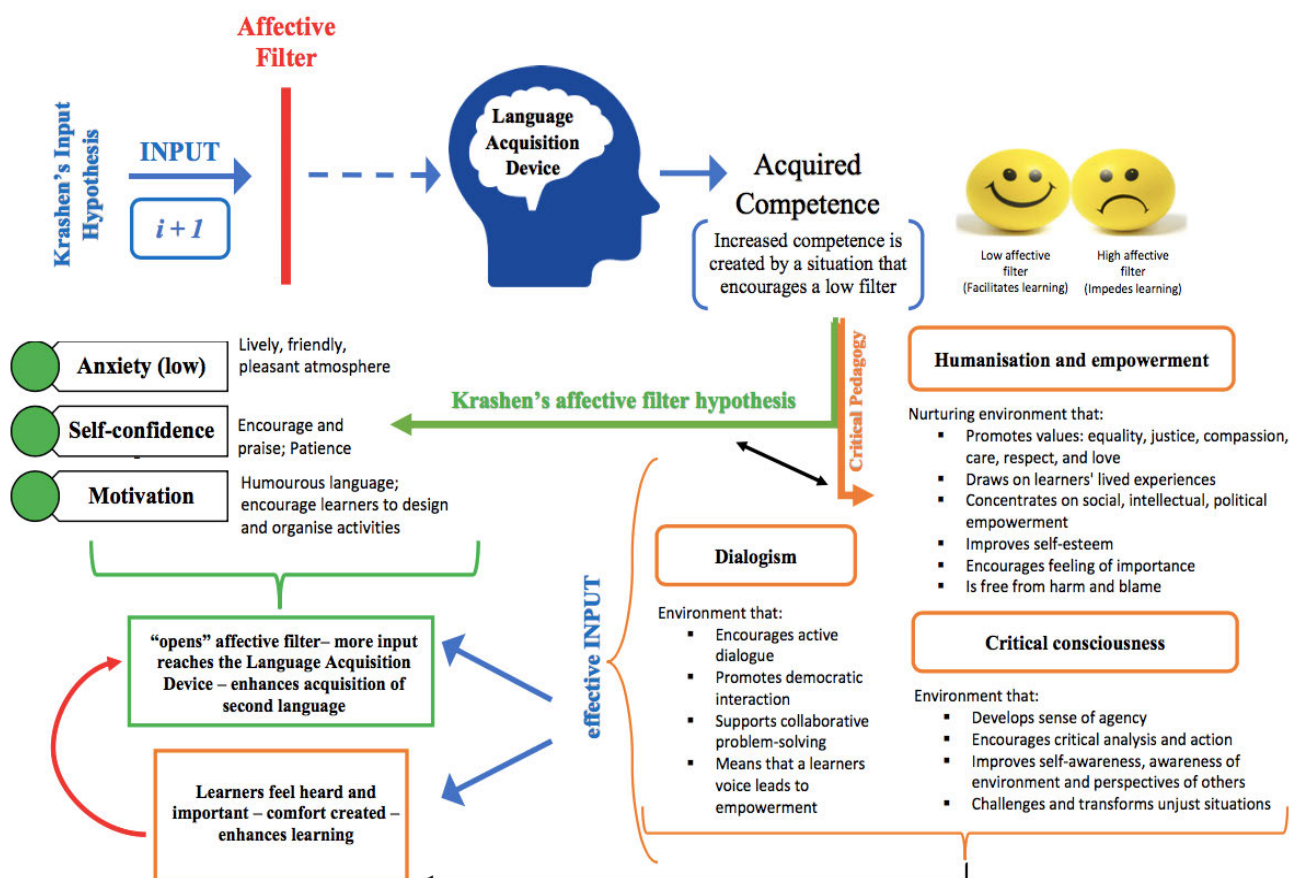
Presumably, the person with high self-esteem is able to reach out beyond himself more freely, to be less inhibited, and because of his ego strength, to make the necessary mistakes involved in language learning with less threat to his ego.

On the contrary, those with low self-esteem are afraid of making mistakes and they lose the opportunity to practice the language; therefore, it is important to increase self-confidence to yield success (Du, 2009). The key to effective language acquisition is also low anxiety (Krashen, 1982), which is related to self-confidence. Communicating with others, taking of tests, and fear of others result in anxious learners (Du, 2009).

Since anxiety inhibits second language learning, it is important to consider how to develop self-confidence (Feyli & Ayatollahi, 2016). Teachers can improve learners' self-confidence by providing regular feedback and making use of enjoyable activities (Tunçel, 2015, p. 2575). Learners will be more motivated to learn the language through the use of fun activities in a pleasant learning environment; this will also increase their confidence and lower their anxiety (Du, 2009).

2.4. Using both theories – a visual and narrative explanation

Figure 2.6: How critical pedagogy and affective filter hypothesis work together



Using both critical pedagogy and Krashen's Affective Filter hypothesis better underpin this study. Critical pedagogy fosters humanisation and empowerment by promoting values such as respect, care, compassion and love, draws on learners' experiences, improves self-esteem, encourages the feeling of importance, and fosters an environment in which learners voice their opinions and are free from harm and blame to create a sense of comfort in order to enhance language learning. A learning environment that espouses a humanising pedagogy and empowers learners ultimately influences the affective filter and facilitates learning as learners will be relaxed and motivated to learn the language, thus opening the affective filter and allowing more input to reach the LAD, and consequently enhancing the acquisition of the second language.

The Affective Filter hypothesis encourages low anxiety, increased self-confidence, and motivation through the use of a lively, friendly and pleasant atmosphere, encouragement and praise, and allowing learners to be part of the designing of activities to lower the filter for optimum learning. Thus, these parts of both theories work together for optimum second language learning.

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter focused on critical pedagogy which highlights that education needs to be transformative, give learners an active role to play, encourage them to take responsibility for their learning, and provide opportunities to construct knowledge with their teacher. It is also important that they engage in dialogue with each other and with the teacher in order to share experiences and challenges, and brainstorm their weaknesses in terms of learning English, and ways to improve their learning. These processes, along with humanisation and empowerment strategies in the classroom may shape learning so that learners may become conscientised and make the necessary changes for themselves, and make valuable changes in society.

Three dimensions, namely self-confidence, enhanced motivation and low anxiety, as espoused by the Affective Filter hypothesis, are imperative for second language learning. In my study, critical pedagogy's humanising and empowering nature of a classroom is coupled with the Affective Filter hypothesis as both argue for a pleasant, fun, and encouraging learning environments as this leads to optimum learning of a second language. The Input hypothesis was also considered, as it is the input of the teacher that drives the process of second language learning in this study. The next chapter is an appraisal of the scholarship in the field related to the main research questions of this study.

Chapter 3

Enhancing the classroom with literature

“Teachers should be aware that the classroom four walls do not constitute the only ideal area for language learning...” (Kakule, 2016, p. 332).

3.1. Introduction

This chapter will appraise the literature related to the role of English language clubs in enhancing learners' language competence and in empowering learners to take responsibility for their learning. The chapter will explore previous scholarship related to the main research questions of this study, focusing on the following themes: English Language Clubs and their purpose, strategies that enhance language learning, how to engender motivation and responsibility in learners, and developing learners' linguistic confidence.

3.2. English Language Clubs and their purpose

English Language Clubs, like language clubs using other languages, are similar to book clubs (a place to meet to share and discuss books) in that they are free, informal and involve individuals meeting voluntarily (Alexander et al., 2011; Malu & Smedley, 2016). Academic clubs such as English Language Clubs (ELCs) are group experiences (Afia, 2006), considered co-curricular in schools and differ from the conventional academic curriculum (Pereira, Ismail, & Othman, 2013, p. 49).

While some clubs are created by teachers who charge a fee for their services, and other clubs are created with the aim of gathering like-minded people to share ideas and advance careers, some clubs just provide a safe environment to practice English (Malu & Smedley, 2016), which is the aim of the ELC in my study. I saw the need for an ELC in my school, as discussed in chapter one, and wanted to study it, understanding that ELCs are “underutilized, sidelined and sometimes totally disregarded” (Pereira et al., 2013, p. 49), and are not widely studied in their role as a means to enhance language competence and learner empowerment. The study was undertaken to address this gap in the literature.

Activities conducted in these clubs depend on the language needs of learners that attend and the societies from which they come, and could include songs, poems, chants and games as learners learn easily while playing; this is important to consider for second language learners (Afia, 2006; Alexander et al., 2011). Other activities include reading aloud and storytelling, group and paired reading, writing letters and journals, writing workshops where learners focus on a genre and create books of poetry, narrative or biographies, or designing greeting cards which is a good way to encourage learners to write (Alexander et al., 2011). Skits, which are short performances, role plays, debates, discussions on relevant local and international news, and viewing of relevant short video clips also prove to be effective club activities (Pereira et al., 2013). These ideas resonate with the ELC.

The purpose of ELCs depends on the learners and context. For instance, the Vulindlela Reading Club, based on mother-tongue bilingual education, which was launched in December 2006, is held every Saturday morning for two hours at St. Louis Primary School in Langa, Cape Town (Alexander et al., 2011). This community-based reading club was created for the purpose of supporting and encouraging reading for enjoyment and developing reading in mother tongue and additional languages, and ultimately addressing literacy scores (Alexander et al., 2011). Other purposes of such clubs include allowing the best opportunities for learning in ways that schools do not offer, fostering motivational and supportive spaces that empower learners to read and write, and creating experimental and explorative atmospheres to stimulate interest in learning the language and improving the standard of English (Alexander et al., 2011; Pereira et al., 2013).

The Vulindlela Reading Club differs from my ELC in this study in two ways: Firstly, it is a community-based project, whereas mine is school-based. Secondly, the ELC in my study focuses on four skills of English (Listening and Speaking, Spelling and Vocabulary, Reading and Writing), whilst the Vulindlela Reading Club focuses only on developing reading and writing skills. Hence, the ELC in my school is more comprehensive in terms of skills developed in English language learners and attempts to improve English competence holistically, which was the aim of the club and study. Ultimately, the primary goal of ELCs is to practice and communicate in English (Malu & Smedley, 2016).

Language clubs foster a safe, stress-free, relaxed, nurturing, non-threatening and respectful environment where the aim is not on demanding answers or correcting errors but on guiding

and facilitating those who join, and encouraging the sharing of ideas amongst learners (Alexander et al., 2011; Pereira et al., 2013; Malu & Smedley, 2016). A similar culture was adopted by Maths clubs in Eastern Cape primary schools (Graven, 2011). In the study using learners from grades 3 to 6, Graven (2011) argued that Mathematics clubs run after school could aid in enhancing learning of the subject. To analyse whether the after-school clubs influenced learners' assessment in class, Graven provided teachers with questionnaires, where all but one teacher revealed that the club improved learners' performance. A learner in Graven's study initially noted her dislike of Mathematics and she displayed a lack of confidence, but after joining the club, the same learner said that she grew to love the subject and that she enjoyed it because they had fun even though the activities were difficult. This notion relates to Krashen's Input hypothesis which states that the input has to be relevant and interesting and go beyond what learners know for them to progress or improve (Abukhattala, 2013; Nath et al., 2017).

Some of the characteristics of the Maths club included playfulness, love and passion for Mathematics, which resulted in its success in improving performance in the subject (Graven, 2011). Graven (2011, p. 7) therefore argues for the use of such clubs to "strengthen learning dispositions" as "club learners might then become catalysts in their mathematics classrooms." This idea was kept in mind during my study and in the ELC as it aimed at fun, enjoyable activities that allowed learners to be responsible for identifying their strengths and weaknesses in the subject, thus being a co-curricular club to enhance learners' learning of English.

3.3. Strategies that enhance language learning

Language learning strategies are important in the teaching and learning process as they enhance the performance of the language (Chamorro & Paz, 2017). This section has been divided into four parts to address how language learning may be enhanced: the appropriate atmosphere, engaging activities, the use of technology, and authentic materials.

3.3.1. The appropriate atmosphere to enhance language learning

A negative learning environment can stifle learning; therefore, it is essential to understand how to create a positive one (Garibay, 2015). The ideas discussed here are used to explain the importance of a positive atmosphere in teaching and learning, some of which were adopted by

the ELC to enhance the learning of English. Instead of traditional, conventional activities, which Noreen and Rana (2019, p. 149) define as “an instructor focused technique” where “a lot of tension is laid on the educating of a course book” and is considered “teacher-arranged”, a creative, experimental, and enjoyable atmosphere needs to be incorporated into the strategies created to eliminate the stress of learning a language and encourage participation, which is the responsibility of schools (Bojuwoye et al., 2014; Alexander et al., 2011; Dewi et al., 2017), thus encouraging the incorporation of unconventional activities to complement learning. Kenly (as cited in Razia & Abdul, 2019, p. 151) stated that an activity-based learning strategy is different from the conventional classroom as it allows learners’ active participation in terms of providing them with opportunities to be “involved in doing or in considering something prepared.”

The atmosphere created impacts learning (Bojuwoye et al., 2014) and creating a positive classroom is essential for the enhancement of teaching and learning (Rahimi & Karkami, 2015). The ways in which learners perceive their classroom environments influence not only their learning, but their satisfaction and academic success, and their motivation to learn and engage in the classroom (Garibay, 2015; Barr, 2016). The classroom environment also impacts learners’ well-being (Goss et al., 2017).

Fraser and Treagust (as cited in Barr, 2016) found dimensions of a higher education classroom environment which may be applicable to school classrooms as they are both educational contexts. These dimensions include creating opportunities for interaction, encouraging participation, using innovative teaching methods, enabling learners to make decisions, considering learners’ differences, and fostering friendliness. A sense of friendship in the classroom also proves useful in developing language learning and this can manifest through the use of group work which improves learners’ achievement and develops their attitude towards learning (Goss et al., 2017). Chain stories where the class is divided into groups, given a topic, and each creates part of the story and shares ideas to create something new, were positively received by learners in a study that concentrated on developing different activities to provide a friendly atmosphere to learners (Aslam, Ahmed, & Mazher, 2015). For this reason, group work was included in the ELC in my study. A friendly environment lowers anxiety and opens the affective filter and more input reaches the Language Acquisition Device, according to Krashen’s hypothesis.

A friendly environment would mean that tension is reduced in classrooms. A total of 90 participants involved in focus group interviews (60 primary school learners and 30 high school learners) of a study at Western Cape primary and secondary schools revealed that teachers need to adopt methods that reduce tension in the classroom (Bojuwoye et al., 2014). Various methods can be used to reduce tension, thus enhancing learning. At most schools, English is taught by using reading and writing activities but a British linguist who designed her own materials, focused on representing a protective atmosphere where the lessons were humourous, energetic and stimulated the wellness of learners, eventually enhancing their learning (Emandi, 2015). A learning environment also needs to encourage learners' opinions so that they feel invited to the process of teaching and learning without fearing judgment (Hannah, 2013). These characteristics were incorporated into my study with the aim of empowering learners and enhancing their learning of English.

Another important factor in enhancing language learning is related to the supportive school and classroom environments which play an important role in learning (Graziano, 2011; Hannah, 2013). The more conducive and supportive the environment, the more successful the learning outcomes because there is a positive relationship between the learning environment and learner motivation (Pereira et al., 2013). Additionally, because a child spends a lot of time in a classroom, it is imperative that one is mindful of how learning environments affect learning effectiveness (Hannah, 2013). Therefore, the use of the baseline questionnaire on learning spaces (Appendix 7) was suitable for my study as it aimed to find out more about learners' English classrooms and how this may have influenced their learning. The results of this questionnaire informed the kind of environment that needed to be created in the ELC for the betterment of learning.

As much as the physical environment (strategies such as arranging desks for co-operative learning, decorating walls or providing learners with adequate materials) determines whether teaching and learning are conducive, the support from teachers is also crucial; how learners feel and how they are treated are important factors (Hannah, 2013; Garibay, 2015). A good environment should provide the necessary amount of care and support for learners, be inspirational, and encourage learners to be responsible (Pereira et al., 2013). The aim is to create a classroom where learners feel comfortable, respected, are treated fairly, and have good relationships with their teachers (Goss et al., 2017). Furthermore, teachers should plan accordingly so as to ensure that diverse learners "feel safe, valued, and respected" (Garibay,

2015, p. 5). In relation to this, recognising that learners have different learning styles will result in effective teachers understanding that different, innovative methods need to be adopted and varied according to the type of learners in the classroom (Mansor et al., 2012). Learners who have good relationships with their teachers succeed at school (Hattie as cited in Goss et al., 2017).

If learners know that the adults involved care about them, their social participation develops (Alexander et al., 2011). The primary school learners in the Western Cape study by Bojuwoye et al. (2014) revealed that primary school learners desired a safer environment where teachers and parents need to provide emotional support. As a teacher of English, I find this important to consider and, therefore, I was cautious about the atmosphere I created and was mindful of my approach to learners both in my classroom and in the ELC. I envisioned a classroom and club that are safe and nurturing and that will respect and support learners as they gained competence in English and became empowered as individuals.

If a teacher is negative or lacks motivation it affects the teaching and learning process (Hannah, 2013). The study by Rahimi and Karkami (2015) that investigated teachers' classroom discipline strategies and learners' motivation in learning English as a foreign language revealed that learners are demotivated by teachers that are authoritarian; this leads to stress, lower learning outcomes and a negative attitude towards either the subject or learning. Therefore, creating a relaxed, enjoyable classroom is perceived as an element of a good teacher (Rahimi & Karkami, 2015). This is in keeping with Krashen's Affective Filter hypothesis which considers motivation as lowering the affective filter and increasing input (Krashen, 1982). The Iranian study by Rahimi and Karkami was effective in that 1408 high school learners completed a questionnaire, so it served as a good representative sample, and schools were randomly sampled which contributes to the credibility of the data generated. A key criticism could be that data was based only on learners' reports and no classroom observations were done, for example, to confirm what was shared in the questionnaires about the teachers' strategies.

Bojuwoye et al. (2014) revealed that motivation such as the availability of teachers, encouragement by teachers, and their caring attitudes affect learning in primary schools, which learners expressed that their teachers lack; on the other hand, learners from the secondary school were more concerned with textbooks, extra classes and the need for other resources for learning to be more effective. This does not imply that secondary school learners do not need

encouragement and compassion from teachers. Learners, as a whole, also shared that their fear of asking for assistance was attributed to teachers' negative responses, lack of time for them, and impatient dismissive attitudes, which negatively impacted learning (Bojuwoye et al., 2014). Simple encouragement and praise such as 'good job', or rewards, prove to be effective (Goss et al., 2017). The reward system resonates with my study as the ELC considers innovative, fun activities where learners were involved in task competitions and won prizes. This developed self-esteem and encouraged the feeling of importance, which is humanising and empowering, in line with critical pedagogy. The support from teachers in terms of a caring, reassuring and approachable nature was also evident and will be discussed in detail in the analyses chapters.

Learners' perceptions of the classroom are also a result of interactions that occur during the teaching and learning process (Barr, 2016; Hardman, 2016). Therefore, it is important to create a dialogic space to enhance learners' active learning, where the environment is made to be supportive to enable learners to share ideas freely and without fear, and help one another; other principles of dialogic teaching include teachers and learners addressing activities together and developing ideas (Alexander as cited in Hardman, 2016). This notion of dialogism is in keeping with critical pedagogy. Positive interactions and perceptions are associated with learners' satisfaction and success (Garibay, 2015).

The study by Rahimi and Karkami (2015) revealed that a language teacher who is caring creates tasks that involve interaction. The rapport (which is a feeling of trust between two people) created is essential for promoting interpersonal relationships that are positive to improve the environment; enhanced learning outcomes are a result of good rapport between teachers and learners (Barr, 2016). This is especially significant in language classrooms; if handled effectively, interaction can prove to be "a very powerful pedagogical tool" that will espouse active and thought-provoking learning experiences (Hardman, 2016, p. 12).

Interaction can be encouraged by using humour in the classroom. Using humour may also assist learners who may not interact in the classroom as this makes a teacher more approachable to learners; sharing funny stories will also gain their attention (Barr, 2016). In this way, rapport can still be created. One ought to be careful with the use of humour, however, and ensure that it does not create chaos, especially in overcrowded classrooms. Additionally, teachers should not drift away from the topic but use humour to enhance the content being taught. Furthermore,

to develop rapport and further encourage learners, simply responding to learners' questions shows that a teacher is interested (Barr, 2016). Rapport can be developed by praising learners' work and their participation, asking them if they understand, and talking about yourself to the learners; an action like simply neglecting to learn names, or neglecting learners' questions may affect rapport (Barr, 2016).

Classroom management significantly impacts the way learners learn as it contributes to the kind of atmosphere created. Teaching English becomes successful when there is effective classroom management through the creation of a harmonious classroom (Weixuan, 2014) and that which results in optimal learning (Zein, 2018). Learners' actions and behaviours are considered to be factors in classroom management (Aksoy, 2015), and include the ability of the teacher to deal with learner behaviour and "establish and maintain order in a classroom" (Zein, 2018, p. 154). The growing class sizes have, however, made managing classrooms a difficult task for teachers which negatively impacts the improvement of teaching English; therefore, it is important that teachers master the skill of managing large classrooms (Weixuan, 2014). In terms of this, the ELC helped as the number of learners who participated at a time did not exceed 30 (half the number of learners in a classroom at my school).

However, the noise that a large classroom may bring must not be dwelled upon, provided that it is due to learning English; to improve effectiveness, teachers must consider controlling the noise by using a variety of teaching methods, self-management and self-learning skills; this can occur by giving learners more roles to play rather than taking all the duties as a teacher, and establishing different methods of classroom discipline by creating positive teacher-learner relations (Weixuan, 2014), as has been discussed previously in this theme. Zein (2018) takes the notion further by arguing that there are two dimensions to consider: seating, grouping learners, using timers for activities, giving instructions and providing feedback fall part of the instructional dimension of managing classrooms, while correcting and preventing inappropriate behaviours is the behaviour management dimension. Therefore, it is important to optimize the management of larger classrooms by enforcing the rules so that learners know what to do and what to avoid doing during teaching and learning time (Weixuan, 2014).

The kind of classroom atmosphere created has a significant influence on learning. Classroom climate can be made effective by teachers being motivating, removing fear, encouraging dialogue, developing positive relationships in the classroom, and managing the classroom

appropriately. The same qualities of a positive classroom have been adopted in the ELC to ensure effective learning.

3.3.2. Engaging activities to enhance language learning

Learning a language is a challenging task (Mubaslat, 2012). Active learner participation is influenced by the teacher's use of appropriate methods in teaching and learning (Magulod, 2018). Learning should be supported by activities in the classroom, and activities outdoors (Dhanapal, 2013; Yildirim & Akamca, 2017). Participation in creative activities both indoors and outdoors has a positive effect on teachers and learners, and changes learners' perceptions of learning (Aslam et al., 2015). 21st-century education "requires innovation and creativity"; therefore, offering creative opportunities for learners to work with the target language leads to the promotion of communicative competence (Magulod, 2018, p. 1).

When designing activities, it is important to reflect that in order to encourage classroom communication and enhance learners' learning, one ought to consider situations that eliminate classroom constraints and focus on conditions that will interest learners. The best way to address this is through the introduction of non-formal education such as song, dance, tales and theatre, and creative activities or games. Recreational activities extend education outside the classroom and are conditions in which learners learn more effectively (Mubaslat, 2012; Avilia, 2015; Emandi, 2015; Dewi, et al., 2017). Additionally, to enhance motivation and maintain it in classrooms where English is learnt as a second language, teachers ought to use a range of teaching methods that results in "an environment of competition, challenge, collaboration and fun" (Iaremenko, 2017, p. 126).

The Tunisian Ministry of Education implemented a programme that used ELCs introduced to fifth grade learners as a club rather than a formal class, held thrice a week for learners aged 11 (Afia, 2006). Out of all studies mentioned thus far, this was the one most related to mine as it used a club as a less formal way to enhance learning of English. Though, the difference is that primary school learners were part of the club. Nonetheless, the emphasis of the study was on exposing learners to English rather than concentrating on a set of language skills that were strictly abided to in the conventional classroom through the use of "hands-on fun activities" and the result was a positive attitude towards learning the language (Afia, 2006, p. 21). Similarly, in a more recent study, Iaremenko (2017, p. 126) stated that practitioners and

researchers have argued that using games has significant “educational value” as they offer learners “a fun-filled and non-stressful learning atmosphere” which enables them to concentrate on the message being portrayed rather than correcting language.

Games, especially educational, are one of the strategies teachers can use to improve teaching and learning a language as not only do they allow learners to take a break, but they also provide learners with the opportunity to practice skills of the language and are significantly motivating and challenging (Mubaslat, 2012). The study of educational games compared to traditional teaching practices in schools in Jordan revealed that games encourage an interactive environment and improve achievement. The use of games was recommended as they are effective in second language learning (Mubaslat, 2012). Similarly, Avilia’s (2015) observations at a Colombian private English-teaching institute revealed that the participants were less interested in learning English but with the use of games and creative writing, they were more willing and motivated to participate. This is attributed to the fact that conventional activities like performing a memorised text causes learners to be bored while learning English.

As much as games create interactive spaces that may lead to improvement in second language acquisition and help learners recall content in ways that are interesting and enjoyable, they should not be used to fill gaps in the classroom when there is nothing better to do; rather, they should be used to complement the learning process and therefore be chosen carefully so as to get learners to use language during the game and reduce the stress language learners face in the classroom (Mubaslat, 2012). This was kept in mind when planning and designing activities in my ELC, where I ensured that the games targeted specific English skills, as much as they were introduced for learners to enjoy and complement the learning process that was started in the classroom.

To develop fluency and competence in communication, learners need to be exposed to using language creatively (Becker & Roos, 2016). An action research study using interviews, observations and a questionnaire at Junior High Schools in Jakarta, Indonesia proved that communicative games stimulate classroom interaction, improve participation, have a positive impact on teaching and learning, and improves learners’ fluency in speaking (Dewi et al., 2017). Turning activities into a communicative task like giving learners a picture of a monster and asking them to describe it in pairs by completing a given phrase provides the opportunity for learners to work creatively with the target language and promotes communicative

competence (Becker & Roos, 2016). Such activities are effective as learners learn from each other; furthermore, social communication while learners are playing helps one build relationships and “social partners are key resources for learning” (Zosh et al., 2017, p. 27).

The study by Dewi et al. (2017) was effective as it was a collaborative action research study that considered not only the researcher but both a teacher of English and 36 of her learners, so it provided opinions of the strategy from both parties involved in the teaching and learning process. This is in keeping with the principles of critical pedagogy that argues for both learners and teachers to work together in the teaching and learning process. However, an approach of this kind comes with a well-known limitation – that the use of communicative games requires time management and classroom control, which is problematic in large classrooms as indicated by the teacher in her interview (Dewi et al., 2017) and an issue I have observed as a teacher. Rahimi and Karkami (2015) also revealed that the language learners of the study were motivated, but their willingness to learn cannot be entirely fulfilled due to factors such as large classes and technological tools, which is the case in the ELC.

In contrast, a strategy that may work in larger classrooms is simple visual aids such as pictures, charts, flashcards, video clips and models that may be used to enhance learning and make it easier and interesting and also simplifies teachers’ explanations (Shabiralyani, Hasan, Hamad, & Iqbal, 2015). 75% of learners and teachers in the study by Shabiralyani et al. (2015) agreed that visual aids help with explanation, and 70% of learners and teachers agreed that they assist in terms of motivation. The creation of flashcards by learners in my study in Cycle 2 (Spelling and Vocabulary) was appropriate in addressing the issue of a lack of technology as it still enhanced vocabulary. This was a positive outcome of using flashcards indicated in the study by Shabiralyani et al. (2015). A more recent study by Bavi (2018) investigated the effect of using fun activities on learning vocabulary. 40 female students from an elementary school in Iran were divided into control and experiment groups. The control group was taught using traditional methods of teaching vocabulary, while the experimental group was exposed to fun activities such as chalkboard acronyms, letter scrambles and charades. Results revealed that the experimental group performed better in the tests.

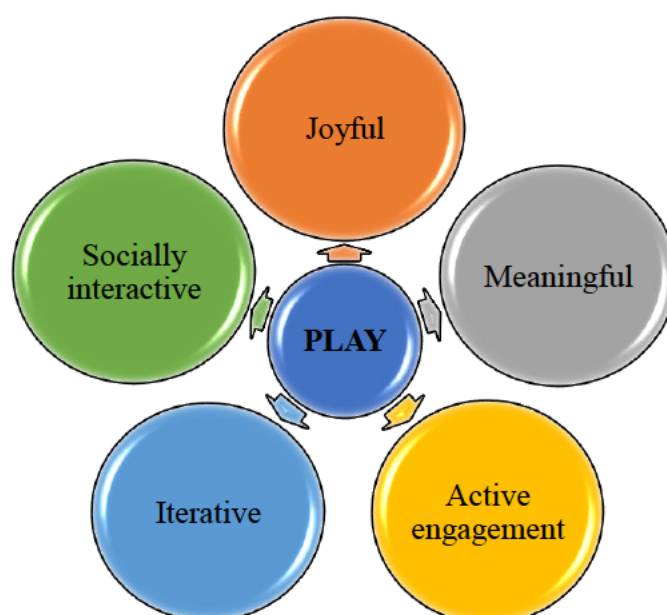
The notion of play has been persistently emphasised in the study by Zosh et al. (2017). They argue that play leads to more profound learning and allows for an ideal environment for the development of knowledge and skills in entertaining ways. There has been an increasing

interest in the use of outdoor activities to enhance language learning (Dhanapal, 2013). Moreover, learners are able to remember things that they learn in environments that incite all five of their senses (Yildirim & Akamca, 2017). The classroom is not the only place in which learning can occur; learning may be achieved in playgrounds, gardens, parks, zoos and museums (Turkmen as cited in Yildirim & Akamca, 2017). This proved useful when learners were taken to the beach in my study to practice their spelling. Their spelling and attitudes towards it were enhanced when learners were taken out of the classroom because it was a different environment than that which they were used to, which was learning spelling in the formal classroom context in the form of spelling tests and dictionary activities, which are generally not motivating for second language learners.

Yildirim and Akamca's (2017) study reported that outdoor activities allow learners to participate actively, enabling them to learn while doing. Observation forms were filled by two observers for each of the 35 pre-school learners in Turkey and revealed that linguistic and cognitive skills were enhanced through the use of outdoor activities. Though the study concentrated on pre-school learners, the principles can be applied to secondary school learners, that is grade 8 and 9 learners in my ELC. Similarly, Bavi (2018) revealed that vocabulary was enhanced through fun movement activities. Additionally, learning that occurs outdoors cannot be done without the necessary planning; the outdoor activity needs to include necessary content that aims to educate learners (Yildirim & Akamca, 2017).

Figure 3.1: Characteristics for optimal learning during play

(adapted from Zosh et al., 2017)



It has been reported that optimal learning occurs when it is perceived as joyful, helps with finding meaning in whatever is being done, involves active minds, involves iterative thinking and encourages social interaction (Zosh et al., 2017). It must be noted, however, that saying that learning needs to be joyful does not mean that negative emotions may not be attached to the activity; frustrations are welcomed and are considered to be good to feel joy when a problem is finally solved, just like in activities that were considered as challenging in my ELC. In terms of finding meaning, learners often explore what they see or do, or notice what other learners do, and this must not be taken as negative action in learning.

Watching what others do helps learners grasp what things mean and it helps them expand their understanding. Being actively engaged in activities leads to learning benefits as learners learn best when they are actively involved in solving problems rather than just being instructed (Zosh et al., 2017). This does not suggest that they do not need guidance; they do learn from listening to and observing others. This needed to be kept in mind during planning and implementation of activities in my ELC, and a balance of guidance and active involvement was considered. Iteration is trying out possibilities and discovering subsequent answers that lead to enhanced learning; play allows for this (Zosh et al., 2017). The social relationships that develop during play help learners not only enjoy the activity, but they are able to build relationships. Group

games and pair tasks in the ELC addressed this notion. Another engaging activity that may enhance learning is decorating the walls of the school.

Results from interviews in Graziano's (2011) study revealed that visuals and murals on the walls of the school was a strategy used by the school to help learners learn the language. Though this strategy is very inventive, enjoyable and may beautify the learning environment in some schools, it was decided not to use such in my study as learners have been found to deface furniture and walls with undesirable images and text; therefore, it would have a more deleterious influence on learning. The use of interviews in the study by Graziano, in comparison to closed-ended questionnaires, like in the study by Shabiralyani et al. (2015), may be more effective as it allows for a participant to express opinions, and the researcher is able to probe the participant to find out more, unlike in a questionnaire. Cuban's research (as cited in Shabiralyani et al., 2015) that focused on the psychology of visual aids reported that the sense of sight contributes to 83% of what is learned.

During my time teaching at the school, I observed the challenge of having posters put up. These were destroyed over time as many learners from different grades used the classroom and teachers were not stationed in one classroom to ensure order. Due to this, potential learning resources could not be used. The learners in the ELC who were involved in the 'decorate your space' activity were in keeping with this finding as they engaged with making the learning space more visually appealing by creating posters and displaying their favourite quotes and phrases. Though it seemed to be a challenge as some of the posters were defaced, learners still wanted to try, even if it only lasted a few weeks.

Research has shown that learners learn most effectively when they engage in creative, innovative and fun activities that allow them to be actively involved both inside and outside the classroom. Therefore, teachers need to use a range of recreational activities to improve their teaching and enhance learners' learning.

3.3.3. The use of authentic materials to enhance language learning

Meaningfulness (which, in this case, refers to how significant an activity is for a learner and the purpose it serves) is essential in language learning, so the use of authentic materials is required as they play a significant role in enhancing language competence (Mubaslat, 2012;

Beresova, 2015). Therefore, exposing learners to authentic materials throughout the teaching and learning process is essential (Adam et al., 2010).

Authentic materials are those that have been created by and for native speakers of the language, with no alterations, which may be used in teaching and learning (Beresova, 2015; Ciornei & Dina, 2015). Non-authentic texts, also referred to as artificial texts, are those that are constructed for textbooks which cause the teacher to focus more on the grammar aspects; these are created to teach a specific genre or tense (Islam & Santoso, 2018). Such textbook examples are limited in the solutions they offer for certain situations and often teachers need to look for additional materials to assist with teaching second language learners as the textbook material is inadequate in successfully improving their language competence (Adam et al., 2010).

Though authentic materials are not created for second language learners and there is confusion due to them containing language that may be difficult for second language learners, authentic materials provide exposure to the language in its real form, they relate closely to the needs of learners, and they are more creative (Richards as cited in Beresova, 2015). Although one of the problems with the use of authentic texts is the difficult language and complexity of language structures that they entail (Adam et al., 2010; Islam & Santoso, 2018), Islam and Santoso (2018) argue that this shows how language is really used in a specific context and this is what learners will encounter in reality – not what they find in textbooks. Furthermore, materials such as newspapers may still be useful for beginners who are usually excluded as teachers claim that authentic texts may be used only with a certain level of learners (Adam et al., 2010). This was not the case in the ELC as the club encouraged equality and motivated learners to feel able, in keeping with the humanisation pedagogy. All learners were provided with the same text and a range of texts were used.

Hands-on, practical and fun activities that have been discussed prior also motivate learners to learn (Afia, 2006; Pereira et al., 2013; Mahdi, 2015; Dewi et al., 2017). Meaningful activities allow learners to learn (Aslam et al., 2015). Providing materials that are appealing to learners also plays a significant role in motivation; authentic materials, therefore, increase learner motivation (Lazovic, 2017; Islam & Santoso, 2018). Mantiri (2015) shows that motivation can also occur through meaningful activities where the learners are in real-life situations, or practice through role-plays as these are considered fun and motivate learners to practice and speak English.

To acquire communicative competence, learners need to be exposed to real-life situations in which they can use the language (Adam et al., 2010). Richards (as cited in Beresova, 2015, p. 196) supports the use of authentic materials as “they provide cultural information about the target language. They provide exposure to real language [and] they relate more closely to learners' needs.” Authentic materials also support a more creative approach to teaching and realistic contexts that learners can relate to (Beresova, 2015; Lazovic, 2017). Authentic materials may include journalistic writing and newspaper articles based on what is going on in the world (Beresova, 2015). Berado (as cited in Marzban & Davaji, 2015, p. 86) “considers newspapers, magazines, TV programs, movies, songs, literature and internet as some examples of authentic sources.”

The acquisition of a language is more effective when activities considered concentrate on eliciting experiences and real-life situations and social change activities that discuss community issues, which make learning meaningful (Graziano, 2011; Au as cited in Malu & Smedley, 2016). Some language learners seem to have lost interest in reading, but the use of authentic texts addresses this issue (Marzban & Davaji, 2015). In the ELC, an example of an authentic text was a reading comprehension that dealt with gender roles. The idea that women should be told who to marry by their fathers instead of a man that she loves (as portrayed in the text) brought on much debate and allowed learners, both male and female, to express their opinions, thus empowering them.

The use of authentic texts in teaching English improves fluency and language comprehension (Ciornei & Dina, 2015). The effect of authentic texts on reading comprehension by Marzban and Davaji (2015) noted that the authentic group of learners (those provided with authentic texts) were influenced positively by the online authentic texts in comparison to the simplified group of learners (who used a simplified version of the text). Another study that investigated the use of authentic texts in teaching reading comprehension revealed that it improved learners' achievement; the achievement was higher for those who were exposed to authentic texts, as compared to the group of learners who were taught using non-authentic texts (Islam & Santoso, 2018).

The study by Islam and Santoso was effective because of the use of the Quasi-experiment method which allowed for a comparison to be made in terms of whether authentic texts are more effective than non-authentic texts. However, their pre- and post-tests entailed multiple-

choice questions; this may not be a true reflection of learners' understanding as they could have selected a correct answer by chance from the options provided, if they were not certain about the answer. Data analysis would have been enhanced, especially considering that the study concentrated on reading comprehension if the tests included open-ended questions for learners to display their true understanding of the texts in detail. In this regard, the study differed from mine as I designed instruments according to the skill that was focused on in a particular cycle. For example, the Listening and Speaking cycle ended with individual interviews that entailed these skills.

Authentic experiences that involve interacting with native English speakers significantly impact the confidence levels of those learning English (Gaines, 2015; Wu & Marek, 2010). Though only a few learners were included thus questioning generalisability, a long-term study by Gaines (2015) investigated the effectiveness of an elective course that aimed to promote the use of Saudi Arabian and Japanese students' use of English outside the classroom and improve their confidence overall. Role-plays, field trips and simulations were used, and results revealed that they learnt English more, and faster, outside the classroom as compared to before taking the course. This was also the case in the ELC as learners expressed being more comfortable in the outdoor activities and did not concentrate on incorrect answers but on participating in the activity that resulted in enhancing their learning of the language. Examples of these kinds of activities were the Reading for Treasure (treasure hunt) activity and the Unscramble the Sentence activity that will be discussed in detail in the analysis chapter. Drawing attention to successes is also important in increasing linguistic confidence (Gaines, 2015). Gaines (2015) found that using authentic outside situations to practice what was learnt in activities that were scaffolded in the classroom prior to the field trips in the community were very effective methods chosen to increase linguistic confidence. An example of this in the ELC was the Heritage Day programme where learners presented different cultures in a programme to the rest of the school, using listening and speaking strategies developed in the first cycle of the ELC.

Learners should also be encouraged to choose and share materials and write on topics of their choice, in genres they are comfortable in; a strategy to encourage this is to create a small library in class to allow them to choose what they want to read and write on (Alexander et al., 2011; Hannah, 2013). This empowers learners in their literacy journeys (Alexander et al., 2011). Authentic texts must be suitable to learners' contexts for them to be effectively used (Islam &

Santoso, 2018). They can be very beneficial provided that they are used appropriately in the teaching and learning process (Lazovic, 2017). A simple example is instead of photocopying articles from the newspaper, a teacher could bring newspapers to the classroom so that learners make use of them in their real form (Islam & Santoso, 2018). In the ELC when learners were provided with new reading books, they expressed much gratitude. Most of the learners referred to the old books that they are exposed to at home (if at all) and at school. Receiving new books to read that were in good condition and having a copy of their own instead of sharing (like was done in the classroom) made them feel more confident in enhancing their reading skills as they could take the books home.

For those who lack the luxury of the internet or technology to engage with native speakers via platforms described in the above studies, authentic texts also serve a similar purpose. Paper-based materials such as newspapers, magazines, and books may be used as they are also considered authentic materials that improve learners' self-confidence as they are able to see how they manage using the language in real-life situations instead of using artificial textbook examples (Adam et al., 2010). They "provide exact examples of how the language is used by native speakers" and finding that you are able to read a text intended for native speakers of the language is motivating and develops confidence (Ciornei & Dina, 2015, p. 277). Apart from this, because some of the learners in the ELC are not exposed to the internet or technology at home, or in the school, these authentic texts come in handy during their learning.

A teacher needs to consider a number of factors when selecting the appropriate authentic texts. When considering a text for the teaching and learning process, a teacher needs to think about various factors like the goals of the curriculum, suitability in terms of learners' age and ability, and whether it will interest the learners (Khaniya as cited in Lazovic, 2017). Berardo (cited in Lazovic, 2017, p. 74) "suggests a check-list for teachers for selecting authentic materials, particularly for choosing authentic reading material." The check-list for selecting such materials is captured in the figure to follow.

Figure 3.2: Elements of authentic reading materials

(Adapted from Berardo, as cited in Lazovic, 2017)

Content Suitability	Exploitability	Readability	Presentation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Elicits learners' interest• Relevant to needs of learners• A representation of what will be used outside the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can be used for teaching• What skills and strategies can be developed by exploiting the text?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Level of difficulty for learners• How much new vocabulary does it contain?• Does it contain relevant vocabulary?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Looks authentic• Attractive• Attracts learners' attention• Encourages learners to read more

3.3.4. The use of technology to enhance language learning

The use of technology, in the recent years, has proven to have significant importance in the teaching of a language as it assists in the enhancement of language learning (Hubbard, 2013; Motteram, 2013; Gonzalez-Vera, 2016; Yesilel, 2016; Kranthi, 2017; Azmi, 2017; Ahmadi, 2018). It is also an important tool for teachers as it facilitates language learning (Ahmadi, 2018). Young people are significantly influenced by their use of technology; daily, learners use different technological tools for various purposes, whether for communication or to retrieve information (Vymetalkova & Milkova, 2019). Learners are eager about using technology daily, so it is important to “embed their enthusiasm into the language classroom” (Yesilel, 2016, p. 97).

Technology provides learners with opportunities to develop their confidence (Shyamlee & Phil, 2012). Tutor simulations (which are activities facilitated by a tutor and are useful as they “mimic real-life situations”) that provide immediate feedback ensure participation and build confidence as they give learners opportunities to engage in realistic exchanges (Gaines, 2015, p. 58). An example of this simulation is where tutors play various roles and respond to learners in the manner in which native speakers would most likely respond in reality, for example providing help or ignoring the learners, or by being unsympathetic listeners. The aim is for learners to get feedback from the tutors in these situations, and the activity may be repeated (Gaines, 2015). The fear of being mocked by people is removed by using this technology. Similarly, school literacy software allows for individual learning, thus encouraging confidence

as learners learn at their own pace and in private (Graziano, 2011), considering those who prefer learning alone.

Golshan and Tafazoli (2014) also argue for the use of Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL); teachers (85%) in the Iranian study by Golshan and Tafazoli valued technological tools and they revealed in questionnaires and semi-structured interviews that it is a substantially effective method for teaching English. TELL increases learners' motivation, decreases anxiety (which is very important for second language learning according to the Affective filter hypothesis discussed in the previous chapter), encourages interaction and discussion, and generally transforms the classroom into a learner-centred environment (Yesilel, 2016). The use of technology in language learning enables a varied classroom environment that is welcoming to individual learners, thus enhancing the quality of the teaching and learning experience; resultantly, technology increases participation and prompts learners' engagement (Azmi, 2017).

Zhou and Wei (2018) reported that language learners generally use technological tools to make their learning or use of the language more effective. Technology is motivating and ensures that learners are actively engaged and involved in the process (Graziano, 2011), increases their cooperation (Ahmadi, 2018) and encourages and motivates the practice of English skills (Boonyopakorn, 2016). To encourage autonomy in learners' learning and make learning flexible considering learning constrictions such as space and time, using technology like cellular phones and computers proves effective (Golshan & Tafazoli, 2014). Digital technologies, more specifically the internet, allow teachers to design various, new learning environments; this enables learners to obtain information that considers their needs, abilities and interests "without any time or location restriction" which in turn encourages them to be autonomous learners instead of being passive recipients of knowledge (Yesilel, 2016, p. 98).

Technological tools such as videos, the internet and emails can assist learners' language acquisition (Azmi, 2017). A significant discovery is the use of internet videos that allows learners to be exposed to communication that is non-verbal, enabling them to interpret speech as they contain the necessary gestures and facial expressions that accompany spoken language (Azmi, 2017). Therefore, it is important to understand how technology may be used to enhance the learning of English. A similar example of such technology to enhance language learning is photovoice which combines learners taking pictures and engaging in conversation about those

pictures; this gives a voice to those who are not involved in the decision-making processes and captured 16 Hispanic English language learners' experiences of learning the language (Graziano, 2011).

Though the sample size was relatively small therefore making it difficult to tell whether results may be generalised, the study by Graziano (2011) was effective in that the research question was broad, allowing the participants to define their experiences in many ways and allowing them various options to choose from. Results from interviews revealed that technology such as listening to music and literacy software are strategies used by the school that helped learners learn the language. Furthermore, the researcher conducted a unit on the use of photovoice prior to the participants using the camera. However, this method may only be effective for small groups of learners and therefore would not work in a classroom with many learners without the use of such technology, like in my study. However, cell phones may be used as a substitute to take pictures, provided that their use is monitored. Concurring with this idea, the study by Boonyopakorn (2016) that focused on TELL on English communication for learners in Thailand revealed that learners have good attitudes towards the use of technology and tools such as i-pads and smartphones may be used to practice English skills anywhere and anytime, as much as they like to.

On the contrary, the interviews by Golshan and Tafazoli (2014) noted that as much as all teachers perceived technological tools as helping learners learn English, they were not allowed to have certain devices, such as video games and cellphones, in some classrooms. Although I acknowledge that their study had a specific aim, it differed from my study in that it did not include learners' voices, which is an important aspect in education, as it did not consider learners' perceptions of the use of these technologies. In my study, learners' perceptions were essential; their reflections on the activities implemented in the cycle were necessary to decipher how to continue with the subsequent cycle.

Multimedia technology inspires learners' thinking and communication (Shyamlee & Phil, 2012). Examples of multimedia technology such as YouTube, television and videos and Childtopia (a collection of games, listening and reading comprehension, and tales) allows learners to learn a language from real-life material; they are found online and can meet any level or interest of learners (Ciornei & Dina, 2015) and enhances the content being taught by making the classroom "lively and interesting" (Shyamlee & Phil, 2012, p. 152). A more recent

study with undergraduate students that focused on two groups, one using an online component called ‘MyEnglishLab’ and the other using paper-based materials, revealed that the group using the online component reached better results (Vymetalkova & Milkova, 2019). This further emphasises the significance of technology on learners’ academic lives, whether at school or university level.

It must be noted, however, that as much as technology and tasks that are efficiently designed may lead to learner success, it is not the technology or how teachers use it that matters; what matters most is how learners use it (Hubbard, 2013). Moreover, using technology without planned objectives could prove futile in the classroom (Azmi, 2017). Kranthi (2017) extends this argument by stating that the effectiveness of technology depends on the teacher’s expertise and knowledge, who manages the learning environment. Technology is not a teaching method on its own but may be of assistance in teaching a language when it is coupled with a teaching method (Kranthi, 2017). Shyamlee and Phil (2012) also argued that though technology has replaced traditional methods of teaching, they are still useful. Zhou and Wei (2018) note, on the other hand, that computer technology has become more than a supporting tool in the language classroom and has brought about many changes.

3.4. Developing learner responsibility

Learner responsibility is also important in learning a language. Developing responsibility encourages motivation to learn English. The case study of learner responsibility at a secondary school in Sweden revealed that learners appeared motivated to learn English and this resulted from being allowed influence over their process of learning (Ivarsson & Pihl, 2013). However, this may only occur in environments where teachers share power with learners who then take responsibility for their learning by making decisions in the learning process (Cam & Oruc, 2014). This sharing of power to increase learner responsibility is in keeping with the principles of critical pedagogy that removes the teacher as the ultimate source of power in the classroom, allowing learners to be more involved in changing their circumstances. Learner responsibility was an aim of the ELC in this study as learners were involved in the action research cycles (to be discussed later).

Learners’ reflections on their strengths and weakness are useful in facilitating learner responsibility or autonomy (Gaines, 2015; Malu & Smedley, 2016). These may include self-

reports where learners report on their thoughts while performing a task (Cakici, 2015) or self-assessments where strengths and weaknesses are assessed (Mahdi, 2015). Diaries and evaluation sheets where learners plan, monitor and evaluate their learning allow them to find problem areas and how to solve them (Cakici, 2015). This encourages learners to take responsibility for their learning and it is effective as it is as an ongoing task. Furthermore, these strategies are in accordance with the critical pedagogy framework as they are exposed to a learning environment in which they are able to reflect and question the problems they are facing, giving them the ability to be more involved in the teaching and learning process, which reduces the power usually placed on teachers.

On the other hand, teachers can also encourage learners to take responsibility for their learning through active and personally meaningful strategies, both inside and outside the classroom (Cakici, 2015). Teachers need to offer different learning styles, offer equal opportunities to all learners, and allow self-discovery through experiences and examples they can apply in real-life (Cam & Oruc, 2014). Engaging in experiences is in keeping with the humanisation principle of critical pedagogy and is a form of empowerment. However, these activities are within a learner-centred approach and according to a case study conducted on four primary school learners, such proves difficult in classes with large numbers of learners and a lack of time to complete the syllabus (Cam & Oruc, 2014). Therefore, the ELC as a co-curricular club complements classroom learning and provides learners with further opportunities to learn the concepts they could not grasp in the classroom, in a smaller group and using different methods. However, learning strategies such as independent work, where ability as independent learners can be demonstrated, and creating personal contexts while eliciting personal meanings are also important ways to engender learners' responsibility (Graziano, 2011; Cakici, 2015).

3.5. Developing learners' linguistic confidence

Learners who lack proficiency in English are afraid to speak because they are scared to make mistakes or be laughed at by their peers; their lack of confidence to express ideas results from a lack of necessary vocabulary and their fear can be easily observed through cues such as giggling when they do not understand, as revealed in the action research study by Dewi et al. (2017). Fear is a very powerful obstacle to learning (Milner, 2013). Technology, communicative games, and creative activities encourage learners to participate in the lesson as they stimulate discussion, and interaction with others in a more natural setting and fun way;

ultimately, these strategies result in an increase in their confidence to use the language because self-esteem is enhanced (Avilia, 2015; Dewi et al., 2017; Graziano, 2011).

Strategies such as communicative games and technology allow learners to overcome challenges with speaking English and build their linguistic confidence because they improve their speaking fluency; they focus more on the communicative task and not on language accuracy (Avilia, 2015; Dewi et al., 2017). Though very effective, unfortunately, these strategies are not possible in schools like mine that are under-resourced or lack the technological advancement of computer programmes such as simulations.

It is important to bear in mind, however, that more than 16 hours a week may not yield positive learning outcomes for teachers who already have significant workloads; an entertaining course should be encouraged to address the issue of workloads so as to make it motivating to attend (Gaines, 2015). My ELC kept this in mind as the actual sessions were once a week for an hour, while other competitions and meetings were not held weekly. However, it aims to remain informal and fun, so as to tackle the stresses that learners have to deal with during a school day.

3.6. Conclusion

Though there is a plethora of research on strategies to enhance language learning, more needs to be done when it comes to teaching English. An evident gap in research is that the use of English Language Clubs at school level is minimal as studies in this chapter have used workshops or just innovative strategies in teaching to enhance the learning of a language. Additionally, language clubs that do exist in other platforms do not focus on all four skills of English; rather, they focus on one or two skills or activities. Furthermore, while there are very few studies on clubs at schools in South Africa, they are not English clubs. Language activities and workshops are drawn from studies outside South Africa, in the main. South African studies related to the phenomenon are few; more studies have been conducted in other parts of the world. Thus, my study focusing on a school in KwaZulu-Natal addresses this gap in research further so that South African teachers have more strategies to emulate from a context they may be better able to relate to. In the next chapter, I will discuss the research methods that were adopted in my study to ascertain how an English Language Club may be used to enhance learners' language competence and empower learners to take responsibility for their learning.

Chapter 4

Refurbishing methods

*“...research is nothing but a state of mind...a friendly and welcoming attitude toward change.
It’s going out to look for change, instead of waiting for change to come”*
(Kettering as cited in Hubbard and Power, 1993, p. 1).

Therefore...

“...teachers must be more than mere technicians who carry out a cookbook approach of past instructional strategies...” (Hoover, 1994, p. 83).

4.1. Introduction

In order to ascertain how an English Language Club (ELC) may be used to enhance learners’ language competence and empower learners to take responsibility for their learning, a critical paradigm was used. A qualitative approach was adopted to gather detailed descriptions of their perspectives and to present a detailed account of the data. A participatory action research design was used to further explore the phenomenon of the empowerment of English language learners and the enhancement of learning English being studied. Through data generation strategies such as field notes and a research journal, qualitative questionnaires, observations, visual representations, interviews, and written texts, the main research questions of the study were answered. This chapter is a discussion of the research process and methods used in this study.

4.2 Research Paradigm

The study used a critical paradigm. It emphasises the need for developing social transformation and emancipation; critical theory is a school of thought that was developed by, among others, socio-political analysts, Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse, commonly known as the ‘Frankfurt School’ (Giroux, 2009; Ashgar, 2013). This paradigm studies society by analysing dominating structures and focuses on exposing power relations and oppressive notions and behaviours, (Fuchs, 2015; Harney, 2014; Ashgar, 2013); it provides opportunities which emancipate those who are subordinated and lack a voice and agency due to exclusion, by providing more liberating environments and challenging circumstances that enslave people (Harney, 2014; Ashgar, 2013).

This paradigm is therefore suitable for my study as learners in the school chosen come from language backgrounds that are not prioritised in the school, as English is taught as a Home Language only and is the language of teaching and learning. This results in the exclusion of many learners' home languages and learners are, thus, considered subordinates as English is the language in power. As a result, learners have challenges learning English and seem to lack motivation in learning the subject. However, the ELC aimed to address this issue by allowing learners to become active participants in the planning and implementing of the activities in the club. The ELC also fostered a motivational approach through fun and games, which is possibly not the case in most English lessons at the school, seemingly causing the feeling of subordination and lack of confidence to learn. Additionally, the ELC aimed to provide opportunities to linguistically subjugated learners, giving them a voice and agency within a liberating environment.

An important idea is that a critical paradigm “reveals the potential in it for change” (Rush, 2004, p. 28). The potential for change using this paradigm serves as a suitable foundation for education which aims for transformation. Education is not a neutral activity; rather, it is political. Additionally, it is taken as having possibilities for transformation despite obstacles that may work to prevent change (Freire, 1998).

Thus, I adopted this paradigm as the study aimed to enable English language learners to become agents of change in their learning and in their school environment, giving them a sense of emancipation which occurred through their active involvement in the teaching and learning process. Ultimately, I did this to combat their feeling of exclusion and powerlessness despite their challenges with the English language. For this to happen, participants and I had to engage deeply with the transformation process by first challenging existing ways in which English was taught in their classrooms as the current practices appeared to have a detrimental effect on their learning.

4.3 Research Approach

Qualitative research focuses on capturing, through word descriptions instead of numbers, the meanings people assign to their experiences or realities (Creswell, 2009; Hancock et al., 2007; Check & Schutt, 2012). In a qualitative research study, the use of qualitative data generation methods requires that researchers have close contact with the participants; it is important for

the researcher to recognise that experiences and opinions of the research study and what facilitates the study become part of the research, and form an enhanced understanding of the situation at hand (Patton, 2002).

Since the researcher in this case is a teacher, this approach was appropriate as I worked closely with learners to understand the phenomenon at hand (empowerment of English language learners and the enhancement of learning English) and thoroughly understood learners' challenges, strengths and weaknesses, through extensive word descriptions. Furthermore, a qualitative approach allowed for descriptions and interpretations of the experiences of participants throughout the study and focused on the process of how the study unfolds in their natural context, which in this case was the English classroom and school environment.

However, there are certain drawbacks associated with the use of qualitative research. For example, the use of a qualitative approach requires rich descriptions to enhance the trustworthiness of the study and it may make the data analysis process difficult in terms of coding the appropriate data in order to effectively answer the research questions (Leung & Savithri, 2009; Vissak, 2010). It is possible for the researcher to become overwhelmed by the large quantity of data generated (Vissak, 2010). However, the use of thematic analysis assisted in managing the abundance of data generated and allowed for key concepts to be addressed systematically and thoroughly, dividing important aspects to be dealt with in detail, separately, thus decreasing the overwhelming nature of data generated. Thus, despite the overwhelming nature of qualitative research, this approach was favoured and adopted by my study as it allows researchers to study and report complex phenomena in-depth.

Another limitation of qualitative research is that human language is used and ambiguities may be present in the data generated (Atieno, 2009). However, this was overcome in this action research study as it is a design that allows for constant discussion and reflection of proceedings, which resulted in discussing and addressing any ambiguities that may have occurred along the way. Furthermore, it proves to be quite difficult to extend the findings to broader populations with certainty like in quantitative studies, largely due to qualitative researchers not testing results like in quantitative research (Atieno, 2009). Nonetheless, other researchers and teachers may find their contexts similar to that of mine and thus consider the ideas and interventions put forward useful to attempt in their own contexts.

4.4 Research Design

This research took the form of a participatory action research, a “subset of action research” (MacDonald, 2012, p. 35), as its research design. Action research is a research design that combines action and research and is a tool for understanding, improving and reforming practices (Coats, 2005; Cohen et al., 2011). In the context of education, action research that is guided by critical theory replaces traditional teaching with a discovery method and instils positive educational changes based on the findings of the study, giving education a transformative and an emancipatory nature (Batagiannis, 2011; Cohen et al., 2011; Boog, 2003; Bellman, Bywood & Dale, 2003). Action research was modified due to democratic movements in 1968 and action research started to have a more “explicit emancipatory” aim; thus participatory action research, critical action research and emancipatory action research were developed (Boog, 2003, p. 430). “Ideally, the purpose of all action research is to impart social change, with a specific action (or actions) as the ultimate goal” (MacDonald, 2012, p. 35).

Participatory action research is based on Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy which concentrated on the empowerment and liberation of individuals who are oppressed (MacDonald, 2012). It is “considered democratic, equitable, liberating, and life-enhancing qualitative inquiry that remains distinct from other qualitative methodologies” (Kach & Kralik as cited in MacDonald, 2012, p. 34) which is why I chose it for my study. Participatory action research is, thus, an approach used to improve education by changing it and learning from the changes made through a democratic process where people act and research “on, by, with and for themselves” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 349).

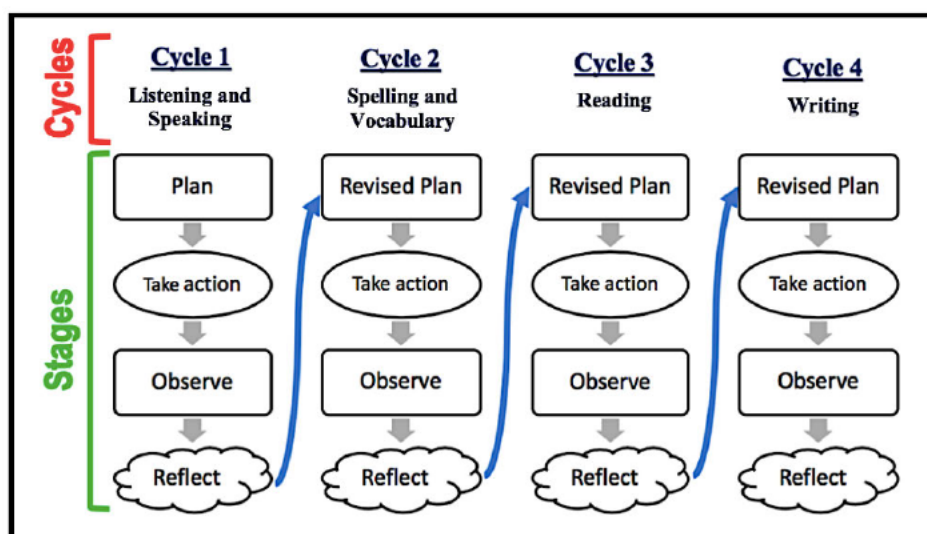
In the context of education, the participatory action research process usually begins with observation or questioning by a teacher or learner and is related to a problem or challenge experienced during teaching and learning (Coats, 2005; Young et al., 2010). In this study, participatory action research involves me (the teacher who notices a challenge) as well as the learners (who are affected by the problem), who all work hand-in-hand to plan, implement and analyse the results of the study. This is important as the growth of all participants is key in such a research design.

Furthermore, it is also an inquiry into one’s own professional practice with the aim of self-development to enhance student learning (Dominic, 2013; Rossouw, 2009). Since the learners,

in this study, were generally performing poorly in the English language, the aim of this study was for me to work closely with learners who shared their challenges in learning English. Participatory action research was also appropriate in this setting as the process allowed for both the teacher (myself) and learners to attempt to change the teaching and learning environment, with active participation and critical reflection, and transform teaching and learning for enhancing the learning through the use of an English Language Club. At the beginning of the research, baseline information (mind-maps that are discussed later in this chapter) were used to gather information about learners' challenges and topics that need to be focused on. From these mind-maps, we discussed what type of interventions would interest them. As a result, I attempted to change the way learners learn by better understanding the effects of my teaching methods and modifying them according to learner reflections and discussions. At the end of each cycle, learners reflected and decisions were made, with my facilitation and guidance, to inform the subsequent cycle according to their specific needs and interests.

Action research studies involve multiple cycles and include four stages, namely planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, which are then used to revise the research process and inform and begin the next cycle (Coats, 2005; Young et al., 2010; Cohen et al., 2011). In this study, there were four cycles that focused on Listening and Speaking, Spelling and Vocabulary, Reading, and Writing, respectively. Each cycle included the steps fundamental to action research and interventions were planned, implemented, reflected on, and modified accordingly throughout the duration of the research study, depending on the needs of the learners. Reflection in this study was an ongoing process and the participants and I reflected after each cycle, and these reflections were used to inform the subsequent cycle in terms of what worked, what did not work, or what needed to be modified in order for the next cycle to be more effective (Cohen et al., 2011).

Figure 4.1: Action research cycles and stages in this study



4.5 Data Generation strategies

Various methods of data generation were used. The table below outlines the strategies used throughout my study, followed by a detailed explanation of each.

Table 4.1: Data generation strategies used

Cycle	Data Sources	Number of Participants
Baseline information	Visual representations (Mind-map)	27
	Questionnaires (Learning spaces)	13
	Visual representations (Posters)	28
	Secondary data	N/A (Secondary data refers to mark lists and subject analyses)
Cycle 1 – Listening and Speaking	Written text 1	14

	(Telephone conversation)	
	Written text 2 (Instructions)	10
	Interviews	7
	Observation (Heritage Day programme)	7
	Fieldnotes and research journal	1
Cycle 2 – Spelling and Vocabulary	Written text 1 (Unscramble the words)	13
	Written text 2 (Spelling relay)	16
	Observation (Beach spelling track)	10
	Visual representations	12
	Learners' written reflections	9
	Fieldnotes and research journal	1
Cycle 3 – Reading	Questionnaires (Pre)	43
	Observation (Reading for treasure)	10
	Written text 1 (Sequence story game)	20
	Written text 2 (Comprehension)	11
	Written text 3 (Reading for colours)	34
	Questionnaires (Post)	37
	Fieldnotes and research journal	1
Cycle 4 – Writing	Written text (Brainstorm conversation)	35
	Written text (Film review)	16
	Fieldnotes and research journal	1

4.5.1 Baseline information

The first step in this study entailed generating baseline information. Baseline information or baseline data refers to anything from surveys to secondary data sources at the start of a project; irrespective of the source, it is impossible to decipher changes in a situation without reliable information based on the situation before interventions are implemented (Bamberger, 2010). Baseline information, in my study, allowed me to explore learners' English competence, understand how learners respond to their learning and find out about their strengths and weaknesses and how they would like to learn English in the ELC. This was done prior to the planning of interventions as the baseline information is meant to inform the rest of the research process.

The generation of baseline information took four different forms:

1. *Visual representations (mind-maps)* – learners who were interested in joining the ELC engaged in brainstorming by filling in the mind-maps (Appendix 6) and answering each of the questions in the clouds which aimed to seek what holds them back while learning English and what they can do to learn English.
2. *Questionnaire (learning spaces)* – learners also completed a questionnaire prior to the commencement of the first cycle. The questionnaire (Appendix 7) focused on their learning spaces (their classrooms and the school library) and how these made them feel. It also aimed to understand what goes on in their learning spaces and how it may influence their learning. The questionnaire also took into consideration learners' desired seating arrangements and what they believe to be the best learning environment. The information sought determined the kind of learning environment created in the ELC in order to enhance their learning of English and empower them to be responsible for their own learning.
3. *Visual representations (posters)* – In response to learners' perception that neither the classrooms nor the library looked visually appealing, we decided that they should be involved in decorating the library with posters that they would create using pictures and quotes of their choice.

4. *Secondary data* – Subject analyses and English mark lists were used at the beginning of the study to understand learners' competence and to identify the skills that needed to be developed. Mark lists were used throughout the study to analyse improvement.

4.5.2 Interventions

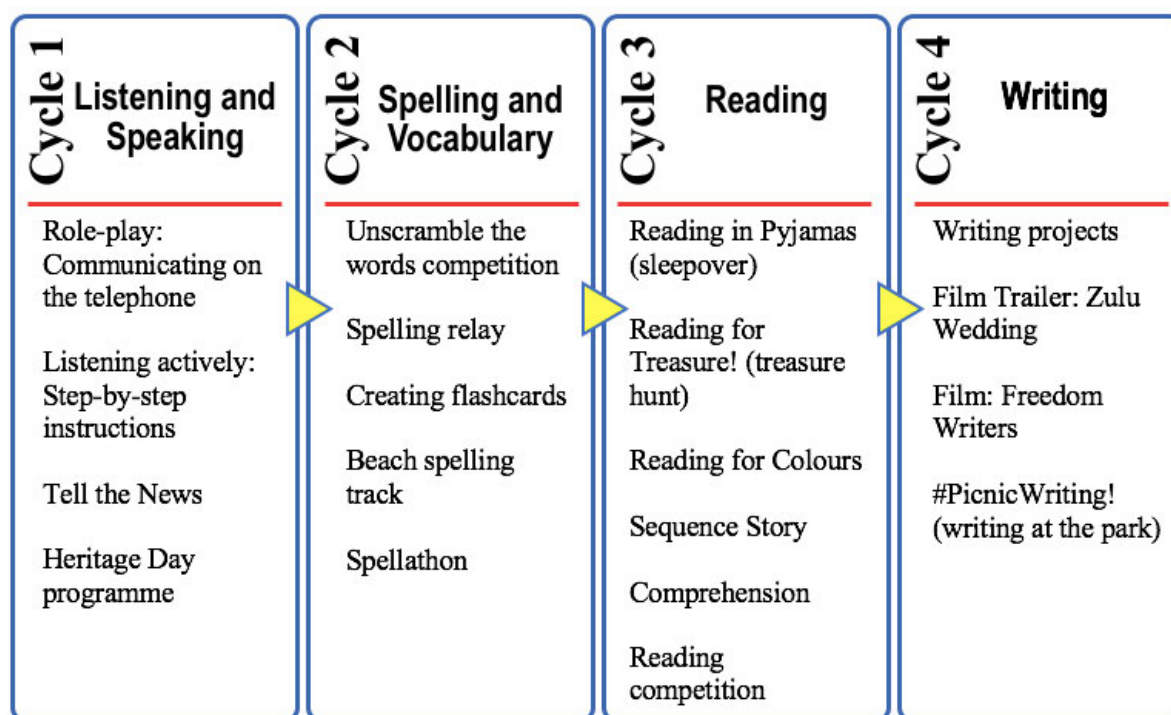
The data generated from baseline information determined how I should proceed. Once the baseline information was analysed, the learners in the ELC and I discussed the research as a whole and determined the kind of activities that needed to be incorporated into the ELC. We then ensured that the interventions that were designed were in line with the research questions of the study.

Each cycle concentrated on a specific skill and required different sets of interventions. At the beginning of each cycle, potential activities were discussed and planned. These interventions were then implemented during the cycle and reflected on at the end. The reflections took both written form, like at the end of Cycle 2 (Appendix 16) and class discussion, and informed the planning of interventions for the subsequent cycle and changes and revisions were made to suit learners' needs and enhance their learning of English accordingly.

The English Language Club was initially held on Wednesdays from 13h30 to 14h30. However, I started having sessions on some Friday afternoons and during some lunch breaks, as per learners' specific requests for the expansion of the interventions. It became clear from early on in the process, that learners were drivers in the teaching and learning process as they gained voice and agency in their learning of English and in their ability to take responsibility for their learning.

The following figure provides a list of interventions that were implemented throughout the study to explore how an English language club may be used to enhance learners' language competence and empower learners to take responsibility for their language learning. The interventions are discussed, in detail, thereafter.

Figure 4.2: Interventions in each cycle



4.5.2.1 Cycle 1 – Listening and Speaking

- *Role-play: Communicating on the telephone*

During the discussion regarding the kind of activities, learners wanted to be involved in, I discovered that they wanted a more active role in activities such as those they were involved in their daily lives (which did not occur in most of their English classrooms) and which would remove the stress of a classroom setting. This is in line with the studies on the use of active learning strategies to enhance language learning, as presented in the Literature Review chapter (Hardman, 2016; Yildirim and Akamca's, 2017; Zosh et al., 2017; Magulod, 2018). Bearing this in mind, I used old telephones, which I found in the storeroom at the school, as props to expose learners to a different learning context, to plan and present a telephone conversation.

Learners were provided with instruction sheets (Appendix 8). They were required to work in pairs and discuss styles of communication and tone used in various situations. Then, they were tasked to act out a telephone situation by picking from the list provided or choosing one to their liking. Tips for speaking on the telephone were provided to scaffold learners. Learners planned their conversation and were then given the opportunity to volunteer to

role-play what they planned in pairs. After a few pairs did their role-play, learners answered the questions on the worksheet, based on what they have done and what they observed the other pairs do during their role-plays.

- *Listening actively: Step-by-step instructions*

Individually, learners worked on step-by-step instructions for doing a familiar activity, such as making a salad, making a cup of coffee/tea/any other beverage, heating frozen food, assembling a toy, or any other activity of their choice. Volunteers shared their instructions verbally while others listened to guess what activity the instructions describe, listening to keywords and taking notes along the way if they needed to. Discussion questions were answered on the worksheet (Appendix 9) at the end.

- *Tell the news*

Believing it is important that learners are updated with what is going on in their communities and around the world and creating critical consciousness, we decided on an activity where learners would listen to or watch the news or read a newspaper and write a summary or paste the news article onto a page. This piece of news was shared with the group. The homework activity required learners to either read, listen to or watch the news and understand it before sharing it with others in the ELC. Learners listened to the news shared in the ELC session and both the learner sharing, and learners listening were asked questions based on what was shared to test their listening skills. Learners also discussed the news story and shared how they felt about what was going on currently.

- *Heritage Day programme*

During Cycle 1, learners practised their listening and speaking skills individually or in small groups. When the school was planning the annual Heritage Day programme, the ELC decided that it would be a great opportunity for learners to be exposed to a much larger audience in order to boost their listening and speaking confidence. The learners chose what they wanted to present at the special assembly held at the school and these included; poetry, historical information, and speeches. After practising, learners performed in the staffroom in front of teachers to get feedback before going out to present their pieces to the rest of the school.

4.5.2.2 Cycle 2 – Spelling and Vocabulary

- *Unscramble the words competition*

Having completed the first cycle, it was discovered that learners required a more motivating strategy to enhance their enjoyment of learning English in the ELC. Thus, we agreed on the cycles including competition-based tasks to encourage learners to want to learn and receive a prize if they won. This is in line with the studies on the use of motivating competitive teaching strategies to enhance language learning, as presented in the Literature Review chapter (Iaremenko, 2017).

Therefore, Cycle 2 started off with learners unscrambling occupations vocabulary and numbering the pictures accordingly (Appendix 12-A; see Appendix 12-B for answer key). Instead of the conventional, stressful spelling test, learners were given 20 minutes to unscramble the words by working in pairs and number the corresponding pictures. Learners chose whom they wanted to work with.

- *Spelling relay*

Reflecting on the interventions of the first cycle, it was also discovered that greater use of groupwork was required to boost the confidence of those learners who were still afraid to participate in the learning process. Therefore, I designed a spelling relay where learners were randomly divided into two groups. The list of words to be spelt included the words that learners generally spelt incorrectly in their English tasks in their classrooms and in the ELC.

Each group of learners stood in separate lines ahead of a table that had a sheet of paper. I called out the first word in the list and the first learner from each group had to quickly move to the table and write out the word on the paper, go back to the line and pass the pen to the next learner. Once one of the two learners started moving back to the line, I called out the second word. The group to spell the most words correctly was announced the winner of the spelling relay.

- *Creating flashcards*

Following the spelling relay activity where I observed some difficulties in spelling, learners were encouraged to create flashcards of their own. I gave them a list of words and

encouraged them to add words of their own. They were required to write the word on one side of the card, and include a definition on the other side. They were also required to use the word in a sentence of their own which they wrote below the definition. These flashcards would be carried around in their pockets and spelling would be practised by learners during breaks or in their free time.

- *Beach spelling track*

Having observed the fear of spelling by some of the learners in the ELC and in English classrooms, I decided to ask learners what activity they would like to engage in, and it is here that they came up with the idea of an outdoor activity to practice their spelling and stressed the need to spend some time outside. They expressed the need for a change of environment and demonstrated the ability to use their voice to request activities. This is important to consider as teachers need to think about how to address spelling errors by designing activities that will address the learning needs of learners (Al-Bereiki & Al-Mekhlafi, 2016).

Using this information, we decided that the beach would be suitable, and, after obtaining all the relevant approvals and permissions, I decided to use a section of the beach that included a jungle gym as a spelling track. Learners started at one point and had turns to spell a word called out by me; a ball was thrown to them to indicate they needed to start spelling; if the word was spelt correctly, the learner would move to the next point of the track (referred to as ‘check points’), otherwise, he/she would go to the back of the line until the next turn. The winner (the learner to spell the most words correctly and cross the finish line first) would receive a box of chocolates and a medal.

Image 4.1: ‘Check points’ in the spelling track



- *Spellathon*

At the end of the cycle, a spelling competition was held for those willing to participate. This took a more formal testing approach to ease learners into the conventional school assessment technique and to assess their improvement at the end of the Spelling and Vocabulary cycle. Learners were provided with a list of words of varying difficulty to study prior to the test. These words included those they have practised previously and other words. The test included 15 words, five of which were not in the list provided to learners before the test (See Appendix 15). The top three learners were selected from those who participated in the competition.

4.5.2.3 Cycle 3 – Reading

- *Reading in Pyjamas (sleepover)*

When reflecting on the previous Spelling and Vocabulary and planning ahead, ELC learners suggested staying over at school as the Grade 12 learners do. Displaying such eagerness, and agency, at this stage, to learn English I decided to gain the necessary permission and approvals and design a sleepover that included a range of fun reading activities for whoever was interested in or could participate. The activities were mostly competition based and included both individual and group activities. The winners of the

activities received a medal and they collected these medals throughout the sleepover. The learner who won the most medals was crowned the ultimate winner of *Reading in Pyjamas*.

The sleepover had a range of activities and included the following:

- Reading for colours: Appendix 18; finding hidden colours in sentences; explained later in this section – individual activity
 - Double puzzle challenge: Appendix 19; filling spaces to make words that fit the definition provided – individual activity. Learners were given 20 minutes to find as many words as possible. The learner with the most correct words won the activity.
 - Re-arrange the short sentence!: Group effort where learners were randomly divided into two groups and parts of an entire sentence were pinned to the front and back of learners' t-shirts. They had to work collaboratively to figure out what was pinned on them. Thereafter, they had to 'unscramble themselves' to put the sentence in the correct order by standing in that specific order; the group to complete first involved each learner reading his/her part of the sentence out loud, in order to be titled winners of the challenge.
 - Unscramble the sentences: learners worked individually to unscramble five sentences. Five sentences were each printed, cut up and scrambled. The scrambled sentences were placed on their tables and the first learner to unscramble all five sentences by moving the pieces of paper around was titled winner of the challenge.
- *Reading for Treasure! (Treasure hunt)*
- A treasure hunt was modified to suit the reading cycle. There was a request from learners to be more physically active in the ELC. Therefore, I designed a treasure hunt in the school premises that allowed for running around to look for clue cards to read. There were five clue cards in total (Appendix 21); each clue card had a sentence on one side that would make up a five-sentence story (Appendix 22) if learners found all the clues. The other side had a riddle that they needed to solve to find out where to go next.

The treasure hunt began by providing learners with an envelope that included: 1. an instruction sheet (Appendix 20) that they needed to read prior to commencing which explained how to go about the treasure hunt. 2. The first clue card which had a sentence on one side and a clue on the other side, which, once figured out, would instruct their next move where they would find the next clue card. Some clues had sweets or chips attached to it so as to encourage learners to find as many clues as they can.

If all five clue cards were in learners' possession, they would be able to tell the final destination of the treasure hunt where they needed to unscramble the five-sentence story. The first learner able to do this won a box of goodies. If all clue cards were not found, learners would not be able to find all the treats or complete the activity and would therefore not win the treasure hunt.

Image 4.2: Some clue cards and treats in *Reading for Treasure!*



■ *Reading for Colours*

This activity involved a worksheet of 12 sentences each having a hidden colour. The first sentence was done as an example. Learners had to read the sentences slowly and carefully and try to find the hidden colour. This activity was done during *Reading in Pyjamas* and based on the amount of fun learners had and their enthusiasm and intrigue, I decided to repeat this activity with the new set of learners that joined later in the Reading cycle as their first activity. The activity was game-based and learners were given 15 minutes to find the

rest of the 11 colours, both during the sleepover and in the second round with the additional club members.

- *Sequence story*

The sleepover and treasure hunt revealed that learners enjoy competition and stories. Therefore, I conducted an activity where they would put sentences in order to create a coherent, brief story. To enhance the competition, learners had to sequence two brief stories: one included jumbled sentences accompanied by a picture for assistance (Appendix 24) and the other included a brief story with some of the sentences jumbled below it (Appendix 25). The first learner to sequence the stories correctly was crowned the winner of the sequence story activity.

- *Comprehension*

A comprehension passage was provided to learners entitled, *The King's Daughter* (Appendix 26) which encompassed gender issues. This activity followed a discussion pertaining to why there were more girls than boys in the ELC. The comprehension was marked as a group and led to an unexpected debate about the issues in the text.

- *Reading competition*

The reading competition involved those who were part of the ELC from the beginning and who wanted to participate. It was discussed amongst learners that those who joined later in the Reading cycle still needed assistance with their reading, therefore it would be an unfair competition as they had not been involved in all reading activities of the club. Participants were happy with this decision and there were no concerns.

The reading competition was twofold: the first round was prepared reading where participants chose their own text and prepared before the day of round 1 where they had to read aloud in the presence of the rest of their peers and judges. A rubric was used to assess their reading (Appendix 27). There were two judges: me and another English teacher for the sake of trustworthiness and an outside opinion. The top three learners with the highest scores progressed to round 2 which involved unprepared reading of a text I chose (Appendix 28). The same rubric was used to assess reading aloud; however, in this round, I was the only judge due to teacher availability. I added three questions based on the text, to test understanding that learners answered orally, so as to enhance the round and the

competition as a whole. The learner with the highest score in this round was the winner, though the other two learners took second and third place in the reading competition.

4.5.2.4 Cycle 4 – Writing

- *Writing projects*

When the ELC was introduced to learners, irrespective of which cycle they joined in, they were encouraged to constantly practice their writing in a form of their choice whether it was poetry or short stories. This was done to allow learners to practice their writing skills over time as there are a lot of writing tasks in English that are considered for assessment. Learners worked on their writing projects in their own time, outside the ELC, and brought these pieces of work to me voluntarily which we discussed on a one-on-one basis.

- *Film trailer: Zulu Wedding*

The comprehension passage *The King's Daughter* initiated a debate on gender issues. I realised that when learners are provided with a stimulus they can relate to, it acts as a good springboard to a further activity. I played a trailer of the film *Zulu Wedding* that reflects 28-year-old Lou who goes to America to become a dancer. She then meets Tex with whom she falls in love. He proposes to her, however, there are complications because she comes from royal heritage and is promised to Zwelibanzi, a Zulu King. She does not want to honour the traditional arranged marriage and attempts to fight for the life she wants.

Using the trailer as a springboard to another writing task, learners had to pretend to be the main character and jot down points. Learners had to brainstorm the conversation they would have had with their father if they were the main character who was being forced to marry a man she was not in love with. These ideas were then discussed as a class.

- *Film: Freedom Writers*

I decided (with learners' plea to watch a movie in this cycle) that the film *Freedom Writers* would be an effective springboard to a writing task. *Freedom Writers* is set in Long Beach, California. Erin Gruwell, the new English teacher, finds herself in a high school that has recently implemented an integration programme allowing different races to be educated on the same premises. Erin joined the school because of this but finds herself having

challenges due to gang violence, racial discrimination and substance abuse. However, she does not give up despite her colleagues' ignorance and lack of support. She works three jobs to buy books for the learners and uses various teaching methods to create unity in her classroom and succeeds at removing the challenges that once existed.

Participants watched the film and were tasked to write a film review on the special template provided by me (Appendix 29) after working on a draft and editing their work.

Image 4.3: Participants watching *Freedom Writers*



- *#PicnicWriting! (Writing at the park)*

The film review, described above, was written on the school playground that learners recreated as a park, by using picnic mats and bringing snacks. I was present to assist them with their writing, more especially when it came to assisting them in effectively editing their work, as lack of editing was one of the prevailing challenges.

Image 4.4: Some participants at the picnic which concentrated on writing a film review



An additional intervention and data generation instrument could not be completed, due to the introduction of the COVID-19 pandemic towards the end of the writing cycle. I anticipated an essay where participants would write about their journey in the ELC, that would have served as both an intervention to assess writing progress at the end of the cycle and as a written reflective piece. However, due to the sudden closure of schools due to the pandemic, this was not possible.

4.5.3 Fieldnotes and Research Journal

Fieldnotes refer to the notes that researchers make in the field during the research process (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Widely used in qualitative studies, fieldnotes serve as means of recording necessary information related to context (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). Fieldnotes are records of activities observed in the field, as well as discussions (Kawulich as cited in Deggs & Hernandez, 2018). In my study, the fieldnotes recorded details such as what happened during the session of the English Language Club, what activities were done and how, and how many learners were present at the session. Pacheco-Vega (2019, p. 1) shares the following about fieldnotes:

Theoretically, academics who conduct fieldwork should be able to produce words consistently and frequently, simply by virtue of using these to produce a permanent record of the phenomena they are studying. These words, obviously, are meant to have

insight at some point in time, but at the very moment of writing while on the field, we are merely concerned with the act of producing text. We are recording data for us to process down the road.

In other words, fieldnotes are a record of everything that happens in the field of research which are used at a later stage to analyse issues in relation to the research phenomenon. On the other hand, a research journal or diary comprises descriptive logs of events and personal encounters, thereby putting together both subjective and objective aspects through the course of a research study which enables a productive interdependence of the two data collection strategies (Newbury, 2001). “Using reflective journals allows the researcher to make their experiences, opinions, thoughts, and feelings visible” (Ortlipp as cited in Deggs & Hernandez, 2018, p. 2554). Practically, it proves to be a challenge to single out the writing of “purely descriptive fieldnotes” because when one records events, other aspects of the research that are linked to the particular observation, such as theoretical concepts and follow up tasks, come to mind and are recorded accordingly with personal experiences of the participants and the researcher; consequently, the significance of a research journal is that it considers all these aspects in relation to the objective descriptions of events (Newbury, 2001, p. 3).

Based on this premise, both fieldnotes and a research journal were coupled to gather more detailed and specific data which is an advantage of using these strategies together. The fieldnotes and research journal considered the proceedings of every session of the ELC, as well as keeping account of related events outside the club that were considered influential to both the club and the research process in terms of how the learners and I felt about the intervention, what worked or did not work very well and the reasons for such incidences as well as the dynamics of the situation.

A key advantage is that since the journal allows for one to make consistent individual reports throughout the study (Sheble & Wildemuth, 2009), the use of a research journal proved to be appropriate as I needed detailed and personal accounts of the research process, as well as the effectiveness of my teaching methods in the club; this instrument allowed me to keep track of such information that was vital for informing the cycles in participatory action research which aimed to enhance the teaching and learning of English in the club. Fieldnotes and my research journal aimed to answer all research questions along the way and throughout the research cycles.

4.5.4 Questionnaires

A questionnaire consists of printed questions related to a study to which participants individually respond (Rule & John, 2011). There are two types of questionnaires, namely structured and unstructured questionnaires (Acharya, 2010). Questionnaires are useful to collect biographical details of participants, and data based on attitudes or practices; they can be interviewer-administered (verbally administered; face-to-face or over the phone) or self-administered (Codó, 2009). My study used a self-administered questionnaire which refers to respondents filling in the questionnaire in writing and then returning it to me (Codó, 2009) because it allowed respondents to be more truthful as compared to a face-to-face situation (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014).

Though this method of data generation is effective as it is quick and allows for all participants to respond simultaneously, allowing the researcher to obtain a vast range of data from many people (Codó, 2009; McLeod, 2014; Bertram & Christiansen, 2014), Codó (2009) argued that self-administered questionnaires are unsuitable in a case where the respondents may have literacy difficulties. However, since participants in my study were second language learners and this issue may have prevailed, all questionnaires were completed in my presence to allow for clarity-seeking questions.

Questionnaires can be structured (closed/pre-coded questions) or semi-structured, which refers to those that include open-ended questions (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). In this study, the questionnaires used included both closed and open-ended questions. In a questionnaire, questions that are ‘closed’ refer to those that have answers to choose from that are structured into categories by the researcher (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; McLeod, 2014); they have options to choose from, enabling comparisons across the sample (Cohen et al., 2011); these questions provide assistance to the respondents in terms of helping them with possible options to choose from to guide their responses, making it easier than a questionnaire that only has open-ended questions (Cohen et al., 2011; McLeod, 2014).

Taking into consideration that I was working with younger second language learners, this was an appropriate approach. However, the closed questions are disadvantageous in that they lack detail and limit respondents from expressing their opinions; they also cannot capture detailed responses due to predetermined options to choose from (McLeod, 2014; Meadows, 2003). To

address this drawback, some questions were open-ended. Open-ended questions refer to those that require responses, which are respondents' opinions, to be written in blank spaces (Hancock et al., 2007) and allow for free writing and explanation of responses (Cohen et al., 2011). This is effective as it allows respondents to provide experiences without constraints (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014).

In this participatory action research study, it was important to first get an idea of how learners respond to their classroom environment as a learning space, as this is where the learning of English occurs. Before the first cycle, a questionnaire (See Appendix 5) was administered. The questionnaire based on learning spaces was answered by learners in the ELC to understand the nature of their classrooms and how this influences their learning. This informed me about their challenges and preferences in learning English, and such information was important in order to plan a more conducive environment to empower them and enhance their learning before interventions were implemented. This was included in the baseline information required before embarking on a participatory action research study.

A questionnaire (Appendix 17) was also used at the beginning of the third (Reading) cycle (to understand their reading approaches and challenges). A similar questionnaire was used at the end of the cycle with slight changes, including that of the addition of the last question (Appendix 29), to see how their reading habits may have changed or had been improved after the cycle. The reason for the choice of the instrument at this point is that the questionnaire was threefold: collecting data based on the specific cycle; developing and assessing learners' reading skills (as they read the questions and understand them before answering); it also served as learners' reflections on the cycle which would inform the proceedings of the subsequent cycle. Ultimately, these questionnaires aimed to answer the research questions, 'What strategies may be used within an ELC to enhance the learning of the language?' and 'How may an English Language Club engender motivation and responsibility in learners?'

4.5.5 Observations

A distinctive feature of observations is that it allows for gathering "live data from naturally occurring social situations" that include data that is both visual and oral (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 396). Researchers can record observations of a situation or environment, or they can observe people by recording notes of what is seen (Hancock et al., 2007) but they can also record

qualities and behaviours of participants (Cohen et al., 2007). Researchers can also use observations to gather data on the kind of interactions that are taking place, verbal or non-verbal instances, resources and pedagogic styles (Morrison as cited in Cohen et al., 2007).

The risk with this strategy, however, is that the researcher may opt out on observations while writing about the last thing that was noticed (Hancock et al., 2007). However, in my study, this challenge is addressed by the constant reflection that may introduce information that may have been missed during observations. On the contrary, a unique strength of observations is that due to their immediate and direct nature, one is able to yield more authentic data; additionally, what people do may differ from what they say they do and observations highlight these issues that are necessary for research (Cohen et al., 2007).

The technique of observations used in this study was written descriptions (Hancock et al., 2007) and structured observation schedules were used. An observation schedule is a description of proceedings; the structured observation schedule contains predetermined categories for observations (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). The following is a description of observations done in this study:

- School Heritage Day programme (Cycle 1): I observed participants' presentations to the rest of the school and made notes of their speaking and listening in terms of eye contact, audibility and expression. I also made notes on observations such as facial expressions and body language, and attitudes portrayed before, during and after presentations (See Appendix 11 for observation schedule).
- Beach spelling track (Cycle 2): The idea was to use an outdoor activity to enhance learners' attitudes towards spelling. Therefore, observations included participants' expressions about spelling in terms of their feelings towards spelling before, during and after the intervention and recorded general behaviours towards the intervention and towards peers. Additionally, spelling approaches were also observed and recorded during the intervention (See Appendix 13 for observation schedule).
- Reading for Treasure (Cycle 3): Since the intervention took the form of an outdoor activity where participants needed to read an instruction sheet and then various clues to find goodies, I observed and recorded whether they took time to read the instruction sheet thoroughly first before starting the hunt, whether they just followed where others ran

instead of reading clues, and other behaviours and expressions (both verbal and non-verbal) portrayed during the course of the activity (See Appendix 23 for observation schedule).

4.5.6 Visual representations

What we look at, see or watch are considered visual images or representations (Cohen et al., 2011). Silverman (2014) notes that a range of issues may emanate from visual data, therefore they are important instruments to inform the research study. Visual data may include video recordings, photographs, cartoons, paintings and drawings (Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

Although qualitative research relies mostly on the written word, visuals also allow for the generation of effective data that may accompany the written word and enhance data analysis as they are more appropriate especially for those who feel they cannot effectively or fully articulate their experiences and opinions verbally or through the written word (Lichtman, 2010; Guillemin, 2004). Visual representations were appropriate for this study as participants are English language learners with various challenges related to the learning of the language. So, this method allowed learners to more effectively engage with the study by allowing them to respond in ways through which they feel more comfortable expressing their thoughts and feelings throughout the study.

Visual representations in the study took the form of mind-maps to collect baseline information by finding out the challenges that learners experience, before the study commenced, and during the first session of the ELC. Mind maps included a few sentences written by the learners to explain, in their own words, their mind maps.

Additionally, since the study involved the use of an ELC to enhance the learning of English, learners were encouraged to create posters before the commencement of Cycle 1 (Listening and Speaking) to improve their learning space (the school library which had been identified as needing improvement and a classroom in which the interventions were conducted). These posters were also analysed in terms of the quotes and material chosen, the reasons behind learners' choices, and how such visuals affect their learning. This strategy also served as baseline information as learning spaces have an influence on teaching and learning and aimed to answer the question, 'What strategies may be used within an English language club to enhance the learning of the language?'

At the end of Cycle 2 (Spelling and Vocabulary), learners in the club designed a poster (Appendix 14) to persuade others to join. They used adjectives to describe the ELC to the other grade 8 and 9 learners. This way, they practised their spelling further and I was able to monitor areas of improvement. These visual representations mainly aimed to answer the research questions, ‘What strategies may be used within an English Language Club to enhance the learning of the language?’, ‘In what ways may language learning strategies enable learners to gain confidence linguistically?’ and ‘How may an English Language Club engender motivation and responsibility in learners?’

4.5.7 Interviews

An interview involves an exchange of dialogue between two or more people (Edwards & Holland, 2013). Interviews adopted as a data generation method promotes the attainment of explanations of people that are direct, through the interaction of speech (Alshenqeeti, 2014). They are considered to be more effective than questionnaires as they elicit data that allows researchers to explore people’s perspectives in detail (Kvale as cited in Alshenqeeti, 2014).

My study adopted a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions that were determined in advance so as to obtain information on the topics I wanted to cover; all interviewees were asked the same questions in the same order, however, the open-ended nature of the interview allowed the discussion of topics in more detail, allowing me to probe the interviewee into discussing his/her response in more detail, or finding out more about what he/she is referring to at the time (Hancock et al., 2007; Cohen et al., 2011). Additionally, semi-structured interviews allowed for going into the interview with questions that would answer the research questions and guide the process, bearing in mind that certain information and other relevant themes would arise throughout the interview, that may not have been predetermined (Evans, 2018). This is a key advantage of semi-structured interviews in qualitative research.

Both the interviewer and interviewee learn about themselves and each other in this process (Edwards & Holland, 2013). Therefore, this strategy was appropriate for my study as I wished to find out about the learners’ challenges in learning English, how the English Language Club may enhance their English competence and encourage motivation, and how I could modify my own teaching strategies for more effective teaching and learning.

Interviews were conducted during my study at the end of the first cycle (Listening and Speaking; see Appendix 10). The reasons for the use of interviews at this stage are: they were conducted to find out more about learners' experiences of the activities in the cycle, in order to reflect and plan further, according to their needs, and also formed part of their reflections. This strategy also further developed speaking and listening skills in a different form as learners listened to the question and responded accordingly. The interviews aimed to answer all research questions of the study.

However, there are limitations to the use of interviews. Transcribing interviews is a time-consuming task that results in a lengthy written text that needs to be carefully worked with in a qualitative research study (Hancock et al., 2007). To overcome this, I transcribed one interview a day and this allowed me to carefully check transcriptions against the audio recording. Additionally, only a portion of the message is communicated in the words used; more of it is transmitted in the manner in which the person is speaking; therefore, tone is significant in indicating the kind of feelings portrayed (Hancock et al., 2007). Since the interviews were audio-recorded and may not clearly capture verbal cues and facial expressions that also carry meaning, I considered note-taking during the interviews to address this challenge (Leung & Savithri, 2009; Rule & John, 2011) and when transcribing, I ensured that meaning was portrayed accurately through the use of punctuation marks (Hancock et al., 2007) and other necessary descriptions.

4.5.8 Written texts

The definition of 'text' could be as limited as an official document, or as broad as traditional products that form representations of meaningful symbols (Bauer, Suerdem, & Biquelet, 2014). The meaning of texts is enclosed in the work and portrays a message to the reader; therefore, the purpose of textual analysis is not passive reading of an author's work, "but the entry into a reflexive dialogue between the reader-analyst and the text" (Bauer et al., 2014, p. 3). In this study, texts refer to the writing activities learners engaged in, which required the completion of a worksheet, a task or anything that involved them writing and presenting a piece of work.

This data generation strategy was appropriate for the study as documents are considered to be "left-overs of some kind of activity" and "are produced in one context and used by the

researcher in a different one” (Bauer et al., 2014, p. 4). In this context, the texts produced by learners were used to monitor their progress within the different cycles. The written texts aimed to answer all research questions of the study within the different cycles.

4.6 Ethics and gatekeeper approval

Before the research process commenced, gatekeeper permission to conduct research with learners at the school was sought from the school principal (Appendix 1). After gatekeeper permission, Ethical Clearance from the university was sought (Appendix 2), and upon approval of my study, learners who volunteered to join the English Language Club were provided with consent forms (Appendix 3), if they agreed to participate in this study.

Since learners were under the age of 18, their parents needed to give permission for their children to participate, hence there was a need for parents’ consent forms (Appendix 4). In these consent forms, the research questions and data collection methods were highlighted, and participants were made aware of what they are required to do and which of their contributions within the ELC would be used for the purpose of the study; the consent form stated that they will be kept anonymous and the information they provide will be kept confidential, that they will not be compelled to participate and are free to withdraw from the study at any time (Lichtman, 2010; Cohen et al., 2011; Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Learners were also informed that while they may be part of the ELC they are not compelled to participate in the study; only those who provided informed consent, with permission from their parents, participated in the study. No one refused to be part of the ELC, however, not all grade 8 and 9 learners joined due to being in other school clubs and societies and joining more clubs would have overloaded them.

4.7 Recruitment of participants and sampling

The English Language Club was introduced to grade 8 and 9 learners by conducting a meeting after collecting lists of names of learners who were interested in joining; learners joined voluntarily. The announcement of the introduction of an ELC in the school was made through the Representative Council of Learners (RCLs) in grades 8 and 9 who compiled the list of interested learners.

In some instances, the study used total population sampling which refers to a method where the entire population or all participants are included in data generation and analysis (Etikan et al., 2016). Thus, in this study, I generated data from all learners who were members of the ELC in some cases, while other data was collected as a random sample. For example, the questionnaires, written work, visual representations, fieldnotes and research journals involved all learners and therefore used total population sampling. The interview considered at least 15% of the club of 30 and was randomly sampled, acting as a representative sample. Random sampling allowed each learner in the population (participants in the study) an equal chance of selection by including all names so that each selection is independent, and each name has the same probability of being chosen (Cohen et al., 2011; Frerichs, 2008; Sharma, 2017). Learners to be interviewed at the end of Cycle 1 (Listening and Speaking), were randomly selected by drawing names from a hat.

Table 4.2: Biographical details of participants

Participant	Gender	Race	Age	Home Language	Preferred Language	Primary school attended	English type in primary school
Sammy	Female	African	14	isiZulu	English	Suburban	HL
Ngo	Female	African	15	isiZulu	isiZulu	Suburban	HL
Thandi	Female	African	14	isiZulu	English	Township	FAL
Andy	Male	African	14	isiZulu	English	Suburban	FAL
Cindy	Female	African	14	isiZulu	isiZulu	Suburban	FAL
Lee	Female	Coloured	14	English	English	Suburban	HL
Hamed	Male	African	15	English	English	Suburban	HL
Macy	Female	African	14	isiZulu	English	Suburban	HL
Lolo	Female	African	15	isiZulu	English	Suburban	HL
Jabu	Female	African	15	isiZulu	English	Suburban	HL
Minnie	Female	African	15	isiZulu	English	Suburban	HL
Jola	Male	African	16	isiZulu	isiZulu	Township	FAL
Jade	Female	African	14	isiZulu	English	Suburban	FAL
Wethu	Female	African	15	isiZulu	English	Township	FAL
Xoli	Female	African	14	isiZulu	isiZulu	Township	FAL
Sbonga	Male	African	14	isiZulu	isiZulu	Township	FAL
Andiswa	Female	African	14	English	English	Township	FAL
Sne	Female	African	14	isiZulu	English	Rural	FAL
Linda	Female	African	14	isiZulu	English	Township	FAL
Luyi	Female	African	13	English	English	Township	FAL
Zama	Female	African	14	isiZulu	isiZulu	Township	FAL
Amy	Female	African	14	isiZulu	English	Suburban	HL

Sam	Male	Coloured	13	isiZulu	English	Township	HL
Sphe	Female	African	14	isiZulu	English	Township	FAL
Futhi	Female	African	14	isiZulu	English	Suburban	FAL
Anne	Female	African	13	English	English	Model-C	HL
Noku	Female	African	14	isiZulu	English	Rural	FAL
Lezi	Male	African	14	English	English	Township	HL
Omi	Female	African	14	isiXhosa	isiXhosa	Suburban	FAL
Sibby	Female	African	14	isiZulu	English	Township	HL
Thembi	Female	African	14	isiZulu	English	Suburban	HL
Kwanny	Female	African	13	isiZulu	English	Suburban	HL
Nisha	Female	African	14	English	English	Township	HL
Sbu	Male	African	13	isiZulu	English	Rural	FAL
Zee	Male	African	12	isiZulu	English	Township	FAL
Sibu	Female	African	13	isiZulu	English	Township	FAL
Leah	Female	Coloured	13	English	English	Township	FAL
Nelly	Female	African	14	isiZulu	English	Suburban	HL
Zimmy	Female	African	14	isiZulu	English	Suburban	HL
Hlongi	Female	African	13	isiZulu	isiZulu	Suburban	HL
Phili	Female	African	14	isiZulu	English	Township	FAL
Yanda	Female	African	15	isiZulu	English	Suburban	FAL
Sthoko	Female	African	14	isiZulu	English	Suburban	HL

Of the 43 participants who were involved in the study, the first 16 (highlighted in grey) joined the ELC first and therefore participated from Cycle 1 of the study. The rest of the learners joined at different stages of the study. Not all learners participated in all activities throughout the cycles. Participation was voluntary and depended on learners' availability.

The majority of participants were females, only eight participants were male. Three participants were coloured while the rest were African. Most of the participants spoke isiZulu as a Home Language. Eighteen participants attended primary school in townships, three attended rural schools and only one attended a Model-C school. The rest of the participants attended schools in suburban areas. Twenty of the participants attended primary schools that offered English as a Home Language (EHL) while the other 23 learnt English as a FAL (First Additional Language) at their primary schools.

One of the contributing factors for the mediocre pass percentages in EHL (of the learners who joined the ELC) is due to most participants' (34) home language being isiZulu which may influence how they perceive the learning of English and their competence in the language as they are mostly exposed to their home language, have more practice in it, and are thus more competent in it.

Table 4.3: Home languages of participants

Home Language	Number of participants
English	8
isiZulu	34
isiXhosa	1

English is only offered as a Home Language at the school in which the study was conducted, thereby placing pressure on learners, especially those who came from primary schools in which English was taught as a First Additional Language. This can be seen in the table above.

4.8 Data analysis

Data analysis is presented as a descriptive narrative, which is in accordance with a qualitative research approach (Cohen et al., 2011). Thematic analysis was used for the purpose of this study since in the qualitative approach, data generated in the form of words will provide extensive descriptive detail, so thematic analysis allowed for the presentation of themes that related to the data generated during the qualitative study (Alhojailan, 2012; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). It is considered appropriate for my study as I interpreted and understood key concepts, on a wider scale. Since qualitative data are extensive, thematic analysis is suitable for this study as it allows one to present key themes succinctly by keeping the focus (Alhojailan, 2012).

The goal of thematic analysis is the identification of themes in the qualitative data and to use these themes to answer the research questions; in other words, it is more than a mere summary of the data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017; Evans, 2018). Hence, I analysed such themes and perspectives provided by the data generation instruments (Creswell, 2009) in order to understand participants' learning of English, thoughts and feelings as the study progressed, as well as reflections on my own teaching methods and how these could be improved. A thematic arrangement of data categorized data into main themes and served as an effective way to present the study (Rule & John, 2011).

Visual representations were analysed by noting key aspects presented. Focusing on interpreting what message learners wished to portray in the visual representations is important. Taking into consideration that thematic analysis was used in my study, I needed to note and generate the themes that were common across all visual representations and analysed these according to the key research questions. The themes generated took into consideration the learners' choice of items to be represented in the visual representation as well as their reasons for choosing to portray those items.

Analysing the questionnaires required me to first code the material in order to reduce the data into "manageable and meaningful text segments" which needed to be based on the theoretical framework and research questions of my study (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 390). This occurred by first becoming familiar with the data through thorough reading (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Thereafter, I picked out the recurring topics or words in the questionnaires that address the research questions (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Flick, 2014; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Thereafter, themes were arranged and the necessary responses by learners in the questionnaires which fit those themes were analysed accordingly and written up under the generated themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). It is important to note that similar data from each section of the questionnaires were analysed under the broader themes of the study, as they came up throughout other data generation methods.

Interviews were analysed firstly through transcription. The audiorecordings were listened to and transcribed diligently, recording all verbal data. While reading and re-reading the transcripts, themes were sifted from the conversations and these were thoroughly explained and analysed with verbatim words and phrases from the transcriptions to enhance the analysis of data generated, maintaining that the themes capture something pertinent to the research questions of the study (Evans, 2018). If themes already existed, the data from the interviews were discussed under those themes.

4.9 Feedback to participants

Although participants would have been made aware of the outline of the study via the consent form, feedback to participants occurred through a brief summary of the study as a whole, including data analysis and conclusions made. However, throughout the study, both participants and researcher engaged in planning and reflection (parts of the action research

cycle) and this required consistent discussion and feedback based on the interventions and their development throughout the English Language Club. There was also a discussion at the end of the study where learners gave me feedback on the data analysis, to confirm if they agreed with it or not.

4.10 Storage and disposal of data

For the duration of at least five years, the research data will be secured in a safe location, in a locked cupboard in the supervisor's office, after which paper documents containing confidential information will be shredded and disposed of, and audio equipment incinerated.

4.11 Rigour and trustworthiness

It is imperative to ensure that the data generated and analysed in this study are a true interpretation of what has occurred during the research (Cohen et al., 2011). Since the approach used in this study is qualitative and aimed to explore how an English language club may be used to enhance learners' language competence and empower learners to take responsibility for their learning, certain measures of trustworthiness were undertaken.

Firstly, since this is an action research study that entails four cycles that took approximately eight months considering the cyclical nature of the study that required constant planning, reflection, readjustment and implementation of interventions, I had prolonged engagement in the field (Anney, 2014; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This developed trust amongst the participants in the study as I taught them in the conventional classroom context as well as in the English Language Club, allowing me to fully immerse into their world and better understand their experiences and context by investing sufficient time to thoroughly understand the data (Onwuegbuzie & Leech as cited in Anney, 2014; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The extended period of time increased rapport and positively affected the quality of data generated.

Secondly, to further ensure the trustworthiness of data, the study adopted data triangulation, which refers to the use of a range of data collection methods to ensure that information obtained is in agreement throughout the sources (Cohen et al., 2011; Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Flick, 2014; Anney, 2014) since various methods of data generation were used in this study.

Thirdly, member checks is another means of ensuring the trustworthiness of data which entails sending information back to participants for them to verify as correct and not misreported, or to identify any inconsistencies (Anney, 2014; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In my study, audio-recording the interviews and transcribing data verbatim from data collection instruments ensured that rigour was achieved. Furthermore, the transcriptions were shown to the participants so that they could verify the correctness of the data generated and ensure that what has been captured by me was not altered. Furthermore, since the study is rich in qualitative data, it was also essential to ensure that learners view the transcriptions and data analysis to confirm that I had portrayed their responses accordingly and that the data complied with the actual statements made in the data generation methods (Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Silverman, 2014; Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Furthermore, notes were taken during the interviews in case the audio tape was destroyed or was not audible, and the combination of the two data generation strategies further ensured the trustworthiness of data and sustained rigour.

4.12 Limitations of the methodology

4.12.1 Sample size

Due to the nature of the action research cycle that differs from other research designs, and the fact that participation in the ELC was completely voluntary, the number of participants at various points in the study was inconsistent and some activities only involved a small number of learners that were available during the time. Additionally, though the population was made up of 43 learners, not all were involved in all activities throughout the study due to various reasons: clashes with other extra-curricular activities and sports, bus strikes, and other transport issues. Although learners showed enthusiasm in the ELC, they sometimes had to make choices that caused their absence in some sessions. Nonetheless, these issues were reflected on throughout the study as should be done in action research.

4.12.2 Learners leaving the ELC

Four of the participants left the ELC during the study due to their parents' relocation. Though these learners did not withdraw from the study and gave permission for me to use the work that they had already done, they expressed their sadness and disappointment. With these learners, I was only able to analyse the work they had completed. Data analysis including these specific learners would have been enhanced if they completed all four cycles; moreover, more sound conclusions on their improvement in English as a whole would be made if I had their work from all cycles.

4.12.3 Lack of rigid design in participatory action research

One criticism of participatory action research is that it lacks a specific framework that may result in a data-gathering process that is unreliable (van der Meulen, 2011) which makes it different from other research designs with more strict planning methods. The relationship that existed between the learners and me may also be considered different when compared to other designs as my study involved both parties working together to make decisions; however, the planning, reflecting and implementation of the four cycles were done as meticulously as possible and all findings were worked with and reported carefully to increase trustworthiness of findings.

4.13 Conclusion

In this chapter, the research methods used to explore the study, based on critical theory, were carried out using a participatory action research design that consisted of a research journal and fieldnotes, questionnaires, visual representations, interviews, and written texts, which comprised qualitative data. Data generated were thematically analysed and despite limitations and challenges during the study, the results provided essential information to answer the main research questions of this study. These results will be presented and analysed in the subsequent findings chapters.

Chapter 5

Using the data blocks for educational renovation:

Analysis of baseline information

“Research serves to make building stones out of stumbling blocks”

(Little as cited in Verma, 2015).

5.1. Introduction

Baseline information is provided in this chapter as it was used to determine how to proceed with the participatory action research study. Such information was also important to consider before interventions were planned and executed in the English Language Club with the aim of enhancing learners’ competence in English and empowering them to take responsibility for their learning. Baseline information included subject analyses, participants’ visual representations in the form of mind maps, a questionnaire on learning spaces, and participants’ posters. The latter part of the chapter deals with reflections and decisions pertaining to the baseline information that informed the proceedings of the participatory action research.

5.2. Baseline information

5.2.1. Subject Analyses

The schools’ subject analyses show that of all the subjects taught at the school, English Home Language (EHL) was consistently producing the lowest pass rate, and since it is the first subject that determines whether learners pass or fail the term, and ultimately the grade, this was contributing negatively to the overall performance of learners. This can be seen in the following table.

Table 5.1: Overall performance of grade 8 and 9 learners in 2019 (Terms 1-3)

Grade	Total number of learners	Term 1		Term 2		Term 3	
		Number wrote	Number passed	Number wrote	Number passed	Number wrote	Number passed
8	245	245	94 (38%)	245	85 (35%)	244	128 (52%)
9	243	243	122 (50%)	241	127 (53%)	238	104 (44%)

Before the study commenced in September 2019, I perused through the school's term-by-term subject analyses. I used the analyses of 2019 to decipher trends or improvements, if there were any. It was evident that EHL was a challenge for learners as the pass rate, especially in grade 8, was poor.

Table 5.2: Pass percentages in EHL in Grades 8 and 9 in the year 2019

Term	Grade 8 (2019)	Grade 9 (2019)
2 (June)	48%	89%
3 (September)	57%	76%
4 (December)	61%	89%

The table above indicates that grade 8 learners' EHL marks generally improve over time. With the grade 8 learners, they were able to pass EHL by September, something they could not previously do. The grade 9 learners' final EHL pass rates are very positive, indicating that most learners passed EHL. What is important to note, however, is that the above statistics include learners who were 'progressed' – a term referring to those learners who do not pass on their own but are moved to the next grade due to their age or number of times they have failed that grade.

It is also important to note that grade 9 learners did significantly better than grade 8 learners. This may be attributed to social maturation. Considering that grade 9 learners have transitioned into the school and have made more friends and got to know teachers better, as compared to grade 8 learners who are new to the school and have transition challenges at first, this may have

allowed grade 9 learners to transition into English and improve in it at that stage. This concept is revealed as the influence of social interaction on learning by Hurst, Wallace and Nixon (2013) whose data revealed the following findings: 1. Learners learn from others which enhances understanding due to prior knowledge. 2. A positive environment is created when there is better social interaction. 3. Social interaction enhances critical thinking and problem solving as learners have an array of perspectives to draw from. Thus, there is “a strong connection between social interaction in the classroom and their learning” (Hurst, Wallace, & Nixon, 2013, p. 390)

While learners may have passed, their achievement ratings or level of pass in EHL were low and may be considered as mediocre. This is represented in the table below which shows the number of learners in each achievement rating. The table below serves as an indication that the majority of learners (90 learners in grade 8 and 82 learners in grade 9) passed with level 4 (50-59%). This is bearing in mind that 50% in English is compulsory to pass these grades. 45 learners failed the subject in grade 8, while only six failed in grade 9. Moreover, there was only one distinction in grade 8 and 13 in grade 9 and considering the number of learners in each grade (245 learners in grade 8 and 243 learners in grade 9), these distinctions may be considered scanty. Moreover, the subject analyses reveal that the average mark in EHL in grade 8 is 51.24%, while it is 61.68% in grade 9. Though there is improvement in assessment in the classroom, the results could be better, and the school aims to better the average overall. Thus, interventions are required, which the ELC focused on.

Table 5.3: Achievement ratings of learners in EHL in term 4 of 2019

Number of learners in each achievement rating							
	Level 1 0-29%	Level 2 30-39%	Level 3 40-49%	Level 4 50-59%	Level 5 60-69%	Level 6 70-79%	Level 7 80-100%
Grade 8	11	34	49	90	42	17	1
Grade 9	3	3	20	82	70	47	13

The above statistics (using real numbers), where learners mostly obtained a Level 4 rating of between 50-59% in both grades 8 and 9, as revealed by subject analyses, resulted in me questioning the current practices in the English classrooms and in my own teaching, as I was

one of the English teachers who taught grade 8 and 9 learners in term one in 2018 and grade 8 learners throughout 2019. Thus, I decided that transformation needed to occur for improvement to come to pass, and learners had to be involved in the process as it seemed as if what was going on in their English classrooms was not adequate in enhancing their English competence. From my observations and experience as an English teacher in the school, learners were rarely involved in deciding how they would learn what they needed to learn in the English classroom, and this may have contributed to their poor performance in the subject. In addition, it was also observed that they did not speak English during group discussions or practice their English during lunch breaks which could have influenced their progress in speaking the language as a whole. While the above data referred to all grade 8 and 9 learners in the year 2019, the next section deals only with learners in the English Language Club.

5.2.2. Visual representations: Mind maps

One of the contributing factors to the mediocre pass percentages in EHL (of the learners who joined the ELC) is due to most participants' (34 as per Table 4.3) home language being isiZulu which may influence how they perceive the learning of English and their competence in the language as they are mostly exposed to their home language, have more practice in it, and are thus more competent in it.

English is only offered as a Home Language at the school in which the study was conducted, thereby placing pressure on learners, especially those who came from primary schools in which English was taught as a First Additional Language. This can be seen in the table above.

The achievement ratings, as discussed above, point to the fact that much needed to be done with grade 8 and 9 learners in terms of enhancing their English competence. Thus, the ELC was created with the aim of addressing this issue by using teaching and learning approaches unlike the ones used in the conventional English classroom. These were found to be more appealing to the second language learners who are part of the club. Evidence of this was revealed in their enthusiasm for being involved in the planning of the interventions with the aim of transformation and empowerment.

Before the commencement of the participatory action research, learners completed a mind map that served as a guide when planning the cycles of action research. The mind map focused on

learners' challenges when learning English. At this point in the study, 27 learners attended the ELC and all participated in the mind maps. The following table represents the recurring challenges in the mind-maps and how many learners mentioned each.

Table 5.4: Learners' challenges when learning English

Challenge	Number of learners
Spelling and pronunciation	21
Writing	9
Reading	7
Reading out loud (feeling shy or scared)	6
Fear of classmates	4
Speaking in front of other racial groups	2

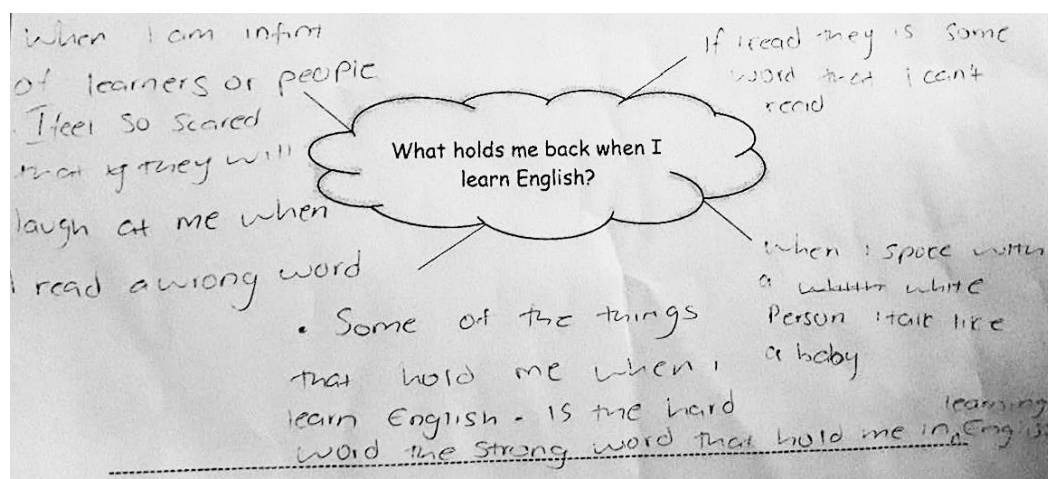
It was evident that learners needed assistance with spelling and pronunciation as this was the most recurring challenge in the mind-maps, followed by writing and reading. The learners' concern about spelling is evident in their posters, which will be discussed later on. Spelling was also studied by Al-Bereiki & Al-Mekhlafi (2016) who concentrated on the causes of spelling errors and provided suggestions for improvement. Proficiency in a language is a goal in language learning and spelling is an important skill that requires much work to learn (Al-Bereiki & Al-Mekhlafi, 2016). Challenges with reading and writing were focused on by Alexander et al. (2011) who reported that working-class children in South Africa and across Africa are at a disadvantage when it comes to reading and writing and aimed to develop reading and writing through the Vulindlela club, referred to in Chapter 3. This context is similar to the one in which I found myself.

Though learners did not identify 'linguistic confidence' per se in their mind maps, it was also evident that learners were concerned about this as 12 participants made mention of how they felt speaking around others in the classroom – that they were afraid that their peers were going to laugh at them when they read or speak in English or they were shy. This finding was also revealed by Dewi et al. (2017) who reported that peers' laughter contributes to learners' lack of proficiency in English and their fear of speaking. I also discovered while engaging with learners during discussions and in my teaching, that some were lacking linguistic confidence

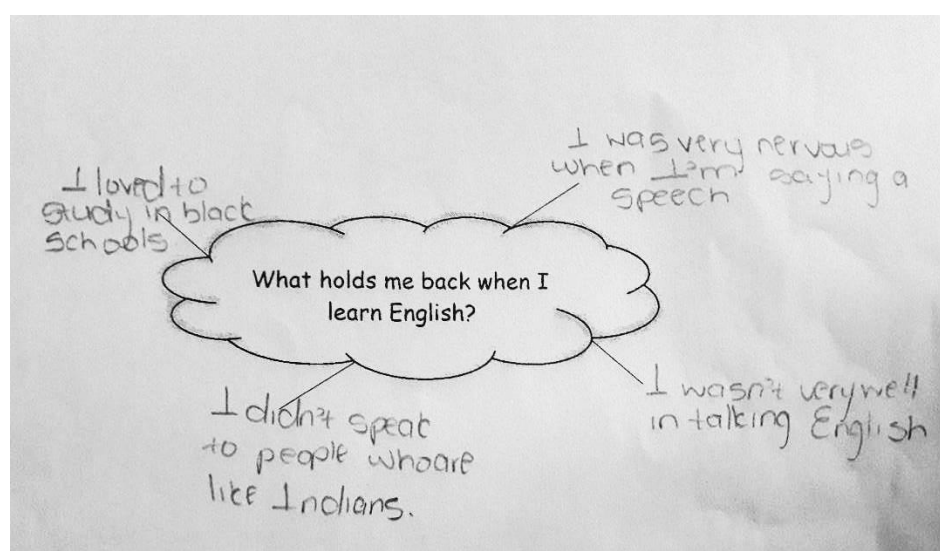
while others had challenges with listening in class and following instructions; therefore, listening and speaking was also necessary skills to work on.

Two learners expressed how they felt when they used English in the presence of other racial groups, which are depicted below.

Visual representation 5.1: Learner's mind map



Visual representation 5.2: Learner's mind map



One learner mentioned that he speaks “like a baby” when speaking to a “white person”, while the other learner expressed that she did not like speaking “to people who are like Indians” which could be the reason behind her “love to study in black schools.” Both of these African learners indicate that African second language learners’ linguistic confidence is jeopardised by

their opinion that Indians and Whites are more competent in the language which may cause them to feel a sense of subordination and reluctance to learn the language before they even attempt to. The implication of this opinion is similar to that of Norton and Toohey (2004) who argued that language is not only viewed as a method of communication but it influences and is influenced by learners' understanding of their social contexts, which in this case is the learner's opinion that Africans are not good at speaking English like Indians and Whites are. Furthermore, this view highlights the power relations that exist in the classroom (Wink, 2005) that may influence how learners learn. As I am an Indian teacher of English, this could have implications for the learner who felt that she did not like speaking to Indians. The data, therefore, indicates that learners needed to be empowered in this regard. Of importance was the fact that the learner chose to join the ELC. Even more important was the learners' willingness to share her insecurities about speaking in front of speakers perceived to be more competent in the language.

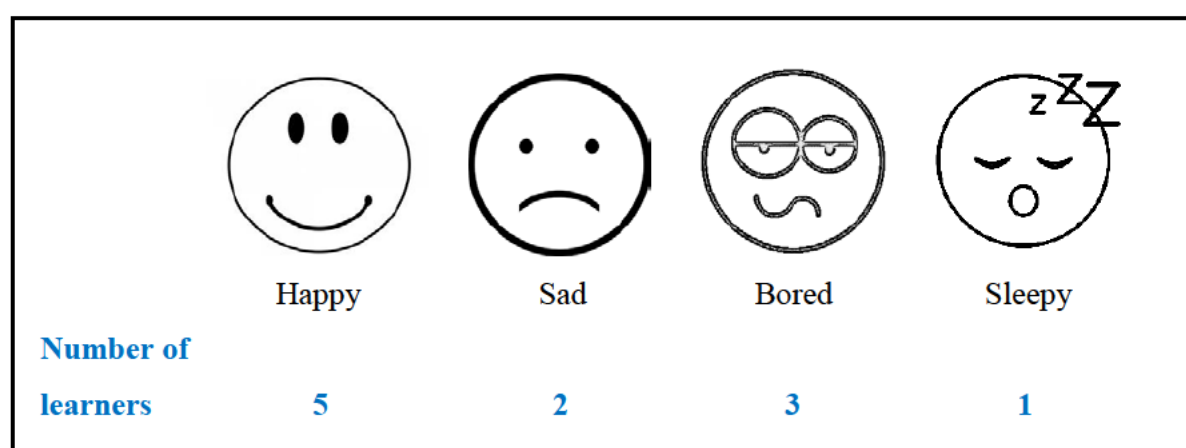
5.2.3. Questionnaire

Understanding that learning spaces impact learners' well-being (Goss et al., 2017) and the way they perceive these environments affect their academic success (Barr, 2016; Goss et al., 2017), I administered questionnaires on learning spaces to learners. This baseline information was designed to inform the kind of environment that needed to be created in the ELC for optimum learning to take place. Eleven learners, present in the second session, were available to respond to the questionnaire. The decrease in numbers was due to a compulsory extra session that was held by a Mathematics teacher with his classes during the activity period. Four themes were derived from learners' responses in the questionnaire:

5.2.3.1. Learners' attitudes towards their classrooms

The first question in the questionnaire asked how participants' classrooms made them feel, and they had to colour in one of the four faces provided that represented a mood. The following figure presents the data for this question.

Figure 5.1: Learners' responses to how they felt about their classrooms



Five respondents indicated that their classrooms made them feel happy. In response to Question 2 (Why do the classrooms make you feel this way?), these respondents had a range of reasons: “It makes me feel better like I could learn more things or skills” (Jola); “I learn new words” (Xoli); Cindy referred to me in this question and explained that I come up “with the best topics.” These responses are a reflection of learners’ willingness to learn which could be a contributing factor to their success.

Lee and Sammy, who both felt bored, indicated respectively that it is because there were no attractive colours in the classrooms and that the teacher talks too much sometimes. Lee said she would improve the classrooms by putting up posters and by teachers using different colours of chalk, while Sammy said that she would prefer talking about more “exciting things.” Lee enhanced her idea of posters by stating that the best environment is one that “is colourful and has charts and posters” which she could read when she felt bored.

The issue of ‘boring’ classrooms due to the lack of colour and posters was also reflected in Question 9.9 where 10 of the 11 respondents shared that their classrooms were not decorated. Since simple visual aids such as pictures and charts enhance learning and make it “interesting” (Shabiralyani, 2015, p. 226). Based on learners' responses, I had to ensure that the room used for ELC sessions was visually attractive to enhance their language learning and serve as motivation. Hence, learners were asked to design their own posters, and these will be analysed later on in this chapter.

5.2.3.2. How the learning space is influenced by peer and teacher attitudes

Peer and teacher attitudes towards learners are crucial elements of the learning space. The approach by both parties affects the learning of English and is evident in the data: the two respondents who indicated that their classrooms makes them feel sad had reasons based on peer and teacher attitude towards them. In terms of peer attitude, Jade expressed that the classrooms make her feel sad because learners call one another “names” and “laugh at you.” Thus, peer attitude and response is a significant factor in linguistic confidence. Unfortunately, this response shows that some classrooms may not be complying with the notion that a learning environment needs to be encouraging in order for learners to feel invited to participate, without fear of being judged as conveyed by Hannah (2013).

Thandi indicated that some learners are unfriendly; this notion was confirmed later in the questionnaire when she ticked ‘No’ in response to Question 9.5 (In my class, everyone is my friend). Furthermore, none of the respondents felt that everyone shows respect in the classroom (Question 9.16). The lack of friendliness and respect could be possible factors in the lack of English competence portrayed by the learners who find themselves in these classrooms. Thandi also shared that her best learning environment is one in which people “understand” her. Since learners spend a lot of time at school, and in the classroom with others, it is natural for their learning to be influenced by others in the classroom (Hannah, 2013) which explains why the respondents made mention of these issues in the questionnaire.

In relation to the above notion of friendliness and in response to the question that asked about how they would improve the classroom, Thandi said that learners “should act as brothers and sisters” and Jade mentioned that she would improve the classroom by “telling learners to start respecting one another.” In contrast, Jabu was happy about her classrooms because she felt that learners “get along” and in her classrooms, she indicated that everyone is her friend (Question 9.5). It is evident in these responses that learning may be affected by the way learners’ peers respond to them in the classroom as it has a significant influence on their emotions, ultimately affecting how they feel about learning in that context. A friendly environment lowers anxiety and opens the affective filter causing more input to reach the Language Acquisition Device (Krashen, 1982) which is not always the case in learners’ classrooms according to the responses above. Therefore, I needed to address this issue as a sense of friendship in the classroom could play a significant role in developing language learning (Goss et al., 2017).

In terms of teacher attitude, in Question 2, Thandi shared that “the teacher always [shouts] at [them].” In terms of how they would improve the classroom, Thandi suggested that “the teacher should stop shouting for no reason.” Though Jabu felt that her classrooms make her happy and justified this by stating that she feels “at home” and teachers pay attention to them, she also mentioned that she “would like if the teachers would stop shouting at [them] for no reason” to improve the classroom. In Question 9.18, seven declared that teachers shout at them. Being shouted at in the classroom could be detrimental to learning as learners may feel nervous to speak to teachers about their challenges in English as teachers could appear to be unapproachable, thus negatively affecting linguistic confidence and learners’ English competence as a whole. It also does not enable the empowerment of learners as they sit in fear in the classroom and this goes against a humanising pedagogy.

Andy took the teachers’ approach further by stating that his best learning environment is where the teacher does not shout, but rather motivates, encourages and guides him when he does something wrong. Thus, this reinforces the study that showed that creating a relaxed, enjoyable classroom is considered one of the characteristics of a good teacher (Rahimi & Karkami, 2015). This is also in keeping with Krashen’s Affective Filter hypothesis which considers motivation as lowering the affective filter and increasing input (Krashen, 1982). However, Andy did not feel that he was getting the necessary support from his teachers which could affect his input process, during teaching and learning, negatively affecting his competence in English.

The data points to the fact that learners may be happy in the classroom for various reasons, but the teacher’s approach to learners plays an important role in how they feel about their classrooms, and ultimately how they learn. Since learners who have good relationships with their teachers succeed at school (Hattie as cited in Goss et al., 2017), the learners’ responses here pertaining to the teacher shouting at them may be one of the reasons behind them performing at a mediocre level. However, peer approach also affects learning. Therefore, the participants and I needed to consider how to approach our engagement with the ELC members and how to engender positive peer relations among them in order to help combat their challenges with English.

5.2.3.3. Influence of classroom management on the learning space

Question 9 required respondents to think about their English classrooms and answer the questions by ticking one of the three boxes. The following table presents the data for this question.

Table 5.5: Question 9 of questionnaire on learning spaces

	Yes	No	Sometimes
9.1. English is fun.	7	0	4
9.2. The class is noisy.	6	1	4
9.3. Learners are fighting with each other.	2	3	6
9.4. Some students are not happy in class.	5	1	5
9.5. In my class, everyone is my friend.	6	2	3
9.6. I answer/ask questions in class.	5	2	4
9.7. I am shy to answer/ask questions.	5	5	1
9.8. The classroom is crowded.	7	3	1
9.9. The classroom is decorated.	1	10	0
9.10. I understand the teacher.	3	1	7
9.11. The teacher gives me individual attention.	2	2	7
9.12. We do pair/group work.	5	0	6
9.13. Other learners disturb me.	8	1	2
9.14. I am able to concentrate in class.	5	2	4
9.15. I get enough help from my teacher.	6	4	1
9.16. Everyone shows respect.	0	4	7
9.17. The teacher motivates us.	4	1	6
9.18. The teacher shouts at us.	7	0	4
9.19. There are many resources.	3	6	2
9.20. I feel safe in the classroom.	5	3	3

The above data reflected both positive and negative aspects of the English classrooms. One of the positive aspects was the enjoyment of the subject. For example, seven of the 11 respondents indicated that they felt English is fun; six respondents felt that they have friendly classmates, and only two respondents indicated that they could not concentrate in class, while the other nine learners either responded to ‘Yes’ or ‘Sometimes’.

The issue of classroom management was evident in Question 9, where only one respondent indicated that the classroom was not noisy, while others indicated ‘Yes’ or ‘Sometimes’, which could stifle learning as evident in some responses to the other questions. For example, the issue of noise makes it difficult for learning to occur; Thandi indicated in Question 2 that she “can’t hear the teacher” and such disturbances in the classroom may reduce teaching and learning

time as the teacher would have to stop the lesson in an attempt to quieten learners. Cindy was actually referring to the ELC in Question 2 (Why do the classrooms make you feel this way?), which is evident in her response that included “this class.” She conveyed that I have “control.” In terms of control, it appears that she was referring to classroom management as this issue was expressed by six of the 11 respondents who made reference to noisy classrooms. While only one learner felt that other learners do not disturb them, eight of the 11 learners felt that they are disturbed by other learners in the classroom. The appropriate classroom management strategies are important to enhance language learning as they may affect listening skills and the ability to hear the teacher and concentrate on the lesson.

Moreover, only three respondents indicated that learners were not fighting in class, whilst six noted that learners fight sometimes. It appears as if this is why three learners indicated that they did not feel safe in the classroom and three indicated that they only ‘sometimes’ feel safe (Question 9.2). Moreover, in response to the last question in the questionnaire which was open-ended and focused on asking participants to describe the best learning environment for them as learners, Sammy expressed that this would be a place “where you feel you [are] safe” and are able to exist without fear. A learning environment that is negative can stifle learning; therefore, it is important to understand the ways in which to create a more positive environment; furthermore, teachers should ensure that learners feel respected and safe (Garibay, 2015). This is in keeping with the humanisation and empowerment facet in critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970) but seemed to be lacking in learners’ classrooms.

5.2.3.4. How overcrowded classrooms affect the learning space

Seven respondents indicated that their classrooms are overcrowded, whilst only three said they were not and one said sometimes. The general class size in the school is approximately 65 learners per class, in most cases. This is reinforced by Andy who mentioned the issue of overcrowded classrooms four times in his questionnaire. For example, he indicated that classrooms make him feel bored and justified this by saying that the classrooms are too crowded resulting in much noise in the teacher’s presence. He further stated that he would make sure that there are not more than 40 learners in one class, to improve the classroom and that his best learning environment is one that has “40 or less” learners.

A similar response by Jabu, who seemed not to have an issue with the learners in the classroom but the size of the classroom, said that her best learning environment would be a hall as it is a “large space for more learners.” The issue of crowded classrooms was evident even in my teaching. In 2018 and 2019, I had two grade 8 classes of approximately 60 learners in each, and learners were sharing desks. This makes it difficult for learners to concentrate as they are uncomfortable and hot and it makes resorting to talking to peers, unnecessarily, much easier when they are all seated in close range. This results in poor academic performance as they may not be paying full attention to the English lesson.

The overcrowded classrooms could also be the reason behind the five learners being shy about answering/asking questions in class which, resultantly, may be a reflection of the seven learners only ‘sometimes’ understanding the teacher as they may very rarely ask follow up questions if they do not understand. Overcrowded classrooms may also hinder the input process in the Affective Filter hypothesis as learners may have increased anxiety in participating in teaching and learning, as revealed by the data above.

5.2.4. Visual representations: Posters

Participants created their own posters to decorate the ELC space following their responses indicating that their learning spaces lack the necessary visual appeal. The posters were designed and submitted by 28 participants and the following were the recurring themes to emerge:

5.2.4.1. Learners’ attitudes towards the school library

Learners expressed the need for the library to be decorated as they described it as “boring” (Sammy) and “unattractive” (Lee), according to fieldnotes based on a classroom discussion following the answering of the questionnaire on learning spaces. Furthermore, 10 of the 11 respondents in the questionnaire indicated that their classrooms were also not decorated. Therefore, it was decided that learners in the ELC create posters or charts with educational references to decorate the library in which the ELC sessions took place. Learners tended to stay away from the library in the school and we hoped to encourage usage of the library by making it more attractive. Visual aids such as pictures and charts are important to enhance learning (Shabiralyani, 2015).

To reinforce the tendency above, Lee mentioned in the classroom discussion that she did not visit the library as it was not inviting, and it was not a place she saw herself learning in. Jabu expressed that the books were dusty and that she would not even touch them. These responses show that the library needed to be thoroughly maintained and it could be a reason for learners not using it, thus not encouraging reading in the school.

A total of 28 posters were completed, including the ones done by those who joined the ELC in the Reading Cycle, and these were eventually put up on the notice board in my classroom where ELC sessions eventually took place as the library was later used as a classroom during the activity period. This decision was also made after some of the posters were removed and destroyed over time as the library was used by other learners in the school. This revealed a further concern: that even if the library was maintained, learners who destroyed the posters displayed a negative attitude towards learning and a sense of disrespect towards their learning spaces which could serve as a reason why teachers did not decorate their classrooms.

5.2.4.2. How to achieve success

In their posters, participants also made reference to how they believe success can be achieved.

Five participants represented education being the “key to success” in their posters. This refers to their understanding that one needs to be educated in order to have a successful life. This is emphasised by one of the participants who wrote “If you want to be [successful] you need to study.” Furthermore, this serves as an indication that participants acknowledged the importance of education in their lives. This is a good foundation for enhancing their English competence as it is important for learners to be willing participants for transformation to be possible. This is necessary in education as it transforms learners’ views of their realities (Nouri & Sajjadi, 2014). This is in line with the self-awareness dimension in critical consciousness development as it refers to one’s ability to sense the significance of actions, which in this case is the need for them to have an education in order to better their lives (Alexander & Schlemmer, 2017). Some of these posters are presented below.

Visual representation 5.3: Posters on education being the key to success



Other participants believed that education comes from within and goals can only be achieved if the person responsible for it strives towards them at all costs. For example, Sam expressed in his poster that “The future is in your hands” and Hlongi shared, “If you believe in yourself anything is possible no matter how hard it is.” Linda shared in her poster that “being self-motivated, having courage and trusting yourself makes your future bright and successful.” This points to the fact that participants are aware that despite reaching out for help, they are ultimately also responsible for their own success and what they do is important in reaching their goals. Additionally, the fact that learners joined the ELC voluntarily to help themselves extends the idea of responsibility. This is in keeping with the dimensions of self-awareness in critical consciousness development in terms of seeing one’s potential for transformation (Alexander & Schlemmer, 2017).

In contrast, Luyi (visual representation below) believed that anyone can reach goals “but only if you try to find help and try to communicate with others.” This shows Luyi’s understanding

that it is necessary for one to reach out for assistance to reach the necessary educational goals and highlights her awareness of other people in terms of developing relationships with the aim of learning (Alexander & Schlemmer, 2017). This is a crucial element in critical pedagogy.

Visual representation 5.4: Luyi's poster

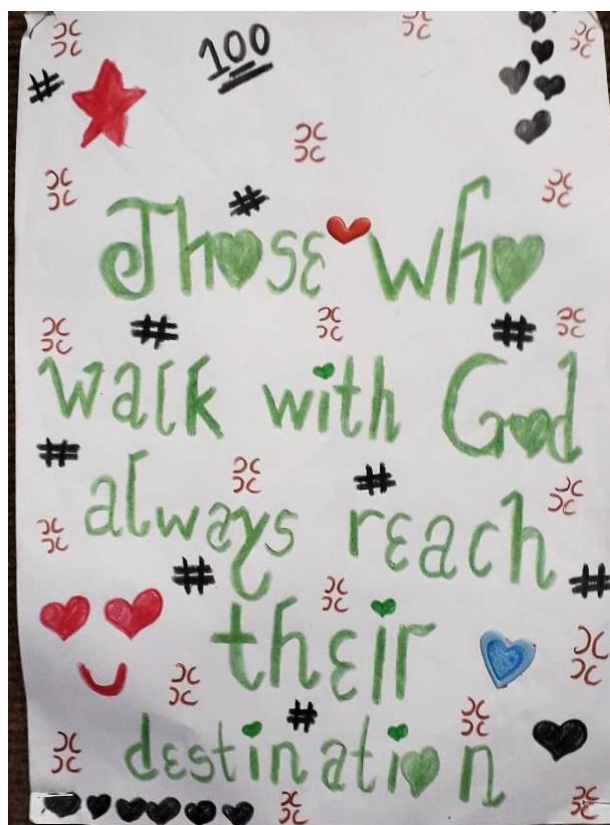


Luyi also referred to me in her poster by including my surname, and when asked about it, she indicated that a teacher was an important point of reference for a learner who wants to enhance English competence and shared that it was important for her to include me in her poster as I created the ELC just to “help them.” This finding foregrounds that support from teachers is a critical factor and how learners feel and are treated are important for the betterment of their learning (Hannah, 2013; Garibay, 2015). Luyi also drew a trophy, a medal and a star which may symbolise achievement and excellence that she could have felt that the ELC may bring her as she mentioned the academy three times on her poster. Spelling errors were evident, for example ‘exellent’ instead of ‘excellent’ and ‘always’ instead of ‘always’ and this takes us back

to learners' challenge of spelling. It was, therefore, evident that Spelling and Vocabulary needed to be one of the cycles in the study.

A different opinion was shared by Leah who shared a spiritual reason for success. Her poster is presented below. Since humanising pedagogies are founded on aspects such as respect for others and their identities (Delpont, 2016), it was important for me to understand and display respect towards participants as spiritually inclined beings. Furthermore, in making the ELC a space which is humane (Shudak, 2014), there was no sense of discrimination in terms of participants' religious beliefs, despite us belonging to different religions. Leah's poster was important in addressing the notion that her belief that her God helps people reach their destinations, especially since humility is one of the Freirean indispensable qualities of teachers that refers to listening to others without opposing views (Law, 2015).

Visual representation 5.5: Leah's poster



Moreover, it was important to express acceptance of her belief as this would, possibly, be her source of motivation especially when she felt afraid (Leah was initially a participant who was very shy and afraid to speak to me and others). Thus, by me creating a mutual understanding

of God, generally, with her, I slowly eradicated her fear to talk to me as she felt that there was a mutual understanding and that the ELC was a safe place to share even religious views despite our differing religions. This confirms the notion by Grundy (as cited in Masouleh & Jooneghani, 2013) that the humanising approach in teaching and learning includes respect for learners and acknowledging the emotional nature of learning. Leah drew a number of hearts and a smiley face which may indicate her love towards the ELC and her happiness for being part of it. The “100” could represent perfection and achievement which she might hope for herself.

5.3. Reflections and decisions on baseline information

After I engaged with the posters, mind maps and questionnaires, findings were dealt with in a class discussion in the ELC where participants’ ideas and concerns related to the learning of English were ascertained alongside the data. Participants and I decided that the study will have four cycles: Listening and Speaking, Spelling and Vocabulary, Reading, and Writing as all four skills needed to be enhanced. What was also decided was that the ELC was going to make use of activities that were not done in the classroom. We were going to engage in fun, innovative activities related to the abovementioned language skills, instead of me just lecturing to them, understanding that they indicated that their teachers talked a lot. It was hoped that this approach away from the ordinary would keep them interested and help them feel more comfortable learning English.

We discussed the role of the teacher in motivating learners and I reassured participants that it was a safe place where no one was going to laugh at them as we were going to work on creating a friendly club where they could count on one another and feel free to talk to me about all their learning needs.

Participants also shared during discussions that they have noticed some who do not participate openly and suggested that the ELC use pair and group work so they could help each other. This demonstrated a sense of community and agency. We then decided that the first cycle should be based on listening and speaking skills so that learners’ linguistic confidence may be developed before the other skills were worked on, as listening and speaking form the basic foundation in the learning of English and will assist with enhancing the other skills. If they are able to better listen to and follow instructions, they will be better able to complete other activities.

Learners understood that they would be designing participatory action cycles with me and were therefore participants in the study. They were excited about being involved in the decisions of teaching and learning and could not wait to start Cycle 1 and this displayed initial feelings of empowerment. Some learners even requested that we meet more than once a week, and this demonstrated their eagerness in the ELC and in the study. I then suggested that they should approach me whenever they needed to about any work, and if they wanted to meet as a group, we would have to arrange a special time.

5.4. Conclusion

It was important to gather baseline information to better understand learners in the ELC and how they felt about their learning contexts and learning of English. In response to the issues relating to their English competence, challenges and suggestions for improving in the subject, I used the information generated from the subject analyses, mind-maps, questionnaires and posters to plan the participatory action research cycles, with learners playing an active role in the planning of the interventions by sharing how they felt about the activities and what they would enjoy and feel comfortable doing. The baseline information also informed the nature of the ELC with the aim of enhancing their English competence.

Chapter 6

Using the data blocks for educational renovation:

Analysis of Cycles 1 and 2

“Students take control of their learning; however, teachers have a major impact on their progress towards autonomy (Reinders & Balciakanli, 2011, p. 15), which leads them to create activities that foster fruitful learning and that monitor the students’ progress”
(Gonzalez-Vera, 2016, p. 53).

6.1. Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses data that emanated from Cycle 1 (Listening and Speaking) and Cycle 2 (Spelling and Vocabulary). Each cycle will be analysed separately under themes generated from that cycle. At the end of each cycle reflections and decisions made during the cycle and for the next cycle will be discussed.

6.2. Cycle 1 – Listening and Speaking

This cycle was five weeks long and included three intervention sessions of one hour each. The interventions in this cycle were: communicating on the telephone (role-play), step-by-step instructions, and telling the news, as discussed in the methodology chapter, to enhance listening and speaking skills. Sixteen participants were regular attendees who partook in most sessions of this cycle. At this point, there were 28 participants. Individual interviews with seven participants were conducted at the end of cycle one, based on the interventions.

I also used my fieldnotes and a research journal throughout the cycle to record significant data as a less invasive technique since it was still the early stages of the study. Additionally, learners’ written reflections were used to gather more information on their experiences of the cycle. The following themes emerged from Cycle 1: the importance of teacher support and teaching approach in enhancing listening and speaking; how learners’ attitudes towards others influence motivation for listening and speaking; the significance of teamwork for the enhancement of listening and speaking skills; the impact of learner responsibility on listening and speaking.

The listening and speaking cycle also included a Heritage Day programme that took place throughout one school day and included music, dance, poetry and speeches. This school programme served as an observation of learners' listening and speaking skills at the end of the cycle. Learners from the English language club (ELC) suggested that they participate in the programme as a club. It was decided that they would each have a presentation but would appear as a united group at the assembly. Seven participants were part of the presentation during assembly: Cindy introduced Heritage Day, Sammy recited her own poem, Lee, Wethu and Andy had speeches to share, and Sbonga recited his own isiZulu poem which Jabu translated to English.

6.2.1. The importance of teacher support and teaching approach in enhancing listening and speaking

Providing an example of how an activity needs to be completed proved to be useful in enhancing listening and speaking skills during the telephone activity. Learners had to role-play a telephone conversation; topics could be chosen from the worksheet (Appendix 8). They worked in pairs and discussed/brainstormed ideas before volunteers acted out the telephone conversation in the ELC. Since the activity was done in pairs, it allowed both listening and speaking to take place and be observed by me.

A student-teacher and I were involved in the role-play activity where a topic had to be chosen and acted out, using old telephones as props. By doing so, an example of how to approach the activity was modelled. The props were used as the communication over the phone is common amongst people of today and I decided it might be a good strategy to encourage learners to speak and listen in a fun, natural way. Graziano (2011), Avilia (2015) and Dewi et al. (2017) attributed an increase in learners' confidence in using language to creative activities that encourage participation and stimulate interaction in a fun, natural setting that motivates learners and lowers anxiety as the acquisition of a language is most effective with a lowered filter (Krashen, 1982; Abukhattala, 2013; Kakule, 2016).

The topic of the telephone conversation that was modelled for learners was based on a teenager informing her mother about coming home late because of a party; meanwhile, the mother knew that the teenager was out doing homework. Learners seemed to enjoy the example provided as

there was a lot of laughter along with note-taking which indicated they were listening to the example. Furthermore, enjoyment was further revealed at the end of the cycle during individual interviews. For example, when Jabu was asked about how she felt about me participating in the telephone conversation by modelling a role-play. She said, “Oh! Miss, it was awesome actually... It was very clear because we learnt the tone.” By me participating in the role-play with another teacher, learners better understood what needed to be done, thus enhancing their listening skills. This was revealed in Macy’s response to an interview question and she shared that she liked the telephone activity “because it gave [them] examples.” When asked in the interview if she thought the ELC interventions improved her listening and speaking skills, Cindy shouted, “Yes!” and said, “I was able to understand some things better than when they just give instructions...” indicating that examples that accompany instructions enhance the understanding of instructions.

The above strategy was emphasised by Screviner (as cited in Sowell, 2017) who stated that meaning is enhanced when it is demonstrated; teachers can model what they want their learners to do after the instruction has been given. Therefore, in order to enhance listening and speaking skills in the English classroom, the manner in which teachers explain things matters; providing examples to accompany instructions is also an effective teaching and learning strategy that needs to be considered to ensure that learners’ understanding of the English instructions is enhanced and they can, thus, more effectively complete tasks.

It is crucial that teachers model examples and participate in the activity so as to create a sense of unity and eradicate the power relations that normally exist between teacher and learner. It must be noted, however, that Macy indicated at the end of the cycle in her interview that she did not feel she had good speaking skills and that she is “shy” and does not like expressing herself in public, she spoke well during role-play with Jabu. This indicated that Macy’s linguistic confidence needed to be developed through more listening and speaking interventions, which the cycle took into consideration.

Teachers need to offer different learning styles; experiences and examples that can be applied in reality to be helpful to learners (Cam & Oruc, 2014). This proved true as five of seven learners indicated in their interviews at the end of the cycle that the telephone conversation was their favourite activity in the cycle. The student (Sammy) who shared that the instructions activity was her favourite was not present for the role play but when she was asked if she thinks

it is important for a teacher to model what to do, she said, “It would really help ... because when it happens for real you know what to do.” Similarly, Cindy said, “I was able to understand some things better than when they just give instructions.” This suggests that teachers providing examples assists with learners’ listening skills because they pay close attention, thus further understanding what to do and leading to a better outcome for speaking. Contrary to this, if students are unsure of what needs to be done, they might be reluctant to participate or afraid to speak, which could result in a higher filter and lower input (Krashen, 1982), thus negatively influencing listening and speaking skills.

Jabu extended the notion by sharing in her interview, “It was understandable because we practised it and after that in front of people...we communicate and learnt about how to make eye contact and communicate with people.” Her response points to the idea that the activity allowed them to practice communication which involves listening and speaking skills; the fact that they practised it in pairs and then shared it with the rest of the learners as the role-play enhanced their listening and speaking skills and the written text that accompanied the activity included tips on how to communicate on the telephone as well as questions for discussion. These discussion questions entailed different tones used and how the speakers sound different in various scenarios. While listening to the role plays learners had to make such notes, thus further encouraging listening. Their answers were discussed thereafter, encouraging further speaking.

Overall, the telephone carried meaning as learners paid attention to the messages that were being portrayed through the use of tone. Thus, listening and speaking were enhanced because learners were able to do peer assessments on the role-plays and I was able to observe and make comments on their presentations.

It was revealed that the manner in which teachers give instructions also influences learners’ listening and speaking skills. In her interview, Jabu shared that her challenge with listening and speaking in the English classroom depends “on the way the teacher is speaking. Sometimes she is very hushy. Sometimes she is very slow.” By ‘hushy’ Jabu meant that her English teacher is soft-spoken. When I asked her to explain how this affects her listening and speaking, Jabu stressed that her English teacher gives them many instructions at once, which are sometimes jumbled so she does not thoroughly understand what is expected. Similarly, Lee shared: “the person might talk too fast and I don’t hear anything, or the person might talk too slow and then

I get bored.” Furthermore, Jabu made reference to a teacher and said, “Miss didn’t give us an explanation about what we needed to write about. She only gave us the instruction and it was not clear.” These experiences could explain why seven of the 11 respondents mentioned in the baseline questionnaire that they only ‘sometimes’ understand the teacher.

Sowell (2017) reported that giving instructions affects learning and that when learners do not understand what to do, the lesson or activity can fail. It was further argued that this is a problem for both native and non-native language teachers, and can be challenging for experienced and novice teachers; thus, because giving instructions has a significant impact on learners’ learning, pre-service training needs to consider more practice in and attention to effectively giving instructions to learners (Sowell, 2017).

Macy’s challenge in relation to listening and speaking differed from that of the rest. She indicated that the challenge arises when she presents something orally in the English classroom, she “shakes” and “just [doesn’t] want to talk because others laugh.” The challenges were addressed by the ELC by providing examples when instructions are given and asking learners to explain, in their own words, what they needed to do before the activity commenced. Additionally, they were reminded that the ELC is a safe place and mistakes only mean that there is room for improvement. Due to the ELC fostering such a humanising and fun environment, it could explain why there were no cases of mockery as Macy felt in the English classroom. Mahdi (2015) noted that it can be challenging to get learners to participate in speaking classes, however, it can be deduced that though Macy indicated she felt shy and nervous about speaking, she was comfortable in the ELC as she still chose to participate in the interventions in the listening and speaking cycle.

The importance of effective teacher feedback plays a significant role in enhancing learners’ linguistic confidence, thus enhancing speaking skills. Fieldnotes revealed that having the rest of the teaching staff watch the learners’ Heritage Day programme performance as a trial run played a crucial role in their improvement. For example, an English teacher suggested to Sbonga to use facial expressions and put more action into his presentation of his poem; the teacher then commended him. Resultantly, he took the feedback very well and performed the poem (in isiZulu) better than he performed during rehearsal in terms of eye contact, tone, audibility and confidence. His partner, Jabu, who shared the English translation of the poem was given the same advice and also performed better in terms of audibility and expression,

which was lacking in the rehearsals and trial run. This view is supported by Dincer and Yesilyurt (2017) who reported that to encourage learners to speak includes listening to them carefully and providing necessary constructive feedback.

Image 6.1: Sbonga passionately using action to express the ideas in his poem



The above serves as an indication that not only did Sbonga listen to and understand instructions carefully, but this enhanced his linguistic confidence. Although his presentation was in isiZulu, I noted, in my fieldnotes, that he started using English more after the Heritage Day school programme. More importantly, I found that learners value their home language and English more when both are respected. When rewarded for using both languages, their self-confidence appears to increase, they are able to express themselves better, they reveal a sense of belonging, and they are more willing to participate in the English classroom. Teachers' strategies for encouraging learners to speak include respect, and freedom of expressing opinions (Dincer & Yesilyurt, 2017) which was what I drew on when I supported Sbonga's request to present an isiZulu poem.

Additionally, opportunities for learners' sharing of ideas and opinions eradicates silence and oppression (Breunig as cited in Asakereh & Weisi, 2018) which is an important aim of education and serves as a significant role of teachers as transformative intellectuals in line with

the principles of critical pedagogy. The use of an isiZulu poem and English translation in a school Heritage programme, as a listening and speaking strategy, allowed the learners to share the values of being 'a Zulu'. It is important, then, to respect learners' home languages during the learning of English for any improvement in English to take place.

According to fieldnotes, not only did other learners also perform well in the Heritage Day programme, but they were motivated and displayed confidence in front of the rest of the school due to the commendation received by their teachers who told them they were proud of their improvement. This finding is contrary to that of Bojuwoye et al. (2014) who reported that motivation such as the availability of and encouragement by teachers, and their caring approaches affect learning in primary schools while secondary school learners were more concerned with textbooks, extra classes and the need for other resources in order for effective learning to occur. Motivation is equally important for learners in secondary schools, as my study showed in this instance.

Teachers' feedback was important for learners and for me, as some of them were ELC participants' English teachers, which allowed us to believe that the ELC seemed to have aided in their enhancement of listening and speaking. This was evident in teachers' responses that I recorded in my fieldnotes and research journal: "Wow! She is in my class and I did not even know she could speak so well as she is very quiet in my class." This comment points toward the notion that a fun environment where learners feel safe may foster better participation in listening and speaking activities and therefore increase the chances of developing these skills.

Teachers' efforts play a crucial role in enhancing English competence as it motivates learning. For example, Lee was asked in the interview, 'What about the activities make you enjoy them?' She responded, "They are fun. You can do stuff instead of being bored, sitting at school doing nothing." As mentioned in chapter 1, the activity period on Wednesdays was rarely used and learners would be found outside just waiting for the end of the school day. Lee's comment, therefore, shows that learners want to use the time allocated in the activity period for their educational well-being and for the fun aspect. Sammy has a similar experience as she said the activities are enjoyable because she "loves playing games." Therefore, it is evident learners' positive experiences stemmed from the fun, creative activities in the ELC, which may not be possible in a classroom. These findings enforce those of Garibay (2015) and Barr (2016) who maintained that the ways in which learners feel about their classroom environments influence

their learning, satisfaction and academic achievement, and their motivation to learn and engage in the classroom. Therefore, the activities of the ELC complement the school classroom. Some ideas from the ELC may be able to transfer to the classroom, depending on the numbers of learners, curriculum requirements and assessment.

In her answer to the interview question, ‘What aspects of the club do you enjoy?’ Sammy said, “I enjoy it because it has creative things... we design... we talk. We feel free to do anything.” A creative, experimental, and enjoyable atmosphere needs to be incorporated into the strategies created to eliminate the stress of learning a language and encourage participation (Alexander et al., 2011; Bojuwoye et al., 2014; Dewi et al., 2017). In a follow-up question where I asked if she does not feel this way in her English classroom, she said, “No, because in the classroom they do work, notes.” Jabu shared that she was enjoying the club as it relaxes her mind and she “thinks outside the box.” A relaxed environment opens the filter and allows for more effective language acquisition (Krashen, 1982; Abukhattala, 2013; Kakule, 2016; Xu, 2016; Nath et al., 2017). Providing opportunities for learners to learn critical thinking and become more active enables them to be critically conscious of life conditions (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011; Mahmoudi et al., 2014).

Like the baseline information, this cycle also revealed that a teacher’s approach to discipline and classroom management also affects how learners learn English. Both Cindy and Jabu, when asked if there was something else, they would like to share at the end of their interviews, mentioned that Andy and Hamed were too noisy when they sat at the back during the session and that “they make the craziest jokes” (Jabu). Though Jabu thought that these jokes were necessary sometimes, she expressed that it was overdone and disturbing and they could not concentrate. There is a possibility that some interactions in the ELC may disturb other learners’ ability to concentrate while listening to instructions.

This was concerning as Andy was also part of the Heritage programme and during the trial run, fieldnotes revealed that three teachers expressed being surprised that he was capable of performing well as he “misbehaves” in their class. My fieldnotes and research journal revealed two things when I asked Andy about it, he shared that I do not shout at them. Teachers’ shouting at learners was a recurring theme even in the baseline information. It is possible that learners tend to rebel when constantly shouted at and this ultimately affects their learning. The study by Rahimi and Karkami (2015) that also explored teachers’ classroom discipline strategies

revealed that learners are demotivated by teachers that are authoritarian as it leads to stress, lower learning outcomes and a negative attitude towards either the subject or learning, which are characteristics Andy displayed in his classroom. Thus, differing discipline approaches and classroom management may influence learning, bearing in mind that I did not have a discipline issue with Andy in the ELC. It is possible that if the teachers told Andy what he was doing wrong in their classrooms then perhaps he may have acted differently.

Different learning strategies also influence learners' behaviours and, resultantly, success in a language. Andy also shared that he felt "misunderstood" and that "other teachers did not understand [his] need to be playful while learning because [he] remembers things better." He expressed further that when he asked what he did wrong in an attempt to change it in future, the teachers did not provide feedback and only took his questions as a sign of rebellion. Bojuwoye et al. (2014) attributed learners' reluctance to ask for assistance to teachers' negative responses and dismissive attitudes which could have a negative impact on learning. The way learners feel and are treated are important elements in teaching and learning (Hannah, 2013; Garibay, 2015).

From a critical pedagogy perspective, Giroux (as cited in Vargas, 2019) noted that for teachers to be transformative individuals, learners must be provided with opportunities to voice their opinions about their learning experiences, a notion that the ELC adopted in terms of reflections, and that which was revealed by Andy. Furthermore, considering critical pedagogy as a pedagogy of love implies that teachers should love who they teach; if not, the facilitating of empowerment becomes fruitless (Vandeyar & Swart, 2016). The idea is to encourage learners to have a voice by actively engaging in dialogue with teachers (Asakereh & Weisi, 2018) and not force them into silence, which is the oppressive force that education ought to be addressing.

The above results on the importance of teacher support and teaching approach in enhancing listening and speaking point to teachers' use of praise and effective feedback, teaching approaches, discipline strategies and classroom management approaches as important factors that affect learning and affect learners' English competence.

6.2.2. How learners' attitudes towards others influence motivation for listening and speaking

The manner in which learners react to one another in the school context impacts linguistic confidence and motivation both positively and negatively, depending on the kind of attitude portrayed. For example, Jola, who has a stutter, was laughed at in class. In the ELC, with fewer learners, learners were told about speech impairments and were thus more educated about it, resulting in them being more polite towards him. Jola was the first to volunteer to 'tell the news', a homework activity where learners were asked to gather a piece of recent news to share with the rest of the ELC members. They could retrieve the information from television, the internet or a newspaper and share it orally with other learners. Questions were asked based on the news. Jola's courage must be recognised as even with a stutter and being laughed at previously, he displayed comfort in this activity. According to fieldnotes, Jola's stutter was not as problematic as it used to be and this may be linked to anxiety – the more comfortable he is, the less he stuttered.

Another example of the influence of learners' attitudes towards others was evident in the poem presentation by Jabu and Sbonga at the Heritage Day programme which resulted in the crowd cheering more than they had cheered any other performance. Fieldnotes and observations revealed that as the presentation of the poem continued, both learners started showing signs of enhanced confidence and motivation to continue with a smile, as the rest of the school applauded them. The approval of others in school was, therefore, encouraging and both learners' linguistic confidence and motivation were enhanced. This can be seen in their written reflective pieces after the Heritage Day programme: "It made me feel happy and I was so proud of myself. The things that made me feel happy are that people loved my poem and called me poem master..." (Sbonga). This supports the idea that group work and social activities are important to lower anxiety and boost confidence (Du, 2009).

A similar experience was shared by Jabu: "I wish we could do it again. The crowd loved us the most!" This confirms the idea by Graziano (2011) and Hannah (2013) who indicated that a supportive school environment plays an important role in enhancing language learning. Jabu's desire to "do it again" shows that it was an enjoyable experience for her and displays a greater sense of confidence after the activity as compared to during rehearsals when she was worried about the performance. Motivation is important in language learning and the more motivated

the learners were, the lower their affective filter, and the more successful learners were (Krashen, 1982; Du, 2009; Abukhattala, 2013).

The strategy of using the school's Heritage Day programme, as an outside-the-classroom activity, to enhance speaking and listening skills was appropriate as the interaction with others was considered to be a fun way to increase learners' confidence to use the language because their self-esteem was enhanced. The idea of non-classroom settings and fun strategies to enhance confidence and self-esteem was also revealed by Avilia (2015), Dewi et al. (2017) and Graziano (2011). Gaines (2015) also found that using authentic outside situations to practice what was learnt are very effective methods of increasing linguistic confidence.

The idea of a family-like classroom was also a significant factor in motivating learners to learn English and participate in the ELC. For example, in her interview, Sammy was asked what makes her, as a professed shy person, speak at the ELC but not in her classroom, and she shared, "In class, you know people but not really. But in the club, we are brothers and sisters. We communicate in a very good way." In Cindy's interview, she shared, "We are close. We are used [to one another] ... we are very open. We are not angry..." The interviews reflected that the environment created in the ELC was effective in learners' feeling like they were a family, thus increasing their linguistic confidence and motivation to learn English. The friendly environment decreased their anxiety as they knew that they were a unit who would not laugh and mock each other, thus opening the affective filter and allowing more input. A relaxed environment opens the filter and allows for more effective language acquisition (Krashen, 1982; Abukhattala, 2013; Kakule, 2016; Xu, 2016; Nath et al., 2017).

6.2.3. The significance of teamwork for the enhancement of listening and speaking skills

Working in pairs allowed learners to be comfortable in the role-play and speaking in front of others became easier because it was done with someone else; context is important for increasing linguistic confidence. Interviews revealed that five of the seven participants liked the telephone conversation (role-play) the most. This sort of strategy is supported Mantiri (2015) who argued for the use of practising through enjoyable role-plays where learners find themselves in real-life situations and that which motivates them to practice and speak English. Therefore, participants being able to move around and role-play a familiar situation with a partner proved useful in the ELC to enhance listening and speaking.

Working as a team also encourages learners to do better as they have support from others who share the same goal. For example, during rehearsals for the school Heritage Day programme, learners helped each other by listening to and practising as a group which created a support structure which motivated them to work on their performance. Furthermore, Jabu expressed, “The good thing working with someone ... you can communicate... could get ideas together and bring up something pretty nice” which could explain the reason for the linguistic confidence displayed during the role-play. Lee shared that the positive aspect of pair work is that “you have somebody you can gain feedback from.”

Additionally, Macy shared in her interview: “I think it’s good working in pairs because we help each other... if you make a mistake a person can help and put some ideas somewhere” and this could be a reason for learners’ sense of comfort during the telephone activity. This proved true when she did the telephone conversation role-play with Xoli. According to my fieldnotes, it was difficult for Xoli at first, to answer any questions in class but when she worked in pairs in the ELC, she was able to respond to her as her partner led the conversation on the telephone. This encouraged Xoli’s speaking and she spoke loudly (which did not occur usually). However, Xoli still needs practice with sentence construction. Pereira et al. (2013) enforced that role-plays are effective as club activities and in this cycle, this proved useful since the adjacency pair, which refers to utterances in the dialogue that occurs in a pair and “is a unit of conversation that contains an exchange of one turn each by two speakers” (Muhammed, 2018, p. 197), are effective in developing interactions as both speakers have the opportunity to speak and ask questions, creating harmony in the discussion (Iswara et al., 2019).

Pairwork also proved to enhance linguistic confidence as learners are forced to match the standard of their teammate. In the Heritage Day programme, Jabu, having worked with Sbonga, presented the English translation of the poem much better than she did in rehearsals as she knew that she had to “match up to his great performance” as revealed by fieldnotes. In order to increase confidence and lower learners’ anxiety, Du (2009) argued for the use of group work and social activities which this strategy also proved.

In Contrast, Jabu and Macy expressed a negative aspect of working in pairs or a group. They argued that certain individuals may do more work while others contribute little. This was a

reference to their classroom experiences of pair and group work, and the effects of learner responsibility. This is in relation to learner responsibility, which will be discussed next.

6.2.4. The impact of learner responsibility on listening and speaking

Cycle 1 demonstrated that learners need to be responsible for their learning if any improvement in English is possible. For example, had Sbonga and Jabu not suggested the presentation of an isiZulu poem and its English translation, we might not have witnessed his presentation and his pride in his abilities and in his home language. Ivarsson and Pihl (2013) remind us that learners will be motivated to learn English if they are allowed to have an influence over their learning. Thus, participants' responsibility for their learning in deciding what they wanted to present and how served as an important factor in enhancing their listening and speaking skills. This view is supported by Cam and Oruc (2014) who argued that the enhancement of learner responsibility in making decisions about learning is only possible if the teacher shares power with the learners. This is in line with critical pedagogy that aims for removing the teacher as the ultimate source of power in the classroom (Freire, 1970; Mahmoudi et al., 2014; Vandeyar & Swart, 2016; Vargas, 2019) in order for learners to transform their lives.

Another example that demonstrates learner responsibility is the case of Cindy who volunteered to open the ELC's group performance with a speech at the Heritage Day programme. She initially did not want to participate in the telephone activity. Yet, by the end of the cycle, she built enough confidence to speak in front of the rest of the school – she mentioned in her interview that she is a good listener but not a good speaker which shows her self-confidence still needs work but her initiative and participation at the programme was a turn for the better.

On the other hand, if learners are not responsible for their learning, it may affect their competence in the language. For example, in her interview, Lee was asked which activity in the cycle she liked the least. She shared, "The Tell the News activity...only because I wasn't prepared." Fieldnotes confirmed this. Lee, who was usually very involved, was significantly quiet during that session. However, Lee not doing the homework and getting any news to share with others resulted in a decrease in her linguistic confidence that day, thus proving that learner responsibility is an important factor in learners' learning.

Similarly, during the ‘Tell the News’ activity, I discovered that some learners (for example, Thandi and Xoli and Andy) shook their heads when asked to share their news. At the time, according to my fieldnotes, I assumed that they had not done the homework and that learner responsibility was still lacking. However, at the end of the session upon collecting their newspaper articles and other written news, I discovered that such learners had something to share but were reluctant. This served as evidence that more still needed to be done to enhance linguistic confidence for some participants.

6.3. Listening and Speaking skills before and after Cycle 1

The following table documents the observations I made before interventions and at the end of the cycle in order to decipher improvements, if any, in participants’ listening and speaking skills. The following table represents 16 participants who participated in most of the interventions in Cycle 1.

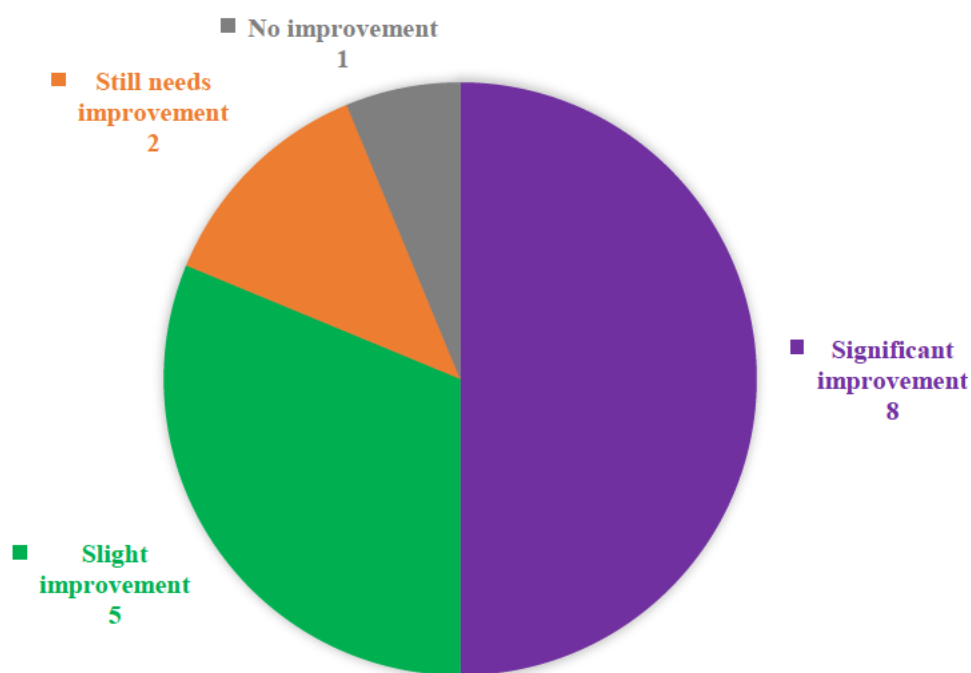
Table 6.1: Record of participants’ listening and speaking skills before and after Cycle 1

Participant	Before	After	Overall result
Sammy	Shy; soft-spoken; does not speak until spoken to; sits on her own in the front.	Still shy; attempts to participate in discussions; presented monotonously in assembly – no differing tones despite speaking English fairly well; sits with a friend.	Still needs improvement
Nqo	Does not speak much; afraid to answer questions, even if it is about herself; only listens to others; does not understand instructions the first time.	Found talking to people around her but still shows signs of reluctance to speak in larger crowds and to me; poor verbal sentence construction but understands instructions better.	Still needs improvement
Thandi	Giggles a lot when I ask questions; stutters when answering questions; does not speak to others; issues with basic communication skills.	Still giggles but is more confident to talk to others and participates more in group discussions.	Slight improvement
Andy	Very vocal; likes to work with his friends; shy to share ideas with the whole class; only wants to share ideas with his friends and me.	Made more friends; speaks; shares ideas with everyone and is very well spoken.	Significant improvement
Cindy	Very shy; does not participate in discussions; works on her own.	Still shy but not as before; attempts to talk to others; volunteered to say a speech for the Heritage Day programme.	Significant improvement

Lee	Very willing to improve in English though speaks fairly well; laughs while talking; does not talk to people she does not know; sometimes needs instructions explained more than once.	Explains instructions to others, so also shows signs of talking to others; does not use unnecessary laughter during conversation; very good and audible speech in assembly; speaks English very well; won 'best speaker' in external debate competition.	Significant improvement
Hamed	Soft-spoken; only talks to other boys; speaks English fairly well; does not ask questions.	More audible and willing to talk to others; asks questions in class; speaks English very well.	Significant improvement
Macy	Shy; soft-spoken; during discussions, she talks to her partner but stops talking when I listen to them.	Very confident speaking; talks more than usual and encourages others to participate in discussion.	Significant improvement
Lolo	Very soft-spoken; prefers listening; does not have issues listening to and understanding instructions.	Speaks more in terms of providing suggestions in the club but is still soft-spoken.	Slight improvement
Jabu	Does not ask questions out loud; whispers questions into my ear; asks me not to share her comment or question with others.	Very vocal; likes leadership roles -encouraged to speak to others; always approaches me to ask if there are upcoming ELC events so as to inform others. This initiative indicates a sense of empowerment.	Significant improvement
Minnie	Does not speak even when spoken to. Rolls eyes a lot. Portrays a lack of interest in participating in activities.	Speaks a lot more than when she started but is soft-spoken. Has made more friends.	Slight improvement
Jola	Stammers a lot when he speaks to me – a sign of nervousness; stammers when he speaks to peers but not as much; I can barely understand what he is saying and participants could not hear him; takes a while to complete a sentence – hesitates.	Volunteered to start the tell the news activity and shared his story; still stammers but words are significantly clearer; completes sentences with less hesitation.	Significant improvement
Jade	Does not speak at all; prefers working on her own.	Stopped attending regularly.	No improvement
Wethu	Speaks very fast; likes to talk but does not like listening to others; interrupts others; issues with understanding questions and instructions.	Learned how to listen to others without interrupting; speaks at a better pace; understands instructions better.	Significant improvement
Xoli	Very willing to speak but poor use of the language; does not speak until spoken to; a few unnecessary pauses.	Speaks more and use of the language has improved a little; still pauses during speaking.	Slight improvement
Sbonga	Speaks in isiZulu more than in English; speaks to me in isiZulu; prefers writing down his ideas.	More willing to speak to me in English, though problems with sentence construction; prefers his home language.	Slight improvement

Eight participants had significant improvement in their listening and speaking skills while five had slight improvement. Two participants who did not really show improvement but showed potential for improvement by the end of the cycle were categorised into ‘still needs improvement’. Unfortunately, one participant did not show any improvement as her attendance at the ELC was poor. When asked about this, her sister, Cindy, shared that she just wanted to “fool around” instead of doing some work. Another significant finding was that not only was the ELC improving participants’ listening and speaking skills within the club but it enhanced speaking and linguistic confidence outside the club: Lee, who did not speak to peers she did not know and who would laugh often while speaking when she joined, entered an external debate competition and won ‘best speaker’.

Figure 6.1: Overall results of participants at the end of Cycle 1: Listening and Speaking



6.4. Reflections and decisions based on Cycle 1

Firstly, the interviews conducted at the end of Cycle 1 served as learners’ reflections as we discussed the use of activities in the cycle and what they would like to add, improve or change in the club in the next cycle. In her interview, Lee indicated that she wants to move around more and be more active. The plan to change the next cycle is to have more interactive and

dynamic activities as this cycle was mostly based in-classroom and focused on textual activities coupled with role play. Therefore, the next cycle would include more activities where participants can run around and be playful. This may be more effective in enhancing learners' linguistic confidence, better motivating and empowering them to learn English, and ultimately enhancing their English competence it will also build on learners' responsibility for learning by use of active strategies inside and outside the classroom (Cakici, 2015).

Secondly, in terms of participants' noise, as expressed by Cindy and Jabu, we decided that the boys in question would not be separated as this may decrease their motivation to participate or jeopardise their learning process, but they should always sit in front. As a teacher, though, who understood and reflected on the boys' hyperactive and overly fun nature, I also explained to the participants that although the boys were immediately seated in front in this cycle, the next cycle would include more competitive and active tasks may cater for their energetic nature. The boys were very happy to hear this, while others were also relieved that they would be using their energy for the purpose of their learning instead of disturbing others with it, thus managing the situation appropriately. As a result, the boys were to put their energy to better use in the club, thus enhancing their English competence and well as the competence of others as they would put their concentration into the dynamic activities instead of focusing on making jokes that may be considered unnecessary and destructive by other participants.

Thirdly, Cindy suggested, in her interview, that she would encourage more learners to participate. This cycle did not adopt a competitive nature or use the notion of prizes. When this was discussed in a group setting, learners were very eager about the idea of winning prizes and it appeared to address Cindy's concern about participation. This increased motivation and lowered anxiety to open the affective filter. This strategy assisted in enhancing English competence; it was suggested by learners that the use of competition and prizes helped participants whose anxiety still exists and who remain to have low linguistic confidence and fear of participation as they were encouraged to win the prizes.

The spelling errors evident in learner's written texts and reflections prompted the choice of spelling and vocabulary in Cycle 2.

6.5. Cycle 2 – Spelling and Vocabulary

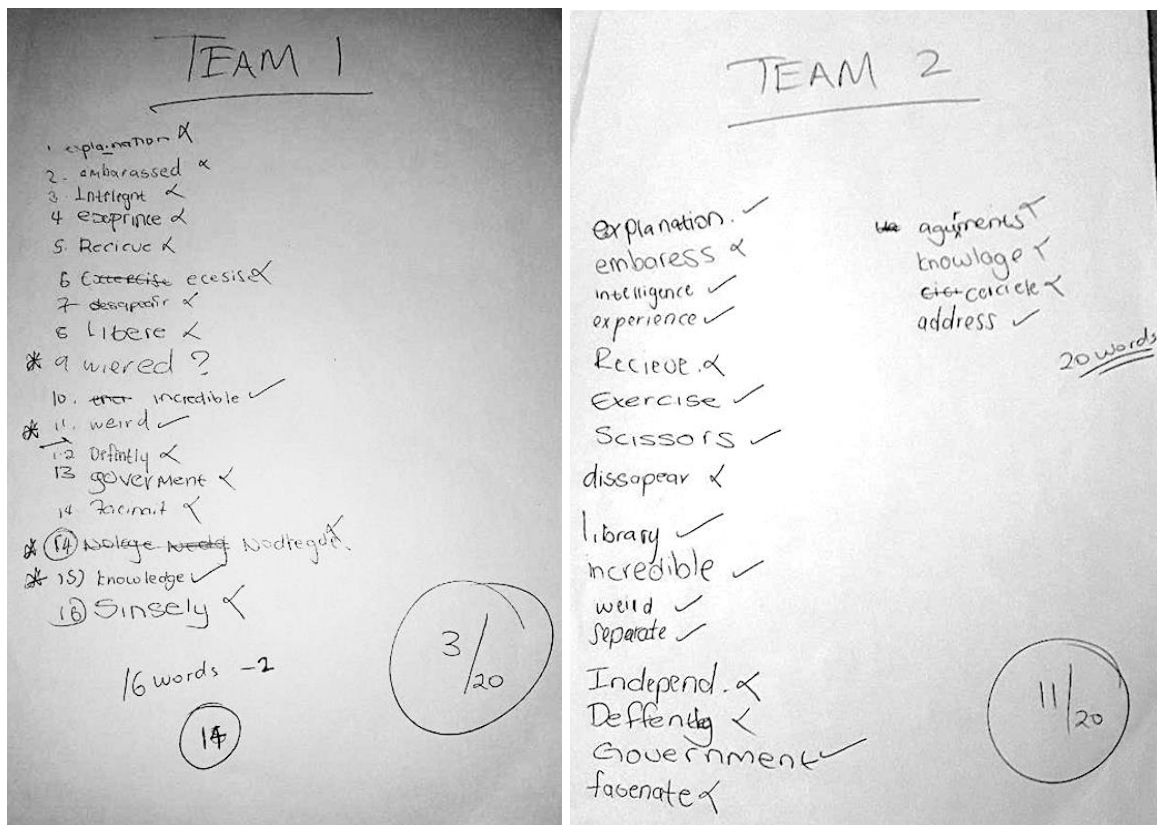
Four interventions were implemented in Cycle 2 (Unscramble the words competition, spelling relay, creating flashcards and a beach spelling track, discussed in more detail in the methodology chapter). Cycle 2 was completed in six weeks and included 16 participants overall. The decrease in the number of learners in this cycle may be attributed to the idea that learners wanted to engage in more outdoor, fun activities, which will be discussed in the reflection section at the end of this cycle.

Cycle 2 made use of fieldnotes and research journals throughout to record significant data. Additionally, posters of persuasion (created by learners in the ELC to encourage other learners to join) were also data sources used to assess spelling. A spellathon – spelling competition – was held at the end of the cycle to assess learners' spelling and incorporated the competitive nature that was lacking in Cycle 1. Data was also generated from learners' written reflections at the end of the Spelling and Vocabulary cycle. The following themes emerged from Cycle 2: learners' feelings about spelling, learners' sense of community and positive interactions, learner responsibility in enhancing spelling, and unanticipated conscientisation.

6.5.1. Learners' feelings about spelling

Participants' initial vocabulary was limited, meaning that they used very few words in their writing activities in class and were not familiar with some of the words I used during my teaching, causing them to have little to no confidence in spelling. My fieldnotes and research journal based on the spelling relay held between two teams randomly set up by giving students numbers '1' and '2', revealed that some participants had not even heard of the words I was calling out to be spelt, while others may have known the words but had issues with recognising them, possibly due to pronunciation. For example, while I pronounce the word 'separate' as seh-puh-rate, some learners pronounced it as 'seh-pa-rate' or instead of 'de-ter-min', learners would say 'de-ta-mine'. Though team 2 outperformed team 1, there were clear issues with spelling that were revealed by this intervention. Words that were commonly spelt incorrectly in classroom activities and writing tasks were chosen for this intervention. The results can be seen below.

Image 6.2: Teams' attempts at spelling relay



It was clear from the above that participants in Team 2 were better at spelling than those in Team 1, possibly because Team 2 included participants like Lee and Andy who were considered to be good spellers. Participants in Team 2 were titled winners of the spelling relay as they were able to attempt all 20 words called out and spelt 11 correctly. Team 1 struggled with spelling, took more time to attempt spelling the words and therefore only attempted 14 words, some of which were repeated, and others were in the wrong order. They obtained three out of 20. It was evident that learners' spelling and vocabulary still needed to be enhanced and more had to be done in the cycle to address the issue.

Some learners display a sense of fear for spelling when in competition with others. Fieldnotes revealed that at the beginning of the Spelling and Vocabulary cycle when the idea of a spelling competition was proposed, Cindy instantaneously indicated that she was not interested in participating. Her facial expression revealed an overwhelming sense of fear of and concern for the activity and feelings of not wanting to engage in the spelling competition. This was confirmed by her stating in the classroom discussion that she was "afraid" of the thought of spelling competitively, which disclosed a possible lack of confidence in spelling. Cindy's

reaction reinforces Kabir's suggestion of eradicating a stressful environment to lower the affective filter (Abukhattala, 2013).

In contrast to Cindy, Hamed and Andy, who had correctly completed the Unscramble the Words task first, shared in discussion that they "loved competition" because they "love to win." Fieldnotes recorded that the boys, who received medals and bags for winning the Unscramble the Words competition (having completed first with all words correct), wore their medals all day to show other learners in the school. This proves that rewards are effective in enhancing learning, as put forward by Goss et al. (2017).

In this study, outdoor activities proved to be useful strategies in enhancing learners' attitudes towards spelling and improving their spelling confidence. Fieldnotes revealed that all participants displayed excitement when told we would make a trip to the beach to practice spelling and shared during the discussion that they "could not wait for Saturday." This indicates that the idea of using an outside-the-classroom activity elicited positive feelings about spelling. Cindy who indicated a fear of spelling, initially, was one of those who spelt considerably well during the beach activity. Observations noted her smile throughout, which she did not display in the classroom discussion about spelling. After spelling a word correctly on the beach, Cindy threw her hands in the air shouting, "Yes!" Her verbal and physical expression served as an indication that her attitude towards the spelling task transformed into a more positive one. Participants' reactions to spending time outside the classroom verify that outdoor activities transform learners' perceptions of learning, as Aslam et al. (2015) argued.

Going beyond classroom walls and designing a fun beach activity increased participants' confidence and positively affected their attitudes towards spelling. This was evident in Lolo who won the spelling track activity. She danced with a big smile on her face and the other learners clapped their hands to congratulate her. According to fieldnotes related to this part of the intervention, while there was only one winner, all learners were content with their overall improvement. This is confirmed by Nqo who referred to the beach activity in her written reflection by writing that she "[loved] it so much...because everyone was happy" and that she learnt "how to spell more words." Furthermore, fieldnotes revealed that Cindy eventually did participate in the spelling competition and obtained second position in the spellathon held at the end of the cycle, after all spelling interventions. She also indicated in her written reflection at the end of the cycle that "this cycle was full of enjoyable things...including the beach trip"

and that she enjoyed it “without hesitation” which shows her change in attitude towards spelling and the beach trip. This was also evident in the work by Kakule (2016) who noted that learners should be inspired to love learning using a relaxed atmosphere that is joyful, and encourages togetherness, friendship and laughter instead of stress. Thus, lowering the affective filter through a relaxed and enjoyable activity allows for more input (correct spelling) to the LAD as learners are motivated to spell (Abukhattala, 2013). This notion was evident in that learners were happier to know that through such activities they improved their spelling, thus conquering their fear of it and transforming their attitudes towards it.

Cindy she also mentioned in her written reflection that she obtained second place in the spellathon. In relation to the idea of competitions and obtaining a good standing, Kakule (2016) noted that to inspire learners to enjoy learning, competitions and rewards may be used. Thus, the interventions in the cycle, especially the beach spelling track, were effective in enhancing both her spelling and her attitude towards spelling. This finding highlights the importance of being aware of the Affective Filter hypothesis in teaching and learning by teachers creating hospitable environments to lower learners’ anxiety, enhance their attitudes and motivation, and improve their confidence (Du, 2009). This is in keeping with critical pedagogy as the intervention was empowering and humanising as the learners’ fears of spelling in a classroom setting were taken into consideration and the approach to teaching spelling was transformed into an outdoor, fun context to enhance their attitudes. It also confirms the idea of optimal learning occurring during playful activities, as suggested by Zosh et al. (2017).

Unlike the conventional classroom that is meant to ensure that teaching and learning do not disturb surrounding classes with noise at the school, the use of the beach allowed learners freedom to learn. For example, they were able to voice their words of encouragement and cheer on those who were spelling well. Additionally, some learners were more comfortable with attempting to spell the words by either writing on the sand or writing it in the air with their fingers and this indicated that they needed to ‘see’ the word to check their spelling before spelling it out verbally. Fieldnotes revealed that this learning strategy was not adopted by learners in the ELC at school. It is possible that the formal setting of the school restricted learners, and they responded in ways that are deemed ‘suitable’ for the school setting. The change in environment and relaxed supportive atmosphere at the beach led to a positive change in how they approached spelling. Essentially, such a free approach enhanced learners’ attitudes towards spelling highlighting that educational games may be an effective strategy to enhance

language learning and motivates them to learn in a different manner (Mubaslat, 2012). However, what is imperative to note is that the beach needs to be recognised for what it symbolises – a relaxed, happy space with minimal rules. Such a space or atmosphere may be recreated anywhere, including a classroom.

While the beach activity was relaxed and enjoyable, it did not only include positive results. fieldnotes highlighted that there were some sad faces and frowns indicating frustration when learners spelt words incorrectly, both after the spelling relay when results were announced, and during the beach intervention. In her written reflection, Wethu mentioned that she did not like the spelling relay activity because she “performed poorly even though it was fun.” However, she would not mind doing it again. This finding echoes the argument by Zosh et al. (2017) who noted that a joyful activity is not detached from negative emotions, but annoyances may help learning. This was also evidenced when learners spelt a word incorrectly and could not move to the next target in the spelling track activity. The true learning occurred when they figured out the correct spelling after the first failed attempt and were then very happy with the outcome. For example, Thandi would frown at first and jump in frustration but would throw her hands in the air on her second, correct attempt.

6.5.2. Learners’ sense of community and positive interactions

Learners’ sense of community and positive interactions enhanced their motivation to learn spelling in this cycle. For example, the first activity where participants worked in pairs for the Unscramble the Words competition allowed them to help each other with spelling, which they displayed more interest in, as opposed to spelling alone. Reinforcing this sense of positive interactions was the beach spelling track where participants were whispering answers to the person whose turn it was to spell a word. Despite the fact that the activity was a competition where the winner would receive a box of chocolates and a medal, participants displayed a sense of helpfulness and togetherness. This finding reinforced the idea in critical pedagogy which emphasises the significance of the teacher allowing and helping learners to learn from each other (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011). Therefore, though the beach activity was a competition, I did not object to learners assisting one another with spelling as the ultimate aim was to help them transcend their fears and improve their spelling.

This helpful manner enhanced learners' motivation towards spelling as they knew that they were assisting one another instead of resorting to mockery and laughter, which they said happened in their classrooms. This was also evident when participants encouraged one another to complete the spelling and move ahead in the spelling track, as well as complete unscrambling all the words in the first intervention, and this sense of community enhanced learners' attitudes towards spelling as their peers were not laughing at them but were being very understanding and supportive. Such activities are effective as they learn from each other and having social partners during a playful activity is a significant component in learning (Zosh et al., 2017). Furthermore, the Affective Filter hypothesis encourages social activities for improving learning confidence and lowering anxiety (Du, 2009). This was the reason for the use of groupwork in the spelling relay, and the Unscramble the Words competition being done in pairs.

Fieldnotes also recorded that the sense of friendship is a very important factor in making participants feel comfortable as it relieved them of the stress related to spelling, even individually (as revealed by the beach spelling track). The evidence for this was depicted in participants' written reflections at the end of the cycle which revealed that the outdoor activity was worthwhile as learners spent time with friends. For example, the winner of the beach spelling activity (Lolo) indicated in her reflection that she "loves" the club and "going to the beach with her friends" which she had never done before and indicated that it allowed her to improve in English. Lee also wrote that she enjoyed "laughing and having fun with the others." This is in keeping with Du (2009) who argued that the use of groupwork and social activities lowered anxiety and boosted confidence, in line with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis.

However, the above does not propose that learners do not need guidance; learners learn from listening to and observing others, as these interventions proved. Furthermore, being actively engaged in activities leads to learning benefits as children learn best when they are actively involved in solving problems (like in the Unscramble the Words competition) rather than just being instructed by the teacher (Zosh et al., 2017). Ultimately, fieldnotes suggest that the sense of family and care for one another that the ELC created specifically in this beach spelling activity played a significant role in learners transcending their fears of spelling and enhancing their attitudes towards spelling.

6.5.3. Learner responsibility in enhancing spelling

Learners need to take responsibility for learning how to spell in order for the process to be deemed more successful. Observing the beach spelling track intervention, I also discovered that only one learner (Minnie) seemed to have been having a difficult time with the task as she remained far behind the others and was not happy about it. According to fieldnotes, however, Minnie did not complete the flashcard activity done before the beach activity that was intended to assist participants in learning some of the words that were tested on the day. Nonetheless, her presence at the activity showed a step in the right direction but serves as an indication that the teacher may go beyond the classroom with the aim of enhancing English, but learner responsibility is an important factor if any transformation is to occur.

The importance of learners taking responsibility for their learning in this study was evident in Sammy's reflection who wrote that she "really enjoyed the day [they] went to the beach" but also shared that she was "disappointed" about not winning the spellathon at the end of the cycle, even though the beach spelling activity helped her improve her spelling. The participant recorded, however, that she realised that she did not "put much effort" in. It is imperative, especially in action research, that learners reflect on and are aware of their roles in learning and this reflection shows that the learner developed critical consciousness as she was able to admit what she felt went wrong in her learning. These reflections on strengths and weaknesses are useful in facilitating learner responsibility or autonomy (Gaines, 2015; Malu & Smedley, 2016) and allow learners to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning, find problematic areas, and decide how to solve them (Cakici, 2015) – characteristics that Sammy displayed.

6.5.4. Unanticipated conscientisation

Apart from Cycles 1 and 2 improving learners' use of English and encouraging a sense of responsibility, Cycle 2 proved that the ELC, which aimed to empower learners, allowed them to be more conscious of racial issues. In her visual representation during Cycle 2, Cindy used very positive words to describe the club to other learners, such as 'fun' 'supportive' and 'anti-racism' which may appeal to other learners in the school to join. Furthermore, in her explanation of the poster, she stated, "This is one happy family...we don't judge each other..." which could also serve as persuasion as sometimes learners are mocked in the bigger classrooms. The use of capital letters in "NO RACISM" seemed to serve as an emphasis on

this point and was a declaration that the ELC encourages all learners. She adds, ‘boy or girl’ to her explanation on her poster which points toward gender awareness. This shows that Cindy recognises that ELCs are not just for girls, which Hamed and Andy indicated might be the reason for having so few boys participating – the belief that boys should be participating in soccer and playing outside during the activity period.

Visual representation 6.1: Cindy’s poster of persuasion



In her exam which was held after Cycle 2, Xoli wrote a transactional piece which was to a teacher who influenced them in the year. Xoli addressed her letter to me, though I was not her English teacher but worked with her in the ELC. She wrote:

You have made my life so much easier than before...You have [built] so much confidence than the confidence I ever [had] in me... Even being an Indian you have made me, a Zulu, see that English is for everyone...

The above finding (which was shared with me by her English teacher) revealed that Cycles 1 and 2 enhanced Xoli's confidence in English and empowered her in terms of believing in herself and her capability. In the baseline information, two learners mentioned how they felt when speaking to people who were not African. This finding, therefore, proves that the ELC was successful in empowering learners by removing learners' perspective that other races are better at English as Xoli declared that "English is for everyone." This confirms the importance of questioning the existence of power relations between teachers and learners, and challenging the unequal power relations in such interactions, which, as a result, shape the education process (Kuang as cited in Sarani, Alibakhshi, & Molazehi, 2014). Additionally, this finding confirmed that teachers who implement critical pedagogy ought to be aware of their roles in the classroom in the empowerment of learners so as to prevent the perpetuation of inequality and unjust practices (Tabrizi & Rideout, 2017).

It is also significant to note that Xoli did not make many spelling errors in her exam paper and it is possible that the proceedings of Cycle 2 were helpful to her since it was a formal assessment outside the ELC. This is also evident in her written reflection at the end of the cycle where she stated that the ELC helped her "experience new words." She also shared, "It [has] helped [with] my pronunciation and spelling of words."

6.6. Reflections and decisions based on Cycle 2

After cycle two, I decided to enhance spelling and vocabulary by providing learners with books to read. They were given their own new copies of a text applicable to their age group which exposed them to vocabulary enhancement. The reading books were free copies provided to the school, which were found in the storage room, unused. Additionally, since they mentioned they had challenges recognising words called out, it was decided that the words that were used for the spelling relay would be provided to learners to create flashcards. They would also use their reading books and dictionaries to create more flashcards to practice their spelling and pronunciation and expand their vocabulary.

After the spelling flashcards were created, we had a discussion about how to practice spelling together since they found it boring to do it on their own, and there was evidence that some learners still experienced anxiety related to spelling. Drawing on the success of the beach activity, we decided that in Cycle 3 (Reading) we will engage with more outdoor activities,

and not just one per cycle. The boys in the ELC also indicated that more boys would join the ELC if more outdoor activities took place.

Participants also suggested a ‘cross-night’ like the Grade 12 learners do (a time in the year where Grade 12 learners spend a whole night at school, working on a particular subject with a teacher). I suggested ‘Reading in Pyjamas’ where we would do fun activities related to reading in the form of a pyjama party, which participants were excited about. Additionally, more sessions were requested by participants; therefore, ELC sessions in Cycle 2 were held not only on Wednesdays during the activity period, but during some breaks where learners ate and worked.

Now that learners displayed a sense of comfort with me and with their peers in the ELC and had gotten used to the idea of testing (like in the Spellathon), I decided that more structured testing should take place in order to ascertain improvements in English more clearly. Therefore, in Cycle 3, I decided to assess their reading using a rubric before the commencement of the cycle. Assessment in the form of a reading competition would be done at the end of the cycle, after interventions, for comparisons to be made.

Overall, Cycle 2 was successful in improving learners’ spelling and vocabulary as all learners involved indicated this in their written reflections. For example: “The spelling and vocabulary cycle has helped me a lot judging by the way I used to spell and how I spell now” (Macy) and “It improved my spelling and how to read words” (Nqo).

6.7. Conclusion

Not only were Cycles 1 and 2 successful in enhancing listening and speaking skills and spelling and vocabulary, respectively, both within the ELC and in learners’ classrooms, but similar themes emerged: Both cycles revealed that not only are innovative, outside teaching and learning strategies effective in enhancing language learning of second language learners, but teamwork is as important and needs to be integrated in language learning in extraordinary ways rather than the conventional pair or groupwork in a classroom writing activity. Moreover, as much as these can be adopted and implemented in teaching and learning, learners’ responsibility is essential in the process of enhancing their English competence and is a significant factor that can positively and negatively influence their learning of the language.

Various obstacles such as a lack of resources and language barriers may stifle the learning of English for second language learners. However, creating interactive opportunities, encouraging learner participation, using innovative teaching and learning strategies, enabling learners to make decisions, considering learners' differences, and fostering friendliness may address these, and other, challenges (Fraser & Treagust as cited in Barr, 2016). The relaxed, fun activities in both cycles allowed learners to participate more freely and started to eradicate the fears they experienced related to learning English decreased anxiety and increased their motivation and self-confidence overall.

Chapter 7

Using the data blocks for educational renovation:

Analysis of Cycles 3 and 4

“...student workload reflects the new active role of students in the learning process, which is bound to the philosophy of learner-centredness where learners and teachers are involved in a process of give-and-take”

(Gonzalez-Vera, 2016, p. 53).

7.1. Introduction

This chapter concentrates on presenting and analysing data under themes that emanated from Cycle 3 (Reading) and Cycle 4 (Writing). At the end of each cycle analysis, reflections and decisions made during the cycle and for the next cycle, based on the proceedings, will be discussed.

7.2. Cycle 3 – Reading

The reading cycle had six interventions: Reading in Pyjamas (sleepover), Reading for Treasure (treasure hunt), Reading for Colours, Sequence Story, Comprehension, and a Reading Competition. These interventions, including data sources were completed over seven weeks. In this cycle, more learners (new learners at the school in Grade 8) joined the ELC towards the latter of the cycle. There were 43 participants in this cycle as a whole.

In terms of data generation, questionnaires based on reading habits were completed by participants at the beginning of the cycle and at the end of the cycle, after interventions. An observation was done on the Reading for Treasure activity, and fieldnotes and research journals were also used throughout the cycle. Several themes emerged in this cycle: learners’ attitudes towards reading, learners’ reading habits, the influence of teamwork on reading, and the significance of relatable comprehension texts in empowering learners.

7.2.1. Learners' attitudes towards reading

The following reading scores are for those participants who were involved from the beginning of the reading cycle. Though these scores do not reflect the reading scores of all participants at this stage of the research (as most of the new members of the ELC joined later in the cycle, did not participate in most of the interventions and indicated they needed more practice), the scores were used to decipher improvements for the 15 learners who were present since the beginning of the cycle.

Table 7.1: Participants' reading scores before interventions in Cycle 3

Participant	Reading scores before			
	Pronunciation and Articulation	Rhythm and Fluency	Expression	TOTAL (15)
Sammy	2	2	2	6
Nqo	2	2	1	5
Thandi	2	1	1	4
Andy	3	3	2	8
Cindy	3	3	3	9
Lee	4	4	4	12
Hamed	2	2	2	6
Macy	3	3	3	9
Lolo	3	3	2	8
Jabu	3	3	1	7
Minnie	3	2	2	7
Jola	2	2	3	7
Jade	3	2	2	7
Wethu	2	2	2	6
Xoli	2	2	1	5

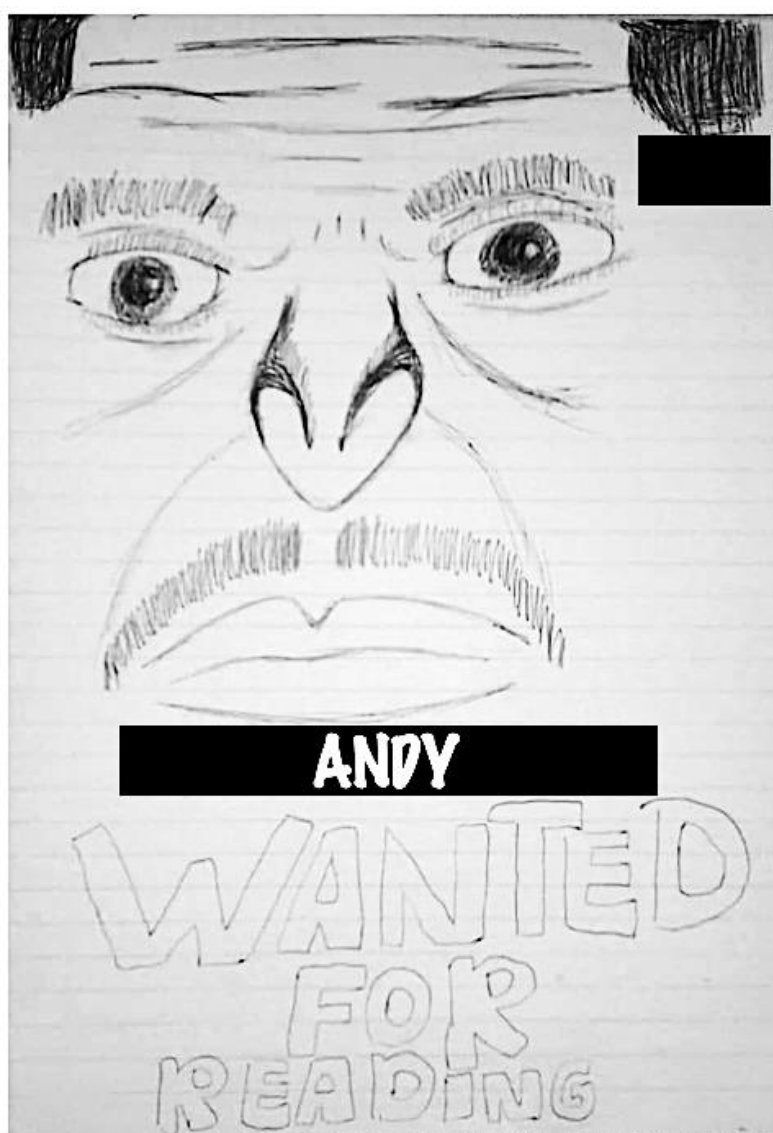
Considering the pass mark of grades 8 and 9 is 50%, participants should have obtained at least an eight out of 15 in order to pass the reading oral/reading aloud. Results show that only five of the 15 participants passed. Moreover, most needed assistance with reading aloud.

A lack of confidence to read in the presence of others was prevalent at the beginning of this cycle. Not only was this reflected in participants' mind-maps at the beginning of the study, but this was also reflected in the pre-questionnaires. Of the 26 respondents who initially completed

the reading questionnaire at the beginning of the cycle, 24 shared that they felt “nervous” (examples: Hamed, Luyi, Sibui), “shy” (examples: Zee, Jola, Wethu) and “ashamed” (Yanda) to read aloud in class. This was seemingly due to their perceived inability to read well. For example, Noku wrote that she feels “scared” and “frightened” because she “can’t even read.” Additionally, Thandi was of concern as she obtained the lowest reading aloud score. Fieldnotes revealed that when she read out loud, she had poor audibility due to a lack of confidence which was evidenced by her laughter and the blocking of her mouth and face when she made mistakes. Additionally, according to fieldnotes, she expressed, “Jesus!” and uttered “Oh ja” while attempting to read. She could not read most of the words. This was concerning as participants were reading from the book that I distributed in Cycle 2. Therefore, from this information, one would conclude that Thandi could not read well and her low confidence may have been a reason for this.

Contrary to Thandi, Andy could read in terms of recognising words and pronouncing them with ease. However, according to my fieldnotes, Andy took deep breaths before reading and blocked his face with the book and he read extremely softly. In his questionnaire at the beginning of the cycle, in response to the question, ‘How do you feel when you are asked to read out loud to the class?’, he expressed “I fan myself” while reading. Additionally, when participants were designing posters earlier in the study, I found the following submission from Andy:

Image 7.1: Andy's poster



‘Wanted’ posters are displayed with the aim of finding someone who has done something wrong or who has committed a crime. The face drawn also reflects that of someone who looks like a criminal on such posters: it looks angry and possibly scary. This could mean that when it comes to reading, Andy is considered, metaphorically, a criminal, and is ‘bad’ at reading – so bad as to be wanted like a criminal for an offence. The above results relating to Andy reveal that he had a lack of confidence in reading out loud but also had low self-esteem in terms of reading. This proves that learners may be able to perform the skill of reading, but their confidence affects their oral results, and this may be a problem.

Learners’ attitudes towards reading aloud before interventions were due to the response of their peers. Since none of the respondents had a problem with reading to themselves, as revealed by

questionnaires, it was evident that their peers in their English classrooms caused a significant decrease in reading confidence. This was evident in the responses by Yanda and Sam, for example, who indicated in their questionnaires that others laugh at them while they read. Only two respondents had no issues with reading aloud in their classrooms; Andiswa indicated that it made her feel “happy” as others will “correct” her, which indicated that she understood that even though she may not consider herself to be a very good reader, she uses the opportunity to improve. On the other hand, Jabu shared, “I don’t mind reading aloud because I like to show off” and this reveals that she has confidence in her reading ability and likes to show this to others.

Learners’ willingness to read affects their reading competence. In his questionnaire, Hamed stated in his responses to two different questions that reading is “a waste of time.” The attitude portrayed by Hamed toward reading did not change at the end of the cycle because though he expressed learning the importance of reading, he did not reveal any sense of improvement in terms of his willingness to read. While he participated in the reading competition, he did not prepare before Round 1 (which was prepared reading); the judge also indicated in her notes that there was no sign of preparation. He was the only participant who did not show a change in attitude.

Negative attitudes to reading were also evidenced in the question that asked how learners would feel about receiving a book as a birthday present and their responses to this question uncovered their initial attitudes towards reading. For example, Hamed said he would feel “really bad and annoyed”, Macy said she “would have rather received something more exciting” and Jola said he “would be embarrassed” as he would be expecting “something big.” These are all negative attitudes towards receiving a book as a gift as their responses suggest that a book is not good enough as a birthday present. However, these negative attitudes towards receiving a book portrayed in the pre-questionnaire were changed by the end of the cycle after interventions were conducted.

The same question was included in the questionnaire at the end of the cycle; Of 37 respondents, 34 revealed positive attitudes toward receiving a book as a birthday present. For example, Minnie wrote she would be “very happy” as she “loves books”, Sammy said, “I actually asked my granny to buy one for me for my birthday”, and Yanda shared that a book is “a precious thing.” It can be deduced that the change in learners’ attitudes was due to the numerous,

different reading interventions of this cycle which caused them to see reading from a different perspective as compared to their initial views. This notion was confirmed by Molotja and Themane (2018) who postulated that the more children are exposed to different reading texts, the greater the positive attitudes.

Not only were learners' attitudes towards reading enhanced by the interventions but it was evident that their critical consciousness was also developed in terms of the self-awareness dimension as they were able to sense the significance of the action of receiving a book as a present, and they developed a sense of efficacy and ability to see their own potential for transforming their reading competence (Alexander & Schlemmer, 2017). Both Luyi and Zee mentioned that they would be happy as reading books improves their English, and Lolo said that she would be "very happy" to receive a book as a present by justifying that she thinks that "the person giving [her] the book really cares about [her] and [her] education." Lolo's response to this question shows a positive attitude towards receiving books as gifts and also demonstrates her critical consciousness development as she was able to analyse the importance of receiving a book and what it meant for her education, rather than passing it off as 'bad birthday gift' without much thought behind the meaning.

7.2.2. Learners' reading habits

It was important to understand learners' reading habits at the beginning of this cycle in order to plan how to address challenges, or how to attempt to alter negative attitudes towards reading, since Molotja and Themane (2018, p. 1) argue that "when reading habits become internalised and occur subconsciously, then the reading process becomes a meaningful one" and that learners with good reading habits are more likely to succeed academically. 43 learners completed the questionnaires before they were involved in the Reading Cycle (irrespective of when they joined this cycle). Part of Section A in the questionnaires revealed the following:

**Table 7.2: Responses to some of the questions in Section A of the questionnaire
(beginning of cycle)**

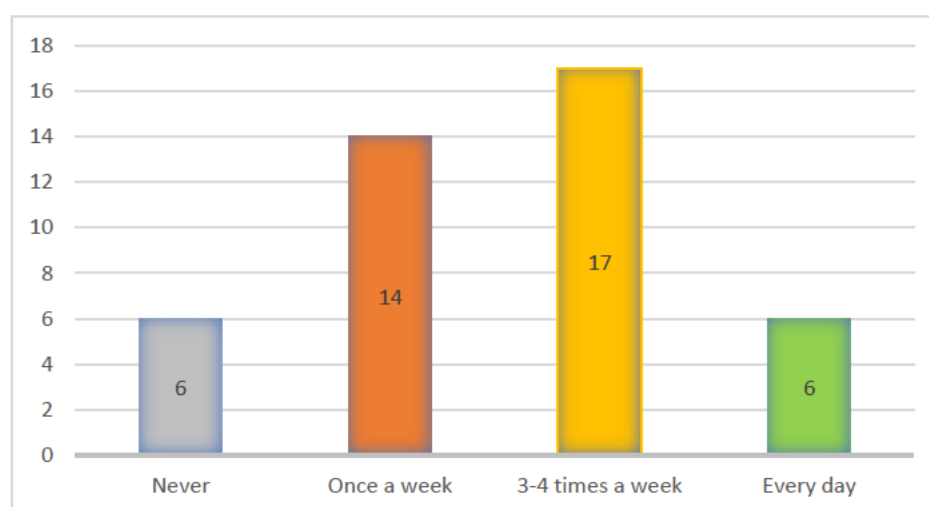
Question	Number of respondents in each category		
	Never	Sometimes	Always
1. When I was younger, my parents/guardian read to me	18	1	24
2. When I was younger, I read aloud to my parents/guardian	11	12	20
3. I saw my parent/guardian reading at home	8	10	25

The above table shows that even though the majority of the respondents indicated that their parents/guardian ‘Always’ read to them, they ‘Always’ read aloud to their parents/guardian, and they ‘Always’ saw their parent/guardian reading at home, 18 respondents indicated that they were ‘Never’ read to at home, 11 respondents ‘Never’ read aloud, and eight respondents ‘Never’ saw their parents/guardian reading at home. Additionally, four respondents answered ‘Never’ for all three of the above questions, revealing that these four learners were not exposed to reading at home, in any form, which further impacts their reading ability and could be the cause of their negative attitudes towards reading.

Mudzielwana (2014, p. 253) argued that children do not become literate on their own; parents and teachers should offer help and “parents must bestow love for learning in the child and guide him to persevere on his own” by supporting their children to read. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that the learners, who indicated that they do not see their parents/guardians reading or that they were never read to, will want to read on their own or display a passion for reading. Thus, it may be concluded that the kind of reading exposure learners have at home may negatively affect their attitudes towards reading and influence their reading competence (Molotja & Themane, 2018).

In relation to this, the following figures capture data in response to the question ‘How often do you read outside the classroom/school?’ before and after interventions in Cycle 3.

Figure 7.1: Bar graph representing how often learners read outside the classroom/school (beginning of Cycle 3)



Before engaging with interventions, of 43, only six respondents shared that they read every day outside the classroom/school. This was documented by Cullinan (2000, p. 2) who stated that learners “do not choose to read often or in great quantities” and Whitten, Labby and Sullivan (2016, p. 50) who reported that “instances of pleasure reading began to decrease around the age of thirteen and fourteen” which is in direct reference to this study as this was the age group of my participants. This is a concern as learners who read for pleasure obtain higher scores than their counterparts thus having a significant impact on overall performance (Whitten et al., 2016). Therefore, “Parents need to spare time to read with their children at home. Every member of the family should get involved and it must be a daily ritual of reading together” to help them develop the habit of reading (Mudzielwana, 2014, p. 255). Taking into consideration both the fact that most participants do not speak English as a Home Language, and how this has proven to influence their performance of English at school, daily reading outside the classroom is necessary to enhance the learning of English as a whole.

The Reading for Treasure intervention revealed that sometimes learners do not read instructions thoroughly. For example, Sammy, Minnie, Hamed and Jabu indicated in the verbal discussion at the end of the activity that they only skimmed through the instructions, finding themselves confused along the way. According to fieldnotes, Lolo, the winner of the treasure hunt, expressed that the reason the others did not win and she did was because “instead of rushing off and running around aimlessly” she took time to read the instructions before beginning and read each clue card carefully. The treasure hunt activity reinforces that

recreational activities extend education outside the classroom and can create an environment in which learners learn more effectively (Dewi, et al., 2017).

A learner who participated in the reading for colours activity used a ruler to read the sentences more carefully; this is a habit that assisted her reading competence as she was able to find seven of 11 colours in a short time, also proving the importance of significant reading habits for reading carefully.

Image 7.2: Learner using ruler to read carefully



A learner's reading habits also influences comprehension. Contrary to Lolo and confirming her argument, Hamed shared his disappointment in not reading the clue cards and "just running around." This could be related to his reading habits as in the questionnaire he revealed he was 'Never' read to, he 'Never' read to his parents/guardian aloud, and he 'Never' saw his parent/guardian reading. He also indicated in his questionnaire that he 'Never' read outside the school/classroom. This indicates why he did not read carefully throughout the treasure hunt; he was not used to the task. However, at this point, he expressed that it is here that he learnt the importance of reading carefully. I argue, therefore, that parents/guardians need to play their role at home as this, in turn, affects learners' reading attitudes and competence in school.

7.2.3. The influence of teamwork on reading

In group activities, participants revealed an enhanced sense of motivation. For example, during Reading in Pyjamas when participants had to re-arrange the short sentence that was scrambled and pinned onto them, teamwork proved to assist in terms of how quickly they were able to unscramble the sentence, stand in the correct order and then read it out loud. According to fieldnotes, Team A proved to be successful because they understood that there should be a team leader who would ensure that everyone stands in order before reading the sentence aloud and their sense of cooperation and politeness towards one another was commendable. These skills of teamwork allowed them not only to win the challenge but motivated the learners who showed signs of low self-esteem in individual reading activities. This was evident in Jola, who had trouble with unscrambling sentences on his own in a previous activity and did not seem happy, as noted in my fieldnotes. However, he worked well in contributing to the activity as a team member and his confidence was increased when finding out he was part of the team that won the challenge.

However, Andy from Team B shouted out, “We lost because of them!” pointing toward others who were struggling with reading, according to reading scores. At this point, I made him understand that it was a team effort and asked what he could have done to ensure that they won. He responded, “I should have helped them instead of shouting.” Thus, this indicates that acknowledgement and understanding of learners’ own mistakes are important before progress can be made, both individually and in a team. Andy’s comments on the activity confirm the finding that learners’ reflections about their strengths and weaknesses are beneficial in the enhancement of learner responsibility or autonomy (Gaines, 2015; Malu & Smedley, 2016) and is in accordance with the critical pedagogy as learners (Andy) are able to question problems they may face, improving their involvement in the process, and ultimately reducing the power of the teacher (me). On the other hand, Team B who lost the challenge because of a lack of cooperation amongst team members proved useful, nonetheless. Fieldnotes suggested that despite not winning the challenge because they stood in the wrong order (after figuring out the sentence), Team B was motivated to win the next one and understood the importance of listening to instructions carefully and reading thoroughly before suggesting the answer.

From the above, and considering fieldnotes and research journals, it can be deduced that Team A showed a sense of friendship, thus allowing them to work well as a team; however, Andy’s

shouting may have caused anxiety in the other learners, thus causing them to lose the challenge. A friendly environment lowers anxiety and opens the affective filter (Krashen, 1982) leading Team A to work carefully towards success in the reading activity. Team B understood, however, that it was not due to their reading competence (as they did figure out the sentence) but because of a lack of co-operation. This sustains the idea by Goss et al. (2017) that friendship can develop language learning and may manifest through the use of groupwork which improves learners' achievement.

Teamwork also proved useful for the development of self-esteem. Xoli was the last participant to complete the Unscramble the Sentences task, which was an individual activity. Lee, who won the activity and completed it in a short period of time, assisted Xoli without providing her with the answers. This resulted in Xoli not feeling inferior despite being the last one to complete and was evident in her demonstrated eagerness to complete the task even though the winner was already revealed. This teamwork was significant as correcting errors is not the aim of ELCs; the purpose is to guide and facilitate those who join (Pereira et al., 2013; Malu & Smedley, 2016).

7.2.4. The significance of relatable comprehension texts in empowering learners and enhancing understanding

An important aspect in English, which is commonly tested, is comprehension. In this cycle, I held a reading comprehension written task entitled 'The King's Daughter' (Appendix 26) which is a text about the daughter of a king who was required to marry a man her father chose, but she was already in love with another man. The king refused and announced that the daughter would marry the man capable of removing the dangers on three roads into their city.

Eleven participants completed this activity. The questions based on the comprehension were made up of various types, from matching facts and providing information from the text, to opinionated questions that encouraged extensive debate in the ELC, for example, the question, 'Even though the smart beautiful daughter loved a man, her father said that he would choose for her. Do you agree with his decision? Explain your answer.' During the discussion of answers to the comprehension, Lee shared that she agreed with the father's decision "in terms of the story" because "the man she loved had to be told how to get rid of the dangers", therefore

“he was stupid and not good enough.” Lee went on to explain that her father set that “obstacle course” to decipher a worthy man for his daughter. Her response to the question not only showed understanding of the question but showed critical thinking about issues within the story that were not explicitly mentioned. This answer led to a discussion and debate on gender issues.

The female learners were then asked to put themselves in the shoes of the King’s daughter and shared their opinions about allowing their fathers to pick a husband. The male learners were asked what they think of this issue too, which still occurs in some cultures. Lolo was adamant that she would not allow a husband to be chosen for her and that she’d rather “run away”, which shows evidence of her empowerment as a female of the 21st century. On the other hand, Lee expressed that though she feels it is wrong, she would have to allow it to happen as her father is “a Xhosa man” and that “he cannot be questioned.” Lee’s response indicates that though she is aware of gender equality and a woman’s freedom of choice, she might be restricted to cultural decisions that seem to clash with what she believes in as a female.

Lolo and Lee got into a conversation on their own, each sounding very passionate about their stance. Lee went on to explain that if the man treated her “wrong” then her father would take her back as it would have been his choice of man, however, if it was her choice, then her father would not involve himself in “saving her from a terrible marriage” which then led to Jola asking why she would need saving if she would have a job. Jola’s question came as a surprise as he had been quiet for most of the discussion. Jola had much to add from this point onwards, for example, he then shared his answer to the question, ‘In paragraphs 1 and 2, the king’s daughter is described as ‘smart’ and ‘beautiful’. Which quality do you think is more important? Explain your answer’ and said that you must be smart enough to be educated and get a job to prevent the problems that come with marriage. He added that he would “love both a smart and beautiful woman.” Jola was empowered to share his difference in opinion as a male, even though his opposition, Andy and Hamed, agreed with Lee and said that when they are married, their wives will need to “listen” to them and “stay at home, cook and clean” (Andy).

7.3. Reading scores after Cycle 3

The table below represents the reading scores that were recorded during Round 1 of the reading competition held at the end of Cycle 3. In this round, the reading scores were based on prepared

reading (where learners had to select a text to read aloud) and includes the results from judges 1 and 2, as well as the total score for each learner.

Table 7.3: Participants' reading scores after interventions in Cycle 3

Participant	Reading scores after JUDGE 1				Reading scores after JUDGE 2				TOTAL (30)
	Pronunciation and Articulation	Rhythm and Fluency	Expression	TOTAL (15)	Pronunciation and Articulation	Rhythm and Fluency	Expression	TOTAL (15)	
Sammy	2	3	2	7	4	4	2	10	17
Nqo	3	2	2	7	3	2	2	7	14
Thandi	4	4	5	13	3	4	5	12	25
Andy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cindy	4	4	4	12	4	4	4	12	24
Lee	5	4	5	14	5	4	5	14	28
Hamed	3	3	2	8	3	3	2	8	16
Macy	4	4	4	12	4	4	4	12	24
Lolo	4	4	4	12	4	5	4	13	25
Jabu	4	3	3	10	3	3	3	9	19
Minnie	4	3	3	10	4	4	4	12	22
Jola	5	4	5	14	3	3	4	10	24
Jade	4	3	3	10	3	3	3	9	19
Wethu	3	3	3	9	3	3	3	9	18
Xoli	4	3	3	10	2	3	3	8	18

The above scores, when compared to scores from the beginning of the cycle, indicate that all participants' reading results improved by the end of Cycle 3, though some still needed to practice and improve their reading further. Three of the participants who had the highest overall score were selected to participate in Round 2 of the reading competition (Lee, Lolo, and Thandi), which was based on an unprepared reading text (Appendix 28), including three questions to assess understanding of the text.

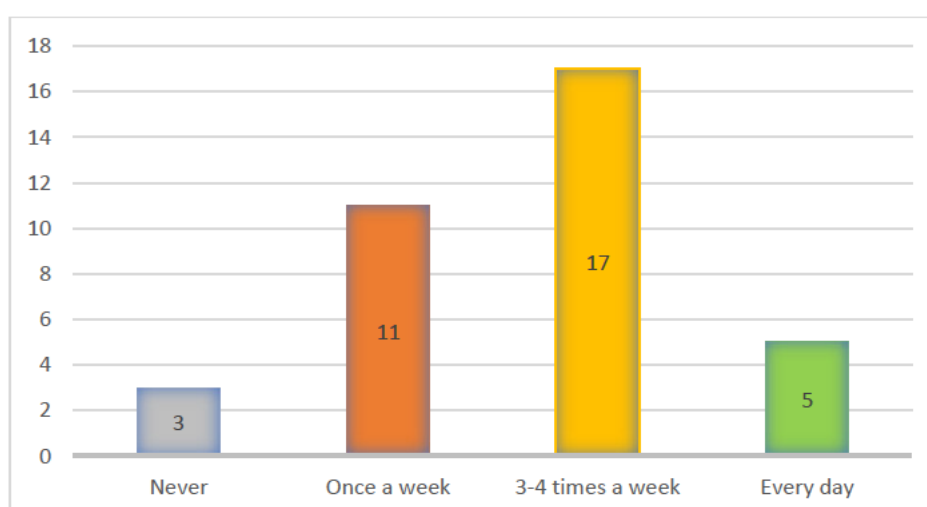
A significant improvement was portrayed by Thandi, who performed poorly in the reading out loud before the interventions of this cycle (she initially scored four out of 15); she was part of the top three in Round 1 of the reading cycle (prepared reading; learner's choice of text) and obtained second position in Round 2 (unprepared reading). Thus, it can be said that the interventions in this cycle improved both her reading skills and confidence in reading as the

reading competition at the end of the cycle was voluntary and she chose to participate. Unfortunately, Andy, who consistently mentioned the need to improve his reading, and whom I observed to have only low confidence as compared to being unable to read, was not part of the reading competition. The reason for this was that he transferred to another school shortly before the end of the cycle.

Furthermore, in the post-questionnaire that 37 participants attempted, these were some of the responses to the question ‘Do you think your reading has improved’: “Yes, I used to always read in a rush forgetting about commas and full stops, but now I’m able to see them...” (Lee); “Yes, I didn’t express myself before but now I can.” (Jabu); “Yes, because I joined the [ELC]” (Macy). Macy’s response shows that she felt the ELC has assisted in her improvement of English. Similarly, Phili wrote, “Ever since I joined [the ELC] my English and reading have improved so far.” Thus, the ELC seems to have had a significant impact on improving learners’ reading skills and the interventions used might also prove useful in the English classroom since different activities and a friendly atmosphere are perceived positively by learners (Aslam, Ahmed, & Mazher, 2015). Furthermore, the ways in which learners perceive their classroom environments influence their learning, satisfaction and motivation (Garibay, 2015; Barr, 2016).

However, the number of times participants read outside the classroom/school at the end of the cycle did not show much improvement:

Figure 7.2: Bar graph representing how often learners read outside the classroom/school (end of Cycle 3)



The post questionnaire was answered by 37 participants, one of which did not answer, ‘How often do you read outside the classroom/school?’ The results did not show a significant difference as compared to the pre-questionnaire. Three participants still did not read at all outside the classroom/school. Seventeen participants indicated they read 3-4 times a week, while 11 participants read once a week and only five read every day. Though the cycle showed improvement in reading scores for learners who participated in most of the interventions, and 33 of the 37 participants indicated that they felt like their reading has improved, the above bar graph serves to indicate that reading habits outside the ELC still need to improve for some learners.

In relation to reading habits and their influence on enhancing reading, in response to the question ‘Do you think your reading has improved’ four learners of the 37 indicated that they did not think they have improved. For example, Sne shared, “No, because lately in the holidays I hardly look at a book.” This shows that Sne recognises her lack of reading outside the classroom/school may influence her feelings about her improvement. Contrary to this, and an idea that portrays the importance of reading outside the classroom and maintaining regular reading habits was shared by Zee who wrote in her questionnaire, “I read books which improves my vocabulary and I learn new words” and Nisha who wrote that she believes her reading has improved because “[She] reads and writes every day”, suggesting that the frequent practice assisted her in her improvement.

Therefore, it must be noted that though the ELC assisted learners’ improvement in English, it is advised that skills need to be practised outside the ELC and the classroom for more successful results.

7.4. Reflections and decisions based on Cycle 3

Cycle 3 showed the importance of using texts that learners can debate about as it increases participation in discussions and enhances reading comprehension since more opinions are voiced. This allowed for participants to engage with the text further as it was something relatable which encouraged participation.

Furthermore, ‘The King’s Daughter’ comprehension text developed critical consciousness since it incorporated issues of gender and power inequalities when it comes to gender. Learners

expressed their opinions, and others showed empowerment in terms of not displaying any fear though opinions differed amongst participants in the activity.

I learnt that the link between the outdoor activity and English skill learnt is crucial. During the treasure hunt, learners discovered more about their reading habits while engaging in the outdoor activity, so the skill of reading and the reflection of their reading habits were not disjointed. So, the interventions of the next cycle (writing) will link all activities to encourage learner autonomy and self-reflection. Furthermore, current events are important, for example empowerment issues as per the reading comprehension. The interventions in the writing cycle will pay more attention to gender issues and power inequalities as learners showed a greater interest in these concepts.

Keeping the above in mind, the writing cycle will include a springboard activity – watching a trailer of *Zulu Wedding* and writing activities will be based on the trailer. Additionally, a movie ‘Freedom Writers’ will be watched, and learners will write a film review to practice their writing.

Fieldnotes also revealed that the reading competition disclosed hidden fears, but that which could be considered positive. A few learners were absent the day of Round 1, due to transport challenges, but were adamant they needed to participate as they had prepared for it. Learners who had already completed the task were sceptical. For example, Lee and Jabu both expressed that the learners may have had more time to prepare for the reading at which point Lolo pointed out that “it shouldn’t matter if you are confident you read the best you could.” This dilemma is twofold: 1. Learners’ fear that others might perform better is an indication that they observe the improvement in others (considering they were concerned about learners who had not read as well as they did at the beginning of the cycle). 2. Lolo shows confidence and compassion which are important traits for improving the learning of English – her own and that of others.

Additionally, more learners joined the ELC when they saw me carrying edible prizes for the treasure hunt. Learners enjoy snacking; we have decided that the next cycle will include picnic writing, where they will complete their writing activities on the school grounds with snacks.

7.5. Cycle 4 – Writing

The writing cycle included two interventions that were completed over four weeks: brainstorming a conversation between father and daughter about an arranged marriage and writing a film review based on ‘Freedom Writers’, a film watched by participants in this cycle. Unfortunately, this cycle was much shorter than previous cycles due to the introduction of the COVID-19 pandemic that quickly disrupted school.

This cycle included 35 participants and the following themes emerged: How springboard activities develop process-writing skills, the importance of peer-editing, and the influence of an outdoor atmosphere on writing.

7.5.1. How springboard activities develop process-writing skills

Springboard activities (the film trailer ‘Zulu Wedding’ and film ‘Freedom Writers’) proved useful in encouraging learners’ thought processes when writing. In the classroom and in the ELC, some learners found it difficult to brainstorm ideas when merely given topics to choose from without a context. Both springboard activities included issues that learners could relate to: the film trailer was about arranged marriages and ‘Freedom Writers’ is a film about students who struggle academically but have a new teacher who does not give up on trying to help them improve despite their socio-economic backgrounds. Television programmes and films are examples of authentic sources (Berado as cited in Marzban & Davaji, 2015) and those used in this cycle support a creative approach to teaching and include realistic contexts that learners were able to relate to (Beresova, 2015; Lazovic, 2017). This enhanced participation in the writing activities that followed.

According to fieldnotes, most learners took ample time to brainstorm in the classroom for three reasons: 1. They felt detached from the topic and were not confident in developing ideas to write, 2. They lacked basic brainstorming skills, for example, writing key points and phrases instead of lengthy sentences on a mind-map that can be time-consuming, causing them to have incomplete written pieces, and 3. Most learners did not take notes during the instruction of an activity.

The springboard method in this cycle is similar to Becker and Roos's (2016) notion that giving learners a picture of a monster and asking them to describe it in pairs by completing a given phrase provides the opportunity for learners to work creatively with the target language. Similarly, in this study, providing a context for learners to work with (film trailer) assisted in addressing the above three challenges; using the film trailer and film in this cycle enhanced learners' writing skills. For example, after watching the trailer of the movie 'Zulu Wedding', learners were required to brainstorm what they would say to their father if they were in the position of the main character who was required to have an arranged marriage. Since they were provided with a context (the trailer about a story of arranged marriages), learners were able to more quickly brainstorm ideas and did not take too long doing so which could have aided them in completing the task in the required time.

Results proved that not only were learners able to write in point form, penning their ideas but they were able to explore various opinions based on the topic in the form of a mind map, which was lacking in the classroom. Brainstorming is an important element in writing activities. Omi, for example, indicated on her mind map that she is "against it!" and would "discuss it with dad." She also indicated that it is "[her] choice." These short points are a step in the right direction as compared to most of the learners' classwork where they would spend a lot of time writing full sentences and spending too much time brainstorming. Furthermore, Omi's response shows a sense of agency and empowerment in terms of not merely accepting something she might not be comfortable with but being willing to disagree for the sake of her own happiness. Lolo, Leah and Lee, on the other hand, are examples of participants who indicated that they would have to "listen" to their father. However, Lolo mentioned that she would "ask necessary questions" about the man and would "not just marry" him.

Overall, brainstorming skills developed in participants and even though learners like Sam, Sibby and Kwanny had spelling errors on their mind-maps, it was mentioned during the discussion after the activity that they now know how to note key points instead of writing down an entire idea. Being self-aware and recognising transformation are key elements in critical consciousness development (Alexander & Schlemmer, 2017).

Note-taking skills were also developed during this cycle, and learners were motivated to ask questions during the film 'Freedom Writers'. It is important to ask questions during an activity so as to know what to do. It also enhanced their understanding of the main issues in the film,

which they needed to write about in the film review. Before the film was watched, learners were made aware that they would be required to write a film review, and they took it upon themselves to take notes during the film. This was a significant improvement in participants' ability to make decisions about their learning, instead of merely being told to make notes. Self-awareness is an important indicator of critical consciousness development (Alexander & Schlemmer, 2017) that can aid in taking responsibility for the learning of English. Additionally, they asked questions about the film's main issues such as racism, poverty, discrimination and learning challenges which demonstrate awareness of other people, another indicator of critical consciousness development (Alexander & Schlemmer, 2017).

7.5.2 The importance of peer-editing

Outdoor activities are effective as learners learn from each other; furthermore, social communication while learners are playing helps one build relationships (Zosh et al., 2017). The notion by Zosh et al. was evident in the group of 16 participants who ate together, wrote together and told jokes during the writing of the film review. The idea of learning from each other during outdoor activities was an important observation in this cycle. Without being asked, some learners decided to share their film reviews with a friend to be edited.

Peer-editing outdoors was effective as the learner editing the work was able to be 'fresh eyes' and spot errors that were pointed out to the peer. For example, Luyi spelt 'nouse' and this was scratched through and 'nose' was written in pencil above it. Various punctuation marks that were missing in her film review were also added by her partner, Jabu.

Thandi edited on her own and showed much improvement. The only errors found in her film review were 'raccism' (spelling error), 'smell's' (incorrect addition of an apostrophe), and 'guy' as a colloquial term. She also missed a full stop at the end of the second paragraph of her summary.

Sam had excellent ideas and showed an understanding of the film and its main issues. However, he needs a lot more writing practice and assistance. Sam's film review was error-ridden in terms of the lack of punctuation (sometimes only put a full stop at the end of a paragraph) and comma splicing in certain cases. However, it must be noted that when I looked at Sam's draft, no editing in pencil was evident so he might not have edited his work, or he did not ask for a

peer to assist. Sam might still be fearful in this regard though he proved more vocal since he joined in the third cycle. Thembi had the same errors, while Sibby was lacking punctuation.

Lee has minimal errors in her writing but tends to be very casual and conversational, for example when writing about her favourite scene in the film she wrote, “Some of the things he said really touched my heart (not literally but you get me)...” which should be avoided in more formal pieces of writing. Such is allowed in informal/friendly dialogues.

The following table reports the marks obtained by learners. The film review was assessed using a rubric for transactional texts (Appendix 31).

Table 7.4: Marks obtained by participants for the film review

<i>PARTICIPANT</i>	<i>MARK OBTAINED</i>			<i>TOTAL (20)</i>
	Content and Planning (10)	Language, Style and Editing (5)	Structure and Format (5)	
Luyi	9	4	4	17
Thandi	8	4	4	16
Lee	9	4	5	18
Jabu	7	3	3	13
Lolo	8	4	4	16
Anne	6	3	4	13
Leah	7	3	3	13
Sthoko	8	4	4	16
Sammy	8	3	3	14
Yanda	6	2	3	11
Sibby	6	2	3	11
Linda	8	3	4	15
Sne	9	4	4	18
Futhi	8	3	3	14
Thembi	6	2	3	11
Sam	6	2	3	11

Of the 16 participants who wrote the film review, seven scored lower than the others for structure and format due to the lack of paragraphs (especially in the first section that required learners to summarise the events of the film). Nine participants wrote in paragraphs throughout and considered different ideas per paragraph. However, it was noted that topic sentences need to be developed. There was a significant improvement in spelling, which could be a result of Cycle 2 for those participants who were involved. On the other hand, editing carefully also proved to be useful for recognising and correcting spelling errors.

7.5.3 The influence of an outdoor atmosphere on writing

Conducting the writing activities on the school grounds, which was a park-like environment, proved useful in this cycle. The classroom is not the only place in which learning can occur; learning may be achieved in playgrounds, gardens, parks, zoos and museums (Turkmen as cited in Yildirim & Akamca, 2017).

Though there was much talking and laughing, many learners who were very shy (for example Sam, Jimmy and Nisha) and avoided expressing opinions, or showed a reluctance to write down ideas when someone is watching (for example Sam, Leah and Sthoko) were more comfortable in this setting. All students voiced their ideas and all students involved in the activity had completed the task (planning and writing a draft) at the end of the hour. Teachers should avoid compelling learners to voice their experiences if they are uncomfortable; rather, other methods may be used to encourage participation (Zimmerman as cited in Vargas, 2019) and this notion was considered when the idea of a picnic environment was created.

7.6. Reflections and decisions based on Cycle 4

Overall, the writing cycle revealed that participants are more comfortable in a relaxed environment in which they can seek help from any of their peers, without the constraint of a classroom environment which might prevent them from seeking help from someone they trust due to the seating arrangement.

Furthermore, Cycle 4 could have had more interventions or could have been done over a longer period of time, but was unfortunately cut short by the pandemic and I was unable to collect learners' written reflections to improve the cycle.

7.7. Conclusion

Cycles 3 and 4 were useful for the enhancement of reading and writing. Similar themes emerged in these two cycles that were observed in the last two cycles that dealt with fun, outdoor activities to enhance learning of English. Transport issues that result in learners' absenteeism could be a cause for concern, if it is a regular challenge since learners miss out on activities in the classroom and in the ELC. Overall, it was noted that much more needs to be done for writing to improve, such as paragraphing, topic sentences, and writing for a specific audience.

Chapter 8

The finishing touches

Summary, Implications, Recommendations and Conclusions

“I have to promote myself as a fit role model by demonstrating examples of good practice”
(Flornes, 2007, p. 280).

8.1. Introduction

This thesis has explored how an English Language Club (ELC) may be used to enhance learners’ language learning and empower learners to take responsibility for their learning. The study set out to identify the strategies that may be used within an ELC to enhance the learning of the language, to understand the ways in which language learning strategies may enable learners to gain confidence linguistically and to study how an ELC may engender motivation and responsibility in learners.

The site of the study was a secondary school located in Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal. The urban school uses English as a medium of instruction, offering English as a Home Language only. Though the school is multiracial, there are only a few learners who speak English as a Home Language. Thus, the problem of the study is that what is done in the classroom may not be enough to assist second language learners to reach the desired proficiency in English, due to the language background of learners and the overcrowded classrooms which make more effective language learning strategies difficult to implement. To address the English crisis at the school, an ELC was used.

Four cycles in a participatory action research study, and various interventions, were used to enhance learners’ language learning. The study is important for its use of teaching and learning methods in a comfortable and encouraging environment that can complement activities and strategies of assessment used in the classroom. This thesis adds to the discourses on educational methods, critical pedagogy and participatory action research, and contributes to knowledge by showing that using participatory action research and critical pedagogy in an ELC are effective for empowering learners while enhancing their learning of English.

In this final chapter, the main research findings are discussed before the theoretical and methodological implications are considered. Thereafter, I also take into consideration the knowledge I gained from this participatory action research study in terms of changes on a personal and professional level. Finally, the limitations of the study are evaluated, recommendations for further research are made, and contributions are discussed.

8.2. Main findings

The presentation of the research findings is shaped by the three research questions that guided the study.

8.2.1. What strategies may be used within an English Language Club to enhance the learning of the language?

Fun, outdoor activities proved to be most effective in this study as they adopted a relaxed, non-stressful environment that encouraged participation. For example, going to the beach to learn spelling in Cycle 2 had more benefits than conducting a spelling test in the classroom. These benefits included active participation in spelling, improving learners' attitudes towards spelling, embracing the different methods learners use when spelling, and thus, improving spelling significantly as a whole. A more significant finding in Cycle 2 was the enjoyment of the activity at the beach because some learners did not go to the beach often or because they were unable to enjoy the beach with friends. Since the activity was suggested by learners and included in the ELC, the activity was appreciated more. Due to this, learners felt heard and cared about, thus enhancing their motivation for the spelling relay at the beach.

Additionally, and in light of the above, findings also revealed that learners were more motivated to participate in activities if their interests were considered. During lunch break duties, I learnt a lot about what learners enjoy doing when they return home from school – a common interest was watching movies and television series, which was also expressed by learners when reflecting on activities to be done in the ELC. Thus, including a film in Cycle 4 proved useful as they had an opportunity to do something they enjoy while still focusing on English skills (writing, in this cycle).

Springboard activities, for example, the use of a film trailer and film in Cycle 4, assisted in enhancing the learning of process-writing skills. Instead of merely writing topics down on the board for learners to choose from, a context is created that helps learners with ideas and enables them to write more about the provided issues. With ideas to draw from, learners seemed comfortable to write.

This sense of comfort was also attributed to the picnic-like environment that was created on the school grounds that enabled learners to interact with their peers, talk, laugh and eat. They were also free to ask any of their peers for help with editing their work, which may be a little difficult in a classroom setting due to the seating arrangement and the need for order so as to not disturb teaching and learning in other classrooms. Being outdoors, one does not need to focus too much on keeping the noise down, provided that the activity is being completed and learners are not drifting from the objective.

It must be noted, however, that these fun, outdoor activities do not need to occur far away from the school. Such outdoor activities can be recreated in the school environment for example, instead of going to a park and having a picnic, the school grounds proved sufficient with just picnic blankets, food and the fresh air to brainstorm and write. This can be considered by schools that have financial constraints and will be useful during times such as COVID-19 when outdoor gathering is safer than gathering indoors.

However, the relaxed environment and the sense of agency created in the ELC might not work in all classrooms for all teachers. For example, it was noted in this study that while other teachers commended learners for their improvement in English and their increased participation in other subjects, some teachers took the learners' opinions in the classroom about teaching methods and selection of activities as a sign of disrespect. Some learners were disciplined by their teachers, thus resorting to going back to merely 'keeping quiet and listening to the teacher'.

Though I was aware that the learners were challenging their teachers' methods in a positive way so as to assist themselves and their peers, learners had to keep in mind that the teachers were not involved in the study and might not have understood their perceptions. It is important for learners to decide whether they are going to embrace teachers' existing practices or

challenge them by justifying their opinions, respectfully so, instead of retreating. Challenging practices are an important factor in transformation. If this option is chosen, learners would need to work on their approach to teachers.

Overall, the relaxed, fun activities in all four cycles allowed learners to engage with the interventions more freely, resulting in the eradication of the fears they experienced related to learning English. The interventions also decreased anxiety and increased their motivation and self-confidence overall. Moreover, it is important to take into consideration learners' interests when designing activities.

8.2.2. In what ways may language learning strategies enable learners to gain confidence linguistically?

In order to enable learners to gain linguistic confidence, which in this study refers to learners' participation in interventions by asking questions, providing opinions on the activities designed and implemented in the ELC, and discussing their strengths and weaknesses in English, the participants needed to feel a sense of trust and respect in the ELC before they engaged in interactive and fun teaching and learning. Thus, one of the most important findings of the study suggested that an empowering and comfortable environment that alleviates the fears of second language learners supports the use of engaging teaching and learning methods. This type of environment allowed learners in this study various opportunities to practice the language in comfort, without fear of being judged, especially knowing that their participation was not going to directly influence their class assessments, but was a co-curricular club to enhance their learning of English.

The findings also indicated that if the participants' views are respected, their motivation to speak is heightened. At the end of Cycle 1, and due to the school heritage programme that did not only focus on English, but on the isiZulu language and various other cultures, findings revealed that allowing learners to use their home language gives them confidence in using English as they feel comfortable speaking to their teacher. As a result, learners respected the English language since their language was mutually respected.

The use of teamwork also enhanced linguistic confidence. For example, findings from the role-play activity in Cycle 1 revealed that some participants were more motivated to speak when in pairs. Their linguistic confidence developed because they worked with a peer to complete the activity and were comfortable knowing they had the same aim, thus reducing anxiety. Learners also knew they had to match the standard of their peer during the conversation that was role-played. This improved their linguistic confidence, as compared to presenting an individual oral which can be stressful in a classroom setting.

As the cycles unfolded, the participants in my study became confident and comfortable with working with their peers, contributing to discussions and asking for help. Participants also showed signs of challenging my opinions and the opinions of other participants through the use of a debate about gender issues in Cycles 3 and 4. The study, therefore, showed that though learners have a voice, they respected the voice of others but were not afraid to challenge their opinions. Therefore, debates on controversial issues encourage personal growth in terms of sharing opinions but also allowing for the opinions of others.

The use of relatable and controversial topics, especially those of gender issues in the study, encouraged debate. Not only did these debates encourage learners to speak, but their critical consciousness was developed and they were empowered to challenge prejudices. An example of this was in Cycle 2 when learners decided to point out during reflections that there were mostly girls in the ELC and attempted to encourage boys to join as some believed it was ‘just for girls’. The interventions in Cycles 3 and 4 also encouraged learners to engage in debate and openly voice their opinions about arranged marriages. By doing so, their linguistic confidence was enhanced.

Since teaching and learning are shaped by external forces, it proved important to tackle issues that learners are passionate about. Such conversations were avoided in some classrooms due to fear of losing control of the classroom when debate is elicited since classrooms were overcrowded at the school. However, discouraging discussions surrounding controversial issues about race and gender inhibits learners’ confidence to speak. If learners are made aware that their opinions matter or that their voices are heard, they are more willing to speak to and with others, as revealed in this study.

8.2.3. How may an English Language Club engender motivation and responsibility in learners?

While the use of competition may be debated, in this instance, the young teenagers embraced the challenge of the friendly, fun competition that was employed throughout all four cycles. Findings suggested that the use of competition in the ELC not only enthused learners to participate in the activities but also encouraged them to work harder due to their desire to be crowned ‘winner’, irrespective of a prize.

A noteworthy finding in relation to competition within the ELC, however, is that learners remained humble and caring to their peers. An example of this was revealed in Cycle 3 where the winner, without being asked, continued to help other learners who could not finish the task of unscrambling sentences on their own. Such reactions exhibited the existence of a humanising pedagogy within the ELC which was an important foundation for enhancing the learning of English. Though her win motivated her, she chose to use the knowledge gained from the activity to help others and this is an example of responsibility toward learning as a whole.

Learners’ sense of responsibility was also enriched by being part of the action research process and selecting interventions, with my guidance, that proved useful for enhancing their learning. Seeing that they were able to reflect on the kind of activities they wished to participate in, they were aware of the activities that may not have been as successful. Moreover, participants were involved in reflection during and after each cycle which gave them a platform to be responsible for sharing their learning experiences with the aim of improving their learning of English.

To the participants, it was not just about having fun but learning while having fun, and also helping their peers and being part of a ‘club’. Being part of a club motivated learners. An important finding during the introduction of the club was that learners were very pleased to be known by other teachers and their principal as being part of the ELC in the school. They were given a special identity in the school through the club.

By the end of the study, participants were not only more able to pinpoint and reflect on their strengths and weaknesses while learning English, but were also capable of recognising what they might have been doing wrong which influences the way they understand English instructions, for example. The participants of the study believed that the study equipped them

to make decisions about their learning, and the interventions conducted developed their responsibility in terms of their learning.

8.3. Theoretical implications

The study adopted a critical pedagogy and was founded on much of Krashen's Affective Filter hypothesis. Combining these theories proved useful. The study focused on enhancing the learning of English and empowering learners and encouraging them to take responsibility for their learning. In order for this to occur and for learning to be maximised, the appropriate environment needed to be created, which considered a humanising pedagogy (from Freire's critical pedagogy) and reducing anxiety and fear while learning (Krashen's Affective Filter hypothesis).

Taking into consideration the combined theories, there are numerous theoretical implications. Firstly, the study recognised the significance of a critical pedagogy; creating a safe environment in the ELC that adopted values such as respect and understanding allowed for learners to learn in a comfortable and non-threatening environment. This atmosphere allowed participants to reflect on the interventions and on their learning more openly as they knew they were in a safe place where they were not judged.

Secondly, the relaxed environment, in turn, decreased learners' fear of the language and decreased their anxiety through the use of fun interventions and outdoor activities. By reducing anxiety and fear while learning, learners were able to actively participate as they did not fear being mocked by their peers. Fear of being mocked or being incorrect are significant factors that influence the level of anxiety during learning, according to Krashen's Affective Filter hypothesis. The result of a non-threatening environment that decreased anxiety led to learners being motivated to learn, thus allowing them to actively participate in the interventions and in the action research process which enhanced their learning and enabled them to reflect on their strengths and weakness to incur change.

Thirdly, the use of relevant, interesting and fun activities in the ELC proved useful. The club enhanced input since I was able to assess their existing knowledge in the classroom as their English teacher, and use this information to inform the kind of interventions required to extend their knowledge. The club extended what was learnt in the classroom by using innovative and

fun activities to develop listening and speaking, spelling, reading, and writing skills. Thus, using both a relaxed environment and engaging activities enhanced input resulting in more effective learning of English.

Fourthly, the importance of dialogue throughout the study not only elicited a transformation in learning but facilitated empowerment. While learners discussed each cycle's interventions, they voiced their strengths and challenges for the purpose of change. Voicing opinions resulted in empowerment which is a significant factor in bringing about transformation. Learners' awareness of the impact of the activities (discussed collaboratively) conducted in the study in terms of how they influenced learning was evidence of critical consciousness, an important facet in critical pedagogy. Learners experienced satisfaction and belonging when discussing their strengths and weaknesses, which are feelings that are important for enhancing motivation to learn.

Finally, another theoretical implication of this study is the combination of critical pedagogy and elements of Krashen's theory into an interdependent working model (refer to figure 2.6). The implication of this model for future researchers and teachers alike is that learning is more effective when both theories are combined. Since they work hand-in-hand and the main concepts under each theory overlap, it is advised that elements of the critical pedagogy such as humanisation and empowerment, dialogism, and critical consciousness are considered alongside Krashen's theory. This is because these elements provide enhanced input which, in turn, affect anxiety, motivation and self-confidence, three aspects that influence the affective filter and impact learning.

8.4. Methodological implications

An important methodological implication is the significance of using action research. The cyclical nature of the design, in this participatory action research study, allowed for planning of interventions, taking action or implementing of the activities, observing, and then reflecting on the cycle before revising the plan and continuing the stages of action research in the subsequent cycles. The aim of this process was to enhance the learning of English, motivate learners and encourage them to take responsibility for their learning. Since the learners and I were collaboratively involved in the process, they had a heightened sense of responsibility, which they were not exposed to in the classroom. Thus, they were empowered to engage in

transforming their learning as they began to understand how the study was designed to enhance their learning of English, resulting in the development of their voices.

Critical reflection, which was evident in this study in written and verbal form, is another methodological implication. The learners and I reflected on the proceedings of each cycle and the use of interventions. After having planned, implemented and evaluated one cycle of the action research process, the learners and I reflected on new and improved cycles. This allowed for the appropriate changes to be made in the subsequent cycle with the aim of enhancing the learning of English and empowering learners.

Not only was critical reflection significant for the transformation process in learning, but was useful for learners to assess their relationship with their peers, whether positive or negative, and allow them to make the necessary changes to maximise a humanising pedagogy in the ELC. Learners were able to understand how their relationships affect learning and thus make the necessary changes.

Furthermore, the use of various activities, including written and verbal interventions along with visual representations catered for different learners. The different activities allowed for learners of differing capabilities to be involved in the study, thus empowering them and enhancing their sense of responsibility. While some learners preferred to express themselves in writing, others were able to draw.

8.5. Professional practice implications

As the study progressed, I was able to observe the influence of the interventions carried out in the ELC which allowed me to explore and further understand some of the challenges of learning English within the school context. Among these challenges were learners' fears of the language as most of them did not speak English as a Home Language but had to study it as a home language subject at the school, classroom anxiety and a lack of participation. What I knew about the learners from teaching them in a classroom environment was very limited. The ELC enabled me to learn more about them, which resulted in my realisation that my classroom experience with them may not have been the platform to find the root of the problem, which has proven to be multifaceted. In this study, I found that the main challenge was learners' fear

of participating in classrooms that had a large number of learners due to fear of being mocked. They also lacked the motivation to learn English because of the type of activities done.

The findings of this study have a number of important implications for my future practice. Throughout the study, I had to remain aware of modelling effective and engaging strategies that would work best for my learners, while taking into consideration how I made them feel as this proved to be an important factor in their willingness to learn English. I was aware that while I was the participants' teacher, I was also a participant in the study and had to mediate the two roles. I had to reflect on my own practices and allow participants to judge my teaching practices in order for them to reflect on the most effective methods of teaching and learning.

The study made me aware of the fact that even though education has transformed to a learner-centred one, this was not effectively portrayed in my classroom. From the analyses, it becomes more apparent that the use of groupwork and questioning in the English classroom were effective methods to enhance their learning. Innovative and fun activities were also avoided in my crowded classrooms because of the lack of space and noise levels which were addressed in the ELC with the smaller group of learners.

Moreover, as a teacher of English, I needed to incorporate more of these activities into my classroom teaching and learning, and if not, then I needed to make the attempt to use the outdoors as a more relaxed environment for more effective learning to occur, as the ELC demonstrated. Not only were learners empowered to make changes to the way they are taught and how they learned in the club, but their participation and interactions brought about empowerment within me to want to change my teaching practices. The classroom, or any environment in which teaching and learning takes place, needs to incorporate a critical pedagogy: these spaces become more conducive for the teaching and learning of English if they adopt an atmosphere where learners are empowered to voice their opinions, where they can work collaboratively without judgment and make decisions for the betterment of their learning.

The above implications were derived through constant reflection, which is another professional implication. Throughout the study, a research journal was used where I recorded events and reflected on the use of interventions in the four cycles, how participants reacted to interventions, and other observations. In addition to this, I needed to reflect on my own

practices and how interventions could be improved in subsequent cycles for more effective language learning. Participants were also involved in the reflection process. Reflection is important as it allows for the evaluation of educational practices for the betterment of teaching and learning. This is important for transformation to occur.

8.6. Limitations of the study

Though the study has produced significant insight into the activities that may be used to enhance English language learning, some important limitations need to be considered.

Firstly, the study was conducted in one school involving a limited number of participants. There are, however, reasons to believe that an ELC can be created and implemented in any school to enhance learning. Consequently, this notion could be explored in other action research studies in other schools.

Secondly, the assumption that a language club is for ‘girls only’, as communicated by some participants in this study, might have been the reason for more females being involved. Though the study did not focus on gender-related concepts specifically in its interventions, there were debates on gender issues that surfaced in Cycles 3 and 4 that developed linguistic confidence and these discussions were a source of empowerment. Having more male students participate in the ELC would have produced stronger data in those instances. However, though the participants and I attempted to encourage more male students to join through visual representations in Cycle 2, the initiative taken needs to be reflected on and improved.

Thirdly, the fourth cycle based on writing was cut short due to the COVID-19 pandemic that disrupted schooling, the attendance of learners and the kind of activities that were permitted. Unfortunately, this was beyond our control and not much could be done since learners did not have access to the internet at home and the cycle could not have continued through social media platforms or through online learning. Therefore, participants were unable to reflect, in writing, their journey through the cycle or in the club as a whole as anticipated. Therefore, I needed to reflect on interventions using my observations and research journal. Nevertheless, the cycle did produce significant data using the two interventions for writing activities.

8.7. Recommendations and Areas for Future Research

The study offers the following recommendations for teachers and their professional development:

- 8.7.1. It is recommended that teachers are trained on how to promote interactive discussions on controversial issues while still maintaining peace and harmony within the classroom. Learners are willing to express their opinions on burning issues and it is important to empower them to do so for change to occur, as this influences how they view their various contexts. Therefore, teachers need to support their desire to question the world around them and support their efforts to make changes in society if they feel the need to. All school personnel should also be offered additional support on how to address difficult situations in the school environment.
- 8.7.2. Future studies could look into using a similar action research process in other subjects to enhance learning. The activities used in this study can be developed or adjusted according to the subject that requires attention. Additionally, other teachers or educational personnel could be involved in the action research process to further develop ideas provided to enhance learning. Their involvement in the process could lead to heightened changes in education.
- 8.7.3. A similar study may be extended to other schools and other grades of learners. It might be preferable to include more schools to get a broader sense of issues in the learning of English for different learners to get more in-depth results.
- 8.7.4. Though the study was effective in enhancing the learning of English in the context used, it did not adopt the use of technology due to the financial constraints of the school. Further studies can focus on the effects of different technologies on learning such as online learning models and activities that use tutor simulations, which this study could not research.

8.8. Contribution to Knowledge

Ultimately, the study re-asserts its contribution to knowledge in its focus on language clubs. Unlike some other English clubs that focus mainly on reading skills, the ELC in this study focused on four skills of English, namely listening and speaking, spelling and vocabulary, reading, and writing. This study thus fills a research gap and expands the current body of knowledge on the use of English Language Clubs to enhance the learning of English while empowering learners and encouraging them to take responsibility for their learning.

Additionally, the study provides a working model of the combination of critical pedagogy and elements of Krashen's theory (figure 2.6) to enhance the learning of English by creating a humanising environment and decreasing anxiety. This model is described in detail in Chapter 2.

8.9. Conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated the influence of a humanising pedagogy in a relaxed and fun environment using innovative teaching and learning strategies, which included the use of outdoor activities. This is done to alleviate the stress of second language learners and enhance motivation. If learners are provided with opportunities to be responsible for their learning, they are more willing to change the way they learn and increase their participation, which are important elements in enhancing the learning of English. The study contributes to discussions around educational methods, supportive learning environments, critical pedagogy and participatory action research. It also contributes to knowledge by demonstrating that the use of participatory action research together with a critical pedagogy and affective hypothesis in an English language club is effective for empowering learners while enhancing their learning of English.

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APPENDIX 1
Gatekeeper Letter: Principal

61 Filigree Loop
Brackenham
Richards Bay
3900

22 April 2019

Sir

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I, Jennifer Sheokarah, a student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, enrolled for a PhD request permission to conduct research at your school. In conducting the research, I will request to speak to the grade 8 and 9 learners.

The topic for this study is ***Using English Language Club to Enhance the Learning of English at a High School in South Africa***. The purpose of this study is to understand how an English language club may be used to enhance learners' language competence and empower learners to take responsibility for their learning.

The objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the strategies that may be used within an English language club to enhance the learning of the language
2. To understand the ways in which language learning strategies may enable learners to gain confidence linguistically
3. To study how an English language club may engender motivation and responsibility in learners

Furthermore, I wish to bring to your attention that:

- The identity of the learners will be protected in the report writing and research findings
- Learners' participation will be voluntary
- Your institution will not be mentioned by its name, and pseudonyms will be used for the school and participants
- Interviews will be voice recorded to assist in the accurate capturing of data collected
- There is no financial benefit towards the participants as a result of their participation in this study.

Should you have any concerns or queries about this study please feel free to contact my supervisor or the university Research Office, whose details are below:

Supervisor: Dr. Ansurie Pillay
School of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal Edgewood Campus
Tel no. 031 260 3613

Email: Pillaya3@ukzn.ac.za

Research Office: Mr Prem Mohun
Tel no. 031 260 4557

I hope my request will be considered.

Yours Sincerely

Jennifer Sheokarah



jennifer_sheokarah@yahoo.com



AQUADENE SECONDARY SCHOOL

PO BOX 1192

RICHARDS BAY EMAIL : aquadenesec@yahoo.com
3900

6 VIA AMANNI

TEL: 0357981906

FAX : 0357981525

30/04/2019

TO: WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

SUBJECT: GATEKEEPER PERMISSION

I, Mr S.G Phakathi, principal of Aquadene Secondary School do hereby grant permission to Jennifer Sheokarah to conduct research with Grade 8 and 9 learners in the said School.

I understand that

- The identity of the learners will be protected in the report writing and research findings
- Learners' participation will be voluntary
- The institution will not be mentioned by its name, and pseudonyms will be used for the school and participants
- Interviews will be voice recorded to assist in the accurate capturing of data collected
- There is no financial benefit towards the participants as a result of their participation in this study.
- Full consent will be sought from all participants, and in the case of minors, from their parents.

Yours faithfully

PHAKATHI SCELO GOODWILL
NAME

30 APRIL 2019
DATE

SIGNATURE

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
AQUADENE SECONDARY SCHOOL
2019 -04- 30
TEL: 035 798 1906
PO BOX 1192, RICHARDS BAY, 3900
KWAZULU-NATAL

APPENDIX 2

Ethical Clearance



06 September 2019

Miss Jennifer Sheokarah (212530608)
School Of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Miss Sheokarah,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00000143/2019

Project title: Using an English Language Club to Enhance the Learning of English at a High School in South Africa

Full Approval – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 18 July 2019 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. **PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid for one year from 06 September 2019.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)

/spm

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

APPENDIX 3
Learner Informed Consent Form



UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

PhD in Education

Researcher:
Miss Jennifer Sheokarah
[REDACTED]
jennifer_sheokarah@yahoo.com

Dear learner/participant

INVITATION

I, **Jennifer Sheokarah**, last completed Master of Education (UKZN 2017), and currently **PhD** student in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, would like to invite you to participate in my research study entitled,

Using an English Language Club to Enhance the Learning of English at a High School in South Africa.

The objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the strategies that may be used within an English language club to enhance the learning of the language
2. To understand the ways in which language learning strategies may enable learners to gain confidence linguistically
3. To study how an English language club may engender motivation and responsibility in learners

The project has been approved by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN

Your voluntary involvement in this study will require you to:

- ✓ Respond to questionnaires that will take approximately 15 minutes
- ✓ Create visual representations
- ✓ Possibly participate in an interview of approximately 30 minutes. During this time, the researcher will engage you in a semi-structured interview, where you will share information about your thoughts of the listening and speaking cycle. Please note that the interview will be audio-recorded to ensure all significant points are noted as it would be physically impossible to write everything down and engage in questions and follow-ups at the same time.

- ✓ Complete various written texts and engage in activities in different cycles that will concentrate on Listening and Speaking, Spelling and Vocabulary, Reading, and Writing skills

TIME COMMITMENT

The study will take place during the school's activity period (Wednesdays from 13:30-14:30) so it will not take class time.

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

You may decide to stop being a part of the research study at any time without explanation. You have the right to ask that any data you have supplied to that point be withdrawn or destroyed. You also have the right to omit or refuse to answer or respond to any question that is asked of you, should you feel uncomfortable answering.

If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, you should ask the researcher before the study begins. A summary report and explanation of the results will be made available to you when the study is completed, by means of an electronic copy.

CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONYMITY

Each individual's participation will be strictly confidential and nobody other than the researcher and supervisor will be allowed to discuss them. While the results will be published, no names or addresses will be revealed. The information will be kept under lock and key and stored securely, and will be disposed of after a five year period.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

My supervisor, Dr Ansurie Pillay will be glad to answer your questions about this study at any time. Alternatively, you may contact the HSSREC Research Office:

Details of Supervisor:

Dr Ansurie Pillay
Language and Arts Education, UKZN
Email: Pillaya3@ukzn.ac.za
Telephone: 031 260 3613

Details of HSSREC Research Office:

Prem Mohun
College of Humanities, UKZN
Email: HssrecHumanities@ukzn.ac.za
Telephone: 031 260 4557/4609

Please tick the appropriate box:

	Yes	No
I consent to answering the questionnaires		
I consent to representing visually my response to the question		
I consent to participating in the semi-structured interview		
I consent to having my interview audio-recorded		
I consent to the completion of written texts and other activities		

I..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in this research project. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

.....
Signature of participant

.....
Date

.....
Name of Participant

APPENDIX 4
Parent Informed Consent Form



UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

PhD in Education

Researcher:
Miss Jennifer Sheokarah
[REDACTED]
jennifer_sheokarah@yahoo.com

Dear parent

INVITATION

I, **Jennifer Sheokarah**, last completed Master of Education (UKZN 2017), and currently **PhD** student in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, would like to invite you to participate in my research study entitled,

Using an English Language Club to Enhance the Learning of English at a High School in KwaZulu-Natal

The objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the strategies that may be used within an English language club to enhance the learning of the language
2. To understand the ways in which language learning strategies may enable learners to gain confidence linguistically
2. To study how an English language club may engender motivation and responsibility in learners

The project has been approved by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN

Your voluntary involvement in this study will require your child to:

- ✓ Respond to questionnaires that will take approximately 15 minutes
- ✓ Create visual representations
- ✓ Possibly participate in an interview of approximately 30 minutes. During this time, the researcher will engage you in a semi-structured interview, where you will share information about your thoughts of the listening and speaking cycle. Please note that the interview will be audio-recorded to ensure all significant points are noted as it would be physically impossible to write everything down and engage in questions and follow-ups at the same time.

- ✓ Complete various written texts and engage in activities in different cycles that will concentrate on Listening and Speaking, Spelling and Vocabulary, Reading, and Writing skills

TIME COMMITMENT

The study will take place during the school's activity period (Wednesdays from 13:30-14:30) so it will not take class time.

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

Your child may decide to stop being a part of the research study at any time without explanation. Your child have the right to ask that any data you have supplied to that point be withdrawn or destroyed. Your child also has the right to omit or refuse to answer or respond to any question that is asked of him/her, should he/she feel uncomfortable answering.

If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, you should ask the researcher before the study begins. A summary report and explanation of the results will be made available to your child when the study is completed, by means of an electronic copy.

CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONYMITY

Each individual's participation will be strictly confidential and nobody other than the researcher and supervisor will be allowed to discuss them. While the results will be published, no names or addresses will be revealed. The information will be kept under lock and key and stored securely, and will be disposed of after a five year period.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

My supervisor, Dr Ansurie Pillay will be glad to answer your questions about this study at any time. Alternatively, you may contact the HSSREC Research Office:

Details of Supervisor:

Dr Ansurie Pillay
Language and Arts Education, UKZN
Email: Pillaya3@ukzn.ac.za
Telephone: 031 260 3613

Details of HSSREC Research Office:

Prem Mohun
College of Humanities, UKZN
Email: HssrecHumanities@ukzn.ac.za
Telephone: 031 260 4557/4609

Please tick the appropriate box:

	Yes	No
I consent to my child answering the questionnaires		
I consent to my child representing visually my response to the question		
I consent to my child participating in the semi-structured interview		
I consent to my child having his/her interview audio-recorded		
I consent to my child completing written texts and other activities		

I..... (full names of parent) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to my child participating in this research project. I understand that my child us at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should he/she so desire.

.....
Signature of Parent

.....
Date

.....
Name of Parent

APPENDIX 5
Biographical Details

This section contains questions about you and your education. In responding to the questions, please tick (✓) the appropriate box.

1. What is your gender?

Female ☐ Male ☐

If you feel you do not fit into these categories, please indicate a category that you feel you fit into: _____

2. What is your race?

African ☐ Indian ☐ White ☐ Coloured ☐

If you feel you do not fit into these categories, please indicate a category that you feel you fit into: _____

3. How old are you?

12 ☐ 13 ☐ 14 ☐ 15 ☐

4. What is your home language?

isiZulu ☐ isiXhosa ☐ English ☐ Afrikaans ☐

If you feel you do not fit into these categories, please indicate a category that you feel you fit into: _____

5. Which language do you prefer communicating in?

isiZulu ☐ isiXhosa ☐ English ☐ Afrikaans ☐

If you feel you do not fit into these categories, please indicate a category that you feel you fit into: _____

6. What type of primary school did you attend?

Rural ☐ Township ☐ Suburban ☐ Model-C ☐

If you feel you do not fit into these categories, please indicate a category that you feel you fit into: _____

7. Did you learn English as a Home Language (HL) or First Additional Language (FAL) in your primary school?

HL ☐ FAL ☐

APPENDIX 6
Baseline Mind-map

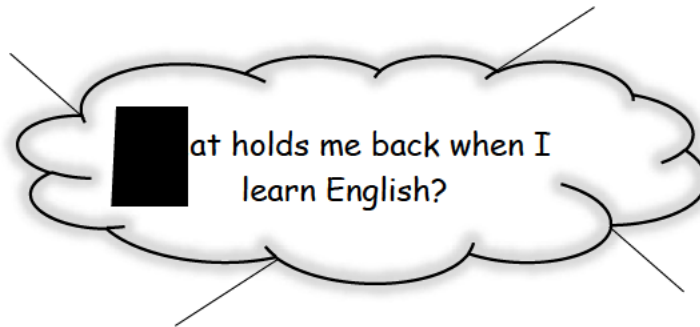
Name: _____

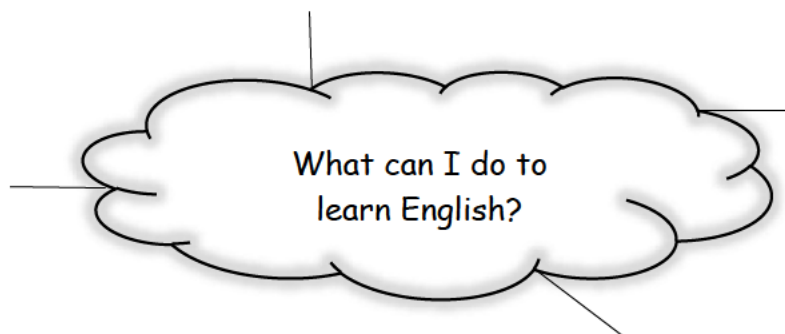
Grade: _____

Brainstorming/Writing Task: Mind-map

Fill in the mind-maps below by answering each of the questions in the clouds.
Reflect on your experiences of learning English. Answer the two questions to the best of your ability.

Write down your ideas (in point form, not full sentences) around the clouds.
Write as many points as you would like.





APPENDIX 7
Baseline Questionnaire

Questionnaire: Learning Spaces

1. How does the English classroom make you feel? Colour in ONE option below:



Happy



Sad



Bored



Sleepy

2. Why do the classrooms make you feel this way?

3. What would you do to improve the classrooms?

4. How does the school library make you feel? Colour in ONE option below:



Happy



Sad



Bored

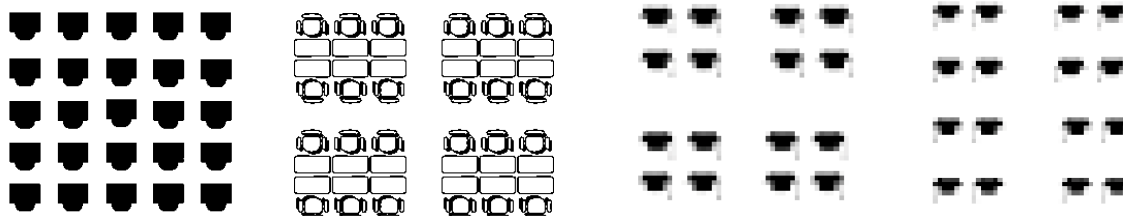


Sleepy

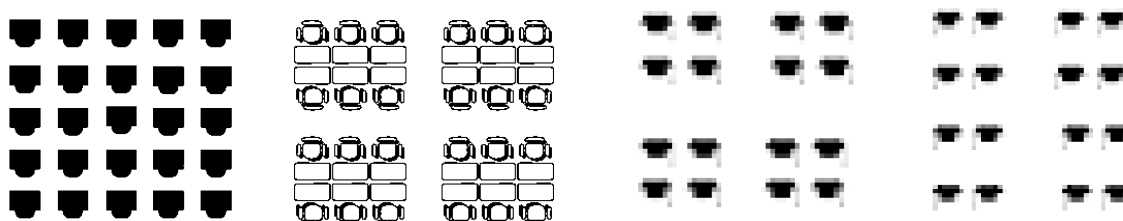
5. Why does the school library make you feel this way?

6. What would you do to improve the school library?

7. Which seating arrangement does your English classroom use? Circle ONE of the options below.



8. Which seating arrangement do you prefer? Circle ONE of the options below.



9. Think about your English classroom and answer the following questions by ticking one of the three boxes.

	Yes	No	Sometimes
9.1. English is fun.			
9.2. The class is noisy.			
9.3. Learners are fighting with each other.			
9.4. Some students are not happy in class.			
9.5. In my class, everyone is my friend.			
9.6. I answer/ask questions in class.			
9.7. I am shy to answer/ask questions.			
9.8. The classroom is crowded.			
9.9. The classroom is decorated.			
9.10. I understand the teacher.			
9.11. The teacher gives me individual attention.			
9.12. We do pair/group work.			
9.13. Other learners disturb me.			
9.14. I am able to concentrate in class.			
9.15. I get enough help from my teacher.			
9.16. Everyone shows respect.			
9.17. The teacher motivates us.			
9.18. The teacher shouts at us.			
9.19. There are many resources.			

9.20. I feel safe in the classroom.			
-------------------------------------	--	--	--

10. Describe the best learning environment for you as a learner.

APPENDIX 8
Listening and Speaking Activity (Role-play)

Listening and Speaking Activity

Role-play: Communicating on the telephone



1. Work in pairs. Discuss different work and personal situations that depend on telephone conversation. Brainstorm different styles of communication and tone used in various situations.
2. Act out some telephone situations like the following. You may choose from this list or create your own situation:



- ❖ A friend calling to leave a birthday party invitation on an answering machine
- ❖ Classmates arranging a time and place to work on their posters for the English Academy
- ❖ A person calling to find out what a car repair will cost
- ❖ A person calling 911 to report a fire
- ❖ A manager calling an applicant to schedule a job interview
- ❖ A teenager calling his/her parent to inform coming home late from a birthday party



Tips

- Speak clearly and directly into the receiver. Identify yourself before asking to speak to someone.
- Speak at a pace that the listener can follow. Slow down when giving numbers or information.
- When leaving a message on a machine, take extra care to speak clearly. Include your name, number, and a brief message.
- Use good manners and a tone that is appropriate for the situation.

Questions for response and discussion:



1. How was the tone used for business-like calls different from the tone used in more friendly calls?

2. How did the speakers sound in the different situations? Provide at least two examples.

3. How can you help yourself listen effectively?

APPENDIX 9
Listening and Speaking Activity (Instructions)

Listening and Speaking Activity

Listening actively: Step-by-step instructions

1. Work individually. Work on step-by-step instructions for doing a familiar activity, such as:
 - ❖ Making a salad
 - ❖ Making a cup of coffee/tea/any other beverage
 - ❖ Heating frozen food
 - ❖ Assembling a toy
2. Write out your instructions. You do not have to choose from the above examples. If you have one of your own, feel free to share this.
3. Read your instructions to the class but *don't say what activity the instructions describe*.

Notes:

- ☐ Listen closely as each learner reads his or her instructions
- ☐ Try to guess what activity the instructions describe
- ☐ Listen for key words related to the activity and for a sense of how the steps connect
- ☐ Take notes as you listen
- ☐ In discussing your responses, try to explain what parts of the instructions helped you arrive at the answer

Tips

- Listen for the particular information and key words that will help you recognize the process: steps involved, related equipment and activities, safety precautions.
- Don't try to write down every word. Instead, jot down a few words to remind yourself of important points.
- Read over your notes to make sense of the description. If you missed a point, ask the speaker to reread it.
- Listen to your classmates' responses to see if they picked up on something that you missed.

Questions for response and discussion:



1. Which clues helped you recognise the different activities? Give two examples.

2. How can you help yourself listen to instructions effectively?

APPENDIX 10
Interview Schedule: Listening and Speaking

Interview Schedule: Listening and Speaking (Cycle 1)

Introduction

Greetings (name of learner) and thank you for providing consent to participate in this interview despite other responsibilities you may have.

The interview aims to find out about your experiences of the Listening and Speaking cycle in the English language club. Please note that interview will take approximately 20 minutes and will be audio-recorded to capture all aspects of the conversation. Kindly speak clearly when contributing to the conversation.

It is important that we keep any schools, teachers or learners anonymous, so should you feel the need to refer to a place or a person, please do not use any names, but use phrases such as “my English teacher” or “the school I attended last year” instead. If you have no questions, I will start the interview as I press the record button.

Questions

1. Would you say you are a good listener? Why?
2. Would you say you are a good speaker? Why?
3. What challenges do you face when listening and speaking?
4. Why is it important to be a good listener?
5. Why is it important to be a good speaker?
6. Which listening and speaking activity/ies did you like the most? Why?
7. Which listening and speaking activity/ies did you like the least? Why?
8. How did you feel about the teacher participating in a listening and speaking activity (role-playing a telephone conversation)? Did you enjoy the example provided? Why?
9. Which skill do you think is more important – listening or speaking? Why?
10. Do you think the listening and speaking activities have improved your listening and speaking skills? Explain.
11. How did you feel about working in pairs? What do you think are the positive and negative aspects to pair work?
12. Are you enjoying the club thus far? Why or why not? What aspects of the club do you enjoy?
13. What would you like to change?

APPENDIX 11
Observation Schedule: School Heritage Day Programme

Take into consideration the following aspects during the presentations:

- Facial expressions and when these are used. How do they influence presentation?
- Body language and posture
- Audibility and expression (during rehearsal and during main performance)
- Indications of confidence/lack thereof
- Audience reaction and learners' reaction to audience
- Other notable observations

APPENDIX 12-A
Unscramble the words activity

OCCUPATIONS UNSCRAMBLE THE WORDS !

Unscramble the occupations vocabulary and number the pictures



1. ocdtor

2. denitts

3. snure

4. evt

5. etaherc

6. ocko

7. atnrpie

8. atererycs

9. ersing

10. ruhetcb

11. fremra

12. inengere

13. rolati

14. rabek

15. ptilo

16. dreherirass



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APPENDIX 12-B
Unscramble the words activity answers

OCCUPATIONS UNSCRAMBLE THE WORDS | ANSWER KEY

Unscramble the occupations vocabulary and number the pictures



- | | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| 1. ocdtor | doctor |
| 2. denitts | dentist |
| 3. snure | nurse |
| 4. evt | vet |
| 5. etaherc | teacher |
| 6. ocko | cook |
| 7. atrnpie | painter |
| 8. atererycs | secretary |
| 9. ersing | singer |
| 10. ruhetcb | butcher |
| 11. fremra | farmer |
| 12. inengere | engineer |
| 13. rolati | tallor |
| 14. rabek | baker |
| 15. ptilo | pilot |
| 16. dreherirass | hairedresser |



APPENDIX 13
Observation Schedule: Beach spelling track

Pay attention to the following during this observation:

- Participants' facial expressions before/during/after activity
- Body language in specific situations – while spelling, for example, or after spelling incorrectly/correctly.
- Strategies of spelling
- Attitudes/behaviours during the spelling track
- Interactions and relationship between learners – are they showing respect? Being helpful? Encouraging?
- Other notable observations

APPENDIX 14
Visual representation

Name: _____

Grade: _____

Visual Representation: Poster of Persuasion
(Cycle 2: Spelling and Vocabulary)

Design a poster to **persuade** (encourage/influence) others to join the club. Use adjectives to **describe** the club to the other grade 8 and 9 learners. Use as many adjectives as possible. Practice your spelling/vocabulary while using a dictionary for assistance.

APPENDIX 15
List of words for spelling competition

Preparing for SpellAthon

List provided to learners to study:

weird	separate	scenarios
handkerchief	definitely	deceit
accommodate	existence	weather
conscience	license	neighbour
rhythm	receive	masculine
embarrass	beautiful	feminist
believe	excellence	embarrassing
harass	investigate	whether
pronunciation	performance	surreptitiously
recommend	achievement	incredible

Five unseen words that were added to the test:

compliment
possessions
reprimand
recruitment
exemplary

Reflection: Spelling and Vocabulary (Cycle 2)

[illegible]

Grade: _____

APPENDIX 17
Pre-reading questionnaire

Questionnaire: Reading habits (Beginning of Cycle 3)

A. Indicate how often you do the following when reading in English. Circle the answer that suits you best.

1. When I was younger, my parents/guardian read to me

Never

Sometimes

Always

2. When I was younger, I read aloud to my parents/guardian

Never

Sometimes

Always

3. I saw my parent/guardian reading at home

Never

Sometimes

Always

4. How often do you read outside the classroom/school?

Never

Once a week

3-4 times a week

Everyday

5. Before you read do you think about what it will be about?

Never

Sometimes

Always

6. While you read, do you imagine pictures in your head or imagine you are part of the story?

Never

Sometimes

Always

7. When you read a word you don't know, do you try to figure out its meaning by looking at the rest of the story?

Never

Sometimes

Always

8. When you read a word you don't know, do you look for the meaning in a dictionary?

Never

Sometimes

Always

9. After you read, do you think about how well you understood it?

Never

Sometimes

Always

B. Use the list in the table below to share your reading process by ticking the things you do when you read

	Reading process	Tick
1.	I read with a dictionary	
2.	I write down key words while reading	
3.	I imagine pictures in my mind while reading	
4.	I guess the meaning of words I don't know	
5.	I read to others	
6.	I read silently	
7.	I read aloud to myself	
8.	I look over what I'm going to read first to get an idea of what it is about.	
9.	I ask myself questions about what I read	
10.	I get distracted a lot when I read	
11.	I try to complete reading as fast as I can	
12.	I read something again if I don't understand it at first	
13.	I have a problem remembering what I have read	
14.	I try to read with expression	
15.	I put what I read into my own words	

C. Open-ended questions

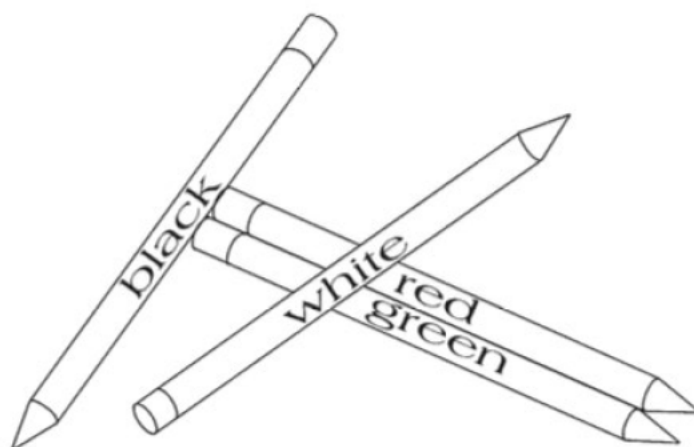
1. How do you feel when you are asked to read to yourself? Explain.

2. How do you feel when you are asked to read out loud to the class? Explain.

3. How would you feel if you received a book as a birthday present? Why would you feel this way?

4. How, do you think, you can improve your reading?

APPENDIX 18
Reading for colours worksheet



Hidden colours

Find the name of a color hidden in each sentence: (The first one has been done as a sample.)

1. Some parts of the face are the eye, eyeblack, nose, and mouth.
2. I'm not really dumb; lack of sleep made me forget the answers.
3. If I tell you what she said, will you agree never to tell anyone?
4. In the box we found a pencil, a pin, keys, and a few coins.
5. Are three zeros enough to write the number one thousand?
6. The wheelbarrow hit eleven rocks as it rolled down the hill.
7. When the nurse gives you the injection, just yell "Ow" if it hurts.
8. Eisa and Otto ran gently down the path to the river.
9. Before arriving at Kuala Lumpur, please fill out these forms.
10. I play nearly all the stringed instruments: violin, cello, bass viol, etc.
11. When I opened the window, shining rays of sunlight flooded the room.
12. We'll go in Jim's car. Let's leave at six o'clock.

Name: _____

Grade: _____

APPENDIX 19
Double Puzzle Challenge

Double Puzzle Challenge

A pale pachyderm puzzle

Fill in the spaces to make words that fit the definitions. The circled letters from top to bottom will spell out a two-word idiom that means **rare and expensive possessions that are burdensome to maintain**.

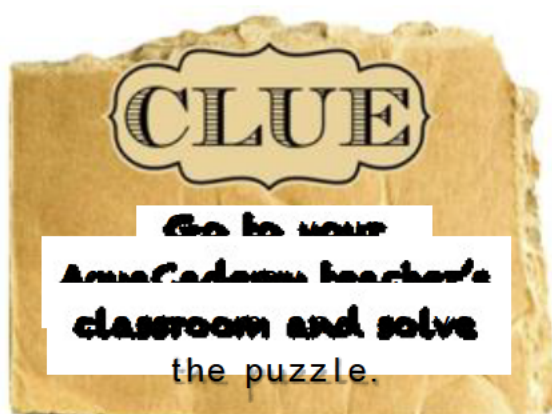
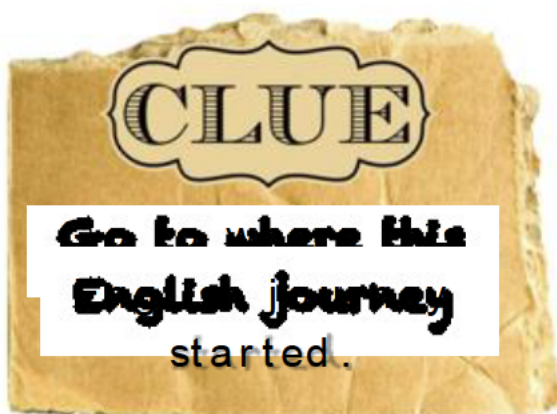
- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| 1. Somewhat hot | ○ _ _ _ |
| 2. Partial darkness produced by a shelter from the sun | _ ○ _ _ _ |
| 3. Tracks that trains go on | _ _ ○ _ _ |
| 4. Give ear to; pay attention | _ _ _ ○ _ _ |
| 5. A piece of furniture consisting of a smooth flat surface resting on four legs | _ _ _ _ ○ _ |
| 6. A fast train that does not stop at intermediate points | ○ _ _ _ _ _ |
| 7. Near | _ ○ _ _ _ |
| 8. Large woody plants that provide shade | _ _ ○ _ _ |
| 9. Not complicated; easy | _ _ _ ○ _ _ |
| 10. Something, no matter what; whatever thing | _ _ _ _ _ ○ _ _ |
| 11. High parts of the earth's surface | _ _ _ _ _ _ ○ |
| 12. A stopping place on a railroad line; depot | _ _ _ _ _ _ _ ○ |
| 13. A discussion in which there is disagreement | _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ ○ |
| 14. Structures with walls and a roof | _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ ○ |

Welcome to **Reading for Treasure!**

Please read the following instructions carefully:

- There are 5 clue cards
- Each clue card comes with ONE part of a very short story (look inside your envelope for the first clue card)
- Solving one clue will enable you to go to the next spot in order to find the next clue, where you will receive another part of the story
- If you reach the end (5th clue card) you will have all 5 parts of the story which you will unscramble in the RIGHT place and read out loud to your teacher
- Some clues come with treasure! So, the idea is to find as many clues as possible to get a treat
- The end of this journey comes with a goodie bag! Remember, you have to be the first to complete the hunt to get the ultimate treasure

APPENDIX 21
Reading for Treasure Clue Cards



APPENDIX 22
Reading for Treasure: 5 sentence story

(5 sentence story)
'The Woodcutter'

Once upon a time, there was a woodcutter, who lived in a little house in the beautiful, green forest.

One day, he was merrily chopping wood, when he saw a little girl skipping through the woods, whistling happily. She was followed by a big grey wolf.

Deciding it was really none of his business, the woodcutter went back to chopping wood, until he heard a scream!

He grabbed his axe, and ran towards the noise, where he found that he was too late: the wolf had already eaten the little girl and her granny.

And the moral of the story is: all it takes for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.

APPENDIX 23
Observation Schedule: Reading for treasure

Take into consideration the following aspects during the presentations:

- Are learners reading clue cards before attempting to find the treasure?
- Do learners follow each other in pairs/groups or are they working individually?
- Are there signs of not reading the clue cards?
- Is the activity fun? How can you tell?
- How do participants react to finding treasure/figuring out the clue?
- Are certain participants frustrated? Worried? Anxious?
- How do learners react at the end of the activity?

APPENDIX 24
Sequence Story 1

Sequencing



- _____ Tom and Tess cook the chips in the oven for 2 minutes.
- _____ They get out a plate to cook on.
- _____ Tom and Tess get out the nacho chips and cheese.
- _____ Tom and Tess eat the food.
- _____ They put the chips on a plate.
- _____ They put cheese on the chips.

APPENDIX 25
Sequence Story 2

Use numbers to put the sentences in order.

A Fishing Trip

Maria was going fishing with her brother. Mother gave them a big lunch because they would be gone all day.

First, they put their things in the car. Then they went to the lake. Maria caught three fish. She showed them to her mother when she got home. Mother cooked all of Maria's fish for dinner.

- _____ Maria caught three fish.
- _____ First, they put their things in the car.
- _____ Mother cooked all of Maria's fish for dinner.
- _____ Maria was going fishing with her brother.
- _____ Then they went to the lake.



APPENDIX 26
Reading Comprehension

WWW.HOOYO.WEB - SOMALI FOLK TALES The King's Daughter

1 A long time ago, a very rich king had a smart and very beautiful daughter. They ruled over a very prosperous city that had three roads leading into it. Each road had a special kind of traveler assigned to it. However, each road also had problems, which threatened the travelers going into the city. The first road had a mean lion that ate up everything he saw. The second road had a gang of men who would kill the travelers. The third road had a group of thieves that robbed the travelers of their food and belongings.

2 Many men came to the king to ask him if they could marry his smart, beautiful daughter. But, the king's daughter loved another man, and she wanted to marry him. However, the king didn't want her to marry the man she loved, so he announced that his daughter would only marry the man who could get rid of the dangers on the three roads into the city.

3 All the men in the city started to compete with each other so they could be the winner, and marry the king's daughter. They all failed to get rid of the dangerous attackers on the roads leading into the city.

4 The girl's lover went to the girl, and said, "You are a very smart girl. How can we solve these problems so we can be married?"

5 She said, "Let's take care of the lion first. We'll set a trap for him. Don't use a spear or carry other weapons."

6 He set a trap for the lion. Then he called the king and all the people in the city, and he said, "Here's the lion I caught without a weapon." Everyone was surprised, and they all clapped for him.

7 The daughter's lover then secretly went back to her, and asked her how to get rid of the gang on the second road. She said, "We'll cook some delicious food. We will put poison in the food. Then we'll tie the food to some donkeys, and have them walk along the road." The gang of men robbed the food from the donkeys. They ate the food very fast, and they all died.

8 The young man went back to the king's daughter, and asked her how to get rid of the thieves on the third road. She said, "Go find as many horses as you can. Tie thorn bushes to each horse. Then let the horses run in different directions to scare the thieves." The running horses made lots of dust, and when the robbers saw all the horses and the dust, they thought they were being attacked by an army.

9 They said, "A huge and powerful army is coming! What shall we do?" They decided to run away in different directions so no one would find them together.

10 The king was very happy that all three roads leading into the city were now safe for travelers. He let his daughter marry the man she loved. They had a big wedding with many presents from the people in the city.

11 They were happy because they had faced these problems together. They had discussed their problems and decided how to solve them. They were always loyal to each other.

12 Lesson: Talk about your problems with people who care. Together you have a much better chance of solving them.

QUESTIONS:

1. This folktale is from Somalia. On which continent is Somalia? _____
2. Do you know anything about Somalia? Please explain.

3. **Synonyms** / Words with similar meanings: What is another word for

3.1. prosperous (paragraph 1) _____

3.2. delicious (paragraph 7) _____

3.3. scare (paragraph 8) _____

3.4. huge (paragraph 9) _____

3.5. presents (paragraph 10) _____

4. Some words in the story are presented as **shortened forms**:

4.1 Paragraph 2: The word 'didn't' is a shortened form for _____

4.2. Paragraph 5: The word 'let's' is a shortened form for _____

4.3. Paragraph 5: The word 'we'll' is a shortened form for _____

4.4. Paragraph 5: The word 'don't' is a shortened form for _____

4.5. Paragraph 6: The word 'here's' is a shortened word for _____

5. Each road in the city had its problems. Match the road with its problem. Use a line to link the road and its problem:

Road	Problem
1	A group of murderers
2	A group of robbers
3	A cruel greedy lion

6. In paragraphs 1 and 2, the king's daughter is described as 'smart' and 'beautiful'. Which quality do you think is more important? Explain your answer.

7. Even though the smart beautiful daughter loved a man, her father said that he would choose for her. Do you agree with his decision? Explain your answer.

8. No men in the city, including the daughter's lover, could get rid of the dangers on the road. The daughter's lover could only succeed when he asked the daughter for advice.

- 8.1. What does this tell you about the king's daughter?

- 8.2. What does this tell you about the daughter's lover?

9. Paragraph 12 gives us the lesson of the story. What other lesson do you get from the story?

APPENDIX 27
Reading competition – rubric

Reading Aloud

	5	4	3	2	1
Pronunciation & Articulation - to read a passage with good pronunciation & clear articulation of the words	Pronunciation is clear throughout the whole passage.	Pronunciation is clear but there are some errors which do not affect understanding of the words.	Pronunciation is generally clear. Several errors in pronunciation are evident.	Pronunciation is difficult to understand. Numerous errors in punctuation are evident.	Pronunciation is unclear. Most words are mispronounced.
Rhythm & Fluency - to use appropriate rhythm & stress to achieve a well-paced, fluent reading of a passage	Reading is fluent. Appropriate pauses. No hesitations.	Reading is smooth. There are pauses at the right places. Almost no hesitations.	Reading is generally smooth. There are some hesitations.	Reading is uneven. There are many hesitations.	Reading is slow and jerky. Almost word-by-word pronunciation.
Expressiveness - to read with appropriate variation of pitch & tone in order to convey the information, ideas & feelings in a passage	Reading is lively and expressive. Able to convey feelings expressed in the passage very well.	Reading is expressive. Able to convey some feelings expressed in the passage well.	Tries to be expressive. Tries to convey the feelings expressed in the passage.	Reading is generally monotonous.	Reading is monotonous throughout the passage.

APPENDIX 28
Reading Competition: Unprepared Reading Text

READING COMPETITION
UNPREPARED READING TEXT

MANDELA CELEBRATED AS 'A GIANT OF HISTORY'

1. In an outpouring of praise, remembrance and celebration, scores of leaders from around the world joined tens of thousands of South Africans in a vast, rain-swept soccer stadium to pay common tribute to Nelson Mandela, whose struggle against apartheid inspired his own country and many far beyond its borders.

2. Swathed in their national colours, some wearing wraparounds bearing Mr Mandela's portrait, citizens celebrated their former president as both an inspiration and an inherited memory for those raised in the post-apartheid era.

3. Huge cheers greeted Barack Obama, the president of the United States of America, as he rose to offer a eulogy that blended a personal message with a broader appeal for Mr Mandela's values to survive him.

4. "To the people of South Africa – people of every race and every walk of life – the world thanks you for sharing Nelson Mandela with us," Mr Obama said. "His struggle was your struggle. His triumph was your triumph. Your dignity and hope found

expression in his life, and your freedom. Your democracy is his cherished legacy."

5. "Even heaven was crying," one woman in the crowd declared as the heavy rain continued. "We have lost an angel." Nothando Dube was at the stadium by 6 a.m., singing old struggle songs until the memorial began more than five hours later. "It feels different when you sing it now as a free young person," Ms Dube said, wearing a beret of Mr Mandela's party, the African National Congress. "You try to reach that feeling, that emotion they were feeling when they sang that song in prison."

6. Cyril Ramaphosa, a former labour leader who became a wealthy entrepreneur and, more recently, deputy leader of the governing African National Congress, presided over the ceremony, declared, "his long walk is over," referring to "Long Walk to Freedom," the title of Mr Mandela's autobiography. "But ours is only beginning. More than 100 countries are represented here today, representing easily billions of people around the world," said Mr Ramaphosa,

APPENDIX 29
Post-reading questionnaire

Questionnaire: Reading habits (End of Cycle 3)

D. Indicate how often you do the following when reading in English. Circle the answer that suits you best.

10. How often do you read outside the classroom/school?

Never Once a week 3-4 times a week Everyday

11. Before you read do you think about what it will be about?

Never Sometimes Always

12. While you read, do you imagine pictures in your head or imagine you are part of the story?

Never Sometimes Always

13. When you read a word you don't know, do you try to figure out its meaning by looking at the rest of the story?

Never Sometimes Always

14. When you read a word you don't know, do you look for the meaning in a dictionary?

Never Sometimes Always

15. After you read, do you think about how well you understood it?

Never Sometimes Always

E. Use the list in the table below to share your reading process by ticking the things you do when you read

	Reading process	Tick
1.	I read with a dictionary	
2.	I write down key words while reading	
3.	I imagine pictures in my mind while reading	
4.	I guess the meaning of words I don't know	
5.	I read to others	
6.	I read to silently	
7.	I read aloud to myself	
8.	I look over what I'm going to read first to get an idea of what it is about.	
9.	I ask myself questions about what I read	
10.	I get distracted a lot when I read	
11.	I try to get complete reading as fast as I can	
12.	I read something again if I don't understand it at first	
13.	I have a problem remembering what I have read	
14.	I try to read with expression	
15.	I put what I read into my own words	

F. Open-ended questions

5. How do you feel when you are asked to read to yourself? Explain.

6. How do you feel when you are asked to read out loud to the class? Explain.

7. How would you feel if you received a book as a birthday present? Why would you feel this way?

8. Do you think your reading has improved? Explain.

APPENDIX 30

Writing a film review

Name: _____

Grade: _____

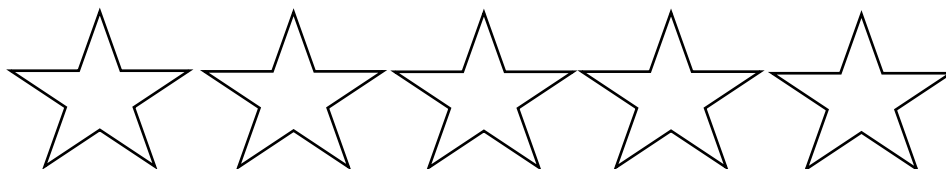


NAME: _____ GRADE: _____

Title of film: _____

Main characters:

How would you rate this film?



Summarise the main events in the film:

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Describe your favourite scene and explain why this particular scene is your favourite.

List some of the issues raised in this film. Explain each.

All movies teach a lesson (theme/moral). What did you learn from this one?

APPENDIX 31

Transactional Writing Rubric

Grades 9 FAL and HL

Transactional Writing

20 Marks

Criteria	7: Outstanding 80 – 100%	5-6: Substantial 60 – 79%	4: Adequate 50 – 59%	2-3: Elementary 30 – 49%	1: Not achieved 0 – 29%
Content and Planning 10 Marks	9-10 Outstanding response to topic. Ideas original and exceptional. Planning excellent. Lucid and coherent. Extremely coherent.	7-8 Very good response to topic. Ideas interesting. Very good planning. Good coherence.	5-6 Adequate response to topic. Ideas fairly interesting. Satisfactory planning. Fairly coherent.	3-4 Content not always clear. Sometimes off topic. Few ideas. Not well planned.	0-2 Content off topic. Ideas irrelevant and unrelated to topic. Poor or no planning. Incoherent.
Language, style and editing 5 Marks	5 Excellent use of language and punctuation. Excellent tone and register. After editing, insignificant errors.	4 Language and punctuation mostly effective. Good tone and register. After editing very few errors.	3 Language simplistic. Punctuation adequate. Adequate tone and register. After editing some errors.	2 Language and punctuation very weak. Insufficient tone and inadequate register. After editing, still many errors.	0-1 Language and punctuation incoherent. Choice of words extremely basic. Errors impede the flow of the essay.
Structure and format 5 Marks	5 Excellent structure and paragraphing – Introduction, body and conclusion. Length correct. Format – accurate. Excellent presentation.	4 Good introduction, body and conclusion. Length correct. Format – correct. Good presentation.	3 Adequate introduction, body and conclusion. Length almost correct. Format – some errors. Adequate presentation.	2 Ideas difficult to follow. Length incorrect. Format – faulty. Weak presentation.	0-1 Sentences and paragraphs muddled/No clear paragraphing evident. Length incorrect. Format – serious errors. Very poor presentation.

APPENDIX 32
Letter from proofreader

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Every Story Deserves To Be Told 

TO: Jennifer Sheokarah, student number 212530608

FROM: Richard Edwards

SUBJECT: PhD Thesis Editing

DATE: 12 May 2022

**Using an English Language Club to Enhance The Learning of English at a High
School in South Africa**

The above thesis was edited.

While I have corrected spelling and language errors (punctuation, tense, concord, word choice and word order) I have not edited any quotations. I have cross-checked that the references contained in your thesis are contained in your reference list, but I have not checked that these sources are cited correctly.

Ideas expressed or content contained within your thesis have not been changed in any way.

Kind regards



Richard Edwards
Editor, proofreader and publisher



APPENDIX 33
Turnitin Originality Report

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