EXPLORING A DIALOGIC APPROACH TO WRITING
FOR ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS

By

Jamiellah Domingo

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Magister Educationis

In the Faculty of Education at Nelson Mandela University

Supervisor: Dr Eileen Scheckle

April 2019
DECLARATION

NAME: Jamiellah Domingo

STUDENT NUMBER: 208094069

QUALIFICATION: Magister Educationis

TITLE OF PROJECT: EXPLORING A DIALOGIC APPROACH TO WRITING FOR ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS

In accordance with Rule G5.6.3, I hereby declare that the above-mentioned thesis is my own work and that it has not previously been submitted for assessment to another University or for another qualification.

........................................................................................................
SIGNATURE

21 March 2019

DATE
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late parents, Gordon and Rhona Llewellyn for their love, determination and resilience passed on to their children. Despite raising 6 children under difficult conditions they made sure that we valued education.

This thesis is also in honour of the late Raseeda Peterson for her love, support and confidence in my ability.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My appreciation goes to:

- My research supervisor, Doctor Eileen Scheckle, for her amazing amount of patience, guidance and encouragement and her absolute belief that I can do this. Her humour and wit are second only to her excellent language skills.
- Professor Naydene de Lange and the Dialogic Engagement team for their valuable support in getting me started on this journey.
- The principal and the grade 10 learners from “Sandhill high school”, who continued our collaboration long after the project has ended.
- Marina Ward for always finding the time to assist this technically challenged student.
- Imtiaz Khan who went the extra mile to assist me in applying and accessing funds that ultimately enabled me to complete this study. I will be forever grateful.
- Jadine January and the RCD office, who ensured that I obtained the tools to undertake this new journey of research. Those workshops were invaluable.
- My brothers and sisters for their continued support and encouragement.
- My mother in law and all the sisters in law.
- All my sister-friends who kept cheering me on and understood the many cancelled engagements.
- My awesome children for their love, patience and ongoing support and their willingness to allow me this time.

Finally, to Shaun, my husband - none of this would be possible, if not for your constant motivation whenever I was ready to give up. Your willingness to support my decision to become a full-time student again, can never be repaid. Your sacrifice and management of the household has not gone unnoticed. Thank you for your love, patience, encouragement, understanding and unwavering support as always.
ABSTRACT

In South Africa, most of our children learn in a language other than their home language. Language and Literacy is thus a major concern for many of them who are trying to make meaning of literature. This study was part of a continuing community dialogic engagement project, between the university and a rural high school in Paterson, a rural settlement in the Eastern Cape.

The selected school – ‘Sandhill High’ has English as the Language of Teaching and Learning (LOLT) but has predominantly isiXhosa- and a smaller number of Afrikaans home language learners. The aim of this research was to explore how English second language learners, in a rural high school engage with and experience a dialogic approach to writing as a social practice. This was firstly done by, investigating in which ways dialogic writing might encourage participation in literacy as a social practice. Secondly, exploring in which ways the choices of language might engage learners in responding to text. A qualitative, participatory case study was used to interpret the phenomena.

To adequately address the research questions, this study was underpinned by Bakhtin’s theory on Dialogism, viewed through the lens of a third space. As this study was about writing, theories of literacies and second language writing were also reviewed. Dialogic journals offer reflective spaces for learners to record their thinking and because reading and writing complement each other, both need ongoing practice. The data was gathered using the dialogic journals and focus group discussions. Data was analysed in a process of thematic narrative analysis. Participation was voluntary and 16, grade 10 learners of the school participated in the study. The significance of this study was that it enabled learners to engage with texts using their choice of language to participate in dialogic journal writing as a social practice.

Keywords:

Dialogism, dialogic journal writing, social practice, multilingualism, literacy, community engagement
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION .................................................................................................................. i
DEDICATION .................................................................................................................... ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ................................................................................................... iii
ABSTRACT ....................................................................................................................... iv
LIST OF ANNEXURES .................................................................................................... ix
LIST OF FIGURES .......................................................................................................... x
LIST OF TABLES .............................................................................................................. xi
LIST OF EXTRACTS ....................................................................................................... xii

# CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................ 1
1.2 THE DIALOGIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECT ............................................................... 2
1.3 LANGUAGE AND LITERACY IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT .................... 4
1.4 RATIONALE & SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY .................................................... 5
   1.4.1 My Professional Rationale ............................................................................. 8
1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION & SUB-QUESTIONS ......................................................... 9
1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ............................................................................. 9
1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY ..................................................... 10
1.8 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY ....................................................................... 10
1.9 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS ...................................................................... 10
1.10 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY ................................................................... 11
1.11 CONCLUSION ...................................................................................................... 12
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................ 13

2.2 DIALOGISM ................................................................................................................. 13

   2.2.1 An Overview of Dialogism ...................................................................................... 14

   2.2.2 Third Space in Dialogism ....................................................................................... 17

   2.3.1 Dialogic Journal Writing ......................................................................................... 20

2.4 LITERACY STUDIES .................................................................................................. 22

   2.4.1 Situated Literacies ................................................................................................. 22

2.5 LANGUAGE, LITERACY AND POWER ................................................................... 25

2.6 MULTILINGUALISM ................................................................................................... 28

   2.6.1 Translanguaging .................................................................................................... 30

2.7 STUDIES OF ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING ..................................... 30

   2.7.2 Reading and Writing .............................................................................................. 34

   2.7.3 Talk and Writing .................................................................................................... 37

2.8 CONCLUSION .............................................................................................................. 38

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................................... 39

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN .................................................................................................... 40

   3.2.1 Qualitative Research Approach .......................................................................... 40

   3.2.2 Participatory Case Study ..................................................................................... 41

   3.2.3 Researcher’s Role ................................................................................................. 44

3.3 THE RESEARCH SITE ................................................................................................ 45

   3.3.1 Participants ............................................................................................................ 46

      3.3.1.1 Participant profile .......................................................................................... 46
3.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODS ................................................................. 47
3.4.1 Language Profiles ............................................................................... 48
3.4.2 Unstructured Observation ................................................................. 48
3.4.3 Dialogic Journal Writing ................................................................. 49
  3.4.3.1 The Reading Club ................................................................. 49
  3.4.3.2 Writing dialogic journals ......................................................... 50
3.4.4 Focus Group Discussions ............................................................... 53
  3.4.4.1 Background to the focus group in this study ......................... 53
  3.4.4.2 Trustworthiness of the focus groups ................................... 54
3.5 DATA ANALYSIS .............................................................................. 55
3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS ........................................................... 56
3.7 CONCLUSION ..................................................................................... 57

CHAPTER FOUR
DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION .................................................................................. 58
4.2 CONTEXT ............................................................................................ 59
  4.2.1 Context of the school ................................................................. 59
  4.2.2 Rurality ....................................................................................... 60
  4.2.3 Context of the engagement project ......................................... 61
4.3 LANGUAGE PROFILES ....................................................................... 62
  4.3.1 Language Portraits .................................................................... 62
    4.3.1.1 Language profile of Amanda ........................................... 63
    4.3.1.2 Language profile of Noxolela ......................................... 66
    4.3.1.3 Language profile narrative of Ayanda ............................ 68
    4.3.1.4 Language profile narrative of Shelly .............................. 69
    4.3.1.5 Discussion of language portraits .................................... 70
4.3.2 Summary of language profiles .......................................................... 71
4.3.3 Conclusion on language profiles .......................................................... 72
4.4 OBSERVATIONS ......................................................................................... 73
  4.4.1 Reading club sessions ................................................................. 73
  4.4.2 Booktalk ...................................................................................... 75
  4.4.3 Drawing together of learnings ....................................................... 78
4.5 DIALOGIC JOURNAL ENTRIES ................................................................. 78
  4.5.1 Writing context ............................................................................. 79
  4.5.2 Presentation and discussion of dialogic journal entries ................. 80
    4.5.2.1 Journal entry focus .............................................................. 81
  4.5.3 Conclusion on the discussion of the dialogic journals ................. 88
4.6 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS ................................................................. 88
  4.6.1 Discussion of Focus groups ............................................................. 89
    4.6.1.1 Dialogic journal writing ...................................................... 89
    4.6.1.2 Choice of books .................................................................. 92
    4.6.1.3 Choice of language ............................................................ 94
    4.6.1.4 Confidence .......................................................................... 96
  4.6.2 Conclusions .................................................................................... 97

CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

  5.1 INTRODUCTION ...................................................................................... 99
  5.2 REFLECTIONS .................................................................................... 100
  5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY ............................................................. 102
  5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS .......................................................................... 104
    5.4.1 Possibilities for further research .................................................. 104
  5.5 CONCLUSION ...................................................................................... 105

REFERENCES .............................................................................................. 106
LIST OF ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE A: ETHICS LETTER .................................................................................. 116

ANNEXURE B: INFORMATION LETTER TO PARENTS ........................................... 117

ANNEXURE C: INFORMATION LETTER TO LEARNERS ........................................ 118

ANNEXURE D: LEARNER CONSENT FORM .......................................................... 119

ANNEXURE E: LIST OF READINGS ....................................................................... 120
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Design of the dialogic engagement project .................................................. 3

Figure 4.1: Amanda’s language portrait ................................................................. 64

Figure 4.2: Amanda’s language portrait narrative ................................................. 65

Figure 4.3: Noxolela’s language portrait .............................................................. 66

Figure 4.4: Noxolela’s language portrait narrative ................................................. 67

Figure 4.5: Ayanda’s language portrait narrative ................................................. 68

Figure 4.6: Shelly’s language portrait narrative ................................................. 69

Figure 4.7: Noxolela’s dialogic journal entry 1 (no date) ......................................... 82

Figure 4.8: Noxolela’s dialogic journal entry 2 (16-08-2016) ................................. 83

Figure 4.9: Noxolela’s dialogic journal entry 3 (30-08-2018) ................................. 84

Figure 4.10: Shelly’s dialogic journal entry 1 (30-08-2018) ................................. 85

Figure 4.12: Okuhle’s dialogic journal entry 8 (06-02-2018) ................................. 87
LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1: Contrast table of Heath’s ethnographic study ........................................... 23

Table 2.2: Roles of readers and writers ........................................................................... 36

Table 3.1: Participatory case study principles ................................................................. 42

Table 3.2: Participant profile .......................................................................................... 47

Table 3.3: Trustworthiness of the focus group data ......................................................... 54

Table 4.1: Summary of learners’ language profiles .......................................................... 71
LIST OF EXTRACTS

Extract 1: Booktalk (2017-08-16) ......................................................................................................... 74
Extract 2: Booktalk (2018-02-28) ......................................................................................................... 77
Extract 3: Focus group discussion (2018-03-07) .................................................................................. 89
Extract 4: Focus group discussion (2018-03-07) .................................................................................. 90
Extract 5: Focus group discussion (2018-03-07) .................................................................................. 90
Extract 6: Focus group discussion (2018-03-07) .................................................................................. 91
Extract 7: Focus group discussion (2018-03-07) .................................................................................. 91
Extract 8: Focus group discussion (2018-03-19) .................................................................................. 93
Extract 9: Focus group discussion (2018-03-19) .................................................................................. 94
Extract 10: Focus group discussion (2018-03-19) ................................................................................. 95
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

*Truth is not born nor is it found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for the truth, in the process of dialogic interaction.*

Mikhail Bakhtin

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is an overview of the study. It serves as an introduction and gives insight into the motivation for the research approach. This study emerged from a continuing community dialogic engagement project, between the university and a rural high school. My study intended to build on the current literacy intervention, which was a reading club in the school to explore and examine the literacy and language engagement and experience in this intervention. The dialogic nature of this research recognises that learners bring many literacies and languages into the school (Bakhtin, 1981). This dialogic engagement project speaks to the quote by Bakhtin (1981, p. 110) “truth is not born nor is it found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for the truth, in the process of dialogic interaction”. Exploring a dialogic approach to writing for English second language learners was an integral part of developing language and literacies as part of this engagement. The notion of knowledge being collaboratively discovered aligns with the aims of the dialogic engagement project being contextualised in terms of the community it is engaging with. The dialogic engagement was an interactive exchange of knowledge in a context of partnership and mutual learning between the researchers from the university and the school community. This collaborative engagement project also sought to make spaces for the many voices within the community and employed a dialogic approach not only to inform their thinking towards a more socially just engagement. I begin by explaining the context of the dialogic engagement project between the university and the rural community on the outskirts of Port Elizabeth. Secondly, I provide some insight into the context of language and literacy in South Africa. Thirdly, the rationale and significance of the study is explained. Fourthly, the
research question, sub questions as well as a brief overview of the theoretical framework which underpins the study is provided. Fifthly, an introduction of the research design and methodology is supplied. Finally, concepts relevant to this study, delimitations of the study and the organisation of the study are provided.

1.2 THE DIALOGIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

The 3-year engagement project commenced in 2015. My study was positioned in node 3 which was Multiliteracy and Multilingual practices. The collaborative research engagement project aimed to contribute to existing knowledge on what it meant to be an engaged university. The study was framed by the research question, “How might dialogic engagement of the university community and the community the university serves, enable agency towards active citizenship in the context of education?” (Cherrington, Scheckle, Khau, De Lange, & Du Plessis, 2018). The dialogic engagement was an interactive exchange of knowledge in a context of partnership and mutual learning between the researchers from the university and the school community. The collaborative project aimed to contribute to existing knowledge on what it meant to be an engaged university. The study was framed by the research question, “How might dialogic engagement of the university community and the community the university serves, enable agency towards active citizenship in the context of education?” (Cherrington, Scheckle, Khau, De Lange, & Du Plessis, 2018).

This collaborative engagement project also sought to make spaces for the many voices within the community and employed a dialogic approach not only to inform their thinking towards a more socially just engagement. The engagement project consisted of four nodes geared towards meaningful social transformation. Node 1 engaged with school functionality and creating hopeful schools. The postgraduate student who originally coordinated the school functionality node exited the engagement project due to other commitments, but hope remained a central theme during the project. Node 2 engaged with digital spaces using ICT to promote learning, they explored career aspirations using ICT. Grade 10 and 11 learners where they identified possible challenges to their career aspirations and how they could overcome these challenges. Node 4 engaged with gender equality and gender violence, this node looked specifically at secondary school girls addressing gender-based violence. The girls identified issues in their school and in their community that they wanted to address.
Node 4 included young men leading change against gender-based violence with grade 9 boys leading change against gender based-violence. Node 4 continued after the project ended to explore how they could address gender based-violence in the school and the community (de Lange 2015-2017). The figure below (provided by the engagement team) gives a graphic representation of the four engagement nodes. The needs were identified by the school-community and the project was designed to engage with each other to enable and strengthen agency towards active citizenship in the context of education (Cherrington et al., 2018).

![Four nodes](image)

**Figure 1.1: Design of the dialogic engagement project**

A rural high school in Paterson, in the Eastern Cape, was the site of the community engagement project. Paterson is a small settlement surrounded by farms and nature reserves, it is 75.5 kilometers from Port Elizabeth. Parents shared their concerns about language and literacy development as the language of teaching and learning (LoLT) was English, yet none of the learners had English as mother tongue. I was concerned that although learners were already engaged in reading for school purposes they were not reading and thus writing for meaning-making. This study intended to provide a print-rich environment with purposeful activities where learners could use their resources, existing knowledge and experience to engage in reading and writing text. The school, Sandhill High* (pseudonym) has predominantly isiXhosa speaking learners and a smaller number of Afrikaans speaking learners. This study was an exploration of how a dialogic approach to writing might encourage learners to
participate in literacy activities as a social practice by using their own choice of languages to engage and respond to text.

I believed the dialogic journal writing within the broader engagement project as part of the multiliteracies and multilingual node would create a space where we could engage in this communal practice. It was further anticipated that these rural, English second language (ESL) learners would be empowered to take up dominant literacies in this case English, enabling them to have more access and engagement with literacy practices. This study aimed to build on the existing reading club established as part of the community engagement project established between the university and the selected rural community. To understand the motivation for this study we need to understand the context of language and literacy in South Africa.

1.3 LANGUAGE AND LITERACY IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

In South Africa English is favoured as the language of teaching and learning in most of our schools, despite many learners never being exposed to the language in the communities where they live. According to the 2011 census there is only about 8% of people living in South Africa who has English as a home language, yet the hegemonic norm in our schools remains English (Statistics South Africa, 2012). Many people want to learn English because it is seen as the language of opportunity and privileged status (Gardiner, 2008). In addition, in South African schools, progression to the next grade is dependent on successfully completing written assessments. It is therefore a challenge for most schools to get learners to view writing as anything other than a school activity, especially with learners who have a different home language to the language of teaching and learning (LoLT).

The Language in Education Policy of South Africa promotes additive multilingualism which states that the home language must be maintained, while access is provided to the acquisition of an additional language (Department of Education, 1997). Policy has clearly not manifested in practice as many learners in our schools are expected to be proficient in the LOLT without the ability to draw on their own language resources. The language resources, rich histories and socio-economic backgrounds are largely ignored and positioned as problems in schools (McKinney, 2017). Learners are often seen as deficient if they are not fluent in the dominant language in this case English,
even though they bring language resources with them to school which enable them to make meaning.

It is thus not uncommon to find that learners use English only in school for reading and writing and the language is viewed as the sole language of literacy. The hegemony of English as medium of instruction and the opposition to multilingualism in multicultural countries and South Africa specifically continue to position English as the language of power and learners are led to believe that they must be fluent in a language for it to count as a resource (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). Learners are not encouraged to use their language resources, range of registers and voices simultaneously in schools to create heteroglossic environments where everyone’s languages count equally (Bakhtin, 1981).

The South African curriculum continues to be dominated by a monolingual approach to language and literacy thus excluding millions of children from meaningful access to quality education (McKinney, 2017). The fact that most learners are expected to learn in a language other than their home language, makes it difficult to practice and promote meaningful writing, especially in our rural, previously disadvantaged schools. Many of these learners see writing only as a product of learning in schools and may not see that writing can also be used for engagement with others. Writing requires thinking skills to order one’s thoughts on paper (Ivanic, 2004). Learners should be able to draw on whatever resources are available in their repertoires to make meaning and engage with texts in their dialogic journal writing.

1.4 RATIONALE & SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Despite numerous interventions South African literacy rates remain a matter of grave concern when compared to global standards (Spaull, 2013). The rural areas where we find predominantly isiXhosa speaking learners and the inclusion of two previous homelands in the Eastern Cape, may all be contributing factors to the poor performances recorded in the province (Gardiner, 2008). Alternatively, it could be argued that learning in a second language is the biggest contributor to the continued poor results in the Eastern Cape.
Many rural learners are seldom exposed to English, other than in school, it thus stands to reason that ESL learners associate English and writing specifically with school practices. The emphasis on assessment in which writing events are embedded, means that learners view writing as a learning activity with no other purpose but testing. English teachers often introduce learners to standard English and Africanised words are seldom welcome in classrooms (Heugh, 2013). School English does not always accommodate the many accents and variations of English we find in South Africa. Delpit (2008, p. xix) states that, “our language embraces us long before we are defined by any other medium of identity”. In the South African context where because of the historical prejudice intelligence is often measured by the ability to communicate fluently in the dominant language, learners might lack the confidence to write in English. The challenge in education is to change the perception of writing and how learners who have a different mother tongue to the LoLT can use their language resources to engage with literature. The dialogic journal writing aims to provide the opportunity for discovering voice and to establish writing as a social practice and to develop literacies.

At Sandhill High School there are 332 learners of whom 104 are in grade 10. None of the grade 10 learners have English as a home language and the school caters to learners previously classified as Black, Coloured and a small number of White learners. The poor socio-economic conditions in the area makes it difficult for parents to send their children to schools offering their home language in neighbouring towns. The rurality of the school also makes it difficult to attract English mother tongue teachers to the school. With poor infrastructure and no library, it makes sense that learners will need to get support in school to develop, what is essentially a very new learning language for many pupils. If the learners want to use English or any language to make sense of their world, they will need to develop their literacy practices.

Unfortunately, since participation in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2006 results showed how poorly South African learners performed in these benchmark tests (Janks, 2011), many interventions since concentrated mainly on reading development and not writing practice development. The failure of not considering how reading and writing informs each other, coupled with the historical bias of English as LoLT, despite testing in the mother tongue where literacy is not
established, sets up our learners for failure (McKinney, 2017). My concern was that non-mother tongue language learners were not able to engage with text and are thus often seen as deficient despite coming to school with rich language resources. They are led to believe that their own knowledge, language and cultures cannot be utilised when trying to make sense of literature in schools where English dominates literacy activities (Janks, 2010). My study enabled learners to engage with text using a dialogic approach to writing using their linguistic repertoires for meaning-making. Learners are often excluded from meaningful participation in their own learning due to the restrictions placed on them by the dominant language in education. The exclusionary practice has a dehumanising effect on learners (Freire, 2005).

Attempting to establish dialogic journal writing as a social practice for ESL learners, is doing more than just developing a language. It is the creation of spaces where learners can write their own stories, experiences and opinions which may encourage them to participate in literacy activities and eventually write more, as they know others will read it. Journal writing has significant implications when contemplating a more hopeful future (Akar, 2016), this is also relevant in South Africa, where ESL learners often feel that they are not good enough to succeed in an education system where the hegemony of English seems to persist. The aim of my study thus became: to explore in which ways a dialogic approach to writing would encourage learners’ participation in literacy as a social practice. The study also aimed to explore how the choices of language might engage learners in responding to text. The study further aimed to establish a communal practice by drawing on learners’ resources, lived experiences and understanding using dialogic journal writing to dispel the deficit notion that language barriers preclude rural ESL learners from participating in their own literacy development.

In this study, we created a dialogic space where learners could use writing not only as an expression about their beliefs, assumptions and opinions, but also to engage with text. Sandhill High was made up of learners who came from an Afrikaans medium primary school and an isiXhosa-English medium school. Learners from both schools were now in English medium classrooms although English was offered as second language subject only. The reading club got the learners involved in reading and writing gave them the opportunity to share their thinking and to plan how, why and
what they would write (Dornbrack, 2018). Dialogic writing using dialogic journals created an opportunity for communication between the participants engaged in the process. Fluency was achieved by focusing on meaning rather than form when giving feedback during the writing process (Janks, 2010). Through writing ESL learners may discover that they are able and that they have a meaningful contribution to make. The study thus aimed to use dialogic journal writing to develop writing practices in a dialogic space.

1.4.1 My Professional Rationale

I was a teacher for 22 years at an English medium primary school. The school at one stage had more than 60% isiXhosa learners who travelled by bus from the townships to attend what was perceived as a ‘good’ English school. I taught English as first language and Afrikaans as second language for many years before I started teaching mainly Mathematics. As a conversational isiXhosa speaker, I often used all three languages in my class to ensure that learners understood the mathematical concepts. My return to university was motivated by a need to research innovative ways to support our learners who are disadvantaged by language hegemonies in our country. As a teacher turned full-time novice researcher, I often struggled to not take up the traditional teacher role. Especially during focus group discussions, I was tempted to offer more guided instruction or re-direct the focus when I felt the discussions became ‘casual talk’. Joining an existing engagement project was challenging as I was not party to the initial consultations or to whom the call for participation went out to. This meant that most learners who were part of the study were those who requested or were perceived to need “help” with English. This changed the initial scope of the study and learners spent a fair amount of their time on the reading activities. However, I was fortunate that the participants welcomed me into their space allowing for continued collaboration. In this regard it was helpful that I could communicate in their home languages when needed and where possible. The study achieved objective of creating spaces and opportunities where learners could experience and engage with dialogic writing. I attempted to be reflective and I took my cue from the learners, we continually assessed our progress and/or learning through reflections, booktalk, discussions and writing as explained later in this study.
1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION & SUB-QUESTIONS

To explore the contribution of a dialogic approach to writing on developing literacies among ESL learners in a rural school, the following research question was formulated:

**How do English second language learners, in a rural high school engage with and experience a dialogic approach to writing?**

To answer the above research question, the following sub-questions arose:

1. In which ways might dialogic writing encourage participation in literacy as a social practice?
2. How might the choices of language engage learners in responding to text?

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To adequately address the research questions, this study was underpinned by Bakhtin’s theory on Dialogism. Bakhtin (1981), states that using a dialogical framework emphasizes the multi-voiced nature of authorship. Using this dialogic framework highlighted how English second language learners in a rural high school engaged with and experienced a dialogic approach to writing. The study was not part of the normal school literacy and was conducted after school which can be viewed as a third space. Third space is a lens through which dialogism is viewed. Dialogic journal writing offered reflective spaces for learners to record their thinking and because reading and writing complement each other (Chokwe, 2016; Scheckle, 2014) both needed ongoing practice. In addition, writing offers an alternate space to engage in and build a dialogic understanding (Scheckle, 2014). The decision to position this study in the third space was also motivated by the fact that schools are often sites where power is exercised through the domination of English as LOLT (McKinney, 2017). According to dialogism there is genuine concern for the views of others, participants share and build meaning collaboratively. This is especially true considering our history, diverse cultures and languages which have shaped who we are. How we engage with literature is directly related to our life experiences (Holquist, 2002). These theoretical concepts will be discussed in depth in chapter two.
1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The study was positioned in a Constructivist paradigm and it was an open and democratic relationship between the participants and the researcher. During the dialogical journal writing meaning was co-created, through a process of communal construction (Yazan, 2015). The nature of this study allowed each participant to contribute a different view and to construct their own personal meaning of the text they engaged with and writing in their dialogic journals (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delport, 2011).

A Qualitative approach was used to generate data in response to the research question as it was less invasive on learners and teachers’ time (Cresswell, 1998). This study was guided by a participatory case study to ensure that the phenomenon, in this case dialogic writing was well explored (Yin, 2014). Learners’ journal writing was analysed by multiple close readings in a process of thematic analysis. Qualitative thematic analysis aims to address a wide range of research questions related to participants’ experiences, understanding and construction of particular phenomena in particular context (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This will be explained in detail in chapter 3.

1.8 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

During this study I only worked in the multilingual and multiliteracies node with the learners who volunteered. Prior to my joining of this literacy node there were many other activities that the learners participated in like making posters, drawing, workshops and presentations. I focus on the aspects in which I was involved during the later part. However, the learners drew on the earlier aspects in the study in the context of this study. I also had several close readings of the dialogic journal entries completed before I joined the project.

1.9 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

Concepts are explained in terms of how it is used in this study. In terms of this study dialogic writing suggests multiple voices through writing (Bakhtin, 1981). Dialogue consists of an utterance, a reply and a relation between the two that connects them. The group sharing their reading and writing with each other – the speaker and the listener and a relationship between the writer and reader using journals.
Literacies are not only the ability to read and write; it includes the ability to construct and understand the different possibilities of meanings made available by differing understanding of texts. It includes drawing on all their language resources to participate in literacy as a social practice (Janks, 2010). Linguistic repertoires refer to all the languages the learners draw on. In recent research a linguistic repertoire is conceptualized as the lived experience of language and relates to the physical and emotional prerequisites for speaking and experiencing of language (Busch, 2015). Busch draws on and adds to the original concept of Gumperz (1964) which views linguistic repertoire as a set of language varieties, this include languages, styles, dialects, registers, codes and interaction displayed in the speaking and writing patterns of a speech community.

English Second Language is used in terms of this study because none of the learners have English as a home language but it is the language of teaching and learning in this rural school. This refers to English as the non-native language being learned in a context where it is the dominant language. In a diverse learner population, it is often a foreign language (Matsuda, Ortmeier-Hooper, & Matsuda, 2009). Rural schools according to Statistics South Africa in the 2001 census rural is defined as a Traditional Authority Area (primarily ‘community owned’ land in the former ‘homelands’) and Formal Rural Areas (commercial farms in erstwhile ‘white areas’). Schools in these areas are normally a distance from towns and have under-developed infrastructure. Learners in these schools often also have poor access to lifelong learning opportunities (Department of Education, 2005).

1.10 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

The study is structured as follows.

Chapter 1 – Introduction and Orientation of the study

This chapter is an introduction to the study and explains the context of my study in the engagement project.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review
This chapter contextualises the study and provides a comprehensive literature review, dealing with previous research related to the topic, as well as the theoretical framework which underpinned my study. As this study is about dialogic writing, I also look at literature related to language and literacy.

Chapter 3 – Research Design and Methodology

This outlines the research design of the study and gives a comprehensive description of the methodology. The focus is on the data generation process.

Chapter 4 – Data presentation and Analysis

This is a detailed description of the findings. Clear documentation of data presentation, interpretations and recording transcripts are presented. It also connects the findings with the literature explored and the selected framework.

Chapter 5 – Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter is a complete discussion and conclusion of findings. The significance of the study is clarified as well as suggestions for future studies.

1.11 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have located the study within a particular node of a wider engagement project between the university and a rural school. I described the dialogic engagement project and provided insight into the context of language and literacy in South Africa. This was followed by the rationale and significance of the study and a brief overview of the structure of the research study. Chapter two will provide a comprehensive literature review and discussion on the theoretical framework which underpins this study.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I live in a world of others' words. And my entire life is an orientation in this world, a reaction to others' words (an infinitely diverse reaction), beginning with my assimilation of them (in the process of initial mastery of speech) and ending with the assimilation of the wealth of human culture (expressed in the word or in the other semiotic materials).

Mikhail Bakhtin (1970-1971)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As indicated in the previous chapter, the aim of the study was to explore how rural English second language learners engage with and experience a dialogic approach to writing. The research was guided by dialogic engagement where we used journal writing to participate in literacy as a social practice. Learners could also draw on their choices of language to respond to text. In addition, this study was not part of the normal school practices and happened after hours. Thus, the study needed theories that would accommodate this form of research.

This chapter introduces the theoretical framework used in this study. The following aspects are discussed in relation to the theoretical framework: Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism. Theory of third space is reviewed as dialogism is viewed through the lens of a third space. This research is a study of writing, therefore theories of language and literacy, multilingualism and second language writing will be reviewed. In addition, factors such as multilingualism and the space in which these activities take place are all factors to consider as it influences the outcome of this research. Some of the classic works from Bakhtin and Freire cited provide a theoretical framework to this research study.

2.2 DIALOGISM

To adequately address the research questions this study was underpinned by Bakhtin’s theory on Dialogism. I also draw on Bohm (1990, 2004) and Holquist (2002) to demonstrate how using a dialogic frame highlighted the multiple voices that dialogic
journal writing afforded the participants. As dialogism is viewed through the lens of a third space, we will also look at theories of related to hybridity.

2.2.1 An Overview of Dialogism

Dialogism, which has its origins in the work of Bakhtin, recognizes the contributions and opinions of others. According to Bohm (1990) ‘dialogue’ comes from the Greek word ‘dialogos’. Logus meaning the word and dia meaning through, this could mean that through words we find common understanding. Bohm views the collective thought as far more powerful than the individual thought suggesting that in a dialogic relationship there is far more potential to construct new understandings together. Bohm further positions dialogue as exploratory which means it is a process that continues to unfold into new understandings. There is a genuine concern for the views of others, as participants share and build meaning collaboratively. How we engage with literature is directly related to our life experiences. To let students express their ‘voice’, we need to have a better understanding of how learning experiences impact on identity (Bakhtin, 1981). Language as a shared event requires that dialogue is centred on a relationship between parties. Similarly Bakhtin describes dialogue as an utterance, a response and a relationship between the two which connects them. These three elements distinguish dialogue from everyday conversation or speaking, which is central to dialogism (Holquist, 2002). Holquist further adds that language as a tool for dialogue allows for meaningless chaos to become meaningful patterns. In this study the dialogic approach has been found to be useful, as writing is not taught but practised. This is seen as precursor to learners developing their own literacy practices.

“The single adequate form for verbally expressing authentic life is the open-ended dialogue. Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse, and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium” (Bakhtin, 1984, p.293).

Rule (2009), likens the above quote to Bakhtin viewing the dialogue as a principle of human becoming, which involves an intrinsic relation with the other: to be means to be for another, and by doing this you are also there for yourself. This resonates with
the principle of ‘Ubuntu’ or humanity espoused by the South African government, which also ties in with a popular isiXhosa saying: *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* which loosely translated means, a person is a person through other people. The ultimate goal of a dialogic relationship can be seen as one of understanding (Rule, 2009). This understanding is created together as opposed to being given or received it thus bypasses the notion of power. It can involve conflict and struggle which results in mutual change and enrichment (Bakhtin, 1986).

Bakhtin (1981) further states that using a dialogical framework emphasizes the multi-voiced nature of authorship. Different voices in response to texts, other learners’ opinions and prior experience all shape how we write. It is therefore a cumulative understanding as each viewpoint is built on in the process of ideological becoming. He believes that a word is always already embedded in a history of expressions by others in a chain of ongoing cultural and political moments. Thus, the discourse is dialogic and historically positioned within a community, a history, a place and cannot be separated (Rule, 2009). This inclusivity of different voices by extension becomes a heteroglossic relationship. Bakhtin views heteroglossia as the stratification of many voices, diverse views and meanings and describes language as “shot through with intentions and accents” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 324). For Bakhtin, words do not exist until they are spoken or written and the spoken word is perceived as meaning different things to different people. Similarly Busch, 2010 positions a speaker-centered approach to school language policy as acknowledging, making visible and valorizing the heteroglossic resources present within the school community. A speaker-centred approach develops strategies which guarantee understanding and mutual understanding; it enables learners to make themselves heard, it also understands school as a location, as a centre of practice, where heteroglossic practices intersect. In the Bakhtinian sense, it is a plurality of individual voices expressing lived experiences, the diversity of codes, languages and registers present in the local community making meaning together. The valorizing of the heteroglossic practices can enhance “understanding and awareness of the multilingual approach and suggests ways in which the principles of linguistic equality laid out in the South African constitution can be implemented at the level of school and classroom” (Busch, 2010, p. 293). This speaks to the multilingual context in which this study was conducted and the many marginalised learners who continue to be taught in monolingual classes.
where power lies in the acquisition of the dominant language. Bakhtin (1981, 1986) further distinguishes between “national languages” and “social languages”. The relevance of these two languages in relation to this research study can be seen in the context that none of the learners speak English at home but are expected to learn in it. A dialogic approach to writing would involve the recognition that the diversity of languages can contribute to the learning experience and expression of self.

Similarly, Freire (1970) posits the notion that dialogue is not merely an educational technique but also the process of becoming a human being (Holquist, 2002). For Freire, it as an act of communication in relationship that shapes one’s orientation to others and the world: “dialogue is a moment where humans meet to reflect on their reality as they make and remake it”. Thus, Freire links dialogue, and the changed consciousness that arises from it as part of a process of awareness that can lead to transformation. The dialogic journal writing and subsequent focus group discussions are consciously situated on the boundary of school and community in the third space. In this third space, second or third language English speakers, who come from low socio-economic backgrounds, could mobilise their languages and dialects freely. In this third space, their languages are not seen as deficits but rather as an important resource for dialogic engagement (Rule, 2009).

In addition, Akar (2016), states that practices of dialogue are used for rising out of oppression, managing conflict and fostering democratic living. Akar’s research is supported by Freire’s (1970) view that peer dialogue and learner-teacher dialogue is the most basic form of communication in education for democracy and empowerment during teaching and learning. Akar’s research in Lebanon, an area of conflict, shows how writing was used to deal with past injustices, which might also be applicable to literacy development in post-Apartheid South Africa. It adds value to the argument that dialogic writing can be utilised as a transformative practice, where previously disadvantaged communities can engage and experience meaningful participation. “Holquist (1990), says that there is an intimate connection between the project of language and the project of selfhood: they both exist in order to mean” (Lysaker, 2007, p. 325) It develops a consciousness of self and others and in this awareness we construct who who we are. It is in telling our own stories that we give ourselves an identity and in doing so we are transforming (Lysaker, 2007).
Providing learners with a wide variety of quality texts, which appeals to them, as well as the autonomy to choose is fundamental in a dialogic space (Doiron & Asselin, 2010; Scheckle, 2014). Adding to the perception of a dialogic space as agential, Rule (2009) specifically looks at university students and he sees this kind of dialogic approach as important in granting students social and epistemic access to universities, as it gives flesh to community engagement and relevance as opposed to just accommodating students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This is especially relevant, in light of this study being part of a community engagement project between the university and the school community, dealing specifically with dialogic journal writing in a third space, that is informed by multiliteracies and multilingualism.

2.2.2 Third Space in Dialogism

Third space is a lens through which dialogism is viewed. Soja (1996) describes a third space as an opportunity to develop new knowledge and draw on learners’ lived experiences. Human interaction in social spaces can thus shape the physical and can be viewed as an opportunity to generate new ideas and new forms of literacy (Soja, 1996). Moje, et al. (2004) follows the lead of Bhabha (1994); Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, Tejeda, et al. (1999) and Soja (1996) in calling this integration of knowledge and discourses drawn from different spaces the construction of a “third space” that merges the “first space” of learners’ home, community, and friends with the “second space” of the discourses they encounter in school. The use of a third space in relation to this study was an apt way to connect the learners’ home-based languages and the text language (Gutierrez, et al, 1999). The choice to align the concept of first space with that of the everyday world of the learners, the naming of what counts as first or second space draws on the concepts of transitional spaces and on notions of narrative (Moje, et al 2004). It is argued that the journal writing “is seen as a hybrid genre of writing positioned between life narrative” and school (Creme, 2008). Journals offer reflective spaces for learners to record their thinking and because reading and writing complement each other, both need ongoing practice. In addition, the learners were not familiar with the alternative writing of dialogic responses therefore an alternate space to engage in and build a dialogic understanding was ideal for this purpose (Scheckle, 2014). Hybridity is another term used to refer to the overlapping of various languages. It refers to “the mixing, within a single concrete utterance, of two or more
different linguistic consciousnesses, often widely separated in time and space” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 429). Participants in this study often draw on all the languages that they encounter within their community and their daily lives. This ties up with the idea of double-voicedness, where there is more than one intended meaning. Furthermore, Bakhtin argues that “unintentional, unconscious hybridization is one of the most important modes in the historical life and evolution of all languages” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 358), because often language transforms and grows without conscious realization.

Scholars often refer to this in-between or hybrid space as “third space”, clearly stressing the role of the physical, as well as social space in which people interact. Soja (1996), stated that the spacial dimensions of our lives has never been of greater practical and political relevance than it is today. Soja (1996, p. 5) elaborates on her idea of the ‘Thirdspace’ as:

“A space of extraordinary openness, a place of critical exchange where the geographical imagination can be expanded to encompass a multiplicity of perspectives that have heretofore been considered…It is a space where issues of race, class, and gender can be addressed simultaneously without privileging one over the other…”

This statement remains relevant specifically in the context of the multicultural nature of many of South African classrooms today. In attempting to navigate the problems associated with poverty, gender discrimination and racism we are becoming increasingly aware of the context in which we exist. Bhabha (1994) postulates that people in any given community draw on multiple resources to make sense of the world, and in our world to make sense of oral and written texts. This was especially evident in how learners drew on their own experiences when reflecting on their readings as well as using their home language when writing in their dialogic journals to make sense of what they read. Bhabha further reflects on this when stating, that “in-between” can apply to the integration of competing knowledge and discourses; to the texts one reads and writes; to the spaces, contexts and relationships one encounters; and even to the establishment of identity and sense of self. “Third spaces are hybrid spaces that bring people together” (Bhabha, 2004).

Garcia and Wei (2014) refers to researchers Rosebery & Hudicourt-Barnes (2001) who viewed a third space as important, because it not only creates opportunities for success in tradiotional school learning, but also provides opportunities to make space
for marginalized voices in our previously disadvantaged communities. However, a different view held by New London Group (1996) is that a third space is a navigational space, a way of crossing and succeeding in different discourse communities. This speaks to the notion of Garcia and Wei (2014) that a third space is an ideal space for translanguaging. The third space is consciously situated on the boundary between the school as an academic institution and the communities from which learners come. The ‘outsideness’ of the students lies in the fact that they are second- or third-language English speakers, that come from poor socio-economic backgrounds (Rule, 2009). The reading club offered this ‘space’ for learners to engage in literacy activities where they were able share their understandings of texts and writing and talking. The third space according to Barton (2001), Hammond (2001) and Lee (1993), in a space of cultural, social and epistemological change brought about by differing knowledges and discourse reshaping literacy practices influenced by learners’ everyday lives (Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo & Collazo, 2004).

2.3 DIALOGIC WRITING

Dialogic writing provides an opportunity for learners to draw on what is familiar to navigate the unfamiliar (Jesson & Rosedale, 2016). Jesson and Rosedale also viewed dialogic writing as an opportunity to develop individual voice as a writer while constructing text. Dialogic writing thus enables learners to incorporate their own voices into conversation and in so doing become part of the language of another (Bakhtin, 1981). This is an integral part of dialogic writing for English second language learners who draw on their home and community languages to make meaning of texts in the LoLT. Placing voice at the centre of dialogic writing highlights the multivoicedness of the learners as writers, it includes the voice of the text, the voice of the other learners, the learners’ own voice and lived experiences to construct their own text (Jesson & Rosedale, 2016). Developing their own voice through dialogic writing allows learners to write their ‘own’ stories while drawing on their linguistic repertoires to engage with text. Elbow (1994) describes the positions of the reader and the writer as asymmetrical because as readers we only have access to the text but as writers we have access to the texts and to ourselves as the authors. In writing we are able to ‘hear’ the sound of our text and hear if it sounds like ‘us’ and in doing so we make it our own voice (Elbow, 1994). Elbow further states that in writing, voice is used as a metaphor about text in
relation to the writer. “The voices of others are represented by the texts that the writer has experience with and these voices create the background needed for their own voice” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 278).

2.3.1 Dialogic Journal Writing

Dialogic journal writing created an opportunity for learners to engage in dialogic writing between them and the coordinator of the reading club. This practice is also viewed as an opportunity to build expertise as shown in research by Jesson and Rosedale (2016). They further state that this approach incorporates in-text voices while drawing on the many voices of the learners to become new text creators. Furthermore, dialogic writing aims to enhance understanding about texts through collaborative knowledge sharing (Jesson & Rosedale, 2016; Bakhtin, 1981). Journals, as a tool for learning writing by ESL learners has been recommended by several researchers among them Blanton (1987), Barton & Klump (2008) and Hawkins (2005). Blanton (1987) states that this strategy can engage learners and raise their confidence levels. By not concentrating on correct grammar and spelling mistakes learners are motivated and their negative perceptions of writing in ESL can be changed. The practice of journal writing allows learners to transfer their own understanding into this “new language”, discover their own voices and learn how to address an audience (Barton & Klump, 2008). In addition, Hawkins (2005) states, that opportunities for practice and scaffolding the writing process aids development. Journal writing is thus an effective way to accommodate the requirements mentioned by Hawkins (2005). All these researchers recommend that creating writing opportunities should become an integral part of learning and language development.

Creme (2008, p.59), in her study on transitional writing states that “in the end, we become the autobiographical narratives by which we tell our lives.” Although Creme’s study refers to university students, it is relevant in the school context as it can also be a way of fostering meaningful learning by giving learners writing spaces that offer them freedom to explore ideas. Journal writing creates opportunities to move into transitional spaces where learners forge new relationships and different writing identities (Creme, 2008). In addition, studies of writing over the years have also demonstrated the important role writing plays in understanding the world, playing a part in questions of politics, gender, personal relationships, power, identity and culture.
Hyland argues that a process approach to writing is unable to cater to all the roles of writing as it does not allow meanings to be socially constructed as it fails to consider the learners’ lived experiences.

English second language learners may well be confronted with the same issues when writing in school or engaging in alternative writing. The value of dialogic writing is further discussed by Jesson and Rosedale (2016) as an approach that foregrounds a range of voices for learners’ consideration. This is done by firstly, offering texts as dialogic, where learners can engage with the texts. Secondly, using texts as opportunities for discussion between learners as in booktalk. Thirdly, learners can link their prior knowledge to existing knowledge, by linking their own lived experiences to incidents or characters in the texts. Dialogic theory premises that all text have traces of other text or are influenced by other text thus influencing the reader and the writer (Bakhtin, 1981). Ralfe (2009) states that everyone can write but it can only occur in a supportive atmosphere. It is also important that learners know their writing will be read and responded to, as stated by Kalikhoka, Strauss & Smedley (2009), the response provides a model of good writing which could be emulated by the learners (Chokwe, 2016). Similarly, several researchers suggest modelling as a strategy for teaching writing, Hirst, Henderson, Alan, Bode, & Kocatepe (2004) and Ivanic (2004) state that this is also an element present in journal writing. Sharing writing within a reading club creates a sense of audience. It can be said that the focus on writing for a specific audience in this case may encourage deeper thought or creativity (Mendelowitz, 2016). The engagement of learners, via dialogic journal writing to further develop literacy as a social practice did not include correction of errors (Ivanic, 2004).

However, as previously mentioned in this chapter, research shows that reading and writing does not occur in isolation. The state of writing may well have suffered after the implementation of the Communicative Language Teaching Approach in South Africa, as many teachers viewed it as an increase in the aspects of language that needed to be covered teachers thus spent less time on aspects not required for formal assessment (Chokwe, 2016). Many teachers neglected development activities like providing writing feedback to guide learners’ writing (Akinyeye & Pluddemann, 2016; Dornbrack & Dixon, 2014). The emphasis has since shifted, and most resources and research concentrate on improving reading, especially after the dismal performance...
of South Africa in the PIRLS 2006 and 2016 reports. Yet, journal writing to enhance understanding of what was read has been well researched and reported upon but remained part of the dominant language teaching skills. Journals offer a reflective space for learners to record their thinking. Freebody & Luke (1990) support the notion of reading and writing informing each other and state that introducing a written component to reading activities can encourage learner engagement. Pelias (2011) builds on the notion of writing for understanding and adds that understanding comes from a process of writing so that the writing itself becomes a method of inquiry, thus writing can be viewed as a way of putting your thoughts on record in the form of text. However, research has not explored the contribution of a dialogic approach to writing in developing literacies among ESL learners in a rural high school.

2.4 LITERACY STUDIES

I have drawn on various literacy studies to explore literacy as a social practice particularly to show that there are different understandings of the spoken language, reading, writing and literacy. I have drawn on New Literacy Studies’ (NLS) researchers, Street (2003), Heath (1983) and Barton & Hamilton (1998) because it situates the language resources of the learners in this study.

2.4.1 Situated Literacies

“New Literacy Studies” (NLS) recognises that learners bring many literacies and languages to the classroom, learners will thus have different approaches or experiences about writing. Dialogical journal writing is at the centre of this research, where learners can talk and write about their engagement with different texts. NLS draws on literacy as a social practice. Street explains this as a “recognition of multiple literacies, varying according to time and space, but also contested in relations of power” (Street, 2003, p. 77). Street recognises that literacies are linked to ideologies, or belief systems, together with social values and how practices of reading and writing are used for different purposes within communities. Street also states that the foci of learning writing are no longer only on acquiring skills as a dominant approach, but rather on what it means to think of literacy as a social practice. New Literacy Studies researchers ask, “Whose literacies” are dominant and whose are marginalized or resistant? NLS researchers further describe writing as a complicated human activity,
which is found in a specific time and place. Writing is also an indication of the wider social forces and relationships (Hyland, 2016).

To explore how a dialogical approach to writing for English second language learners will engage learners in literacy activities we should understand the social theory of literacy. Literacy as a social practice is best described by Barton & Hamilton (1998) as a link between reading and writing and the social structures in which they are embedded. This speaks to Bakhtin’s notion that literacy is always situated in a cultural context. Barton & Hamilton further states that some literacies are guided by social institutions and power relationships and some literacies are more dominant than others. It is what people do with literacy and what these activities mean to them that counts. They also propose that literacies be used to solve the practical problems which people encounter in their lives and which can also be used as a transformative tool. Thus, it is used for sense making in people’s lives. This is particularly relevant to transform our rural schools and to contest the deficit notions of literacy (Gardiner, 2005) among ESL learners in rural schools.

Literacy as a social practice, is a view of literacy strengthened by Heath (1983), who used an ethnographic study over several years to give a detailed description of how two working class communities of Trackton and Roadville, as well as the middle-class town people practiced literacy. She illustrated the contrast in relationships of home practices to school practices. The table below gives a brief representation of the contrast between the literacy practices of the two communities:

Table 2.1: Contrast table of Heath’s ethnographic study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRACKTON</th>
<th>ROADVILLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Babies were surrounded by talk but rarely talked to.</td>
<td>Babies were included in baby talk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storytelling was creative performance. Local knowledge and familiar characters were integrated into their stories.</td>
<td>Storytelling followed a set path. Stories were always factual with no fantasy or imagination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRACKTON</td>
<td>ROADVILLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They had little access to printed literature and they rarely read to their children.</td>
<td>Print literacy was valued but children were passive recipients of read-alouds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy was a communal practice and meanings were negotiated using the understandings of the group.</td>
<td>Although the young moms were reading different types of genres the readings were not shared.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sociolinguistics is central to Heath’s study and she noted that although both communities valued schooling, children from both communities struggled to link school literacy to the home and community literacy practices. Heath (1983) further points out that children need safe and supportive spaces where they can draw on their existing knowledge to become accustomed to school literacies. However, Heath further believes that schools also have a responsibility to understand that learners come to school with different ways of knowing, doing and being and that schools should make it easier for these learners to become accustomed to school practices. Considering how the demographics have changed in South African schools we see how literacy is often viewed as reading and writing only, with little regard for the context, background, and language of learners. Pardoe (2000), posits that the knowledge that learners have should be valued specifically in relation to writing. Pardoe discusses the deficit view of writing, where writing that does not follow the conventional rules of grammar and spelling is viewed as failed attempts to write in the dominant language (Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 2000). According to Pardoe, this approach assumes that the writer wanted to conform. In addition, the deficit view concentrates on ‘what is not there instead of what is there’. In this study the dialogic journal writing is solely concerned with the understandings and practices of the participants, which is the basis for further development of their literacy practice. Pardoe posits that New Literacy Studies acknowledges the value of the existing knowledge of learners and writing is no exception to new language learning (Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 2000).

The focus on English as the dominant language in schools effectively excludes everyone outside of the dominant literacy practices found in schools. These studies
discussed above thus informed the study on dialogic journal writing which drew on Heath’s recommendation to establish a safe space where learners were encouraged to engage with literacy. The reading club in this study valued the existing background knowledge and languages that learners brought into the space to engage with text and to establish new communal practices. In addition, this study approached literacy as combined events, texts and practices to establish literacy as a social practice. However, it must be noted that Collins and Blott (2003, p. 2) argue that literacy practices in education are infused with power and that “although literacy often seems essential to our lives, many aspects of what make us human – language, intellect, the capacity for social living, technical resourcefulness – do not rely on literate practices or do so only recently and secondarily.” Collins and Blott thus believe that power impacts on school literacies. Policies in education are designed by government which speaks to political power. In South Africa the LoLT is English for the majority of learners who have a different mother tongue which speaks to the hegemony of English.

2.5 LANGUAGE, LITERACY AND POWER

Several South African researchers among them Dornbrack (2009), Janks (2009, 2010, 2013) and McKinney (2017) agree with Collins and Blott (2003), Bakhtin (1981) and Freire (2005) that language is never neutral. It can influence our thinking and it holds considerable power. Access to dominant literacies are associated with power and high status (Janks, 2010). I therefore consider literacy as a social practice in relation to the influence of language in participation in dominant literacies. For this I draw extensively on Janks and McKinney’s studies on literacy, language and power. Like the research by some of the authors mentioned, this research is an attempt to demonstrate how learners can be encouraged to participate in literacy using, reading, talking and writing while drawing on their existing knowledge and languages. It reinforces the notion that the dominant literacies taken up at school are not the only ways of making meaning. McKinney emphasises that understanding language ideologies is at the heart of understanding the relationship between language and power in schooling. According to Foucalt (1980) and Makoe & McKinney (2014) language ideologies can be defined as:
“The sets of beliefs, values and cultural frames that continually circulate in society, informing the ways in which language is conceptualized and represented as well as how it is used. Such ideologies are constructed through discourse, that is, systems of power/knowledge” (McKinney 2017, p.19)

McKinney (2017) asserts that South Africa is failing its children by continuing to ignore their linguistic, cultural and other forms of knowledge that they bring with them to school. McKinney explicitly calls for a change in the way we view language. Participating in literacy as a social practice is inherent in this study and encourages learners to draw on all their linguistic repertoires when engaging with text for meaning-making. Yet, the different valuations assigned to languages in South Africa do not make provision for learners to use all their language resources in classrooms and the LoLT remains English. McKinney argues that this monolingual ideology positions multilinguals as deficient in their ability to make meaning. Similarly many countries have made some shifts towards multilingualism in the form of an additive multilingual approach where two languages are taught separately and English is retained as the main language of instruction (Creese & Blackledge, 2010).

The issue of power that language yields when a dominant language is imposed on learners is evident when considering that less than 8% of South Africans have English as home language which makes the majority of learners multilingual (Busch, 2010). McKinney further mentions that scholars have increasingly drawn attention to the monolingual bias in linguistics. The assumption that the “the ideal or normal language user has command of only one language …English” (2017, p. 18) is not valid in a multilingual South African schooling system. Based on these grounds McKinney states that the linguistic repertoires of the majority of South African children should be considered as the norm in language in education policies. McKinney (2017) specifically explores the relationship between language and power in schooling. In so doing, she developed the notion of Anglonormativity to demonstrate how through language and specific uses of English the norms of ‘whiteness’ continue to be the ideal and are reinforced. McKinney further argues that the continued monoglossic and Anglonormative language ideologies maintain the idea of ‘whiteness’ and therefore ‘sounding’ white create a sense of belonging. These schools make no allowance for learners to draw on their linguistic repertoires. Fricker (2007) refers to this maintenance of a monoglossic, Anglonormative ideology as an epistemic injustice
because it excludes learners, from non-dominant backgrounds, from meaningful participation in schooling (McKinney, 2017).

In addition to the position of McKinney that dominance of a particular language is compounded by language ideologies, Janks (2010) alludes to the existence of a problematic binary between who is literate and who is illiterate. Those deemed literate normally belong to groups whose social practices are dominant and considered the social norm. They are also the ones who have access to resources that can advance their social status. Those deemed illiterate are often devalued and they have reduced agency for social advancement. Janks therefore concludes that it is impossible to separate literacy from social, economic and political power. Janks asks pertinent questions related to firstly, whose interests are served in a given text, event or practice? Secondly, do learners have access to privileged forms of language and literacy, while still valuing the diverse language and literacy histories that they bring into the classroom? Thirdly, is there recognition and valorising of learner diversity? and finally, how do we challenge and change these social structures related to the hegemony of English? In educational context, Bakhtin’s dialogism can be applied to deconstruct power by creating a multi-voiced space when engaging in literacy and language in our schools.

If indeed access to dominant literacies is to become a reality we need to look at “the behaviours that enable us to empower ourselves, to access both material and symbolic goods, to fight for and enjoy difference and to see designing and redesigning as transformative acts rather than end states” (Janks, 2013, p. 238). In her framework for critical literacy education Janks examines how to confront inequality and differential access, identity and diversity and how to recognise that understanding and respecting differences are crucial elements for social stability. She posits that the reason for using literacy, matters to the reader or the writer when it is used as social practice rather than a school practice. In her research she focused on text production much like dialogic journal writing. The framework entailed that learners would write things in the world that matter to them, they would share their production with the audience of their choice in order to help them understand the purpose of literacy. This practice gives learners the power to name their world. Reading was continued as a communal practice with the expectation that the more they read the more they would be able to
read, and this would inform their writing. This speaks to Bakhtin and Freire’s notions on language and power framework to ensure that all learners have access to literacy as a social practice to make meaning of their worlds. The journal writing within the reading club gives learners choice and control over what they read and write; uses learners’ diverse language and cultural resources, provides access to reading and writing material to encourage participation in literacy as a social practice. In keeping with how non-English speakers can have their language resources valued, McKinney proposes that we change what counts as legitimate language use in schools and that ultimately transformation must be guided by appropriate educational policy and curricula (McKinney, 2017).

2.6 MULTILINGUALISM

Multilingual learners have a repertoire of different languages and different varieties. Janks (2014), explains that sometimes these languages are equally developed but more often it has been developed in relation to a need or for a specific purpose. Janks positions this ability to speak more than one language as an asset and this is confirmed by (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006). Ebersohn & Eloff suggest that an asset can be used to enable agency in its users. Bakhtin’s (1981) position that language is bound to the context in which it exists, and it can never be neutral because who you are is reflected in what you say, is fundamental to his concept of heteroglossia. Dialogism is rooted in heteroglossia and multilanguagedness which encompasses different perspectives, voices and languages. The hegemonic use of any one language in this case, English, cannot support a dialogic relationship. Multilingualism is thus central to a dialogic approach to develop literacy for English second language learners. Multilingualism is often referred to as knowing and using more than two languages, the term is often also used to describe bilingual speakers of two languages (Garcia & Wei, 2014).

In addition, Canagarajah (2011) states that, for multilinguals languages are part of a repertoire that is accessed for their communicative purposes, so languages are not discrete and separated, but form an integrated system for them. Multilingual competence emerges out of local practices, where multiple languages are negotiated for communication as can be found at the site of this study, where learners communicate in a mixture of English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa. It is a multicompetence that functions symbiotically for the different languages, developing abilities in the
different functions served by different languages (Canagarajah, 2015). Canagarajah further reflects on classroom-based studies of voice, as it may help to shed more light on pedagogical techniques that aid ESL learners in developing control over their written identities.

Canagarajah further explains how a dialogical pedagogy that he adopted, with an ecological orientation to the learning environment, helped his students develop their voice. Canagarajah’s study gives a comprehensive clarification of how to uncover the dialogical voice. He adopts “a heuristic featuring identity, role, subjectivity, and awareness to explore how such identities beyond the text find amalgamation in the textual voices of multilingual students” (Canagarajah, 2015, p. 123). Canagarajah (2015) in his study of working with a Japanese student submits that ecological resources and dialogical interactions can enable learners to become aware of the possibilities of their voice. Thus, it created the opportunity to engage with others, do narrative analysis and reflect on their writing. Feedback in this way from peers and teachers can scaffold evolving writing (Canagarajah, 2015; Makalela, 2015; Motlhaka & Makalela, 2016).

Similarly a study conducted by Motlhaka & Makalela with university students in South Africa, found that dialogic instruction facilitates awareness in the students, where they construct their own voices in writing, through the use of compensation and social strategies when they translanguage between their first language and their second language (Motlhaka & Makalela, 2016). Heugh (2013) and Makalela (2015) state that many South African children grow up in bilingual homes and or multilingual communities. They grow up speaking several languages and can use at least one of these languages for learning. Makalela (2015) further states that bilingual and multilingual learners continue to find ways in which to negotiate the restrictive monolingual schooling. Endorsement of simultaneous literacies and languages to keep the pedagogic task moving (Creese and Blackledge, 2010; Makalela, 2015).

It can thus be deduced that rural learners especially, will be disadvantaged by the hegemony of English in our educational and academic spaces (Gardiner, 2005). If exposure to the LoLT is limited outside of school practices, additional opportunities are required to engage in literacy without having to give up their own languages, but
to use their strengths as multilinguals to enhance their voice by drawing on all their language resources interchangeably (Garcia & Wei, 2014).

2.6.1 Translanguaging

Translanguaging is a multilingual practice and allows multilinguals to draw on all their language resources (Makalela, 2015), as speakers and to make sense of themselves and their audiences in writing (Garcia & Wei, 2014). Research by Canagarajah (2011) and Garcia (2009) describes translanguaging as the ability of multilingual speakers to integrate their linguistic repertoires to move between languages (Garcia & Wei, 2014). Garcia further adds that translanguaging should not be confused with codeswitching which is defined as a shift between two languages. Translanguaging makes up the speaker’s complete linguistic repertoire and all their language resources are used interchangeably (Makalela, 2015; Garcia & Wei, 2014). Garcia (2009) also describes translanguaging as a practice to develop and grow the concepts of more than one language. It promotes the use of all languages available to a learner as their linguistic repertoire. However, most of our South African schools are reluctant to engage in this approach and multilingualism is often seen as a problem rather than an asset (McKinney, 2017). This research study created a social space, where through translanguaging the learners could bring together all their language and cultural practices. Garcia and Wei (2014) argue that translanguaging has the potential to better represent the sociolinguistic realities of everyday life for multilinguals, showing the real diversity. Translanguaging can thus be used to strengthen the home language and promote multilingualism in schools as proposed in the LiEP of 1997. Translanguaging practices recognises that languages do not fit into clear bounded entities and that all languages are ‘needed’ for meaning to be conveyed and negotiated (Makalela, 2015; Creese & Blackledge, 2010).

2.7 STUDIES OF ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING

Writing can be perceived as one of the most powerful instruments of thought mediation and as a cultural instrument it is ‘rooted’ in systems of joint activity (Rosenberg, Stein, & Alam, 2013). In addition, Jesson, Parr, and McNaughton (2013) offer a view of writing as dialogic if it aims to incorporate learners’ existing knowledge and practices. They state that considering learners’ intertextual histories as important for writing
provides an opportunity to develop instruction based on learners’ various experiences with texts. Intertextuality allows learners to negotiate roles and positions for themselves, this speaks to Bakhtin’s (1981) theory on dialogism, where learners construct new understandings together in the process of developing their own voice. This is an important consideration for literacy development in context. A learner’s capability to draw on language and literacy resources can be enhanced if the knowledge they bring into the learning space is valued (Jesson, Parr, & McNaughton, 2013). To do this, teachers must be acquainted with the cultural knowledge that learners bring to school to facilitate the emergence of a third space effectively, where learners can draw on their existing repertoires. Thus, teachers need to see and be guided by the learners’ existing repertoires that can be connected to academics.

Dialogic journal writing, although an alternative writing practice, resonates specifically with the social practices and the creativity discourses of writing and learning to write as presented by Ivanic (2004). Dialogic writing as a social practice in literacy development captures a broader understanding of writing, and includes writing in all social and cultural contexts, without privileging writing associated with school literacies only. Ivanic further explains that assessment is not required in social practices discourse thus a response would suffice. Ivanic further proposes that how people think about writing and learning to write influences policy, practice, and opinions about literacy education. Discourses of writing and learning to write has bearing on how teachers and learners talk and react to writing and learning to write. Ivanic (2004) positions a social discourse of writing as purpose-driven communication in social context. She further states that learners learn to write by writing in real-life contexts, with real purposes for writing. Ivanic (2004) and Abdulatief et al. (2018) further posit a creativity discourse of writing as less focussed on linguistic form and far more about meaning-making. Thus, this discourse holds value for how learners use writing in the enjoyment of literature and how they respond to text. The writing is aimed at “experience, perspective and ‘voice’ of learner writers from minority and disadvantaged backgrounds” challenging ideas of what counts as good writing Ivanic (2004, p. 229) and speaks to McKinney (2017) and Janks (2010), whose language counts?
Bakhtin’s theory on dialogism resonates with Ivanic’s perceptions that a social practices discourse rests on “literacy in people’s everyday lives rather than from linguistic or educational theory” (Ivanic, 2004, p. 234). This speaks to the dialogic approach to writing as an alternative practice where learners could draw on their lived experiences and their linguistic repertoires to participate in literacy as a social practice. Writing in and of itself speaks to Bakhtin’s notion of heteroglossia as a way of constructing new meaning through different voices. Writing for English second language learners thus needs to be developed to ensure access to literacies associated with the dominant language.

Studies by Applebee and Langer (2014) writing about American schools and Dornbrack and Dixon (2014) writing about South African schools position writing as a global problem. Applebee and Langer (2014) opinions that this can be attributed to the advances in technology and the changes in schooling. They claim that writing was last reviewed in American schools more than 30 years before their study, and that during that time there has been a shift to an emphasis on standards and assessment. They also state that schools focused on reading rather than on developing writing or literacy, which inevitably influenced the instruction of writing by teachers and learners’ experience with writing. So, Dornbrack and Dixon (2014) argue that all these changes necessitated the repositioning of how writing is taught in schools. Dornbrack and Dixon further argue that explicit instruction on the conventions of writing is required to supplement social and school practices. There seems to be agreement with that writing internationally and locally has not seen the same kinds of intervention and development as reading (Applebee and Langer, 2014; Dornbrack and Dixon, 2014).

Although the language curriculum in South Africa recommends that extended writing be taught through a combination of text-based and process approaches this does not seem to be the practice. A study by Akinyeye and Pluddemann (2016) reports on the teaching and assessment of narrative writing in English as a second language (ESL) at a time of curriculum change, in a township school. It focuses on a story written by a Grade 9 learner and assessed by her teacher, the study sought evidence of the use of text-based and process approaches. The study found very little evidence of a scaffolded approach to the teaching and assessment of writing and explored the constraints on the realisation of the curriculum cycle in ESL. The sentiments shared
by this study relate to the teacher’s understanding of writing as well as to material conditions in township schools. Akinyeye and Pluddemann found that in overcrowded classes most teachers simply did not have the time to give learners feedback on their writing. Dornbrack and Dixon (2014) agree that writing instruction is hampered by the contentious issues of time requirements and fair assessment. Dornbrack and Dixon focused on the argumentative essay as a high stakes genre in their research and found that social and school capital are insufficient without explicit instruction on the conventions of writing for the different genres. There has been very little research on writing in South African context, and the studies conducted normally draw attention to the deficit and poor quality of writing in English First Additional writing, referred to as English second language in this study. The learners have no choice in selecting a first additional language because the LoLT of the school is English. I thus decided to position English as their second language as it is the language they use for school.

Although, Dornbrack and Dixon (2014) and Hendricks (2009) argue that levels of writing proficiency is a global issue and that South Africa is no exception, she shared the notion of writing instruction being neglected in schools. The fact that most of the learners must learn in a language other than their home language exacerbates the situation as can be seen in studies conducted in the Eastern Cape. Despite the Language in Education Policy (1997), more and more learners are not being taught in their home language but in English, which is often the only language of learning offered and is a second or third language for most learners. Hendricks (2009) asserts that English as LoLT for these learners has a direct bearing on their writing proficiency. According to De Souza (2003), inequalities remain, despite curriculum reform in South Africa. Racial inequalities are also regionally-biased and rural areas seem to be the worst off (Hendricks, 2009). In the context of South African schools, where the LoLT is often different from the home language it makes sense to scaffold language acquisition and writing. Learners, who experience language as a barrier, should not fall through the cracks due to poor literacy practices and the perceived endemic failure of our Government to improve education for the marginalised majority (Jansen, 1998).

In addition, learners who, “write in a second language are often faced with social and cognitive challenges that are related to the nature of the second language acquisition itself” (Mothhaka & Makalela, 2016, p. 251). Learners are thus often reluctant to write
in English as they fear that they will appear incompetent or may be embarrassed if their writing is not perfect, they consequently avoid it altogether. The perception drawn from this is that a language cannot be a resource unless the users are fluent in the language. Ralfe (2009) describes writing as a way to achieve communicative competence, and a source of satisfaction and enjoyment. So how do we get our learners to write? Jacqui Dornbrack in her tips for teachers on writing says that, “Everyone can learn to be a good writer.” This view is also connected to the belief that learners learn to write by writing (Britton, 1970; Dixon, 1967; Graves, 1983). Dornbrack further states that learners will most likely engage in writing if the topics are meaningful to them, if they are allowed to talk about their ideas, if they know they have an audience and will receive meaningful feedback (Dornbrack, 2018). Dialogic journal writing conforms to all these recommendations made by Dornbrack. Writing serves a social purpose and is used to inform and empower learners to use their languages for effective communication.

### 2.7.2 Reading and Writing

Granville (2001) discusses three views of reading: the text-based view, the interactive view and the critical, socio-cultural view. The first view of reading as simply text based where the reader engages in mechanical reading skills such as word recognition, decoding, phonics, and reading aloud without active engagement in meaning-making. The second view is an interactive view of reading which foregrounds the interaction between readers’ background knowledge and the text. It presents the reader as an active meaning-maker if the meaning is embedded in the text. Reading thus becomes a dynamic dual process between the reader and the text. Significantly, this view subscribes to a plurality of meaning in how learners repond to the text as articulated by Bakhtin (1981). The third view of reading argues that meanings are implicated in the social, political, cultural and historical contexts in which the text, the writer and the reader are embedded. This implies that reading and therefore other literacy practices are not neutral and context informs meaning-making. In light of these views it thus made sense to establish a reading culture before embarking on writing as a practice because reading and writing inform each other.

As literacy development was identified as one of the problems at the participating school it was important to establish a reading club first and foremost. According to
Gardiner (2008) schools in rural areas often have very little resources and the same was evident at the research site of this study. Sanders-ten Holte (1998) and Cruz (2003) suggest that to establish a reading culture in a community, the reading environment in the home, school and the community must be improved at the same time (Doiron & Asselin, 2010). This ensures that reading is not only a school focussed activity (Doiron & Asselin, 2010). Doiron and Asselin further state that providing access to good, quality relevant texts is crucial in establishing and nurturing reading interests and habits. This must include books in local languages and texts which reflect local interests. In addition, they state that if learners feel they have a choice in what they read they are often motivated. In relation to this study, a reading culture signified all the activities associated with engaging in texts, with the intention of establishing reading and writing not simply as something designed for school purposes but also as a social practice. This resonates with the definition by Doiron & Asselin (2010) of a reading culture as something practiced in all aspects of our lives.

Scheckle (2014) suggests that in the senior phase reading is no longer taught but practiced and therefore a dialogic approach is useful as it encourages mindful reading for meaning-making and it engages learners in dialogue about the text. If, as Scheckle (2014), Janks (2011), and others affirm that reading and writing compliment each other, it makes sense that both need ongoing practice. The Bua-lit collective on language and literacy (2018) believes reading that is not limited to a structured and sequenced programme allows learners to engage with the world beyond the classroom and to extend their knowledge. The collective also emphasises the importance of learners understanding that written texts means different things to different people. The Bua-lit collective on language and literacy expanded on the four roles of readers outlined by Freebody and Luke (1990) to emphasize their position that reading is not separate from writing. Below is an adapted table of the four roles of readers and writers as suggested by the Bua-lit collective on language and literacy which built on Luke and Freebody’s roles of a reader (Abdulatief et al., 2018):
Table 2.2: Roles of readers and writers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOUR ROLES</th>
<th>READERS</th>
<th>WRITERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Code-breaker</td>
<td>Learners have knowledge of phonics, phonemic awareness and reading of sight words.</td>
<td>Letter formation and handwriting. This includes conventional spelling and the use of punctuation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text-participant and meaning-maker</td>
<td>Comprehension and can relate text to existing knowledge. Learners are able to answer questions related to the text.</td>
<td>Communicate meaning through writing stories, shoppinglists, whatsapp messages, facebook posts, etc. Draws on meaning-making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text-user and producer</td>
<td>Learners use texts for particular purposes and to develop knowledge of different conventions used for different purposes. They understand different genres</td>
<td>Uses appropriate writing conventions for different genres. Writing as the production of a particular text type eg. Diaries, recipes, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text analyst and critical producer</td>
<td>Learners are able to discern whose interest the text serves. They are able to evaluate truth claims in the text.</td>
<td>Writing to make voice heard. Writing for social justice. Providing elaboration and evidence for opinions eg. Argumentative essays.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All four of these roles must be developed from the beginning right through schooling to ensure that learners engage in literacy practices that aids successful literacy development. “This will encourage reading of the world leading to quality dialogue and rich classroom talk” (Abdulatief et al., 2018).
2.7.3 Talk and Writing

Dialogism builds on shared utterances which by implication means that talk can be used to make meaning (Heath, 1983). The cross-state study by Applebee, Langer, Nystrand and Gamaron (2003) in an effort to build on to their earlier research explores the role of talk in developing literacy skills and specifically the academically demanding responses to literature. In further pursuit synthesising their findings with that of other researchers they conclude that discussion-based approaches that involve dialogic instruction allow learners to develop understanding, internalise knowledge and skills to engage in challenging literacy tasks on their own. Their study advocates for discussion as a scaffold for understanding. Talk as a scaffold for developing understanding can link prior knowledge and experiences to changed understandings of the texts. Thus, learners are provided with opportunities to explore new ideas and experiences through challenging reading, writing, and discussion.

Similarly, Gibbons (2015) proposes the many ways in which English second language learners can be supported, and foregrounds how we talk to and about our learners. Gibbons shares two kinds of contexts in which language is used. Firstly, how speakers within a culture have many common purposes for language, for example greeting, writing, and so forth. Secondly, the context of situation, this relates to what is being talked or written about, the relationship between the speakers or reader and writer and whether the language is being written or spoken. The reading club provided the scaffolding as proposed by (Gibbons, 2015).

Dornbrack and Dixon (2014) add that to meet learners’ writing needs, an integration of all literacy skills is necessary where they need time to think, discuss ideas, listen and read. Littleton and Mercer (2013) draw on psychological and linguistic research to highlight the ways in which children learn from talk in the classroom, and state that the psychological development and educational progress relies on the range and quality of the talk they are engaged in. Dialogic talk helps learners to improvise and to find their own voice and way of seeing things (Littleton and Mercer, 2013). In the context of this study we made use of booktalk. Chambers (1996) coins the term ‘booktalk’ in his book Tell Me where he explores the power of talk and states that children do not know what they think about a book until they talk about it. He points out that “booktalk is a way of giving form to the thoughts and emotions stimulated by the book and the
meaning(s) we make together out of its text – the imaginatively controlled messages sent from the author that we interpret in whatever way we find useful or delightful” (Chambers, 1996, p. 12). Talking was an integral part this study where learners engaged in booktalk throughout their interactions in the reading club and so the term ‘booktalk’ will be used to refer to this spoken engagement with unpacking text meanings that are explored in chapter four.

2.8 CONCLUSION

This study drew on various research studies related to literacy. In exploring a dialogic approach to writing for English second language learners in a rural high school, the study was primarily underpinned by Bakhtin’s theory on dialogism. A dialogic study is rooted in language and literacy and focussed on multi-voicedness, therefore I reviewed literacy studies. Language, literacy and power continue to be a barrier for the majority of learners in South Africa and thus warranted some examining in the context of this study. Multilingualism is foregrounded by many researchers as a just practice for access to dominant literacies and studies reviewed explored this together with translanguaging as a tool for multilinguals. Research on writing, reading and talking resonated with this study as it forms the foundation of the dialogic relationship in the reading club. The intention with this literature review and theoretical framework discussion was, to explore what a dialogic approach is and to clarify dialogic writing as a social practice. It also looked at dialogism, and specifically heteroglossia as viewed through the lens of the third space as experienced by English second language learners in a rural high school. The literature review was also an attempt at providing an understanding of how the rurality and multi-lingual nature of the school influenced this study. This creates an opportunity to contribute to existing literature in the research field to explore how dialogic journal writing can encourage learners to participate in literacy as a social practice using their choice of languages to engage with text. In the following chapter I discuss the methodological research approaches employed in this study.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Words belong to nobody, and in themselves they evaluate nothing. But they can serve any speaker and be used for the most varied and directly contradictory evaluations on the part of the speakers.

Mikhail Bakhtin (1981)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter I explored the literature around literacy studies; language, literacy and power, multilingualism, studies on dialogic writing as well as the development of school writing, reading and talking which resonated with this study. Dialogism and third space theories were examined as the theoretical framework which underpins this study. The aim of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive description of the selected research design and methods used in this study. A research design can be described as all the decisions a researcher makes in planning the entire research study (Fouche & Schurink, 2011). This chapter will also provide the justification for the choice of the method used and my role as researcher throughout the study.

As indicated in the chapter two, many scholars have shown in past research that literacy is a social practice that varies from context to context. Yet, despite numerous interventions which focused mainly on reading there has been no meaningful improvement in literacy levels among South African learners in previously disadvantaged schools. Despite the vast body of research on literacy and reading specifically — success rates on standardised tests, like PIRLS remain gloomy (Howie et al., 2017). If literacy is to be presented as a valued and rich resource of expression, communication and meaning-making for all children, alternate ways must be found, where learners can make meaning from and in text (Abdulatief et al., 2018). This study will therefore attempt to add to existing literature by employing a case study methodology to explore how learners engage with a dialogic approach to writing, thereby synthesising the literature on the topic in the hope of strengthening research.
in this field. This may enhance learners’ engagement with literacy and develop their dialogic writing as a way of meaning-making.

To explore the dialogic approach to writing, as experienced by the participants in this study, I will firstly look at the characteristics and suitability of the choice of the research design. Secondly, I will give a brief description of the research site and the participants in this study. Thirdly, I will specifically focus on the data generation methods, namely the unstructured observations, dialogic journal writing and the focus group discussions. This will be followed by an explanation of the methodology used for the analysis of this data. Finally, ethical considerations related to this study will be addressed.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The philosophical assumption which underpins this study is constructivism. The nature of this study allows each participant to contribute a different view on their engagement and experience with a dialogic approach to writing and together construct understandings of it based on the many responses. Within this approach reality is viewed as subjective, together the participants and the researcher generate data through interaction, therefore the researcher cannot be totally objective (De Vos et al., 2011). Because I am working within a qualitative paradigm I attempted to interpret the phenomena of dialogic writing in terms of the meanings learners bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

3.2.1 Qualitative Research Approach

In qualitative research, meaning and how people make sense of their lives and experiences are central to the research process. The relationship between the researcher and the participants is interactive and inseparable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition, “Qualitative research is a naturalistic inquiry, with the use of non-interfering data collection strategies to discover the natural flow of events and processes and how participants interpret them,” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 126). Most qualitative research describes and analyses people’s individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions. It allows for an in-depth understanding.
The purpose of this research was to explore how learners experienced and engaged with a dialogic approach to writing. It was an open and democratic relationship between the participants and the researcher. During the dialogical journal writing meaning was co-created, “knowledge will be constructed rather than discovered”, (Stake, 1995). The nature of this study allowed each participant to contribute a different view of their experience and to construct their own personal meaning during our focus group discussions (De Vos et al., 2011). This speaks to the quote by Bakhtin (1981), “Words belong to nobody, and in themselves they evaluate nothing. But they can serve any speaker and be used for the most varied and directly contradictory evaluations on the part of the speakers.” In the case of this study a qualitative approach was best suited to generate data in response to the research question, “How do English second language learners, in a rural high school engage with and experience a dialogic approach to writing?” I strived to be flexible and always open to change. I had no pre-conceived ideas of the research findings or what the effects of the intervention would be, but I had clearly defined objectives and goals (De Vos et al., 2011). This approach was helpful in conducting the research at Sandhill High* as it was less invasive on learners and teachers’ time (Cresswell, 1998).

3.2.2 Participatory Case Study

This study formed part of the engagement project between the university and the school-community. In asking ‘How might dialogic engagement of the university community and the community the university serves, enable agency towards active citizenship in the context of education?’ (Cherrington et al., 2018), a participatory case study was employed which tied the four nodes of the engagement project together. A participatory case study involves all participants in all aspects of the research process from conceptualizing the study to writing up and sharing the findings (Reilly, 2010). Participatory research also encourages active participation of the people whom the research is intended to assist (Cherrington et al., 2018). This was the approach throughout the project and within the multiliteracy and multilingual node. My particular focus was a case study on the reading club within this node.

Participatory research is one way of giving ordinary people a central role in what research is done, how that research is done, and the conclusions reached. This approach to research is a way to make research more relevant, and to address those
issues related to power imbalance between who creates the knowledge, and those who use the knowledge created (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Sithole, 2013). In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* [1970], Paulo Freire states “…apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human.” The participants in the engagement project were actively involved in co-constructing new understandings for transformation. “Knowledge emerges only through invention and reinvention, through the restless, impatient, continuing hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (Freire, 2005, p.53). By co-constructing knowledge in this collaborative engagement project all participants were free to define themselves. During the engagement project hopeful inquiry and invention and reinvention were characteristic of this research as it developed and responded to learners’ interests and context.

According to Reilly (2010) there are various guiding principles underlying participatory case study research in relation to the engagement project between the university and the school-community. The table below addresses the principles in relation to this project:

**Table 3.1: Participatory case study principles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRINCIPLES</th>
<th>AS APPLIED IN THIS PROJECT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promotes dialogue between participants as insiders who want change and understandings of researchers.</td>
<td>Issues were prioritised and negotiated between the university community and the school-community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumption of co-equal status of practitioner knowledge and expert knowledge.</td>
<td>Dialogic engagement takes place in a space of respect for one another, a space of equal and shared power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional roles of researcher / participant are reduced or eliminated in favour of interchangeable roles.</td>
<td>New and powerful meanings were constructed by acknowledging that all voices provided meaning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PRINCIPLES | AS APPLIED IN THIS PROJECT
---|---
To produce authentic knowledge that will directly benefit the participants that are the focus of the study. | The school-community was active in collaborating knowledge construction to effect change and strengthen its own capacities.
Process is sensitive to the participants’ culture, history, emotional life and language. | Research team members were aware of the multiple layers of the communities engaged in this project.
It can incorporate concurrent and reciprocal levels of inquiry, observation, dialogue and reflection. | Independent case studies provided opportunity for inquiry, observation, dialogue and reflection.
All accounts and reports reflect the perceptions of all stakeholders and are written in clear, everyday language. | The project coordinators already published a report and presentations were held for the community. Researchers in each node will submit their findings of the independent research studies to all the stakeholders.

The table above shows how the overall engagement project was structured with each node around a participatory case study (Cherrington et al., 2018), however the multi-literacy and multilingual practices node was able to conduct research independently. To answer my research question, ‘How do learners experience and engage with dialogic journal writing in a rural high school?’ I applied a more traditional case study process. I concentrated on one phenomenon ‘a dialogic approach to journal writing’, where learners engaged with and responded to text which they had read as part of the reading club in a specific school, and so a case study which explored the phenomenon in depth seemed most appropriate. I was an active participant in the case study and participated in the discussions about responses as well as reflections of experiences which contributed to the generation and collection of rich data (Maxwell, 2009).
The advantages of using a case study in relation to this study according to Merriam (2009) could be summarised as — the researcher is interested in insight, discovery and interpretation thus, the participants will be engaged in dialogic journal writing as well as engage with and respond to text. The phenomenon in a case study is particularistic therefore this study explores dialogic writing. The research will be conducted in the same school, with a particular group of learners and a focus on dialogic writing to respond to texts and to participate in literacy as a social practice. The study contains rich descriptions of each participant’s experience.

The disadvantage of a case study in relation to this study might be the difficulty in ensuring authentic contributions, selective reporting and findings that cannot always be generalised as the participants represent a small number of learners in one specific rural school. However, in a community engagement project where the findings must be communicated it is important that language does not become an exclusionary factor. Thus, a case study allows the results to be communicated to the participants without sacrificing the understanding of the lived experiences of the learners against the background of its contexts (Kyburz-Graber, 2004). According to Yin (2014) a case study must meet the quality criteria of objectivity, reliability and validity required to show sufficient rigour. The case study in this research thesis conformed as it was guided by a comprehensive theoretical framework. The research question “How do English second language learners, in a rural high school engage with and experience a dialogic approach to writing?” was formulated to explore the contribution of a dialogic approach to writing on developing literacies among ESL learners in a rural school. Multiple data sources were used which included the language profiles, unstructured observation, dialogic journal entries and focus group discussions. The study is also presented in the form of this thesis. The data presentation and analysis presented in chapter four gives an authentic account of the processes followed.

3.2.3 Researcher’s Role

I was an active participant and an incidental observer in exploring how learners experienced and engaged in dialogic writing, while being involved in the reading club. I interacted with the learners during reading club sessions at the school and during their off-site sessions at the university over a weekend. My interaction started with
them in March 2017 and data generation was concluded in May 2018. Dissemination of findings and feedback dates will be negotiated with the school-community.

Qualitative research allows for active participation and interaction between the learners and the researcher (Cresswell, 1998). By participating in the focus group discussions as well as actively participating in feedback and discussions on dialogic journal responses, I could observe and familiarise myself with each learner’s personality and many of their backgrounds. According to Lodico, Spaulding and Voegtle (2010) the researcher assumes the role of an interpreter regarding the analysis and the writing of the report, as well as being able to describe the social, cultural and historical context of the study. Therefore, the researcher has to be familiar with the problem, the issues and the procedures of the study (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). In this study it was helpful that I speak the three languages that the learners engaged in, this made it easier for me to interact with the learners and allowed the learners to translanguage comfortably. In analysing and writing the research report I could describe the context of the study. I developed a strong bond with the learners and built a relationship of trust.

3.3 THE RESEARCH SITE

Sandhill High* is a pseudonym for the school that was the site of this study. It is a rural, English medium high school, 75,5 km from Port Elizabeth. The school is the only high school in the area and was opened in 2005 in a previously “white” school that was closed due to an exodus of learners to the city and parts thereof were destroyed in a fire. It is a Quintile 3, no-fee school. The school caters for learners entering from the Afrikaans medium primary school and the isiXhosa / English primary school in the town. Many of the isiXhosa home language speakers also attended the Afrikaans medium primary school. I observed that learners switched easily between Afrikaans and isiXhosa when conversing with their peers. According to the principal, the Education Information Management System (EMIS) of 2018 of the school reflects 332 learners of whom 104 were in grade 10 in 2018. None of the learners as previously indicated have English as a home language. The school has a school building with many broken windows and doors. There were many broken desks and there were no working toilets for the learners for the period that I was involved in the study. There is no library, no laboratory and the computer laboratory is closed for repairs. The school
is in dire need of maintenance, it is situated in a poor socio-economic area and there are very few amenities in the town. The 12 staff members consist of 8 isiXhosa and 4 Afrikaans mother-tongue speakers.

3.3.1 Participants

All the grade 8 learners received an invitation to participate in the project in 2016 as part of the collaborative relationship between the school and the university that facilitated this dialogic engagement. The learners are currently in grade 10 at the school. There were 16 learners involved when I joined the project who ranged in age from 15 to 18 years. On conclusion of the study of the 15 learners 12 of them had been with the multiliteracy and multilingual node from the very start of the research project; others had joined along the way.

The school was also selected because of its rural context and largely isiXhosa speaking population as well as the significant number of Afrikaans speaking learners, the languages makes it ideal for an in-depth study (Patton, 2002) on writing for ESL learners. Participation continued to be voluntary and focused on the learners who were part of the reading club. The selection for this study was convenient, as learners had already volunteered to be part of the ongoing project and were thus available and eager to continue (De Vos et al., 2011). It is also generally accepted that those who volunteer are often more motivated than if they are compelled to participate (Mark, 1996).

3.3.1.1 Participant profile

The table below gives an overview of the participants as per school records. This is helpful to understand the context of the group and their home languages that they declared to the school.
Table 3.2: Participant profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>CURRENT AGE</th>
<th>HOME LANGUAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abraham</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Xhosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Shona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanda</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Xhosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayanda</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Xhosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busi</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Xhosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charity</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elise</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpumi</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Xhosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nandipha</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Xhosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noxolela</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Xhosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okuhle</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Xhosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Xhosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelley</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sindiswa</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Xhosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ziyanda</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Xhosa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participant profile (table 3.2) was provided by the school as per their Electronic Management Information System (EMIS). As can be seen in the summary there were only 2 boys in the group and the list indicated 11 learners with isiXhosa as home language, 3 learners with Afrikaans as home language and 1 learner with Shona as home language. The list did not indicate a second language, everyone in the school has English as second language as per departmental policy because the LoLT of the school is English. The school language categories will be probed more in chapter four.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Some preliminary data was generated in the initial phase of the study. This included the establishment of a reading club with book reviews, drawings, workshops and presentations. Field notes were taken during unstructured observations during the
reading club sessions and informal discussions that followed. This was extended further with dialogic journal writing, booktalk and reflective focus group sessions based on the books read and their overall experience of the dialogic writing to participate in literacy as a social practice. For this study, the data was generated using:

- Language profiles
- Field notes taken during unstructured observation.
- The text from the dialogic journal writing.
- Focus group discussions.

### 3.4.1 Language Profiles

Although the learners completed their language portraits in the focus group discussions, I deemed it important to foreground the language profiles constructed for the reader to understand the learners’ language backgrounds. This activity engaged them on a meta-level in awareness of their own language backgrounds and resources. Busch (2010) suggests that a learner-centred language policy acknowledges and values the resources that the school community, learners, teachers and parents bring with them. It acknowledges the heteroglossic nature of the learners as part of a multilingual and multi-voiced community (Bakhtin, 1981). McKinney (2017) adds, that emphasis on the linguistic repertoires and resources that learners bring for meaning-making matters more than what they lack. The language profiles of the learners will be compared to the languages reflected in the participant profiles in table 3.2 above. The language profiles should give insight into the resources the learners brought into the dialogic space to take up their positions as legitimate language users in school. This will be discussed further in chapter four.

### 3.4.2 Unstructured Observation

Observation can be a complex research method as it often requires that a researcher play a number of roles and apply numerous techniques to collect data (Baker, 2006). Gold (1958 cited in Baker, 2006, p. 174) states that the adopted role depends on “the problem to be studied and the willingness to be studied and on the researcher’s prior knowledge of or involvement with the insider’s world.” When entering a new environment, the researcher may have to adopt the role of complete observer and the
complete participant role. Field notes were recorded during or after the reading club sessions, workshop and during discussions. My field notes consisted of written notes, voice recordings and photographs.

My field notes contained comments on learners’ demeanour, reactions, enthusiasm, levels of participation during discussions and even mundane comments on facial expressions and tone of voice. These observations allowed me insight into events that occurred before I joined the project. Watching and listening gave me the opportunity to get to know the learners and to get a better understanding of the context in which the study was taking place. It further allowed learners to see me as a fellow participant who was learning with them and from them. The data obtained from this participant-observer role was valuable during the analysis of the data and writing of the report. It added to the rich descriptions needed to describe the co-construction of the data generated within the project.

3.4.3 Dialogic Journal Writing

It is important to understand the context in which the dialogic journal writing took place. The dialogic journal writing was a reading club activity and it was the main focus of our literacy activities. Furthermore, booktalk was an essential component throughout the project in conjunction with various other literacy activities. Chambers says, “we do not know what we think till we hear what we say” this activity encouraged discriminating and thoughtful engagement with the text (Chambers, 1996, p. 2), which complemented the dialogic journal writing as not all learners engaged in the same way. However, Pelias (2011) says, that writers discover what they know through writing, therefore in this meaning-making process the literacy development included reading, talking and writing in no particular order. So, although there will be specific focus on dialogic journal writing within the study, this should be seen against the backdrop of other forms of engagement.

3.4.3.1 The Reading Club

A reading club was initiated in the first year of the dialogic community engagement project. The reading club formed the foundation of the dialogic journal writing that followed. The reading club coordinator was one of the primary researchers in the engagement project from the university, leading the multiliteracy and multilingual
practice node. Dr Eileen, as coordinator brought with her a wealth of knowledge having researched book clubs and reading as a literacy intervention before. During the course of her study Dr Eileen found that if learners are provided with a safe space, scaffolding, multiple opportunities and a range of reading material it would help learners to access and use dominant literacies (Scheckle, 2014).

As explained in chapter two reading and writing informs each other therefore introducing a written component to a reading club can encourage learner engagement (Freebody & Luke, 1990). Reading club activities included writing personal responses to text focusing on their relevance in the lives of learners and the worlds they live in. Some of the other activities of the reading club were, getting to know books – fact/fiction, biographies/autobiographies, plots, themes, characters and making predictions. They also discussed newspaper articles, pictures, headlines, captions, cartoons and making collages of the writing they were familiar with. The learners participated in the community presentations where they could showcase their co-constructed knowledge and attended workshops. They had access to a variety of books and were introduced to FunDza books, a reading and writing intervention organisation. The choice of books although pertinent will not be explored in this study. Learners also shared their writing and engaged in booktalk.

3.4.3.2 Writing dialogic journals

It is regrettable that learners only wrote in their own journals with a response from the reading club coordinator without an opportunity to also respond to the writing of their peers. It was a missed opportunity for co-construction of texts (Jesson & Rosedale, 2016). Dialogic writing, using journals created an opportunity for communication between the learners, and the reading club coordinator engaged in the process. Research shows that learners generally write better if they have an authentic audience and purpose for their writing (Scheckle, 2009; Mendelowitz, 2016). However, writing for an audience can be problematic as in writing for an audience the learners quickly switched over to writing in English, assuming that was required. Elbow (1996) states that audience has a big effect on voice, where learners are tempted to imitate those around them — as observed in the later entries of the dialogic journals. Development in journal writing is achieved by focusing on meaning rather than form when giving feedback during the writing process (Janks, 2010). Journals, as a tool for learning
writing by ESL learners has been recommended by several researchers among them Blanton (1987), Barton & Klump (2008) and Hawkins (2005). Blanton (1987) further states that this strategy can engage learners and raise their confidence levels. Because ESL learners often associate writing with school practices they believe it is something that they must get right. On the other end dialogic journal writing is not marked but responded to, which can encourage more writing. By not concentrating on correct grammar and spelling mistakes learners are motivated and their negative perceptions of writing in ESL can be changed. The practice of journal writing allowed learners to transfer their own understanding into this “new language”, discover their own voices and learn how to address an audience (Barton & Klump, 2008). In addition, Hawkins (2005) adds, that opportunities for practice and scaffolding the writing process aids development. Thus, journal writing is an effective way to accommodate the requirements mentioned by Hawkins. All these researchers recommend that creating writing opportunities should become an integral part of learning and language development.

Dialogic journal writing in this study took place in the following manner: Learners would select a book to read during reading club sessions. They were encouraged to examine the cover, consider the title and predict what they thought the book would be about. After reading they would write in their dialogic journals to either explain what the book was about or to reflect on the outcome. Learners also had an opportunity to write about how it related to their own lives, if indeed it did. During booktalk sessions they would share their journal entries with the group either by reading or explaining what their books were about. This was then discussed and often rigorously debated if another member had interpreted the same book differently. Learners could hand in their journals to the reading club coordinator and their writing would be responded to, this did not always happen during the sessions. Most of the learners would write in their dialogic journals at home and often the coordinator would collect it during a session and return it at the next session. The responses from the coordinator served as prompts to further thinking about what they wrote and served as a model of good writing practice. Learners who were still busy reading their books would have another opportunity to submit their journals and other members could exchange books among themselves or select new books. At the next session the cycle was repeated. Regular engagement in dialogic journal writing and booktalk contributed to some extent to
establishing these practices as part of the reading club interactions. So, when learners attended the reading club, they knew that dialogic journal writing and booktalk, at whatever level, would be central to our engagement. Thus, dialogic journal writing and booktalk became established as social literacy practices in the reading club.

Similarly, several researchers suggest modelling good writing as a strategy to teaching writing (Hirst et al., 2004). In this study we made use of dialogic journal writing that can best be described as a to and fro sharing of writing. The participants wrote their reflections on their readings in their journals and the researcher responded to their writing by writing back to them. They then also shared this writing either by explanation or reading with the group, thus developing and modelling the practice of writing for an audience. Dialogic journal writing thus became a tool of written feedback. The coordinator’s response provided a model of good writing which could be emulated by the learners. This engagement of learners via dialogic journal writing was used to encourage learners to participate in literacy as a social practice, encouraging them with feedback, which did not include the correction of errors.

However, as explained in chapter two, research shows that reading and writing does not occur in isolation (Janks, 2011). According to Akinyeye and Pluddemann (2016) and Dombrack and Dixon (2014) the state of writing may well have suffered as many teachers do not have the time for explicit writing instruction or for adequate developmental feedback. The emphasis of research in Language and Literacy over the years has shifted and most resources and research concentrated on improving reading, and may well continue, especially after the dismal performance of South Africa in the PIRLS 2016 report (Howie et al., 2017). The PIRLS report showed that 8 out of 10 children cannot read for meaning. It seems that although learners are reading, they have not mastered the ‘how’ to find the deeper meaning in texts. Scheckle (2014), states that reading and writing both need ongoing practice and writing offers an alternate space to engage in and build a dialogic understanding. Furthermore, journal writing in educational contexts also allows learners space for private communication, either for their own reflections on learning, or to share insights with the reading club coordinator (Granville, 1997). Dialogic journals offer a reflective space for learners to record their understanding, opinions and thinking which the catalyst for could be engaging in literacy for meaning-making.
3.4.4 Focus Group Discussions

Focus groups can be described as a research technique that generates data through group interaction on a topic selected by the researcher (Morgan, 1997). Focus groups are ideal ways to gather rich detailed descriptions of learners' experience and beliefs (Greeff, 2011). It allows learners to share their thoughts, feelings and experiences with other members of the group free to comment. The group interaction encourages participation and provides an opportunity to generate high quality data related to the research question (Morrison-Beedy, -Arsenault, & Feinstein, 2001). Krueger & Casey (2000) explain the focus group as an opportunity to promote self-disclosure among participants and to find out what they really think and feel (De Vos et al, 2011). A limitation of the focus group was that I had to balance my role as moderator and researcher. Quiet learners also proved to be a challenge with certain learners dominating the discussions.

3.4.4.1 Background to the focus group in this study

The focus group discussions were held with the fifteen grade 10 learners who were the participants in this study. The focus group discussions took place towards the end of the study during the reading club sessions and after the dialogic journal writing phase had been concluded. To discover how the learners experienced the dialogic approach to writing as well as their level of engagement throughout the whole project I held four focus group meetings. The sessions were held in our normal meeting place at the school. The learners had become more confident and were comfortable in each other's presence. We used one of the focus groups discussions to compile the language profiles of the learners using an adaptation of the language profiles as described by (Busch, 2010). Learners discussed the different ways in which they use language and which languages they engage with for different activities, before they labelled the image. Further discussions about their choices and a written narrative followed, describing why they labelled it in that manner. This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

In another session the learners were divided into two groups to allow for more participation and engagement. The one group was very interactive and there was a robust exchange of opinions. The penultimate session was held with the complete
group of 15. They first discussed in pairs and then came back to the group to share for further discussion. For this session they had the following prompts:

- What was your experience talking about your books?
- How did the choice of books influence what you wrote?
- How did you find the sharing of your writing?
- Did you find the use of any language of your choice helpful?

For the final group session, the question was simply, what was your experience with the dialogic journal writing? Although most members contributed there was very little interaction or commentary on the contributions made by others and learners often gave individual accounts.

3.4.4.2 Trustworthiness of the focus groups

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) to establish the trustworthiness of the focus group data the following techniques in relation to the focus group discussions in this study were applied:

Table 3.3: Trustworthiness of the focus group data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>COMPLIANCE IN THIS STUDY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>Multiple sessions were held with the same group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truth value</td>
<td>One question was the main focus to find out how they experienced dialogic journal writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in truth of data</td>
<td>Learners knew that they could be honest. There was no right or wrong answers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective of multiple realities</td>
<td>Repeated statements to confirm that what they said was how I understood it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependability</td>
<td>In consultation with supervisor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferability</td>
<td>Direct quotes used in reports obtained from transcripts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicability</td>
<td>Detailed descriptions provided of the process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning for others</td>
<td>I do not lay claim to be the creator of meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmability</td>
<td>All recordings and transcripts retained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutrality of researcher</td>
<td>Comprehensive field notes taken of the process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis in research is a process of making meaning from complex, detailed descriptions (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006) which helps us to understand the research findings. Qualitative researchers do not accept that what participants say during discussions or write in journals is the absolute ‘truth’ in the true sense of the word, but rather their own constructed meaning about their lives and worlds in which they live (Bless et al., 2013). Bless, et al (2013, p. 340) further states that qualitative analysis aims to:

- Describe and understand respondents’ lived experience.
- Examine the way respondents construct personal meaning in their lives.
- Describe the range and diversity of respondents’ experience.
- Amplify respondents’ voice.
- Study people in their natural context.

These aims were achieved by ensuring an in-depth data analysis at the end of the study to establish how learners experienced and engaged with a dialogic approach to writing. Accurate transcriptions of recordings to ensure learners’ voices came through unaltered. All research was done in their familiar surroundings with an understanding of learners’ background and context of the community. The primary sources of data that needed to be analysed in this study were, the texts in the dialogic journals, the transcripts of recordings of the booktalk and focus group discussions, their language profile portraits and field notes made during observations. Qualitative thematic analysis “works with a wide range of research questions, especially those related to participants’ experiences or understanding and construction of particular phenomena in particular context” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). In this study I used the six phases of thematic analysis as suggested by Braun & Clark.

In phase one I described the language profiles and added to this by using my own observations from my audio recordings and field notes. I also described the initial dialogic journal entries and commented on what they wrote, how much they wrote and whether it changed over the research period. This included transcribing the recordings made during the focus group discussions and recordings of discussions during booktalk. This also entailed reading and re-reading the dialogic journals and other
written responses from the learners. In the second phase, the data was coded using coding schemes to make it easier to group the responses. During the third phase, patterns were identified, and this was followed by identifying themes in phase four. Phase five involved the naming of the themes by aligning the codes, patterns and emergent themes and will be discussed further in chapter four. The process was completed by writing up my findings and reflecting on the process. Dissemination of research findings will be done in consultation with all engagement project team members.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics is concerned with whether the behaviour conforms to a code or set of principles. Researchers have a right to search for truth and knowledge but not at the expense of the rights of other individuals in society (Bless et al., 2013). Participants have a right to know what the research is about as well as how it will affect them. In addition, participants have a right to decline participation and can also discontinue their participation at any time during the process (Bless et al., 2013). In addition, informed consent is required prior to participants’ voluntary participation. Informed consent requires that participants are given an explanation of the purpose of the research, the expected duration, description of procedures and are informed that participation is voluntary with no monetary compensation (Babbie, 2016).

During this study I followed the basic ethical principles relevant to research involving human participants: the principles of respect for persons, beneficence and justice as outlined in the Belmont report (The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects, 1978). All learners were treated with respect and had the right to withdraw at any time as participation was voluntary. All activities were negotiated and agreed upon by all participants. Consideration of informed consent and the benefit to the researcher were explained in terms of this study and the voluntary participation of the participants were all guided by these principles. In the process of this study and on completion participants will remain entitled to: a right to privacy, guaranteed anonymity, guaranteed confidentiality and avoidance of harm, betrayal or deception. In line with the Belmont ethical considerations, there was also no discrimination on the grounds of colour, age, religion, political affiliation or race (Govil, 2013).
Ethical approval was obtained from NMMU ethics committee, for this research project entitled *Dialogic engagement between local and university communities: Enabling agency towards active citizenship in an education context*. The Ethical clearance number: **H15-EDU-ERE-014** (De Lange, 2015-2017) see annexure A, as well as consent from all the relevant authorities. Consent was also obtained from the Department of Education, the principal, participating learners (annexure D) and their parent or guardians (annexure B) on initiation of this collaboration. All necessary ethical procedures were adhered to as the process continued. Meetings and activities were negotiated beforehand. In addition, pseudonyms were used to describe the school and the learners to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. The findings of this research will also be shared with the participants and the rest of the community, who have been involved in this community engagement project from the beginning.

### 3.7 CONCLUSION

In conclusion a qualitative approach was best suited to generate data in response to the research question, “How do English second language learners, in a rural high school engage with and experience a dialogic approach to writing?” A case study enabled one phenomenon ‘a dialogic approach to journal writing’, where learners engaged with and responded to text which they had read as part of the reading club in a specific school to be well explored. The comprehensive and detailed description of the site and participants gives the context in which the study was conducted. I also gave a detailed description and reasons for my choice of data generation methods. Furthermore, I provided reasons for the data analysis methodology used and discussed the issues related to the reliability and validity of the data. Finally, the ethical considerations were explained, and the trustworthiness of the study described. The next chapter will be a presentation of the data generated during the study as well as an analysis of the presented data.
CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

*The way in which I create myself is by means of a quest. I go out into the world in order to come back with a self.*

Mikhail Bakhtin (1981)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter a comprehensive description of the selected research design and the methods for generating data were discussed. In this chapter I will present and discuss the data used for analysis in this study. I joined the engagement project in the third year but conducted my research study independently, albeit under the auspices of the engagement project. My study continued into the next year after the conclusion of the engagement project. I will focus specifically on the activities that I worked with and observed. However, I refer to the other activities as a background to the study. I discuss the context in which the data was generated and how the observation notes, dialogic journal entries, focus group writing and recording transcripts were analysed. The data is best interpreted if the context of the school and the learners positioning in the engagement project are understood. During initial collaboration with the school and community it emerged that literacy development was one of the key concerns of parents and learners. The context as explained further in this chapter will show justification for these concerns.

Firstly, I explain the context of the school and discuss the language profiles of the learners. Secondly, I give a description of my observations during the literature club sessions and the booktalk. Thirdly, I present and discuss the journal writing: I examine the amount of writing and the content of the learners’ journal entries. I also compare the entries from the first entry to the final entry as well as their responses in relation to the response from the co-ordinator of the reading club. Finally, I present and discuss the focus group discussions transcripts. This will include all focus group topics and the themes that emerged during these focus group discussions. To maintain transparency and authenticity, the learners’ exchanges in the focus groups and comments in dialogic journal entries, are presented verbatim. However, I have inserted translations
in square brackets in some extracts for non-isiXhosa speakers to understand the content. Although the aim of the study was to explore how English second language learners engaged with text using a dialogic journal writing; we cannot ignore the importance of their linguistic repertoires, the context, interactions, space and practices that informed this activity (Hornberger, 2004).

4.2 CONTEXT

Firstly, I clarify the context of the school to get an understanding of the environment in which the study occurred. The context is important to understand how non-English speakers can have their language resources valued in literacy development and that we change what counts as legitimate language use in schools as proposed by McKinney and explained in chapter two. Secondly, the rural nature of the school is explained. Gardener states that schools in rural areas often have very little resources and that English is not a language that is heard in the community. Finally, we discuss the engagement project and my positioning that was initiated between the university and the school community.

4.2.1 Context of the school

The school was originally a white primary school but closed many years ago. In 2005 the school was re-appropriated to start the first high school in the area. There were no alterations done before the handover, despite extensive damage, which occurred while it stood vacant. The official opening and name change occurred in 2012. It is a no-fee school and it also runs a daily feeding scheme for the learners. The school is plagued by infrastructure failure and is often without water and has no working toilets. The school has no library, but learners have limited access to a small computer room, which is currently closed for repairs.

The following subject choices are available to learners from grade 10-12: Accounting, Business Studies, Geography, History, Life Science, Tourism and only Mathematical Literacy. Despite offering English as first additional language (FAL), the school uses English as the LoLT for learners who have identified isiXhosa or Afrikaans as their home language.
4.2.2 Rurality

The term ‘rural' has different connotations and definitions across the range of people and in different countries who use the term (Gardiner, 2008). This study does not subscribe to the deficit notion that rural areas are often ‘backward' but acknowledges that these communities are often places of great innovation, expertise and resilience. With proper support, schools in these areas can become beacons of hope and inspiration. The rural area where this study was conducted has the following characteristics of a rural area as identified by Gardiner:

- It has a small population and sparse density.
- It is at least 75 kilometres from the closest city.
- It has minimal public amenities and social infrastructure.
- There are high levels of poverty and unemployment in the town itself, likely due to non- or under-development of the area. Farm work is mainly seasonal on the surrounding citrus farms.
- It has only two primary schools and one English language high school, many learners travel by government subsidised transport from surrounding farms and a nearby village to get to school.
- It is surrounded by agricultural farming activities.

According to Gardiner (2008), very few rural areas have public or school libraries and this is also the case for the site of this study. The remote location thus provides great challenges when trying to improve the provision of educational options and empowerment opportunities for the community as a whole. Most rural communities have developed their own social networks and cultural practices which must be acknowledged during any research (Gardiner, 2008). Partnerships between universities and other stake holders and these communities provide ideal opportunities for community engagement projects. Equipping rural communities to drive these projects ensure long-term sustainability. Learners and their families then become an integral part in effecting change and improving and creating optimal conditions in which to succeed.
4.2.3 Context of the engagement project

The Ministerial Committee on Rural Education (MCRE) reports that “to assure transformation and redress of education in rural areas requires a combination of multi-sectoral integrated planning and implementation, with the participation of local government, stakeholders and communities” (Gardiner, 2008, p. 11). The engagement project between the university and the rural community that drove this research is an example of how these partnerships can play a role in empowering learners and their families. This study created the opportunity where learners could engage with literacy by using the dialogic journals and booktalk.

My research provided me with insight into the possibilities for literacy engagement for social justice, in environments where learners continue to be disadvantaged by hegemonic language practices in a post-democratic South Africa. In reflecting on my own experiences during my engagement with the research group at Sandhill High I am once again reminded of the teachings of Freire, which states:

*To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to its namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming. Men are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection….It is in speaking their word that men transform the world by naming it, dialogue imposes itself as the way in which men achieve significance as men* (Freire, 2005, p. 76).

The above quote embodies what we aimed to achieve by attempting to establish dialogic journal writing as a social practice within a reading club. These sessions were able to recognise and accommodate the heteroglossic nature of the interactions between the learners. We were not just reading, talking and writing, but learners were also making meaning and reflecting on their own way forward. Learners made use of their different cultural and language backgrounds, to not only make their own understanding clear, but also to co-construct new meaning, by using their own languages to make sense of someone else’s language (Bakhtin, 1981). The dialogic journal writing explained in chapter two and discussed in chapter three provided an opportunity for the learners to participate in literacy as a social practice, where they could draw on their linguistic repertoires. The language profiles of the learners will
endeavour to give a clearer understanding of the multilingual nature of the participants in this study.

4.3 LANGUAGE PROFILES

The first focus of the generated data is on the language profiles of the learners. The language profiles of the learners are foregrounded in this study to show the languages that the learners draw on to make sense of their worlds. This will also give the reader a better understanding of the language resources of the school, community and the learners.

The language profiles need to be understood within the language context of the school as indicated earlier. The town only has one high school, and the language of teaching and learning (LoLT) is English. Afrikaans and isiXhosa are both offered as options for Home Language and English is the only language offered as first additional language. As previously explained learners at this school have no choice when it comes to selecting a high school, as most families cannot afford to send their children to boarding schools in neighbouring towns or cities, if they want them to receive instruction in their home language and little choice if they want to them to be educated in isiXhosa or Afrikaans. According to Busch (2010, p. 283), “Although South Africa is committed to a policy of linguistic diversity, the language-in-education policy is still plagued by the racialization of language issues under apartheid and, more recently, by new challenges posed by internal African migration.” This school is no different and has a diverse language population as can be seen in the participant profile in chapter three, but none in the language of instruction.

4.3.1 Language Portraits

For this study, I adapted the language portraits from the language profile study, as described by Busch (2010) to gain insight into the language repertoires of the learners. This was done to understand the learners as multilinguals and to show the language context in which this study was conducted. I drew on the study of Busch as indicated in chapter two, to give learners an opportunity to give a visual representation of how they use language. Learners were given a drawing of a child, which they had to label according to their linguistic dispositions. This exercise was preceded and followed by discussion as well as a written narrative to establish a personal language profile.
The image was used to prompt discussion about what each label would represent. A common approach to the drawing emerged, the ears would represent the language they hear most often in their homes and/or community; the eyes would be the language most read; the mouth would be their spoken language and the hands were the language in which they wrote. In addition, they decided their language of thinking would be shown by the speech bubble and the heart represented the language of desire or passion or the language they felt was most important to them. The learners agreed upon assigning the legs to the language in which they felt they were rooted, it was also linked to dancing and music and seen as the happy place. The positioning of this activity in the focus group discussions allowed the selection, interpretation and evaluation to take place in the visual mode as much as in the verbal mode (Busch, 2012). In the next section I will contrast the language portraits of Amanda and Noxolela. Both of whom have isiXhosa as home language. In addition, I will examine the language portrait narratives of Ayanda and Shelly. Both of whom study Afrikaans as a home language subject. These learners were selected as examples of many of the learners in this study and at the school as isiXhosa is the dominant home language in the group followed by Afrikaans.

4.3.1.1 Language profile of Amanda

The language portrait of Amanda, (Figure 4.1) is not unlike many of the other portraits in the group, where most of them draw on more than two languages. Her home language is isiXhosa, but she lives in an Afrikaans speaking community and went to an Afrikaans medium primary school. She reported speaking mainly isiXhosa with her parents, grandmother and the extended family at home, but mostly Afrikaans to her friends and neighbours. Her eyes (reading) and hands (writing) are labelled English, as this is the language which she uses for learning at school. She sees English as the language required for literacy, as reading and writing occurs mainly in school. She feels that Afrikaans is her strongest language and she studies Afrikaans as home language and English as first additional language subjects in school, despite being an isiXhosa home language speaker.
Figure 4.1: Amanda’s language portrait

All her other subjects are in English and she shared that: “English is the most important language” English is also the language of her heart, she commented that: “Good English is what I’ll need to get to varsity and become something.” She is proud that she can speak three languages and feels that she is good in all three languages, but “just not confident enough yet in English.” She shared that her legs are all isiXhosa, she only dances to “local music” and she feels that isiXhosa is the language in which her culture is rooted and that her family follows all the Xhosa traditions.

In her written narrative (figure 4.2) below Amanda sees English as the most valued language. Her belief that fluency in English is related to importance speaks to the hegemonic position of English as a language of access and advancement as mentioned by both McKinney and Janks in chapter two.
AMANDA

Figure 4.2: Amanda’s language portrait narrative

During informal interactions and during discussions with Amanda, I noticed that she modelled her English accent on what she believed to be acceptable. This made her extremely tense when speaking English, as opposed to being at ease and talkative when speaking Afrikaans or isiXhosa. This could well be as a result of ‘White English’ being understood as ‘proper English’ or ‘important English’ where “the positive representation of their own use of English then must indicate some accommodation or assimilation to white norm” (McKinney, 2017 p.88). This reflects McKinney’s observation that “accommodation or assimilation to the white norm” has become an accepted practice in the use of English to empower the speaker. This speaks to the McKinney’s notion of Anglonormativity as discussed in chapter two. Amanda’s concern with how she sounds might well be linked to her view of importance and thus she needs to ‘sound’ white to feel important.
4.3.1.2 Language profile of Noxolela

The language portrait of Noxolela (see figure 4.3) differs from that of Amanda as Noxolela sees herself as a mainly isiXhosa and English bilingual. English is a language that she only uses for school purposes. She lives in the township, not too far away from the school and the community is only Xhosa. Asked about any other languages she shares, “I have no coloured friends, so I don’t speak Afrikaans.”

Figure 4.3: Noxolela’s language portrait

Noxolela uses isiXhosa exclusively in her communication with her family, friends and within the community. She also shared, “I can use English when I talk to my teachers and friends if I must and with other people.” Unlike Amanda, Noxolela sees no use for Afrikaans because it is not a language that she uses for communication with friends, it is also not a language that she hears in her community.

In her written narrative (figure 4.4) Noxolela made it clear that isiXhosa is a very important language to her. She feels that it is important to speak your own language when speaking to others from the same language group. She said, “it is important to
talk Xhosa because you must not forget your language.” It seems as if she believes that by speaking other languages, she might have to sacrifice her own.

NOXOLELA

Figure 4.4: Noxolela’s language portrait narrative

Noxolela associates English with a language needed to communicate with “white” people, yet she seldom has any interaction with white people. When asked about this, she said, “I talk English to Dr Eileen” referring to the reading club coordinator, and “overseas has mainly white people.” English does not seem to hold any other purpose for her, despite it being the LoLT of her school. No mention was made of the current discourses in her school and at institutions of higher education. She switched over to writing in isiXhosa stating: [The reason I chose isiXhosa it’s because my language is very important, when I speak with people, I speak my language with them]. She also volunteered that the teachers speak mostly isiXhosa in class even though the subjects are supposed to be presented in English.
4.3.1.3 Language profile narrative of Ayanda

Ayanda (figure 4.5) as previously explained is an isiXhosa home language speaker but studies Afrikaans home language as a subject in school.

AYANDA

Figure 4.5: Ayanda’s language portrait narrative

Ayanda draws on 3 languages, however as she pointed out she is unable to write in isiXhosa, her home language, because she attended the local Afrikaans medium primary school. Despite this, she was able to bring together her different language histories, her experience and a willingness to use her linguistic repertoires to engage in the literacy project. Within this group she was an asset because she was able to translanguge with ease, especially to make meaning clear to others in the group.

Her current school would not allow her to study isiXhosa as a home language, as she had no primary school knowledge in the subject and it is not offered at the school as a first additional language. She has a rich cultural connection with isiXhosa and is fluent in the language. In the extract above she mentioned speaking English to friends who cannot communicate in isiXhosa, in subsequent discussions she clarified the
friends as “foreigners”. This refers to the migrants from African descent mainly in school and within the village where she lives. She also shared that she finds, “Afrikaans is fun but I am worried that I’m not learning Xhosa.”

4.3.1.4 Language profile narrative of Shelly

Shelly (figure 4.6) as previously explained is an Afrikaans home language speaker and went to an Afrikaans medium primary school. However, she now finds herself in a high school where the LoLT is English.

**SHELLY**

![Handwritten note]

use at school is English because my subjects are in English and my teachers are Xhosa speakers and most of my friends are Xhosa, so the only way I can communicate with them is through using English.

Afrikaans praat ek as et huis toe gaan of by die goeie geslag my vriends van sommige van hulle verskeiden vir praat afrikaans. Afrikaans is my huisstal want my ma en pa en die gemeenskap rondom my praat afrikaans ek bly ook in ’n afrikaans gebied.

English I use to communicate at other events not only at school but at church also, because my Pastor is an English man.

**Figure 4.6: Shelly’s language portrait narrative**

Shelly sees English as her school and church language and for communication with friends and community members, who do not speak Afrikaans. When questioned about the other events she referred to in the extract above, she mentioned the engagement project activities like the reading club, the workshops, presentations and
if she goes to town (Port Elizabeth). This speaks to Jesson and Rosedale’s assertion that dialogic writing which occurred in a third space, brings together the first and second spaces as can be seen by Shelley’s account of her language use. I have observed her speaking isiXhosa on several occasions and when asked about this, Shelly responded that: “I don’t speak it good”, referring to her IsiXhosa and reiterated that it does not count because she does not speak it very well. She also shared that English is the language that she really wants to master as she sees this as an opportunity to better herself. Unlike Ayanda she can write in her home language as it was the medium of instruction at her primary school. Her home language will continue to be developed as she had the option of doing Afrikaans as home language level in her current school.

4.3.1.5 Discussion of language portraits

As Ayanda’s portrait showed, learners could indicate more than one language for any of the purposes of language they agreed upon. Not surprisingly all the learners only indicated English for reading and writing. This indicates that literacy, or perhaps particularly school literacy, is associated with English and none of their own languages have a role in their literacy development. It also implies that no reading and writing or not much reading and writing occurs outside of the school context or the reading and writing that occurs, maybe using social media reading comics, is not recognised as ‘real’ reading and writing. Ayanda’s concern that she is not learning any isiXhosa is contrary to the official language policy of an additive approach to languages as discussed in chapter two. In practice, the systems and structures result in a subtractive experience, especially for young isiXhosa learners.

In addition, Noxolela’s comments on using English to talk to white people is indicative of the continued notion that English equals white people, which is a construct associated with apartheid language divisions. The fact that this whole study was conducted in English and no books of other languages were made available, except some Nalibali stories in the early stages of the reading club speaks to the hegemonic position of English. The ubiquitous use of English is also a reflection of how this language was used to connect with the “white people’ from the university. The opportunities that they perceived this would bring was evident when Adam said, “we are hoping that this reading and writing things will help us get into varsity and that the
people of the university will keep coming and do more things with us.” So, to some extent, the project reaffirmed the perceived benefits and affordances of using English.

Many of the learners started their initial dialogic journal writing in their home languages but quickly started writing in English only, ostensibly believing that the purpose of the study was to improve their English. Despite numerous reassurances that choice of language remained with them they continued writing in English seeing it as an opportunity to ‘improve’ their English. Yet, when discussing their books, they seemingly felt more at ease using any of the languages at their disposable. This may well be because reading and writing was associated with English only, as indicated in their language profiles but when talking other languages could be used, which means they viewed talk as an out of school practice as discussed in chapter two.

4.3.2 Summary of language profiles

Table 4.1 presents a summary of the language profiles based on the information on their language portraits. It shows that the learners have multilingual language resources but are expected to engage with text and participate in literacy activities in monolingual learning environments. English was the only language used for reading and writing, presumably in school. Some learners also indicated English as the language that they speak and are rooted in.

Table 4.1: Summary of learners' language profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learner</th>
<th>Think</th>
<th>Read</th>
<th>Write</th>
<th>Speak</th>
<th>Hear</th>
<th>Desire</th>
<th>Roots</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abraham</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>X/A</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X/E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>S/E</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>S/E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanda</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>X/A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayanda</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>X/A/E/So</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>X/So</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busi</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Z/X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charity</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>A/X</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elise</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>A/E/X</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A/E</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpumi</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nandipha</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>X/E</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The language profiles of the learners differed considerably in terms of their spoken language as can be seen in table 4.1 which gives a good indication of the multilingual nature of the group. I observed that they switched between languages with ease when communicating with each other, even though they may not have shown these languages as their speaking language on their language portraits. None of the profiles were monolingual and the table shows the languages the learners draw from in their linguistic repertoires as discussed in chapter two. I compared this to the initial participant profile (table 3.2), as provided by the school, where they only indicated one home language, yet 12 learners indicated that they speak more than one language on their language portraits. Schooling systems and structure restrict learners in their language choices resulting in learners being placed in linguistic boxes, as can be seen with Ayanda who studies Afrikaans HL and English FAL with no regard for her isiXhosa home language.

4.3.3 Conclusion on language profiles

The language profiles show that the school system compels learners to use only one language for teaching and learning. This results in many learners viewing English as the language of importance as can be seen in the statements made by the three learners above. This also speaks to the Busch’s findings that learners’ linguistic repertoires have implications for language practices. The same sentiment was shared by many other learners in their language profile narratives. According to Gardiner, the MCRE of 2005 report states that for many learners and teachers in rural areas, English is a foreign language that is only heard at school. It will thus require innovative approaches like multilingual teaching to bridge the barrier presented by English as
LoLT. The analysis confirmed Busch’s (2010) sentiments about the predominant status of English in the current South African school system and validates the concerns raised by McKinney (2017) that current LiEP and curricula, positions home languages other than English, as a deficit. The language profiles also confirm the concerns parents had with the literacy development, when they requested this as part of the engagement project. This study thus aimed to contribute to developing literacy, by engaging in dialogic writing as a social practice drawing on the linguistic repertoires of the learners. Exploring learners’ language profiles thus foregrounds the learners’ perspectives of literacy and the languages they bring into the schooling context.

4.4 OBSERVATIONS

As previously mentioned, I joined the engagement project during the third year and continued my study with the coordinator of the reading club after the conclusion of the engagement project. Data was generated from audio recordings, photographs and field notes obtained during my unstructured observations of the reading club sessions and the booktalk discussions I participated in. In this section I will focus on reading club interactions that occurred at the school and at the university where, as mentioned earlier, there was exchange and discussion about the books read. In addition, I have included a special focus on booktalk Chambers (1996) as a central element in the reading club and as a step towards reading for enjoyment in a reading culture.

4.4.1 Reading club sessions

I observed six reading club sessions from March 2017 to May 2018. I made field notes and audio recordings during these sessions. Learners and the coordinator would gather and first have informal discussions to establish how they were. I thought that this was an important routine, as it gave learners a sense of having their lives and activities valued, while at the same time setting the tone for communication and putting them at ease. The focus then shifted to what they read and their thoughts on the books they read. This was normally a lively discussion and others who read the same book would also contribute to the discussion, thus it became a communal activity.

Some preferred to read from their dialogic journals about their books, so journal writing provided the basis for contributing to the booktalk. The learners would then after all had shared what they had read, however little, they would swop books or select new
ones from the collection available. This session also gave learners the opportunity to submit their dialogic journals for a response from the coordinator. The structure of the reading club session was relaxed, and it took place outside of the normal school activities after school. One of the very first things I noticed, was how the coordinator used questions to allow learners an opportunity to think further about their understanding, as shown in the extract below, without dominating the process. This strategy encouraged the less responsive learners to also share their thinking.

Extract 1: Booktalk (2017-08-16)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eileen:</th>
<th>Alright let’s see who else wants to tell us about what book they’ve got. Pick a name.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mpumi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpumi:</td>
<td>I think this book is about Ntombi who lives with her mother and her sister and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>her mother always go out and have fun and leave Ntombi with her little sister.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>And Ntombi misses her practices at school, a teen voice competition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eileen:</td>
<td>Oh singing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpumi:</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eileen:</td>
<td>Ok. That’s what all of you do? When we arrived here we had all the singing going on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You were here and now what’s it called.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpumi:</td>
<td>Broken Promises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eileen:</td>
<td>Where do you think it’s set? Where does the story take place?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpumi:</td>
<td>Maybe in a location.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eileen:</td>
<td>Ah in South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpumi:</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eileen:</td>
<td>In a location near a city maybe or not and in the countryside? You don’t think it’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paterson?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpumi:</td>
<td>Yah I think it is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eileen:</td>
<td>It could be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpumi:</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eileen:</td>
<td>Does it remind you of any other books?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpumi:</td>
<td>Jealous in Jozi!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eileen:</td>
<td>Ah ok. What reminds you of Jealous in Jozi?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpumi:</td>
<td>Jealous in Jozi also had a competition called Teen Voice Competition. And it also had Harmony Series High.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eileen:</td>
<td>Right Harmony High Series. Does anybody else also have one that says Harmony High Series? There’s another, oh you’ve got Too Young to Die. Some of you read Jealous in Jozi? Have you got one too? Yes, you have, you can tell us about that one in a minute. So, Harmony High? Did any of your read this one last year? Did you read it.? (Someone shouts out, yes!)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mpumi was normally reluctant to participate unless addressed directly. In subsequent discussions, it seemed as if she felt she would be judged by the rest of the group. The approach used by the coordinator gave her an opportunity to respond and she clearly read the books but needed encouragement to share with the group. Jesson and Rosedale’s open-ended questions approach as previously discussed worked well in this situation. It elicited further discussion and explored new ideas. Keen observation enabled the coordinator to identify the learners that were not participating, and this approach ensured that most voices were heard within the group.

### 4.4.2 Booktalk

Booktalk was a constant activity throughout the study and was an ideal opportunity for learners to reflect and share with the group. These collaborative discussions created opportunities for the co-construction of new ideas. This enhances what Jesson, et al (2013) refer to as the enhancement of learners’ writing as ‘thinking devices’ that promoted participation from different learners’ voices. The differing opinions resulted in deeper reflection and thinking forward thinking as can be seen in the extracts. These discussions served as encouragement for further writing by learners who were reluctant to write. We were able to engage in meaningful dialogue with each other to complement the entries in their dialogic journals. As mentioned previously booktalk is specifically written as one word by Chambers (1996) in his book *Tell me*. Booktalk is described as a way of saying, saying firstly for yourself, saying to others, saying it together and then saying the new. So, learners must first make sense of their readings, share what they read by sharing their dialogic journal entries or telling the story.
Thereafter learners would discuss within the group and possibly come to new conclusions after hearing other thoughts.

These discussions were a meaningful way to engage those learners who needed prompts to write. They often “found” the words to describe their reading or thinking after these discussions. This affirms the research done by Chambers (1996), that booktalk allows learners to give form to their thoughts and emotions stimulated by the book and by the meanings they make together out of its text, it thus becomes a collaborative, dialogic action. It seemed that for some once the learners spoke about their books, they had a better idea of what it was they wanted to say on paper. Making the connection between what they said and what they wrote became easier.

It also created interest in the book and motivated other learners to read the book. This created an additional opportunity for the learners to think about their own understanding and to question the interpretation of others. The booktalk sessions also kept those learners who did minimal writing engaged in the activities. As previously explained, the boys did not submit their dialogic journals for responses, yet Adam was the driving force behind most of the book discussions. He often took on the role of questioner and clarifier as described by Chambers (1996) in *Tell Me*. Mostly, he was the antagonist and questioned everyone’s interpretation or thinking of what they read. Although this happened throughout the study, I think it is useful to discuss it prior to the discussion of the dialogic journal writing to provide a better understanding of the context in which the dialogic journal writing occurred.

The transcript below (extract 2) gives an indication of the dialogue in the group after a member shared her thinking about the book. The discussions became quite vehement (see Adam’s response) when learners disagreed on what the book meant to them. Likewise, I observed that when a few learners had already read the same book, the discussions were quite enthusiastic, and others would want to read the book sometimes there was a scramble if there was only one copy available.
Excerpt 2: Booktalk (2018-02-28)

Charity: Chasing Dreams is this book about a girl called Lelethu. She lives with her mother; her mother is a domestic worker. She has also has a friend called uThuli. Thuli is in a varsity. Lelethu also wants to get into a varsity but her mother doesn’t have the money for the fees and she’s not even ready, so she isn’t even registered to be in varsity. And some boys and children teases her about, you wash your dishes at your house, your mother washes the dishes of the other houses. And she feels very bad but the only thing she said that even though my mother works at the other house but she earns her money just because she doing the same for me to get where you guys at. Yeah that’s my stuff. That’s what I think we can also do, go to university even if we not rich.

Participants: Yes! (shouting, the girls raising their fists in the air)

Adam: Yah this fighting that you do, you don’t have a lot of money to chase our dreams, there are more things that you can do that follow your dreams where you want to be. Rubbish (gestures angrily speaks with raised voice).

Abraham: Yah (giggling)

Adam: There’s other ways you don’t have to have a proper job to get where you want to be.

Abraham: Thetha. (clapping hands) there’s something I want to say. Sometimes you have (emphasised) to be rich.

Adam: You see we made this point. We made this point we said let’s say I’m in my house and I’m poor and I also go to school and then I don’t achieve those maybe bursary results and then I just pass average. You see at my house there’s no money, but I did pass grade 12 and I want to go to university there’s no money. So my dream maybe was to be a lawyer and then I have to go to varsity to be a lawyer, there’s no money at the house. It means what, my dream is gone.

Charity: But your dream is not gone, your dream is not gone, you can.

Adam: But how will you make it?

Many of them linked what they read to their own personal experiences, which Chambers (1996) refers to as world-to-text. They were able to compare events, characters or language in the text with those known to them personally and vice versa. They were able to bring their own worlds to the world of the story allowing them to
make meaning of what they read (Chambers, 1996). As can be seen in the extract above, the booktalk also led to learners linking events in the book to their own lives. Charity saw the possibility of her and anyone in the group accessing university, despite the lack of money. Adam and Abraham both thought that they were in a hopeless position and chose to focus on their lived realities, while most of the girls were filled with hope that they could realise their dreams as the characters in the book did.

4.4.3 Drawing together of learnings

The activities that I observed and worked with gave learners the opportunity to engage with text and interact with other members of the group. They were enthusiastic and the attendance at all the sessions was very good. They were eager and participated willingly in discussions, writing, workshop activities and the presentation. Learners were more enthusiastic about the off-site workshop and this was a highlight of the project for them. The visit to the university especially allowed them to consider the possibilities for future goals (as informally shared by many).

The observations gave me an opportunity to see which linguistic repertoires they drew on when communicating with the coordinator and with each other. This was a true multilingual space as most of them used languages interchangeably and easily switched between Afrikaans, isiXhosa and English. It was enlightening to see that languages were not automatically culture-bound but came from their lived experiences and their desire to be able to communicate with their peers. Fluency was not a prerequisite for the languages they engaged in with each other, as the focus was on communication for sharing and meaning-making. Use of languages has implications for how these can be mobilised this for the acquisition of other skills required in school context (Busch, 2012). These observations also gave me valuable insight into how to structure the focus group discussions, as I had a good idea of who the dominant speakers were in the group and had a better understanding of their language resources. It also enabled me to look more critically at their dialogic journal entries and the language repertoires they used when writing.

4.5 Dialogic journal entries

Learners were requested to make regular entries in their dialogic journals. These dialogic journals encouraged reflection on their reading but were not limited to their
book readings only. The coordinator would then respond to their entries by using prompting questions like “was this interesting, why do you say this” and “what else can you tell me about…” this normally elicited further writing or comment. This provided a way in for further learner exploration and writing as described by Jesson and Rosedale (2016). There was no language preference specified for these entries, and it was up to the learners to decide which language or languages they wanted to use, though the language of the engagement project tended to be English in line with the school LoLT. Learners were encouraged to submit their dialogic journals during the reading club sessions and it could be taken home again with the new books they had selected. The reading club sessions as explained in 4.4.2 above were held after school in any available classroom. I firstly, explain the writing context of the school and learners before presenting and discussing extracts from their dialogic journals.

4.5.1 Writing context

The fact that most learners are expected to learn in a language other than their home language, makes it difficult to practice and promote meaningful writing, especially in our rural, previously disadvantaged schools. It is therefore a challenge to get learners to view writing as anything other than a school literacy, especially with learners who have a different home language to the language of teaching and learning (LoLT) as is the case with learners in this study. Many of these learners experience writing only as a product of rote learning or just copying notes from the board and may not see that writing can be a home literacy or a tool for engagement with others as can be seen in the language indicated for writing in their language profiles. Writing is viewed as something that is marked, so their experience of writing did not include writing for enjoyment or something that could be used for thinking and developing their own voice. Most of their writing in school is summative and includes different genres but teachers seldom have time to provide the feedback which is needed to develop writing Akinyeye and Pluddemann (2016) and Dornbrack and Dixon (2014) as discussed in chapter two.

Writing requires thinking skills to order one’s thoughts on paper (Ivanic, 2004). It was anticipated that the dialogic journal writing that engaged learners and drew on their linguistic repertoires, would encourage English second language learners viewing writing as a more meaningful practice if they did it regularly. It also built a dialogic
understanding by offering opportunities to engage with a supportive and interested audience (Scheckle, 2014). This speaks back to Bakhtin’s (1981) notion as explained in chapter two, that language is heteroglossic and has multiple meanings. The dialogic journal writing took place in a different space, different from the normal school regiment and the writing we engaged in was a different type of writing. The dialogic journal writing had the potential to become a communal activity and an established social practice.

4.5.2 Presentation and discussion of dialogic journal entries

The journal entries turned out to be difficult to manage, because all activities were voluntary, entries and submissions were not as regular as had been anticipated. However, most of the learners attempted to submit when reminded. Some first entries included chunks of the book copied and some learners explained what they read in isiXhosa and one learner in Afrikaans. Learners could draw on their language repertoires to make sense of the content of their books and was able to share this. Some learners first wrote in isiXhosa and then translated their own writing to English. This could be because they wanted to accommodate the coordinator, who they knew was an English mother tongue speaker. Those who made regular journal entries and submitted these for a response from the coordinator, showed an increase in the length of their written responses as well as some ‘own’ reflection of what they read.

The two boys who never submitted their dialogic journals attended almost all the sessions where I was present. The non-submission may be because they joined the project later than the others. Although Adam claimed that he did not have a journal, Abraham in fact had one. Despite the lack of written submissions, it was always evident that Adam read most of the books being discussed. Mather and Rule (2017), state that the way in which boys and girls respond to writing activities differs. This could be due to social and developmental differences and perhaps because languages are often considered girl-appropriate subjects. In this case, it may well be that because they were only two boys, they just wanted to do things differently from the girls. It was also clear that while Abraham was fluent in isiXhosa and Afrikaans, he was conscious of his English proficiency, whereas Adam was the most fluent in spoken English in the group.
4.5.2.1 Journal entry focus

The journals of three learners were selected for discussion. I selected two isiXhosa home language learners because they were in the majority in the group and one Afrikaans home language learner. Selected extracts from Noxolela, Shelly and Okuhle's journal entries are inserted.

Noxolela: I selected this journal because Noxolela had the most entries of all the journals collected for analysis. She had twelve entries in total, though not all were about books, she introduced herself, made predictions about book titles and then started with the entries as shown below. I only discuss three of her entries but will comment on the others and how Noxolela's journal entries changed over time.

Her very first entry was written in isiXhosa only. The thought-provoking question in the coordinator’s response to her isiXhosa writing garnered a reaction and probably served as encouragement for her to keep writing. She shared that explaining what she read in isiXhosa first, helped with her confidence and she was less reluctant to talk about the book in English, because she knew she understood the story.
Figure 4.7: Noxolela’s dialogic journal entry 1 (no date)

Noxolela wrote in the above extract, [Theme of the story - I will help you: what I learnt is that we should help one another, especially someone that is hurt so that they can help us back one day. The story is about a woman who went to fetch water and she got hurt by a wire on her arm and leg. The woman asked for help and she was helped by a boy called Lungile and he ran away after helping her. Someday Granny sent Lungile to the shops to buy bread, and he met up with his friends. They played in the river and he lost the money. The Granny said to him don’t come back here without my bread, he went to look for the money and he found it near the river.]

She started her entry with what she had learnt from the reading, which was insightful, before recounting the story in her own words. From the coordinator’s response I can assume there was more than one story in the book, Noxolela gave no indication of the title of the book but the reading record lists her as reading Big Ups which is a collection of short stories from FunDza. She did not respond to the question of whether she read all the stories. It could well be that she wrote about this story because she could identify with it or she understood it or perhaps it was the only story that she had read.
In contrast with her first entry, her second entry is very long. Here she only wrote in English but still extended her writing. She did not provide the book title and copied big chunks from the book. She also recounted the story in the beginning with her own words. She responded to the coordinator’s comment with her own thoughts about the story.

Figure 4.8: Noxolela’s dialogic journal entry 2 (16-08-2016)

She started her writing with ‘I think...’ an indication that there was some reflection about the meaning of the title but does not elaborate on why she thinks this. The above extract continues over another two pages where it seems she added some of her own ideas. The coordinator responded with, “this sounds like your story. Did you enjoy the story? What did you like about the story and why?” She responded, “I like this because Betty wants to be pretty and me too, I wants to be pretty.” She related to Betty in the story and seemed to understand her need for braiding to enhance her beauty as this was something, she may want for herself.

The third entry is a about Nana upstairs and Nana downstairs. The book is full of illustrations and the story is easy to read. I only included an extract of the last section
from her lengthy entry to show her response to the coordinator’s comment. In her comment she seemed aware that Tommy’s great-grandmother had died, but in her entry in her dialogic journal she commented that ‘Nana downstairs was a great-grandmother’ which demonstrated her understanding of the story.

Figure 4.9: Noxolela’s dialogic journal entry 3 (30-08-2018)

It is important to note that there were still copied extracts from the book, however these were carefully selected specific parts and woven into meaningful comment. In subsequent entries the trend continued but she explained it better during booktalk sessions. Noxolela’s journal entries show how the responses from the coordinator gave her an opportunity to reflect on her writing. This may not have been long reflections, but she continued to read and write about all her books. It shows how she used the multilingual space to draw on her full linguistic repertoire to make sense of what she read, enabling her to take up her place as a legitimate language user (McKinney, 2017).

**Shelly:** Shelly’s home language is Afrikaans; the extract below looks at her very first journal entry. The response from the coordinator helped her to reflect on what she
read as can be seen by her response. She also shared that, once she saw that her writing was not “marked” but responded to, she was far more eager to write. How we respond to learners’ writing clearly has an impact on how they will respond to future writing activities. She wrote about the following books: *Ruth First*, *Oh the things that you can do that are good for you*, *Sunday Times*, *Mary’s wishes* and *Claws*.

![Shelly's dialogic journal entry 1 (30-08-2018)](image)

**Figure 4.10: Shelly’s dialogic journal entry 1 (30-08-2018)**

Shelly’s reflection on her reading gave a summary about the book, but she could pick up on the race division, although she did not mention this explicitly. Her response though, shows that she could come to that conclusion by looking at the cover and the word ‘freedom’ allowed her to make that connection. She understood that she could look at elements of the book to help her predict the content. She clearly appreciates that the coordinator values her input as can be seen by her response, which is written in a very formal register.

The final entry in Shelly’s dialogic journal is about the book *Claws*. This is from the *Goosebumps* series that was also popular with the learners.
Figure 4.11: Shelly’s dialogic journal entry 4 (no date)

Shelly gave a very concise description of the book but gives the essence of the story. She can convey some of the mystery and gives her point of view. The reader might not understand the complete story but is able to get the gist of it and the mystery is cleared up in her last sentence. Most of the details she tends to share during booktalk are not part of her journal entries. Her entries show her thinking her way through the book and attempting to understand the children’s actions and understanding that the cat does not die.

Shelly’s comments during the focus groups discussions, about how she was motivated to write is contradicted by the number of journal entries. She had three short entries, one with more extended writing, which consisted of selected extracts from parts of the book and the final one as seen above, which was a very brief description of the book. She read all the books above and more as relayed during booktalk but seemed more comfortable talking about her books than writing about them.
Okuhle: Okuhle is an isiXhosa home language speaker. She had eight entries, in the first entry she wrote a bit about herself and then a prediction about the title of a book, *The Skin I live in*, both were in isiXhosa. The third entry has no heading and is written in isiXhosa and English. Thereafter all her entries preceding the entry below are in English only. Some of the titles she wrote about are: *Little green fingers*, *Sunday Times*, *the magic paint brush*, *Nana upstairs & Nana downstairs*, *Chasing Dreams* and *Is there anyone like me in the world?* Previous entries were short and not very detailed. She responded to the responses from the coordinator. I selected her dialogic journal because I observed her starting to write the entry below immediately after a discussion. She had already read the book but then requested to keep it longer. My initial thought was that she would next read it with more insight and possibly extend her writing.

![Image of Okuhle's journal entry]

**Figure 4.12: Okuhle’s dialogic journal entry 8  (06-02-2018)**

She attempted to write about what she read and at the same time gave her opinion (during focus group discussion) stating that, “*Thuli is like me and Amanda them during weekends*” It showed that she saw the similarities between the book, specifically chapter 4 and her own life. She “brings her world to the world of the text by alluding to
familiar social contexts” (Chambers, 1996, p. 40). The book evoked a very interesting reaction as many of the learners had to think about their own role in their future aspirations. I observed that when learners selected a book after it was discussed and wrote about it, these entries were far more substantial. The same was observed with Charity but I had no other journal entries to compare her writing with, as she joined very late. Chasing Dreams was a very popular book and elicited much discussion and debate. Writing seemed to be undertaken easier if learners wrote about a book that they identified with, as seen with Chasing Dreams.

4.5.3 Conclusion on the discussion of the dialogic journals

Writing in the dialogic journals was taken up differently by different members of the project. This is in line with the voluntary participation nature of the project. Most of the journal entries took place in 2016 the second year of the engagement. It had the potential to become a far more established practice if it occurred more frequently. The dialogic journals do give some indication on how learners can use their multilingual repertoires to make sense of what they are reading, and they could share this in their home language. Some moved from writing in their home language only, to attempting coherent accounts of their books that they read. We also see that they could see the potential value of these entries in their journals, by their accounts in the focus group discussions, as will be discussed further on in this chapter. Considering how learners are schooled into thinking that writing is for marks, this new approach to writing may have seemed unusual. Despite the uneven nature of the journal responses, all who participated enjoyed the opportunity of engaging in writing for thinking in dialogic space.

4.6 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The focus group discussions took place towards the end of the project to give learners the opportunity to reflect on their engagement. As the last section of the data generation, the focus groups were also an opportunity for learners to share their experience of the project. I gave the learners prompting questions to give them the opportunity to reflect on the entire process and to respond authentically. The discussion topics as outlined in chapter three were selected to answer the sub - questions:
• *In which ways might dialogic writing encourage learners to participate in literacy as a social practice?*

• *How might the choices of language engage learners in responding to text?*

In attempting to give an authentic account of learners’ contribution and to ensure their voice was not distorted all recordings were transcribed for discussion.

### 4.6.1 Discussion of Focus groups

As outlined in chapter three the focus group discussions were held with the fifteen grade 10 learners who were the participants in this study. The focus group discussions took place towards the end of the study during the reading club sessions and after the dialogic journal writing phase had been concluded. From a close reading of the transcripts the following themes emerged from the focus group discussions: the value of talking about the books; writing in their journals without fear of judgement; more confidence; books that they could identify with and the freedom to speak and write in any language. There was also a perceived improvement in vocabulary and an increased desire to read. The following themes were selected for analysis: dialogic writing, choice of books, choice of language and confidence.

#### 4.6.1.1 Dialogic journal writing

Although the journal writing was not as frequent as I had anticipated the learners who submitted their journals regularly clearly valued the experience as can be seen from extracts below. I selected extracts from the transcripts where learners refer to the dialogic writing. In the extract below Shelly shares her experience with dialogic journal writing.

**Extract 3: Focus group discussion (2018-03-07)**

| Shelly:  | I like how when she, I was writing to her and she was writing back and it was like we are having a conversation. It’s like we were chatting about something that I can; she was not judging us. She wanted to know more like when she wants to know more its like inspires me to write more words about stuff and [inaudible 00:07:00]. |

Shelly seemed to value the collegial discussion she associated with the dialogic journal writing. The dialogic journals became more conversational for her.
Extract 4: Focus group discussion (2018-03-07)

Shelly: at the first time when I wrote my first journal it was like I was shy, I don’t want to share all of my thoughts in the book. So, when Dr Eileen replied to me the first time and then the second time, I thought for myself why must I be shy because Dr Eileen understand me, and I wrote like a whole two pages. I share my thoughts by reading a book. I learn more words and I was writing these high words and I was feeling high. Writing these words, I feel so good I was like Dr Eileen was not judging me so why must I listen to them who’s going to judge me. I was like writing words, I was just feeling like Shakespeare.

It was an exchange more focussed on meaning and a personal response and it was not focussed on getting the right answer. Shelly’s journal entries might not have reflected the extended writing she alludes to, but she clearly drew inspiration from it and seemed and sounded motivated. This reflects an opportunity to experiment with language and try out vocabulary in a meaning-making space.

The extract by Amanda as can be seen below was surprising as she was always a very vocal participant throughout the project.

Extract 5: Focus group discussion (2018-03-07)

Amanda: I think it’s actually better because of when you write you can say nice things, like you can talk in front of a lot of people without getting shy and basically talk to each other without thinking but I think the reading helps me a lot to write, it gives me that confidence to do things in English.

She shares that she found it easier to write than to talk implying that it is easier to say certain things in writing, this could well be linked to her modelling her accent to what she thinks is acceptable as explained in 4.3.1.1 above. This would make it easier for her to write because than she does not have to concentrate on ‘sounding’ right. In the same way she felt that the reading helped her to write in her dialogic journal. Modelling her sentences on those in the book even though some may have been copied verbatim, created a sense of achievement and it contributed to her increased confidence.
Charity joined the group very late when we were already having the reflective sessions and booktalk. She is an avid reader and passionate when sharing. She only had one journal entry on *Chasing Dreams* which was written in essay style associated with extensive details and reflection on her own life. She had taken on the practice of school literacies of drafting and revising. The extract below relays some of her passion.

**Extract 6: Focus group discussion (2018-03-07)**

| Charity: | When I write in my journal I actually feel, I felt great because I was like sharing what; I was writing what’s in my mind and instead of talking to someone because when I talk to someone and they shy all this stuff but when I’m writing it’s like a lot better yah. |

Charity seemed to think a lot about what she read and how she would share it. She made several contributions during the focus group discussions and was able to draw other learners into the discussion because she is also fluent in Afrikaans and IsiXhosa.

Ayanda felt that listening to what other learners wrote, served as an inspiration to her. It must be remembered that, although Ayanda may have been reluctant to speak she had regular dialogic journal entries. Her extract below gives an indication of what motivated her to write.

**Extract 7: Focus group discussion (2018-03-07)**

| Ayanda: | What I think about the journals I’m saying yes. When I’m reading the books and the other kids’ journals they inspire me to write my own book about my own story for the future. Like I can write in the future like when I’m writing in my journal right now, when I write and all of you guys read, I get so excited when you say that Ayanda, *lekka* story. That inspires me to write a book so one day in my future I just want to write a book about all this and share my story with the rest of the world. |

She clearly valued their comments when she shared her own entry and sees this as motivation to continue her writing and positions herself as someone with a story to tell. Ayanda started with a very short journal entry in isiXhosa and her writing continuously became more extended. It is encouraging that she sees herself writing her ‘own’ story in the future.
Other participants shared similar sentiments and felt that the dialogic journals encouraged them to write more. It would seem from Ayanda’s experience that learners exchanged journals and read each other’s responses to books. This would suggest that that the learners took more ownership of their dialogic journals. They went beyond an exchange with the reading club coordinator to a more communal practice of also sharing their writing with friends. They seemed excited to be writing more and to be writing differently from usual school practices.

4.6.1.2 Choice of books

Learners clearly appreciated the autonomy in being able to select their own books from a wide variety made available during this study. However, a core selection seemed to be favoured, specifically the Harmony High series and various other FunDza publications: Jealous in Jozi, Sugar daddy, Broken promises, Too young to die, Chasing dreams, Shark attack and Sabotage. This could be because learners identified with the characters and the issues addressed in these books. The small books of the Stories for Change series were also popular, because it was a quick read, learners identified with the content, the language was easy to read, it was small in size and easy to carry around. The Harmony high and Stories for Change titles are all books set in the South African context which makes it easier for learners to identify with the language, events, names and possibly places.

Although we had some FunDza books initially, we received some more towards the latter part of the project. Discussions and writing on these books were also far more in depth as the journal writing developed and the learners who did not read it were motivated to take them home. Although there were learners who stuck to the more well-known Disney, Goosebumps and Harry Potter series, there were learners like Adam, who would take on more serious readings like Roll of Thunder. Many of them could think of real-life situations or their own experiences that were the same as in the book. The learners seemed to think that if they enjoyed a book it was easier to write about it. The extract below also shows how they found it difficult to write if they did not understand or identify with a book.
**Extract 8: Focus group discussion (2018-03-19)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Charity:</th>
<th>Okay, so now let’s listen. I’m saying is that if you are excited about a book, then it’s easier to write about a book that you are excited about that you like.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants:</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayanda:</td>
<td>It was difficult to write if you, you don’t understand like Book of dust it was so confusing yho.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone screams yohhh the book of dust.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanda:</td>
<td>It was having bold words that I couldn’t understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants:</td>
<td>Yeesss! (avid screams)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanda:</td>
<td>Ok, chasing dreams as we said last time that book is very interesting why I’ve learnt more things out of that book, that it’s not hard, it’s not by any grade 12 it’s not the stop, it’s not the end of the road for you, you just have to carry on. And even if for example it’s hard it doesn’t mean that you have to give up. There’s always a way, you will always find a way, even if it’s not the way that you want it to be. Many things don’t come the way you want to. It never comes the way you want to. Some other ways, sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants:</td>
<td>Amen! (loudly)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When learners liked a book that they read, and if they identified with the content, they were more motivated to write about it. The opposite was the case if they found the language use in the book difficult or could not relate to the context, as most of the learners did with *Book of Dust* which was a promotional extract of about 3 pages to whet their appetite (see extract 8). Some books needed more scaffolding especially if it presented an alternative world as in *Book of Dust*. Existing knowledge is central to making sense of text (Abdulatief et al., 2018) and the context, style, theme and vocabulary in the *Book of Dust* was very different from what the learners were used to.
4.6.1.3 Choice of language

The aim of positioning this study in a multilingual space was to shift the deficit positioning of rural, English second language learners on account of their language resources (McKinney, 2017). McKinney further states that translanguaging allows for better ways in which learners can develop competencies. Learners do not have to be proficient in English as they bring meaning and meaning-making resources with them.

The heteroglossic nature of the group enabled them to bring a diverse range of voices and languages into the space. They used all their linguistic repertoires simultaneously and used their languages interchangeably to make sense of what they read and to enable them to share this with others in the group. They had the freedom to apply any of their linguistics repertoires however they saw fit. The extract below gives an account of learners’ discussions about a multilingual approach to engagement in literacy.

Extract 9: Focus group discussion (2018-03-19)

| Amanda: | I thought it was helpful because in the uhhh first book I didn't know how to write other words in English. and I didn't, most of the words I didn't understand them in English but I know the story. |
| Adam: | so what did you do to understand those words? |
| Amanda: | I wrote them in isiXhosa then I just write them in English. |
| Adam: | okay. |
| Noxolela: | and some of the lines you get, you speak isiXhosa and you mix isiXhosa with English [inaudible 00:02:30] |

It seems that despite not being familiar with all the words, Amanda was still able to understand the story. She may have been able to draw on her language history as she went to an Afrikaans medium primary school and may have had some idea of how to make sense of the unfamiliar words when reading it in context. She is also fluent in isiXhosa as explained in 4.3.1.1 above. Noxolela implied that it was helpful to interchange between languages to make sense of words she did not understand. Learners were aware of moving between languages as their focus was on meaning making rather than operating in a particular linguistic box.
The extract below demonstrates how learners used their language repertoires to explain their experience in the reading club.

**Extract 10: Focus group discussion (2018-03-19)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abraham</td>
<td>Ndizive ndikhukulekile ukuthetha isiXhosa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Yes, I was comfortable when speaking isiXhosa it helps me to think better]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busi</td>
<td>Awukhange ubhale. (laughing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[You didn’t even write]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abraham</td>
<td>Hayil Zimisele wena.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[No, be serious you]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nandipha</td>
<td>Ndicinga ukuba kuleminyaka mibini idlulileyo ndifunde lukhulu kwicwadi ezifana noJealous n Jozi, Sunday Times. Ezinye bezithetha ngamabali ayinyaniso. Ezincwadi zisinceda sifunde ngelizwe lwethu sifunda icwadi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanda</td>
<td>Ndikhumbula ndifunda uNelson Mandela kunye ne Sunday Times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[I remember reading Nelson Mandela and Sunday Times]. I also read lots of books the last two years like ‘Nandipha’ I read the autobiographies and the books of schools. I read the autobiography about Nelson Mandela and others and I was also read a book of other high schools which is Jealous in Jozi. Ohhh and the last one. Ndiye ndafunda icwadi ethetha ngeSikolo.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This type of collegial conversation and playful banter (extract 10) was common towards the latter part of the focus group discussions. Reading clubs as the focus group discussion shows, created a space to engage with books and connect to the world. The focus groups provided an opportunity to step back from the individual reading to a communal space in which to reflect on the entire process. This allowed them to appreciate the reading journey they had been on as evidence in the titles they refer to and their awareness of their own growth.
Learners were never given any instruction on a specific language to use but were told that it did not matter which language they used. Often learners would just build on whatever the previous speakers said no matter what the language, sometimes someone would volunteer to translate, or the speaker would repeat it in English mostly. In addition to the above Adam added:

“So, I think for me it will be a very good feeling if I can speak maybe about four languages and then when I go somewhere; I can be able to talk to them in a way that you can understand each other in a very good way. I think it’s a very good thing and it gives good experience.”

In response to Adam’s statement Shelly adds, “I learn a lot of languages here at school with my friends because now I have been learning from them how to speak Xhosa and here in the group. I even learn how to upgrade my English from poor to good.” It seems that Shelly sees the engagement in the reading club as an opportunity to improve her English but also sees the social interaction with her friends as an opportunity to learn and practice an additional language in a safe space.

Not surprisingly though most learners eventually moved to writing in English only again this speaks to the hegemony of English and the perception that it is the only right way to write. This is significant in that the use of their home language did not diminish their ability to make meaning of what they read whether they wrote it in English or in their home language. Multilingualism has the potential to enhance understanding as learners navigate their own meaning making use of the linguistic repertoires with which they enter schools. The sociolinguistic realities of everyday life for multilinguals are better captured through translanguaging (Garcia & Wei, 2014). When learners can use language interchangeably there is more agency in discovering meaning for themselves. The affordance of using their home languages increased the learner’s participation in the process and they were able to engage with and respond to the texts drawing on their full linguistic repertoires. Thus, they were able to learn with and from each other.

4.6.1.4 Confidence

Allowing learners to use their full linguistic repertoires seemed to encourage participation in the activities geared towards developing literacy as a social practice.
The valorization of learners’ contributions also appeared to build learners’ confidence. The belief in their efficacy as readers and writers motivated them to want to do it more (Mehigan, 2016). The positive comments from the reading club coordinator seemed to affirm their ability and they continued writing and as mentioned before those who submitted regularly had a definite increase in the number and length of journal entries. During the focus group discussions as seen in extract 4 Amanda says, “and these two years I’ve learnt to get out of my comfort zone. I’ve learnt to speak in front of a lot people.” Amanda became more confident in her interactions with others and here she was specifically referring to an English poem that she read at the community presentation. She goes on to add, “I’m not even scared coz now I’m comfortable to do it and by reading books mostly I was not that good in English but now I can even write a book.” Their increased confidence led to far more emotional comfort and learners became far more active in group discussions and booktalk. Noxolela’s continued extension in her writing can be contributed to an increase in confidence stemming from the motivation of the group. The implication of this is that a space that promotes multilingualualism can develop and encourage participation in literacy as a social practice.

4.6.2 Conclusions

It is evident that the learners’ contributions during the focus group discussions resonate with the concepts of heteroglossia and hybridity (Bakhtin, 1981). The learners who contributed to the discussions shared their experiences honestly and without reservation. The focus group discussions foregrounded the learners’ experiences of the dialogic writing throughout the project.

Inherent in these discussions were the recognition of different voices as espoused by Bakhtin (1981) and the ongoing interaction between the learners. This was particularly appropriate within this multilingual group where the linguistic diversity could be accommodated through the dialogic engagement. “Thus, dialogic engagement could take place in a space of respect for one another, a space of equal and shared power and without compromising the dignity of the other.” This project drew in other voices, enabling mutual and reciprocal learning (Cherrington et al., 2018). Within the reading club it also drew in the voices from the texts as learners reiterated what they had read and echoed the character’s words and sentiments.
Furthermore, the learners in this study saw the engagement in dialogic writing and the broader engagement project as an experience that may improve their future prospects. They identified language and specifically the improvement in English as a vehicle to access institutions of higher education. An unintended consequence, which arose during discussions in the focus group was that the learners felt it improved their overall confidence to communicate in English. Some learners noted improvements in other aspects of their language skills, like vocabulary.

This chapter presented a discussion of the findings and provided authentic evidence of how learners experienced the dialogic approach to writing. I believe that through the extracts of the writing of the participants and the transcripts of the discussions one can see how learners engaged with and experienced the dialogic writing. The contributions made by the learners during the focus group discussions showed learners’ contributions and their perspective of their engagement and experience with the dialogic journal writing. Chapter 5 will highlight the conclusion to these findings and make recommendations based on these findings.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“All words have the "taste" of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life.”

Mikhail Bakhtin

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the generated data and gave a detailed description of the findings. The discussion demonstrated how learners in a rural high school engaged with and experienced a dialogic approach to writing. With the assistance of the coordinator, Dr Eileen, of the multiliteracies and multilingual node we engaged with the learners in the selected school in a rural area in the Eastern Cape. Over a period of almost two years we co-constructed knowledge through a qualitative, participatory case study as explained in chapter three. We engaged in book readings, booktalk, dialogic journal writing as well as focus group discussions. I attempted to answer the study’s two sub-questions by using a data-driven thematic analysis of the focus group discussions. This, together with a comparative analysis of the journal entries and my observation field notes collectively answered the main research question:

How do English second language learners, in a rural high school engage with and experience a dialogic approach to writing?

To answer the above research question, the following sub-questions arose:

1. In which ways might dialogic writing encourage participation in literacy as a social practice?
2. How might the choices of language engage learners in responding to text?
The themes presented in my study were re-contextualised using Bakhtin’s theory of Dialogism. In this, the final chapter, I reflect on my position, reflect on the findings, list the limitations, propose recommendations and give a concluding summary of the study.

5.2 REFLECTIONS

I believe that the predominant finding of this study is that it highlighted how English second language learners, in rural schools and possibly other marginalised communities can be encouraged to engage with and experience a dialogic approach to writing. The finding holds relevance for the development of language and literacy in the dominant discourse in South Africa and can be used to guide the development of language policies into practice in schools. Learners took ownership of their dialogic journals by reading what the others wrote and sharing their own writing, which went beyond an exchange with the reading club coordinator to a more communal practice.

I further found that engaging in literacy activities were context bound and central to developing dialogic journal writing as a practice. The *Bua-lit* language and literacy collective describes the whole language approach as learning to read for meaning from whole texts. “Learners must have the opportunity to engage with reading and writing texts and share their book readings” (Abdulatief et al., 2018). This research study provided these opportunities. Many of them used the contextual clues on their book covers like words, titles and pictures and their own background knowledge for prediction of the text and to write in their dialogic journals. Learners recognised how all these elements contributed to orientating their thinking when reading a book. Thus, participation in the literacy activities seemed connected to how much they wrote. In instances where they found the content relevant to their own lives, they were far more eager to engage in the booktalk and for some learners this made the writing easier. In addition, the choice of books available is central to engagement with text, as shown by the interest in the FunDza books that were relevant and had familiar context.

Not surprisingly, I found that although none of the learners came from an English home language background, many of them indicated that they felt it was the most important language. This speaks to the hegemony and perceived affordances of English, a recognition of its power and possibilities. In their language profiles, where many of
them referred to it as the language of their hearts, this was tied to a belief that if they hoped to be successful, they would have to master the language. The issues of identity, self-worth and hope attached to this perception are complex, and it once again affirmed the inter-connectedness of language and power as described by Janks (2010).

The notion that an audience is central in writing and literacy education as espoused by Mendelowitz (2016) was clearly visible in this study. I found that when learners responded positively to each other’s sharing during booktalk or when they read from their dialogic journals then the learners were eager for the next time when they will be able to share again during the next reading club session. The sense of audience played a major role in encouraging some learners to continue their participation as shared by Ayanda in extract 7 “feeling inspired by reading other kid’s journals” and Charity “felt great because I was sharing”. The positive comments from the coordinator in her responses led them to believe in their efficacy as readers and writers and the more confident they became the more they engaged and the more eager they became to participate in the literacy activities. It was a significant finding to see how the participation in the literacy activities and the dialogic journal writing contributed to increased confidence.

Linguistic, cultural, socio-economic conditions and possibly geographic locations in rural areas are often positioned as a challenge in educational settings. Yet, despite not being proficient in English learners were able to make meaning of the text they engaged with by drawing on their language repertoires. The freedom of choice to use any language gave them the courage to translanguage when needed. The multilingual nature encouraged engagement with the texts through booktalk and dialogic journal writing. The fact that most of them moved to writing in English only is testament to the power of English, and their realisation that they would have to develop their proficiency if they wish to succeed in the academic space. However, the findings show that the heteroglossic practices, which allowed the simultaneous use of diverse languages, enabled learners to draw on whatever resources were available in their repertoires to make meaning. They were not expected to have equal competence in these languages (Bakhtin, 1981; McKinney 2017).
In addition, I found that positioning the study in the third space removed it from everyday school practices. This was especially relevant as learners viewed reading and writing and specifically English as school literacies only. The dialogic journals can be seen as a hybrid genre of writing positioned between life narrative and the school (Creme, 2008), and as dialogism is viewed through the lens of a third space it was an apt choice. Bakhtin refers to hybrid as the overlapping of languages, “the mixing within a single concrete utterance, of two or more different linguistic consciousness, often widely separated in time and space” (1981, p. 429). The learners in this study often drew on two or more languages to make meaning through translanguaging it was also a community practice. They grew without even realising it, as demonstrated by their agency in making their dialogic journal writing a communal practice, their increase in confidence and even the previously reluctant participants finding their voice. This speaks to the opening quote “I live in the world of others’ words…” they have mastered the understanding of the text. using their own languages in order to make sense of the English literature. Hamilton & Barton (1998) presents literacy as social practice and describes it as a link between reading and writing, it is what people do with literacy activities, what it means to them and how they can use it to transform their lives. The learners in this study used their linguistic repertoires to participate in the booktalk and dialogic journal writing to engage with and respond to texts. This resonates with the opening quote to this chapter; besides languages they also drew on a ‘taste’ of the genre of booktalk. Their words show how they took up ‘book’ literacy and recontextualised it in their own socially changed lives.

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Reflecting on the engagement project and on this study particularly, I am aware of the limitations and challenges which presented in my study. Although my participation as a post-graduate student in the engagement project between the university and the school-community had several benefits including but not limited to funding, accessibility, academic support and motivation it also had a fair share of challenges:

- Positioning my study in an existing project proved quite challenging as I had no input in the selection of the research site, the participants and my methodologies had to be aligned with that of the bigger project.
• Working with a small group of learners creates a close bond and it is proving difficult to end the relationship even though the study has been concluded.

• Time was a big limiting factor as we did not have access to the school at times due to internal school and community strife. Several learners also lived in a nearby village and were dependent on organised transport, so sessions had to be concluded on time, irrespective of where we were in the process or delays in starting.

• The nature of the study also allowed learners to drop out and new ones to join, but we had full attendance of the whole group during the last four sessions of focus group discussions. Learners were thus only able to reflect on events or activities in which they participated.

• Participatory research and focus groups can be very challenging, more so when working with children. Despite assurances that there are no right or wrong responses, learners were often more concerned about ‘saying’ what they thought was expected especially during booktalk. A reflection of the schooling system and the provision of textbooks that give the right answers.

• The limited resources at the school also led to having to ‘search’ for a suitable location to meet and not having access to working toilets meant that learners could not be kept for long periods at a time. We tried to lessen the impact of these contextual factors by transporting the learners to the university for some sessions and held the presentations at a nearby church hall.

• We had to contend with outside noise and interruptions’ which at times compromised the quality of the voice recordings which impacted on the transcriptions. I was able to ensure the authenticity of this data by supplementing it with my field notes taken to capture original ‘voices’ of the participants by providing direct quotations.

• The different nodes within this engagement project worked with different groups of learners, each node had complete independence and had different activities. However, perhaps this was not clearly communicated to participants on initiation of the project, learners saw some groups as having more benefits than others (especially when one group travelled by air, stayed in a hotel and received branded items). This caused discord and demands of equal treatment.
The engagement project came to end before my study was concluded, thus while I observed the increased participation, growing confidence and positive outlook within the context of my study, I cannot comment on the success of the overall engagement project’s aim of promoting agency in a rural school-community. The project may have ended too early for this study before structures could be put in place to ensure continuity of the current processes.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS
This study presents the engagement and experience with a dialogic approach to writing of rural high school learners, close to Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. The findings revealed that some learners preferred speaking about what they read, and this can be used as a foundation for their writing. It might imply that learners will do better at acquiring new knowledge if they are allowed to draw on their home languages during multilingual discussions, to make meaning of new concepts prior to summarising that new information in writing. Creating more opportunities for learners to write will develop generalising strategies for further writing development and it forms the basis of active agency.

It is thus suggested that the school continue the literature club and encourage other learners to join, also getting parents and youth in the community involved in coordinating activities. The school could approach literacy intervention groups like FunDza or others active in the Eastern Cape to assist with acquisition of age-appropriate books in all the languages used at the school which learners can relate to. The school should actively encourage and allow multilingualism and translanguaging across the curriculum to create opportunities for learners to make meaning of the content. Encouraging writing across the curriculum will also ensure that it is not seen as a Language (subject) skill only.

5.4.1 Possibilities for further research
More research needs to be conducted on a dialogic approach as a teaching strategy to enhance meaning-making of content across the curriculum, for English second language learners. In addition, using multilingualism to acquire a new language or to develop literacy seems to hold great potential for further research into issues related to hope and is especially relevant in the context of decolonisation of language and
literacy. Furthermore, research is needed on how rural learners can be accommodated in appropriating multilingualistic literacies in the absence of the dominant school language in their everyday lives. Finally, universities should consider initiating research projects to investigate how intervention and/or engagement projects are sustained and how they can be supported to ensure long term gains for the community.

5.5 CONCLUSION

My study was motivated by the limited research on a dialogic approach to writing to engage rural high school learners in literacy. I wanted to explore how ESL learners in a rural school-community engaged with and experienced the process. By using a qualitative participatory case study, guided by a constructivist paradigm I responded to my research question: How do English second language learners, in a rural high school engage with and experience a dialogic approach to writing? Learners were invited to participate in the multiliteracies and multilingualism node of the university and school-community engagement project, and my research study became an extension of the reading club established at the start of the engagement project.

This study has found that while there were not nearly enough entries made to establish dialogic journal writing as an established practice, it showed how learners moved from their initial short entries, many in their home language to more translanguaged and even longer entries. It is evident that the third space in which this study occurred gave learners the opportunity to engage in literacy as a social practice. The initial gains we made, even if somewhat limited in writing can be used to further develop their writing abilities. Furthermore, the study has shown that if learners know that they are contributing to their own learning, they are for more eager to participate. Creating a safe and encouraging environment, where learners can use their home language to negotiate meaning, contributed to increased confidence to attempt ‘new’ things. Lastly, it has created a sense of anticipation for what the world has to offer beyond their rural school. I believe it also dispels the deficit notion that rural learners enter the school space with no language resources as the study gave a rich description of their language resources they draw on.
REFERENCES


Bakhtin MM (1986) Speech Genres and Other Late Essays. Austin, TX; London: University of Texas Press.


Mather, N., & Rule, P. (2017). Getting the boys involved: Using an interactive questionnaire to investigate Grade 6 boys’ writing. *Reading and Writing, 8*(1), 64-73. doi: 10.4102/rw.v8i1.146


Mehigan, G. (2016). *Effects of Fluency Oriented Instruction on Reading Achievement and Motivation among Struggling Readers in First Class in Irish Primary Schools*. English Writing.

Mendelowitz, B. (2016). "You’re are in Fundzaland": Pre-service teachers (re) imagine audience on a creative writing course. *Reading and Writing, 7*(2). doi: 10.4102/rw.v7i2.106


Ref: [H15-EDU-ERE-014 /Approval]
Contact person: Mrs U Spies
8 September 2015
Prof N de Lange
Faculty: Education
South Campus
Dear Prof De Lange

DIALOGIC ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN LOCAL AND UNIVERSITY COMMUNITIES: ENABLING AGENCY TOWARDS ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION

PRP: Prof N de Lange
PI: Prof N de Lange

Your above-entitled application served at Research Ethics Committee (Human) for approval. The ethics clearance reference number is H15-EDU-ERE-014 and is valid for three years. Please inform the REC-H, via your faculty representative, if any changes (particularly in the methodology) occur during this time. An annual affirmation to the effect that the protocols in use are still those for which approval was granted, will be required from you. You will be reminded timeously of this responsibility, and will receive the necessary documentation well in advance of any deadline.

We wish you well with the project. Please inform your co-investigators of the outcome, and convey our best wishes.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Prof C Cilliers
Chairperson: Research Ethics Committee (Human)

cc: Department of Research Capacity Development
Faculty Officer: Education
Enabling agency towards active citizenship in the context of education (EATAC) (2015-2017)
Node 3: Multiliteracy and multilingual practices
Dear Parent

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN LITERACY RESEARCH

I am Eileen Scheckle, a lecturer in the Faculty of Education at NMMU. This study seeks to investigate learners’ literacy histories, especially with regard to reading novels and reading club experiences.

This part of the project involves learners who have participated in reading clubs either at school or after school, participating in focus group discussions about

- Their experiences of reading literature throughout their early years
- The role of literature in their lives and their experiences of participating in a reading group

In addition participants will be invited to present their experiences of literature to a reading group at another local high school and to listen to the other group.

Your child’s participation is voluntary and she or he may leave the study at any time without any penalty. All discussions will be treated confidentially and no learners’ names will be used without their consent. All activities will be video recorded and transcribed.

There is no monetary compensation for participating however learners will be given a safe space to share and discuss their literary experiences. This will in some way speak back to how learners are positioned and give their literacy practices a voice. There are no foreseen risks involved in participating in this study.

Should you have any questions, you may reach me via email (Eileen.scheckle@nmmu.ac.za) or phone (041 5042828).

Do you understand this study and are you willing to allow your child to participate?  

[ ] YES  [ ] NO

_________________________  ________________________
Your name                  Date
ANNEXURE C: INFORMATION LETTER TO LEARNERS

Enabling agency towards active citizenship in the context of education (EATAQ)(2015-2017)
Node 3: Multiliteracy and multilingual practices
Dear Learner

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN LITERACY RESEARCH

I am Eileen Scheckle, a lecturer in the Faculty of Education at NMMU. This study seeks to investigate learners’ literacy histories, especially with regard to reading novels and reading club experiences.

This part of the project involves learners who have participated in reading clubs either at school or after school, participating in focus group discussions about

- Their experiences of reading literature throughout their early years
- The role of literature in their lives and their experiences of participating in a reading group

In addition, participants will be invited to present their experiences of literature to a reading group at another local high school and to listen to the other group.

Your participation is voluntary and you may leave the study at any time without any penalty. All discussions will be treated confidentially and your names will be used without their consent. All activities will be video recorded and transcribed.

There is no monetary compensation for participating; however, you will be given a safe space to share and discuss your literary experiences. This will in some way speak back to how learners are positioned and give your literacy practices a voice. There are no foreseen risks involved in participating in this study.

Should you have any questions, you may reach me via email (Eileen.scheckle@nmmu.ac.za) or phone (041 5042828).

Do you understand this study and are you willing to participate? [ ] YES [ ] NO

______________________________ ______________________________
Your name Date
ANNEXURE D: LEARNER CONSENT FORM

EILEEN SCHECKLE
OFFICE: 60121; PHONE: 041 504 2828; CELL: 082 682 4074

Dialogic Engagement project: Using languages and literacies

16 May 2016

Dear Learner,

You are invited to participate in the language and literacies section of a bigger research project entitled Dialogic engagement between local and university communities: Enabling agency towards active citizenship in an education context (NRF Grant 2015-2017).

Explanation of the Study (What will happen to me in this study?)
Grade 8 Learners are invited to participate in the languages and literacies section of this project. Learners will be expected to read and write certain texts which could include headings or captions for pictures or cartoons, reading on different media as well as reading stories and writing responses to them. The reading and writing are not for marks but there will be feedback. Learners who want to participate will be expected to attend the sessions and participate in the different activities.

Risks or Discomforts of Participating in the Study (Can anything bad happen to me?)
There are no physical risks to participating in the research. We hope you will be happy to share your writing with others and offer and accept commentary on what is written.

Benefits of Participating in the Study (Can anything good happen to me?)
We hope you will become more confident in various literacies and appreciate more the power of language in shaping us and our learning.

Confidentiality (Will anyone know I am in the study?)
Your names will not be used unless you would like me to use them. You can also choose the name you would like to be known as during the study.

Contact Information (Who can I talk to about the study?)
The study leader is Naydene de Lange and you can direct any queries to her or to me. Our contact details are at the end.

Voluntary Participation (What if I do not want to do this?)
As this is a voluntary project, no-one will be forced to join in. While I would like you to commit to the full programme, you are free to leave it at any time without any repercussions.

Do you understand this study and are you willing to participate?

YES  NO

Are you willing to be recorded every week during the study?

YES  NO

What name would you like to use throughout the study? ________________________________

Signature of Child ________________________________

Date ________________________________

Eileen Scheckle 041 504 2828
Naydene de Lange 041 504 4519
## Annexure E - Book reading: Multiliteracies & languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First name</th>
<th>Books read 6/8</th>
<th>16/8</th>
<th>23/8</th>
<th>30/8</th>
<th>Nov 2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>28 March</th>
<th>7 March</th>
<th>19 March</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sandy</td>
<td>Karamoko’s Dream</td>
<td>Sunday times stories</td>
<td>Stronger than Lion</td>
<td>Disney’s Pocahontas</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Book of Dust</td>
<td>Chasing Dreams</td>
<td>Sabotage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bubble</td>
<td>The right thing to do</td>
<td>Sunday times</td>
<td>Big Ups</td>
<td>Peter and Friends</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Whitney’s Kiss</td>
<td>Book of Dust</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpumi</td>
<td>Jealous in Jozi</td>
<td>Big Ups</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(Big Ups + ST)</td>
<td>Big Ups</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>speak A</td>
<td>Chasing Dreams</td>
<td>Sabotage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nandipha</td>
<td>Books are friends</td>
<td>Sunday Times</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>A Royal Dog</td>
<td>Broken Promises</td>
<td>Planet Fruitcake</td>
<td>Book of Dust</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Chasing Dreams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noxolela</td>
<td>Big Ups (Brown)</td>
<td>Sunday Times</td>
<td>The right thing to do</td>
<td>Nana Upstairs, Nana Downstairs</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Too Young to Die</td>
<td>Chasing Dreams</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okuhle</td>
<td>I will help you</td>
<td>Books are friends</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Little Green Fingers</td>
<td>Planet Fruitcake</td>
<td>Basketball game</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Break House</td>
<td>Shark Attack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ziyanda</td>
<td>Big Ups (Green)</td>
<td>Sunday Times</td>
<td>Jealous in Jozi</td>
<td>Lady and the Tramp</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>The Outsiders A</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anelisa</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Sunday Times</td>
<td>Sunday Times</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14 times a woman</td>
<td>Harry Potter</td>
<td>Book of Dust</td>
<td>Harry Potter</td>
<td>Broken Promises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelly</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Ruth First</td>
<td>Oh the things you can do</td>
<td>Tuck Diary</td>
<td>Goosebumps: Claws</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Too Young</td>
<td>Sabotage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanda</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Sunday Times</td>
<td>Broken Promises</td>
<td>Big Ups (Brown)</td>
<td>Tuck Everlasting</td>
<td>Book of Dust</td>
<td>Shark Attack</td>
<td>Chasing Dreams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Broken Promises</td>
<td>Big Ups</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Roll of Thunder A</td>
<td>Book of Dust</td>
<td>Shark Attack</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abraham</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Sunday Times</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Zondi’s first Taxi ride A</td>
<td>Book of Dust</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elise</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Journey to Joburg</td>
<td>Diary of a wimpy kid</td>
<td>Book of Dust</td>
<td>Tuck Everlasting</td>
<td>Sabotage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charity</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Shark Attack</td>
<td>Island of the Blue Dolphins</td>
<td>Chasing Dreams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sindiswa</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Shark Attack</td>
<td>Chasing Dreams</td>
<td>Sabotage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>