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Teachers' Pedagogical Approaches and Learners' Engagement with English Literary Texts in Secondary Schools, Johannesburg West District

by

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A thesis submitted to the School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education.

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November 2020

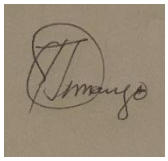
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ABSTRACT

Since the dawn of democracy in South Africa, it has been the objective of the Department of Basic Education to provide equal, quality education to redress the disparity that characterised the past apartheid government. According to existing literature, quality education can be achieved if teaching and assessment focus on guiding learners to engage critically with knowledge. This study was conducted to explore the pedagogical and assessment strategies used by teachers while teaching Grade 12 English literature in First Additional Language at secondary schools. The aim was to find out if such pedagogical and assessment strategies used can promote learners' critical engagement with content to promote critical thinking skills. As the study is qualitative, it relied on the outcomes based on the value of data collected through observing teachers and learners during English literary lessons, as well as on interviews conducted with selected learners and the teachers to obtain supplementary data to establish perspectives on the teaching and learning of English literary texts in relation to the development of critical thinking in learners. Data collected from the three secondary schools revealed that while the teachers believed that teaching English literature is valuable, the reading aloud instructional strategy and lower-order questions used in teaching English literary texts was contrary to this optimism. This is because according to literature, this combination alone cannot promote higher-order thinking which indicates critical thinking skill. In addition, the uncritical engagement with texts as observed could not help the learners to relate to content to the point of applying the knowledge gained in the English literary classes to other subjects offered in the English language, as well as in their real lives. This means that teaching and learning in the public secondary schools in South Africa still focus on comprehension and the uncritical acquisition of basic knowledge. This also implies that the basic education in the country will continue to produce learned individuals who lack critical thinking skills and, in the larger scheme of things, will continue to lead lives of mediocrity. The fact that the findings from all the three secondary schools revealed a persistent lack of development of learners' critical thinking skills suggests that this problem is widespread across the basic education sector in the Johannesburg area. The recommendation from this study is that teachers should use learner-centred pedagogical strategies, critical reading and higher-order questions to help learners to

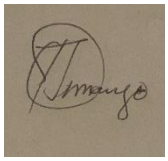
think and appreciate English literary content which is viewed as a reflection of society. In this way, learners can become independent thinkers capable of tackling challenges that they face in their communities. The critical acquisition of knowledge and skills would not only improve the quality of education in South Africa, but would also uplift learners' standard of life because a nation that encourages quality education prospers in all areas needed for survival.

Keywords:
Pedagogical Strategies; Assessment Strategies; Critical Thinking; Critical Engagement; Higher-Order Thinking; Lower-Order Thinking; English Literature; English FAL.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

Name: John Simango

Signature: 

Date: 30 November 2020

Dedication

I dedicate this study to God Almighty who through his unlimited wisdom and grace bestowed the value of education to my late father, Norman Hasane Simango, who in turn spent his life doing his best to ensure that all his children receive better education and opportunities he did not have. You are no longer with us, but your valuable lessons of hard work, faith, hope and integrity still live with us.

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Abbreviations

DE:	Department of Education
DBE:	Department of Basic Education
CAPS:	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
CT:	Critical Thinking
HOT:	Higher-Order Thinking
LOT:	Lower-Order Thinking
LoTL:	Language of Teaching and Learning
FAL:	First Additional Language
EFAL:	English First Additional Language
SMT:	School Management Team
RA:	Reading Aloud
NCS:	National Curriculum Statement
OBE:	Outcomes Based Education
FET:	Further Education and Training
HL:	Home Language
FL:	First Language
HOD:	Head of Department

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Preamble

One of the major objectives of education is to create a certain type of human being who is capable of confronting the challenges of everyday life, conscious of the immediate environment, with the aim of promoting peace and harmony among nations (Carl, 2012). This cannot be possible if education is aimed at filling students' minds with information to be retrieved at a later stage without thinking. Literature and the appropriate teaching of selected texts play a notable role in attaining the above educational objectives. Of importance for literature, also known as literary art or literary works, is that it can transport learners mentally to different environments and introduce them to new concepts, ideas, and cultural and traditional practices foreign to them.[1] In his thesis on "Teaching Literature for Critical Thinking in a Secondary School", Madondo (2012, p.6) argues that "through the teaching, learning, and study of literature, teachers are presented with an opportunity to develop learners' critical engagement with the relationship between the past and the present". What Madondo is saying is that literature plays a notable role in the development of critical thinking skills and can help learners to find their place in the present after studying about the past in literary texts. Madondo further asserts that "if taught and studied critically, literature can be a source of knowledge which will enable learners to make critical judgements about the society they live in" (Madondo, 2012, p.7). Thus literature can be a way of negotiating difference, a means of constructing a self and necessarily a way of relating to others, which includes racialized others (Schultz, 2001). It was the intention of this study to find out the type of teaching and assessment strategies teachers used during English literary lessons, and if such strategies were aimed at teaching learners how to engage critically with content.

[1] The word learner will be used interchangeably with the term 'student' to accommodate direct quotations that includes the term 'student'.

While using literature in the classroom can widen learners' understanding of their own and other cultures (Snelson & Elison-Bowers, 2009), it is complex and some learners need great effort to interpret literary texts, especially texts which are written in a language which is not their mother tongue. This shows the importance of teachers to instil the skills of literary interpretation on their learners. However, some English literature teachers find it challenging to bring their learners to an appreciation of English literature (Mabunda, 2008) and its critical nature. It possibly has to do with teachers and learners' understanding of what literature is all about, what role it plays in the post-apartheid South Africa and in their everyday lives in particular. In addition, teachers' epistemological and ontological beliefs, as well as training in teaching literature, might also play a role. Regarding teachers' training in particular, Mabunda (2008, p.2) suggests that "it would seem necessary for teacher training institutions to become central in the provision of a modest form of critical literacy to teacher trainees". This is important especially because it is unclear whether during apartheid teachers were trained in critical literacy and pedagogical practices. The current status of teachers' critical literacy and the interpretation of English literary texts are barely known as well, hence the need for this study.

The ontological view of literature explains human nature themes in literary works, which may inform learners to critically reflect on humanity and comprehend possible reasons why people act in a certain manner in differing situations (Bracken, 2006). This means that literature, as a tool to acquire critical thinking skills, may help learners to understand themselves and their environments, to reflect and rationalise knowledge and ways to share it, which explains the epistemological aspect of literary art. Epistemology in literary art means the knowledge and beliefs that could be acquired through studying literary texts, which could enable learners to share and debate about their knowledge of literary content (Young, 2001). It should be borne in mind as well that all this can only be possible if the pedagogical strategies used by teachers during English literary lessons are effective enough to promote critical engagement with knowledge. This study, therefore, intends to explore the role that English literary texts taught in township secondary schools have to influence learners' critical thinking.

The concept of critical thinking has been defined by many authors and researchers, one of whom is Coughlan (2007). In his study titled “Learning to Learn: Creative and Critical Thinking”, he defined critical thinking as “the reflection on new information that also encompasses rationality, self-awareness, honesty, open-mindedness, good judgement and discipline” (Coughlan, 2007, p.8). This elucidation reveals that critical thinking skills can help learners to reflect, that is, to carefully think and evaluate new information in order to reach a rational conclusion for a better comprehension. For learners to develop all the above critical thinking elements, teachers should use effective teaching strategies, and therefore this study explored teachers’ pedagogical strategies during English literature teaching in terms of whether it promotes critical thinking. In his book “Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, Freire (1972) discusses about a narrative strategy, which is dully effective to induce critical thinking in learners. It involves a teacher narrating content that is detached from the conceptual reality of the audience, a strategy Freire calls the “banking concept of education” (Freire, 1972, p. 3). Here the teacher is the source of knowledge which is delivered (or deposited) to a ‘meek’ group of learners who act as mere recipients. In South Africa, the above could be the result of how teachers were trained in the past, as (Gardner, 2008, p.21) states: “the educational philosophy that underpinned the training was called Fundamental Pedagogics. This educational philosophy was developed during the apartheid years. It promoted an authoritarian attitude towards the young and discouraged questioning or critical analysis by learners’’. This emphasises the fact that during apartheid, teacher training focused on teaching basic literacy than critical thinking, which makes the education system incompetent when compared to other developed states like Britain and the United States of America.

Alternatively, Freire (1972) offered the ‘humanistic’ and ‘revolutionary’ strategies as alternative to the banking concept. It is humanistic because it promotes the idea that humans are creative in nature, therefore teaching should focus on stirring the innate creativity in learners, and creativity is one of the necessary elements of critical thinking. The revolutionary nature of teaching means that teaching should instil transformation in the way learners think to revolutionise or bring about changes for the betterment of their communities (Freire, 1972, pp.12-16). To achieve this, learners should be critical in their reading and engagement with literary texts, but this can only be possible if the teaching strategies are suitable to enforce this critical engagement.

While it is currently unclear which pedagogical approach teachers use for English literature, it is evident that if they use the banking concept or similar pedagogical strategies critical thinking will remain a perceivable concept but an unattainable educational objective. Pedagogical strategies in this study means the teaching or instructional strategies used by teachers to impart knowledge. Therefore the terms pedagogical strategies and teaching strategies are used interchangeably. It is understood that the term pedagogy encompasses other elements in education than mere teaching and learning, such as the society, politics, culture, economy. It is essential that the term is used to mean the teaching strategies or approaches that may in turn promote critical thinking skills lacking in various spheres of human life in South Africa. This study thus explored and interrogated teachers' pedagogical practices in the English literature classroom to gain an insight on whether and how teachers shape learners' engagement with literature to promote critical reading of English literary texts studied at Grade 12.

1.2. Background of the study

With reference to teaching of English in South African black schools, Balfour (2006) states that the introduction of Bantu education "was vocationally orientated to prepare pupils for semi-skilled forms of labour that did not require anything more than basic literacy and communicative competence" (Balfour, 2006, p.46). If this was the purpose of teaching English in black African schools, it is important to explore whether there were improvements as the curriculum has changed several times since then, from Outcomes Based Education (OBE) to the current Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) which is an extension of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). To ensure that learners acquire the necessary skills like critical thinking at secondary school level, teachers should depict a certain degree of effort to impart the skill of critical thinking. This may not be the case in South Africa because according to Balfour (2006, p.48), "teachers seemed to be obsessed with completing the English language syllabus" rather than possibly teaching learners skills to engage with English literary texts. In addition to the rush to finish the syllabus, teachers seem to use 'teacher-centred methods' of teaching in which students simply obtain information from the teacher without building their engagement level with the material being taught (Boud

& Feletti 1999). Whether this teaching approach still exists in the schools in general, and particularly in township secondary schools, is unclear. This makes the current study important to gain an insight of the teaching and learning that takes place in English literature classrooms.

The importance of teaching literature to promote critical thinking skills has been explored by scholars such as Nur Abida (2016) who noted that “having literature in the teaching and learning process can create the process of critical thinking for students will practice expressing opinions, drawing inferences, explaining cause-and-effect relationships, comparing facts and applying ideas they have gleaned from literature to new situations” (Nur Abida, 2016, p.14). What Nur Abida says above shows that teaching literature can indeed promote critical thinking skills but it depends on how literary content is taught and interpreted by the teachers, hence this study. The value of teaching literature for critical thinking is also expressed by another scholar and educator, Hakes (2008). In her book titled “When Critical Thinking met English Literature”, Hakes (2008, p.1) states: “I teach critical thinking in the hope that it will enable students to have more control over their worlds rather than less; that they will question, will not be manipulated, and will demand answers”. This quotation reveals that literature has the potential to equip learners with the reasoning power not only to comprehend ‘their worlds’ but to have control over their lives and environments. The argument shows that teaching for critical thinking is ideal and can result in the kind of valuable education system mentioned by Carl (2012) cited earlier.

The reality of the education system in South Africa, according to Spaull (2013), is the continual failing of the youth, because it focuses on quantity rather than quality. English literature, which has been established as a possible source of language skills (Ihejirika, 2014), can also be the ideal medium to foster critical thinking in order to reap better quality results. In particular, there is a concern that few learners who make it to higher education may drop out in their first-year of studies (about 50-60%) statistically, because of inadequate preparation from lower level classes (Van Zyl, 2007). It is evident therefore that learners enter institutions of higher learning under-prepared for creative, innovative and critical thinking engagement with contents, considering that this context requires these skills for success.

1.3. Problem statement

In post-apartheid South Africa, a noticeable general dearth of understanding of what is meant by critical thinking and an apparent incapacity to teach it was emphatic when curriculum 2005 was introduced (Mgqwashu, 2007; Mabunda, 2008). The argument is that even though South Africa and its education system is in the new era (post-apartheid era), it seems the concept of critical thinking is not yet comprehended by both teachers and learners. The Curriculum 2005 replaced the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), which in turn was extended in the current Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). Mabunda (2008) and Mgqwashu (2007) argue that during the Curriculum 2005, teachers tended to lecture at passive learners using a curriculum that was divorced from the reality of learners which could not foster critical thinking. When the Outcomes Based Education curriculum was introduced, it was hoped that the objective of instilling critical thinking would be achieved (Lombard & Grosser, 2008) because teachers were encouraged to allow learners to construct knowledge for themselves, while working collaboratively in groups on authentic tasks. It was assumed that in a democratic South African context the approach would promote critical thinking, because literature should not be taught to transmit and preserve the culture of the dominant group (Mgqwashu, 2008) but to problematise and interrogate it. Despite the aspirations and promises of the South African curricula from Outcomes Based Education (OBE) to the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), the continuing poor performance of learners in different tests and learners' challenges with academic literacy in institutions of higher learning seem to show the lack of creative and critical thinking. The conclusion from Warnich and Meyer's (2013) research shows that most teachers still engage in rote learning and spoon-feeding that do not promote critical thinking. It is problematic that some South African teachers appear to use rote learning and spoon-feed learners, which may also shape the teaching and learning of English literature. In addition, there seems to be fewer researches on the topic of critical thinking conducted in the township schools, hence this study.

Samuel (1995, p.100) voiced his concern about the lack of critical thinking at university level as follows:

> I do not think that I am too bold if I say that despite the supposedly liberatory content of what University or college students engage in during their study of the English language, the dominant pedagogical engagement with the content still reflects a generally passive, uncritical and uncreative learning character.

What Samuel is saying above is that learners at institutions of higher learning are expected to engage critically with educational content because teachers are preparing learners for future professions, but this is not the case. According to Samuel (1995), the reality is that the uncritical teaching and lack of learners' deeper engagement with literary content cause learners to struggle at university level. This means that the teaching and learning activities at secondary school level do not lay a good foundation for learners to cope with the level of teaching and learning at institutions of higher learning. The pedagogical engagement, according to Samuel (1995) in the quotation above, is also mediocre that it cannot promote critical thinking skills. Individuals with critical thinking skills, especially in higher positions, are needed to lead others to think and act critically and creatively, which can in turn impact positively on the economy. If pedagogical engagement reflects passive, uncritical and uncreative learning, it means that learners are simply being taught how to answer examination questions so that they can advance to the next level. Literature, which is supposed to be a rich source of language knowledge and skills and has the potential to broaden the thinking capacity of learners, is just treated lightly and its importance is overlooked (Baillin, Case, Coombs & Daniels, 2010).

The long-term consequences of uncritical literary teaching, according to Ramdass (2009, p.111), is that it "hinders the South African people from becoming an educated nation". This scholar further explains that lack of proper education means that there is fewer skilled and knowledgeable individuals that lead productive lives to contribute to the economy of the country, while the rest languish in abject poverty and ignorance (Ramdass, 2009). Based on these insights, one can hypothesise that if learners complete secondary school with training on thinking critically then they will be skilled enough to lead productive lives that will boost the economy of South Africa.

1.4. The rationale of the study

Many countries of the world prioritise the English language (and its literature) in their curricula, for instance, the South African Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) and the American States Standards (ASS) Curriculum, also known as the Common Core States Standards (CCSS). The CAPS curriculum recommends the engagement of language across the curriculum, with the justification that the mastery of language would increase learners' thinking skills to perform well in other subject areas, whereas the ASS curriculum has what is referred to as the common core standards that are compulsory in all the states, meaning subjects that are considered to be essential for the curriculum, and English Language Arts is one of them (Ainsworth, 2010). Therefore, these two curricula prioritise language as the main pillar to obtain their educational objectives, and critical thinking is considered essential. Literature is part of language study, and CAPS promotes the teaching of literature (both in English and African languages) to promote critical thinking. However, little research has been done post-1994 to gain an insight on how literature is taught in relation to the promotion of critical thinking in schools. It is therefore important to find out how and who selects the English literary texts and how they are taught, and whether the teaching and learning experience promotes critical thinking skills. In continuing with this idea, the CAPS document stipulates that one of the aims of teaching English literary texts is "to produce learners that are able to: identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking" (Department of Basic Education, 2011, p.5). This means that critical thinking is regarded as a valuable skill by the DBE, and this study needs to explore whether this aim is achieved and if not, to explore solutions to tackle the challenge.

My involvement in teaching English at a community learning centre that caters for learners from different schools that did not pass Grade 12 with university entrance or obtain qualification to attend institutions of higher learning helped me to understand the lack of critical thinking among learners when engaging with English literary texts. During informal discussions with learners, I discovered that they have not been exposed to literature and engagement with literary texts as one would have expected. This increased the interest to gain insight on Grade 12 learners' engagement with English literature and teachers' approaches when teaching English literature.

1.5. The purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate English First Additional Language (EFAL) teachers' pedagogical and assessment approaches in teaching literature to determine whether they promote critical thinking among Grade 12 learners.

The objectives of the study are summarised as follows:

1. To explore the role that the teaching of English literature plays, if at all, in promoting Grade 12 learners' critical thinking in Soweto, Gauteng Province.
2. To interrogate how assessment is used to promote critical thinking with Grade 12 learners in township secondary schools.

1.6. The research questions

The research questions are as follows:

1. What pedagogical strategies do teachers use to foster critical thinking when teaching English literature to Grade 12 learners in Soweto secondary schools, Gauteng Province?
2. What assessment methods do teachers use to promote critical thinking using English literary texts at Grade 12?

1.7. Conclusion

To conclude, it is quite conspicuous, based on the arguments in this chapter, that teaching English literary texts is a valuable exercise. This fact is derived from different and numerous ideas explored that explain the many benefits of teaching literature, such as developing learners' language skills. The literature cited in this chapter has revealed that if English literature is taught appropriately, other more valuable skills, such as higher-order thinking skills which is related to critical thinking, can be achieved. It is however a necessity to consult other scholars and researchers on the topic to gain more perspectives on the teaching and assessment of English literature

and the desired objectives of promoting critical thinking. The next chapter therefore presents the literature review of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The focus of this study is on teaching and learning during English literature classes at Grade 12 level at secondary schools in Soweto, west of Johannesburg. The study was intended to observe the transference of critical thinking skills to learners through the teaching and learning of English literary texts. To lay the foundation for the data collection exploring the pedagogical and assessment strategies teachers employ while teaching English literature at Grade 12 English First Additional Language (EFAL) classes, a review of fundamental literature in this field of study was pursued. While undertaking this review, it was established that the way teachers and learners perceive English literature was important as this could influence the level of interest and engagement of English literary content. The concept of 'Critical Reading' was intensively explored as different scholars and researchers made the connection between studying literature and critical thinking. The concepts of critical thinking and literature and were defined and discussed as those were the main focus of the study. The discussion here also traces the teaching and subsequent results of teaching English literature during the past apartheid (Bantu) education to the present CAPS curriculum.

2.2. The concept of critical thinking and English literature

There seems to be many attempts by scholars and authors to explain what literature is and one of the explanations is provided by Meyer (1997, pp.3-4) who notes that literature refers to the genres of poetry, prose, fiction, or drama which "are read aesthetically; are intended by the author to be read aesthetically; contain many weak implicatures (are deliberately somewhat open in interpretation)". To expatiate on this view, the term 'literature' refers to written works such as poetry, short stories, novels and plays that are studied in all languages. Many studies contend that the literature section in the English curriculum is essential to enhance learning of the English language and to exhibit understanding in other components of the subject matters or

learning areas (Mustakim, Mastapha & Lebar 2014). According to Mustakim, Mastapha and Lebar (2014), “literature in education is aimed at the potential of students in a holistic, balanced and integrated manner encompassing the intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical aspects in order to create a balanced and harmonious human being with high social standards”. This suggests that the inclusion of literature in the English syllabus is aimed at improving learners’ language skills such as reading, writing, speaking, spelling, pronunciation and communication which are regarded as a driving factor in ensuring that individuals attain high standards of living in society. The teaching of English literature is viewed to be important because it warrants teachers to employ pedagogical approaches that can enhance learners’ learning of morals and develop critical thinking skills when engaging with various literary texts.

The concept of critical thinking requires thorough comprehension, and like many other concepts it has been scrutinized and debated by many different scholars and researchers. One of these scholars is Paul (1997, p.2) who contributes the following elucidation to help in the comprehension of the concept of critical thinking:

> This concept of critical thinking is multi-dimensional, including the intellectual (logic, reason), the psychological (self-awareness, empathy), the sociological (the socio-historical context), the ethical (involving moral norms and evaluation), and the philosophical [ontological] (the meaning of human nature and life).

The above definition of critical thinking provides all the facets of the term, meaning that if learners can acquire all the listed skills they would be complete in all areas of their lives. This definition points to the kind of person Carl (2010) says education can produce: the ideal human being who is aware of the challenges facing his/her community and who uses knowledge and skills for the betterment of humanity and the environment. Critical thinking skills, to explain part of the definition by Paul (1997), may stimulate learners’ sense of logic and reasoning. The logical reasoning is the skill needed for the psychological challenges learners at Grade 12 level may face as they are at very critical stage of their lives (adolescence). These challenges may be in the form of self-doubt which can lead to atrocities such as peer pressure, experimenting with drugs and alcohol, which are some of the challenges facing the youth today. Critical thinking is also sociological because it can help learners to be aware of their cultural, traditional, religious and historical standing in comparison to other

communities and states. It has already been pointed out in Chapter One that English literature can expose learners to different sociological aspects, and the critical teaching and engagement of literary texts can help learners to become critical to the point of questioning what they use to believe in. According to Paul's definition again, the critical teaching and learning of English literature can help learners to appreciate the meaning of life and nature. The stage of appreciation is the highest level in critical cognition of content, whereby learners not only critically comprehend content but can also infer meaning from texts based on critical analysis.

The argument in the preceding paragraph is important as logical reasoning is required in studying English literature in order to fully comprehend content and not to forget the way teaching and assessment of English literature is carried out, as this may influence how learners respond to content. This study wanted to inquire if English literature, and the way teachers critically engage learners using relevant questions, may result in learners who depict all the multi-dimensional aspects of critical thinking. According to Woolfolk (2010), critical thinking skills encompasses the capacity to define and clarify problems, determining if the information is enough and conducive to reach a certain degree of consensus or conclusion or inference. This definition of critical thinking again explains the value of the skill in a sociological sense, whereby learners can employ the skill to 'clarify problems' both in the classroom and in their communities to become solutions to challenges rather than becoming the challenges. Global problems such as youth unemployment result from the kind of teaching where learners are fed information without being taught how to think about it, leading to graduates who need someone to think for them to come out of the trap of poverty.

Critical thinking can help learners make informed conclusions based on known facts, not assumptions. One of the notable elements of critical thinking skills is problem solving, and it is educationally acceptable to explore if English literature can teach learners how to solve everyday challenges. It is not viable to face a challenge without the knowledge and comprehension of that particular problem. This study intended to look into English literary texts and the pedagogical strategies to discover the liaison between literary content and how it engages learners in critical thinking. Woolfolk (2010) further revealed a certain characteristic of critical thinking skill which includes the connections of information from different literary texts, a concept called

corroboration. This happens when learners discuss about one literary text and include information from another to validate their claims. Only learners (and teachers, I must add) who possess critical thinking prowess can manage to make such connections, and this depicts what Thomas and Thorne (2009) term higher-order-thinking (HOT), which is a kind of thinking other than merely memorising and reproducing facts, but doing something unusual with the new information. This skill is important for all learners to acquire before they reach Grade 12, because it is assumed in institutions of higher learning that learners have it already. Thus English literature has the potential to encourage learners to gain these skills, depending on the nature of teaching and learning. The learner's personal characteristics, such as culture, traditions, belief and level of thinking, is also important, a reason this study includes understanding learners' perceptions of English literature and approach to reading the literature.

Abrami et al. (2015) define critical thinking in terms of its inferential nature, its ability to instil self-evaluation and sound judgement of content. Inference, as one of the characteristics of critical thinking skills, is important because that is where a conclusion about an issue is reached, which must be based on objective and empirical study. Self-evaluation can instil the valuable tendency to refrain from indulging in things that can be harmful to learners such as alcoholism and drug abuse. This argument is profound, and raises the question of whether literature, coupled with ideal instructional methods, can induce the above critical thinking elements in learners. According to the CAPS curriculum (Department of Basic Education, 2011), literature is the embodiment of critical thinking, which can also help learners to be creative.

Creativity, as one of the major ideal objectives of the current curriculum, can be achievable through critical thinking. What this means is that creativity can be possible after thinking at a certain higher level called higher-order thinking is achieved. Therefore, it was deemed necessary to investigate if literature could induce some or all the mentioned elements associated with critical thinking in Grade 12 learners, and more importantly to investigate the way teachers of Grade 12 teach and assess English literary content. The teaching or instructional methods could then inform how the learners respond, and in this case the study investigated learners' engagement with English literature for critical cognition.

2.3. The teaching of English literature in the South African context

The Department of Basic Education (2011, p.14) stipulates that "the aims and objectives of teaching literature in basic education are to enhance creative thinking, and this creativity is one of the elements of critical thinking". In order to achieve the objective of creativity as stated above, learners must first develop critical thinking skills, and the themes in English literature would enable learners to develop a critical mentality (Van Roekel, 2011). This means that teachers should plan their English literature lessons with the aim of promoting critical thinking skills, in order to achieve creative thinking, as the curriculum requires.

While English literature education is important for enabling all learners' creativity and critical thinking, in South Africa there is a need to understand that most learners study English (even though it is considered as one of the official languages, and the language of teaching and learning) as First Additional Language (FAL) or Second Language (SL) in many predominantly black secondary schools (Monyai, 2010). To add to this argument, despite the fact that English is taught from the lower levels, the reality is that some learners at Grade 12 still experience difficulties in mastering the language (Caddy, 2015). This may in turn result in lack or limited critical skills development for such learners, and also a lack of creative thinking skills as required by the curriculum. In order to gain more insight on the teaching and learning of English literature in South African secondary schools, it is imperative to find out what teachers and learners think of the compulsory subject (English), especially the literature part of it. I believe that the way both teachers and learners perceive English literature influences how they engage with it, which may in turn result not only in the acquisition of knowledge and language skills but of critical engagement with content as well.

2.4. Teachers' views on the study of English literature

The way teachers perceive English literary texts can have an impact on their performance, which in turn can either increase or diminish outcomes. According to Collie and Slater (1990), most English teachers believe that the use of literature plays a significant role in foreign language teaching. These authors further declare that

“literature offers a bountiful and extremely varied written authentic material which is important in the sense that it says something about fundamental human issues, which is enduring rather than ephemeral” (Collie & Slater, 1990, p.17). Yes, the importance of literature has been established in the introductory chapter, about how literature may equip learners with permanent life lessons (themes), but the difference here is the inclusion of English as a foreign language. With the above quotation in mind, some teachers believe that English literature is vital to teach second language acquisition, and to instil critical thinking in learners as they are exposed to a variety of ideas. Since this study was conducted in the township of Soweto where the majority of learners are black, the above quotation became more relevant as the subject (English literature) is studied as a First Additional Language (FAL). The fundamental human issues mentioned by Collie and Slater (1990) above are themes or moral issues that shape human existence which authors often write about, such as love, respect, religion and politics. These are the elements literature should address, and teachers should use viable teaching strategies to interpret these message to learners in order for them to start thinking critically about English literary content.

According to Richardson and Eccles (2007), some teachers consulted in some parts of Europe view English literature as a four paradigm theory, namely, culture, language, social and personal growth. This means that English literature content teaches societal elements such as culture and language for identity and growth, especially when learners are exposed to other cultural and linguistic entities. Literature is perceived as a lens with which to analyse cultures, peoples and languages for personal growth, and therefore should be included in the curriculum. It is a representation of reality that explains human existence, and therefore is important to be taught and interpreted to help learners to think about what they learn. As English literature is perceived to be a tool to analyse cultures, peoples and languages and for growth in totality, it is advisable to use teaching strategies that would help learners to comprehend and most importantly to critically think about content.

According to Ukpokodu (2011), some African teachers perceive English literary texts as colonial tools to undermine and degrade Africans. This means that for these teachers, English literature is used to propagate the superiority of colonialists in Africa,

while local customs and values are ignored. This belief can influence the way these teachers engage with literary texts, with the possibility of performing at a lower rate which would not result in critical transference of knowledge. The irony here is that most African writers write in the English language, and most African teachers use the same literary and critical theories as Europeans (Ukpokodu, 2011, p.3). In this way, African writers who write in the English language have the platform to redress and uplift African values, beliefs, cultures and traditions. Ukpokodu (2011, p.17) also contends that the content of English literary works seems to be the central point when it comes to some African teachers, not the geographical origin of the authors, meaning that a good English text, coupled with a good pedagogical strategy, may promote critical thinking in learners despite the origin of the text as only the message is vital.

On the other extreme, there are teachers who think that the importance of literature in language studies (particularly the English language) is overrated (Butler, 2006). Their reason is based on the fact that literature may teach students life skills and critical thinking, but the study of language itself, e.g. the rules of grammar, is also necessary for language proficiency. According to these teachers, teaching English literature should enhance the acquisition of language skills for effective communication rather than focussing on the morals of the stories. Language skills and fluency are important, but learners should also be taught how to think so that their fluency and communication skills would be based on profound inference of ideas for the betterment of humanity. While studying the English language is vital, the language used by authors in literary texts can help improve leaners' fluency levels, but teachers' ability to engage effective pedagogical and assessment strategies are important as well.

Since this study was conducted in South Africa, it was imperative to know what South African teachers thought about literature, and particularly English literature. In this regard, scholars such as Samuel (1995) note that there is a call among South African teachers to Africanize literary works to suit the environment where learners come from. What these teachers enunciate is that European and American literature is not relevant for African and particularly South African learners. According to Samuel (1995), teachers further argue that while English texts can enrich learners with language skills, some themes are irrelevant for South African learners as the content

often elevates foreign values over local customs and beliefs, and so cannot provide students with critical and creative skills to solve challenges in their communities. This perspective was already shared by Ukpokodu (2011) cited earlier, and is further echoed by Brooke (2003, p.4) who argues that “telling our local stories is vital to understanding our place in the world and our responsibility to it”. However, while this might be the case, it is not a guarantee that Africanizing literature will automatically produce critical thinking learners; rather, it is thorough interpretation of literary content by teachers that is vital to help learners develop their own perspectives. Hence, this study observed teachers and learners during English literature lessons.

During the apartheid era, the Department of Basic Education was criticised for being Eurocentric when it comes to the choice of literary texts included in the curriculum (Nelson Mandela Foundation Journal, 2004). This created an impression that only European texts have the potential of instilling critical and creative thinking skills, hence some teachers, especially those who were politically minded, had a negative attitude towards the English literary texts they were supposed to teach. This point is however questionable because looking at the history of English texts included in the curriculum, there was always a mixture of texts written by Europeans and those written by Africans, mostly South Africans.

Another on-going debate today among South African teachers and other stakeholders in education is the relevance of Shakespeare’s texts in the new education system (Jonas, 2014). The argument here is that the language and content of such texts is outdated for the contemporary South African educational objectives of resolving, among other things, the unequal distribution of resources that existed in the past. According to Jonas (2014), these ‘revolutionary’ teachers advocate the inclusion of more Afrocentric English literary texts deemed more relevant to the needs of the people of South Africa. On the contrary, the teachers who are pro-Shakespeare and in favour of other texts from the Renaissance era argue that such texts are still relevant as the content is also about modern life in general, meaning that the content is universal and applicable in the modern ways of life. Another perspective on Shakespeare’s plays is offered by Thurman (2013, p.iii) in an editorial for a special journal issue on Shakespeare in Southern Africa and he states: “the assumption of familiarity with a static Shakespeare, with a canon of plays that contain fixed ‘themes’,

because of their place on educational curricula, rather than an engagement with the plays as dynamic works of art – is, one feels, precisely what this scholarship resists". What Thurman (2013) means here is that the argument on whether Shakespeare's works should stay or be removed from the curriculum can become futile when people start viewing his plays in particular as works of art and not in terms of historical or racial elements. Thurman (2017) further advises that in order to appreciate English literature (focussing on the Shakespeare argument), people should vacate the racial box to reach a stage where they can see Shakespeare's works as works on the human condition. To him, a reader of Shakespeare should be thinking: "I am a human being, therefore nothing that is human can be alien to me, then of course Shakespeare's plays are – or can be made – relevant. But doing so requires teacherly skills and knowledge that cannot be assumed or taken for granted" (Thurman, 2017, p.1). The 'teacherly skills and knowledge' is what this study aimed to find out.

Considering the different teachers' perspectives in the discussion above, it was interesting to find out what the teachers who participated in this study thought of teaching English literature and more importantly how they taught and assessed learners during and after English literary lessons.

2.5. Learners' views on the study of English literature

The role of teachers in interpreting English texts to the point of better comprehension by learners is a necessity in teaching, but the learners' response to the interpretations is also vital. This study is also about how learners respond to teachers' interpretation of English texts, and most importantly how they perceive English literature as this may play a role in enhancing the process of teaching and learning as well as acquiring critical thinking (Schoeman, 2011). Learners whose countries are former British colonies seem to display mixed attitudes towards the English language as they learn it either by choice or by force since it is included in the curriculum (Al Mamun et al., 2012). Learners' attitude is mixed in the sense that firstly they like the content in English texts but hate the language because it is perceived as the language of the colonizers who have committed various atrocities against the natives (Al Mamun et al., 2012). This kind of attitude was displayed in the South African context in the 1970s when learners resisted one language in favour of another. Even though the situation

was more political, the fact is that the English language, and its literature, was favoured by the learners than the imposed Afrikaans language.

The attitude of learners towards English as a language was revealed in South Africa when students fought against apartheid and apartheid education. The general belief about the students' uprising of 1976 was that learners were challenging the decision by the then government to use Afrikaans as the language of teaching and learning, in favour of the English language (Ndlovu, 1998). Therefore, it may be argued that South African learners in the past had a good attitude towards the English language to the point of choosing it over what was believed to be the language of oppression (Afrikaans). Their perceptions and attitudes towards English was also influenced by the general belief that fluency in the English language means a person is educated, and this thinking still prevails even today. According to Mawasha (1996, p.23), "black learners (this includes most parents) in South Africa prefer English as a language of learning and teaching even from the earliest years of primary schooling". Mawasha (1996) further asserts that English is regarded as the language of the elite and powerful.

Despite the above argument on English literature and English language, some learners and authors still believe that English studied as a second language can hinder the progress of teaching and learning (Ntshangashe, 2011). According to Ntshangashe (2011), the negative impact of learning in English on the cognitive development of second language learners of English may result in the high failure rate of learners in township schools. This viewpoint is relevant to my study not only because it was conducted in the township of Soweto, but also because there is a recurrent higher failure rate in South Africa, especially in the public schools. If the above argument is true, then teachers need to come up with better pedagogical and assessment strategies to promote English literary works for cognitive development that can result in critical thinking skills.

Some scholars like Carl (2012) believe that an ideal curriculum development should be consultative and include the learners' perceptions as well. This means that the learners should be included in the implementation of the curriculum to the point of choosing the texts to be included in the curriculum, which was not the case during the

apartheid regime. This seems to be the case even in the contemporary curriculum development and implementation as there is no proper learner consultation as to what learners should learn, and this is true for English literature as well. It must be understood that whatever teaching/learning activity happens during English literary lessons, the actual reading of the texts is also very important. It is important because according to Kress (2003), literature courses have, over the years, attracted large quantities of students and the trend continues. This is in spite of the difficulties involved in teaching and learning literature such as resource scarcity for supporting teaching and learning. This reveals that many students are interested in studying English literature. With this kind of information in mind, it was deemed educational to find out how Grade 12 learners perceive English literary texts, by observing their actions during lessons and asking their opinions during interviews. This was also going to provide ideas about the value of teaching English literature at secondary school level in South Africa.

2.6. The value of teaching English literature

There are differing perspectives on the value of English literature in the curriculum. Before going deeper into the discussion, it should be noted that for this study, English literature is the English texts that are studied at Grade 12 level in South African schools, especially in schools in Soweto, west of Johannesburg. The study was interested in finding out the literature genres (novel, drama, poetry, short stories) studied for English First Additional Language (EFAL) at secondary schools in Soweto.

On the value of English literature, Van (2009) posits the view that the teaching of English literary texts has its advantages, especially for learners who study literature in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes. This researcher also added that English literature “provides meaningful contexts and offers a wide range of vocabulary. In addition to developing cultural awareness, literature encourages critical thinking, appealing to imagination and creativity” (Van, 2009, p.172). The secondary schools where this study was conducted offer English as a FAL subject, meaning that English (though considered an official language in South Africa) is taught as an additional language, as opposed to a mother tongue, in most of the Soweto public secondary

schools. The fact that the teaching of English literature can equip learners with a wide range of vocabulary and critical thinking is beneficial for the learners. It is beneficial because the language skills (vocabulary) and critical thinking skills that can be acquired from studying English literary texts may be helpful in the study of other subjects such as history, art and economics. In addition to all these, the exposure to different cultures and environments through literary texts can add to learners' knowledge and even move them to become critical of what they already know.

Collie and Slater (1990) declare that literature provides authentic materials that can be used in the classroom context. They also argue that "literary texts are valuable sources to increase cultural awareness on the target society and they constitute good examples of written language and vocabulary usages for language learners" (Collie & Slater 1990, p.27). What these scholars say here is that in addition to different cultural awareness and the acquisition of vocabulary, literature exposes learners to different styles of writing, a skill they need as they are assessed in writing as well. Despite the numerous valuable benefits of teaching English literature, there are authors who think that these benefits are overrated and that literary texts should not be included in the study of language.

One of those authors who do not believe in the benefits of teaching English literature is Leech (1973) who argues that despite their value and authenticity, literary texts can present examples of vocabulary, grammar and other linguistic elements that are too sophisticated for language learners who are at low levels of proficiency. Other scholars who share a similar viewpoint about English literature are Carter and Long (1991) who claim that there is no evidence of studies that explored the importance of teaching English literature in the past. They add that where literature was taught, there was no need for justification because knowledge of classic pieces of literature were considered obvious aspects of the educated person (Carter & Long, 1991).

Judging by the years of publication, the above views may seem old and outdated, but there are teachers even today (including the ones interviewed) who believe that teaching English literature is difficult because of the difficult and complicated language

use, especially in poetry. In addition to poetry, there are certain English texts like the ones written during the Elizabethan era such as William Shakespeare's plays that are included in the South African English literature curriculum. These texts are regarded as difficult to teach because of the old English language used. Carter and Long's (1991) perspective on the teaching of English literary works may seem trivial, but as has been shown some scholars consider English literature a rich source of language skills and argue that there are people who study it to be fluent in English so as to be regarded as 'educated'. This is a general belief especially among learners who study the English language as a foreign or additional language because of curriculum requirements. Despite this kind of viewpoints about English literature, Burke and Brumfit (2000, p.172)) sum it up by saying: "the general aims of language teachers in using literature in their classes can be classified as developing literal, analytical, social, and imaginative skills; supporting humanitarian attitudes; and giving information about both literature and language". The analytical skills mentioned in the quotation above is needed for both teachers and learners to analyse English texts to the point of appreciation, so that they can develop a critical cognition of the 'social' themes' and humanitarian attitudes towards each other and the environment.

In this way, the conclusion is that English literature is valuable and needs to be taught to secondary school learners, but it depends on the teaching and assessment strategies that teachers use to promote critical thinking skills (Samuel, 1995). The liberatory nature of the curriculum and teaching methods can enable learners to ask the relevant questions in the English literary classroom, and this interaction between teachers and learners can lead to critical engagement. Continuing with the idea of learners asking relevant questions, Chambers and Gregory (2006) declare that it is an international set of requirements that literary study can help students confront realities, and it is towards this set of rules that students refer when they inquire from their teachers about the relevance of literary study. Chambers and Gregory (2006, p.13) state: "if teachers cannot answer the question 'Why do we have to read this stuff?' with something more substantive than 'Because it's required' then we do little to counter the bean counters of the world who view literary study as a mere trifle, an anomalous deviation from the bottom line".

What Chambers and Gregory (2006) are saying is that until teachers can provide a clear answer (both verbally and practically) to the question of why English literature should be studied, learners may not see a point of studying literary texts. Therefore, the way teachers teach English literary content informs the level of engagement with English literary content by the learners which in turn determines what leaners get out of studying literature.

2.7. Critical reading for critical engagement with English literature

The importance of English literature, critical thinking, pedagogical strategies and learners' response to teachers' interpretation of content has been discussed above. However, it takes the actual reading of texts to understand content, and this requires critical reading (Colucciello, 1997). Colucciello (1997, p.3) regards the critical reading of literary works as having "an important effect on the development of critical thinking. A reader must recognise patterns within text, fit details into these patterns, then relate them to other texts and remembered experiences". This quotation assures the reader about the connection between literature reading and critical thinking. This is what the current study was about, to find out if English literature (especially the texts included in the curriculum) can help learners become critical in their thinking. Critical reading, according to Colucciello (1997), is regarded as the ability to find out details in literature, to remember and relate content to other literary works, which is called inter-contextual reference. If critical reading can help learners to create a connection between texts, then hopefully they can use this skill to relate English literary content to other subjects studied in the English language and to their everyday life and also apply theory to reality as a demonstration of their critical thinking skills (Colucciello, 1997).

While this argument about critical reading seems to make sense, other critics choose to differ with this perspective. This disagreement stems from the observation of teachers in English literary classrooms who disregard critical reading in favour of teaching fluency, metacognition and word attack skills (AbdKadir, Nsubki, Haneem & Ishmael, 2014). The argument here is that learners in such classrooms do well, if not better, than those whose teachers focus on critical reading. My understanding is that learning objectives such as fluency, word attack and metacognition can still be

achieved through critical reading. To support this argument, Muchsonah (2015, p.29) states that “although critical reading and critical thinking seem difficult to implement, many find it useful to help students foster not only students’ cognitive development, but also their knowledge about cognitive and self-knowledge (metacognition) development”. This means that even though it is not easy to teach critical thinking skills through critical reading, it is however important to try because the benefits (among others) are critical cognition of content and metacognition, which is knowledge of how one learns.

Critical reading is further defined as abilities to “interpreting symbols or distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant in problem solving” (Wheeler, 1998). This means that critical reading can equip learners with problem solving skills because reading for comprehension should be escalated through suitable instructional and assessment methods, to equip learners with skills such as problem solving. To solve a problem means to distinguish the ‘relevant from the irrelevant’ as Wheeler (1998) puts it. The concept of critical reading maintains that instead of just reading for pleasure, critical reading promotes comprehension through studying, analysis, interpretation and evaluation of the text to reach own opinion (Wheeler, 1998). Forming one’s opinion about a text, I believe, takes a critical thinking process, and my study intended to inquire as to whether teachers of English literature teach and promote learners to critically read literary texts. The pleasure that can be derived from reading English literary texts can only be possible after critical reading occurs to the point of ‘appreciation’ of content. This is supported by Facione (1992, p.12) who states: “it is more than just assisting readers in solving problems and developing critical thinking skills; a good literary work aims to help readers learn to change and be better through challenging a text”.

The change that Facione (1992) talks about can only happen after critical reading. This transformation can be in the form of language skills whereby learners can show improvements in the way they use language in communication and writing. It can also be in the way they think, as evident in the way they ‘challenge a text’ to form their own opinions of it or of its subject matter. Either way, critical reading brings about a transformational revolution. Paul and Elder (2007) define critical reading in its sense of being connected and flexible to critical thinking which can take place any time

before, during and after reading, or even to do more than one layer of reading before critical thinking takes place. This, they argue, is because as an art, critical thinking is "quite different from one individual to another since each individual has different background knowledge, different points of view, different levels of sensitivity, different concerns and interests towards a certain issue resulting in different products of critical thinking with different quality and uniqueness" (Paul & Elder, 2007, p.17). The quotation implies that critical reading levels are determined by the uniqueness of individuals based on the amount of interest and value of teaching and learning. This is true, but whatever the degree of the skill (critical thinking skill) depends on the way teachers teach and assess literary texts, which may influence how learners engage with content.

Based on the argument above, the importance of critical reading lies in the value of critical thinking and the acquisition of this skill can help learners to become decision makers and to solve challenges facing their communities. To elaborate more on the whole discussion about the importance of critical reading, the illustration below is included to clearly differentiate between normal reading and critical reading.

Table 1: The difference between reading and critical reading

	READING	**CRITICAL READING**
Purpose	To get a basic grasp of the text.	To form judgements about how a text works.
Activity	Absorbing/Understanding	Analysing/Interpreting/Evaluating
Focus	What a text says	What a text does and means
Questions	What is the text saying? What information can I get out of it?	How does the text work? How is it argued? What are the choices made? The patterns that result? What kinds of reasoning and evidence are used? What are the underlying assumptions? What does the text mean?
Direction	With the text (taking for granted it is right)	Against the text (questioning its assumptions and argument, interpreting meaning in context)
Response	Restatement, Summary	Description, Interpretation, Evaluation

Source: University of Toronto (2006)

As illustrated in the table above, critical reading goes beyond absorbing or understanding the text to analysing, interpreting and even questioning what is implied in the text. Out of many illustrations on critical reading, the table above is considered the most informative, especially because at the end the table explains what the 'response' of the audience should be when reading. According to the illustration, normal reading results in 'restatement' (explaining content as provided) and summarising. In contrast to this, critical reading equips learners with critical skills to describe, interpret and evaluate content. The evaluative part of the illustration means that learners who are taught critical reading can question the message of the text and offer their perspectives based on critical reasoning and research. In line with this, the study intended to observe the actual teaching and learning experience of Grade 12 learners in some South African schools to find out how the prescribed English literary texts were taught and assessed, especially to establish if this results in transference of critical reading skills to the learners.

2.8. Pedagogical strategies to promote critical thinking

By pedagogical strategies I mean the strategies teachers use to impart knowledge and skills to learners. In simple terms, pedagogical strategies means teaching or instructional strategies teachers use in a teaching and learning environment such as a school. A more inclusive definition of the term is provided by Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden and Bell (2002, p.10) as "the instructional techniques and strategies that allow learning to take place. It refers to the interactive process between teacher/practitioner and learner and it is also applied to include the provision of some aspects of the learning environment (including the concrete learning environment) and the actions of the family and community". As much as this study uses the term to mean the instructional strategies used in promoting learning, the other aspects included in the quotation above cannot be ignored. For example, the physical learning environment (schools), which is where this study was conducted, is very important. Furthermore, the concept of critical pedagogy which is discussed in detail in Chapter Three takes into consideration the schools and what learners learn in terms of lessons

that can liberate their minds. The value of parents and the community at large cannot be ignored either, because teaching and learning should focus on the needs of these two elements.

Many researchers who have studied pedagogical strategies and their role in promoting critical thinking agree that the best strategies to teach critical thinking skill are the ones which focus on the learners (Astleitner, 2002; Brookfield, 2011). The reason given in favour of such pedagogical strategies is that, according to researchers such as Scott (2015), traditional approaches that emphasise memorisation or the application of simple procedures do not advance learners' critical thinking skills and autonomy. The term 'autonomy' in this regard refers to the state of being independent mentally, which is also one of the characteristics of someone who possesses critical thinking ingenuity. Therefore, there is a need for teaching strategies to steer teaching and learning to a 'thinking' position rather than memorising of information. To develop the higher-order thinking skill, learners need to engage in meaningful enquiry-based learning that has value and relevance for them and their communities. This level of engagement prepares them for the "real world experiences which are merged with sustained engagement and collaboration which offer opportunities for learners to construct and organise knowledge, engage in detailed research, enquiry, writing and analysis; and communicate effectively to audiences" (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008). What these scholars mean is that teaching for critical thinking transforms learners from mere collection and storing of information vessels to life-long students, capable of utilising knowledge effectively for the betterment of humanity.

Learner-centred teaching strategies (regarded by many researchers to be tools for critical engagement with content) focus on the needs of the learners and the community, and not only on meeting the needs of the syllabus. Teaching of English literary content should be liberatory in practice to match the emancipatory potential of literary themes found in English literary texts. One of the learner-centred pedagogical strategies that is widely recommended is the 'Explicit Instruction' strategy, which is associated with Ennis (2011). According to this instructional theory, teaching critical thinking is infused in various subjects with the objective of improving learners' thinking through content. The objective of teaching higher-order thinking is made 'explicit' to

the learners, that they need to think about what they learn, not just to memorise for reproducing in the future. This pedagogical strategy is ideal, especially in the teaching of literature as learners are exposed to different themes that require thinking about rather than merely absorbing without questioning. If teachers engage learners in critical discussions while teaching varying subjects, it is believed that critical thinking skills develop in the process. It must be added that it depends on the way the teacher engages learners for this instructional theory to produce the desired outcomes.

Even though this strategy is accepted and regarded as one of the best in promoting critical cognition, other researchers such as Beyer (2008) and Van Gelder (2005) do not think it is effective. These scholars argue that subject course instruction, even with implicit and thorough emphasis on critical skills or critical analysis, may not effectively prepare students to become excellent critical thinkers. Van Gelder (2005) suggests that critical thinking should be practiced deliberately and taught explicitly as a compulsory, separate subject. The idea here is that critical thinking skills cannot be readily transferred to learners through teaching, for example, English literature, but there should be a critical thinking subject in the curriculum. What is implied is that school subjects should be about transference of information as learners would be taught how to think critically only in a critical thinking class.

Scholars in the field of critical thinking suggest various instructional/pedagogical strategies but the one widely recommended is the group discussion, where learners are grouped together to discuss about a particular given topic. According to Orlich et al. (2013, p.244), discussion is “a teaching technique that involves an exchange of ideas, with active learning and participation by all concerned”. This strategy is sometimes linked to the lecture strategy used in some institutions of higher learning because it is believed that lecturers and the students are supposed to engage in discussion, not the lecturer delivering information to silent students. In this way, the lecturing strategy becomes a discussion different from what Freire (1972) calls the ‘banking concept’ of education as discussed in Chapter One. Instead of this banking concept, Freire (1972) declares that the teaching of literature should nurture the creativity of students to become mentally emancipated.

The group discussion strategy in particular has been regarded by many researchers and educators as an effective way to stimulate deeper learning and develop critical thinking skills (Hollander, 2002; Brookfield & Preskill, 2005). It is also regarded as a pedagogical strategy which promotes peer learning and peer evaluation because when learners discuss together in groups, they learn and evaluate each other in the process. Even though the discussion strategy is regarded by many as ideal, Dallimore, Hertenstein and Platt (2004) advise that students need proper training and monitoring to engage in meaningful discussion and be able to develop a critical view about content. This is true in the sense that without proper monitoring, learners may discuss about something else rather than the matter at hand. Dallimore, Hertenstein and Platt (2004) also say that it is advisable to select proper, interesting topics to avoid learner boredom which is associated with this pedagogical strategy. Discussion is often confused with the next pedagogical strategy also believed to stimulate critical cognition: debate.

Debate is another teaching strategy that is avoided because some teachers believe it is time-consuming. Debate is the process of inquiry, a way of arriving at a reasoned judgement on a proposition (Copeland, 2006). Inquiry, as used by Copeland (2016) should be the attitude that learners acquire through the critical teaching of English literature, so that they become interested in learning inside and outside the classroom. According to Halvorsen (2005), debate can help learners for whom English is not a mother tongue to master the English language and the choice of thought-provoking topics can enable learners to develop critical opinions about what they learn. If what Halvorsen (2005) says is true, then debate is ideal for the learners in my study because they study English as a First Additional Language (FAL). Some researchers such as Tumposky (2004) argue that in order for a debate to be effective as a teaching strategy, learners should be encouraged to provide a different viewpoint about pre-existing opinions to avoid a one-sided, biased belief. Without differing viewpoints, debate can be reduced to a meaningless argument.

With an array of pedagogical strategies for critical thinking, the question is: which teaching strategies do teachers use while teaching English literature in township schools and what informs their choice? According to CAPS, teaching English literature

to FAL learners should focus on reading the texts with learners in class aloud. Reading Aloud (RA) is a pedagogical strategy where the teacher or learners read content aloud, often accompanied with explanation of content by the teacher. According to Johnston (2015, p.34), “a systematic method of reading aloud enables a teacher to scaffold a child’s understanding by modelling strategies for making inferences, clarifying meaning, teaching vocabulary, enhancing fluency and oral language, and developing critical thinking and problem solving skills”. Many researchers such as Roberts (2008), Sénéchal and LeFevre (2002), and Whitehurst, Arnold, Epstein and Angell (1994) argue that reading aloud is the single most important activity for building knowledge required for eventual success in vocabulary and syntax to learners. Johnston’s view in the quotation above seems to be disputed by these researchers because they think reading aloud is appropriate for teaching vocabulary and syntax only, and most of all that it is suitable for children, not for learners at Grade 12 level.

In continuing with the discussion on reading aloud as suggested by the Department of Basic Education, Lane and Wright (2007, p.35) note that “the most effective read aloud must engage children in extended conversations through open-ended questions. This dialogue or interactive reading asks questions, such as ‘what, when, where, why’, encourages children to become active learners, and then provides feedback in response to those questions”. This quotation emphasises the fact that reading aloud as a teaching strategy is effective while teaching children, and also asking them questions to keep them actively involved in the lesson. The questions suggested here starts with the letter ‘W’ and according to the questioning levels in the Revised Taxonomy, this type of questions is lower cognitive level for lower-order thinking. This is another evidence that RA is meant for children to comprehend content, not for learners at Grade 12 level to acquire critical thinking skills.

It was the intention of this study to find out the pedagogical strategies teachers use while teaching English literary texts. The success and/or failure of the above pedagogical strategies and others geared to promote critical thinking depends on the types of questions the teacher asks during lessons. It is believed that many literature teachers prefer lower-order questions than higher-order questions while teaching. It was also the objective of this study to find out the types of questions English literary teachers ask when teaching literary texts at Grade 12 level.

2.9. Questioning to promote critical thinking

Questioning is classroom talk. It is the means through which teachers and learners interact. While questioning is a means to measure what learners know or understand of specific concepts, effective open-ended questions that probe and expand thinking and processing of information can be instrumental in promoting deeper learning. Some researchers like Yang, Newby and Bill (2005, p.164).) suggest that "the level of thinking that occurs is influenced by the level of questions asked". This means that the type and level of questions engaged by teachers in English literature teaching can affect or promote how learners think. Yang, Newby and Bill (2005) further suggest that what they term Socratic questioning method is an ideal manner to engage and promote higher level of thinking that symbolises critical thinking. The Socratic questioning is where teachers and learners engage in meaningful interaction, with the teachers asking probing questions to facilitate critical engagement with the topic (Maiorana, 1990). In contemporary educational terms, the activity stimulated by the Socratic questioning technique is called discussion, which can escalate to a debate.

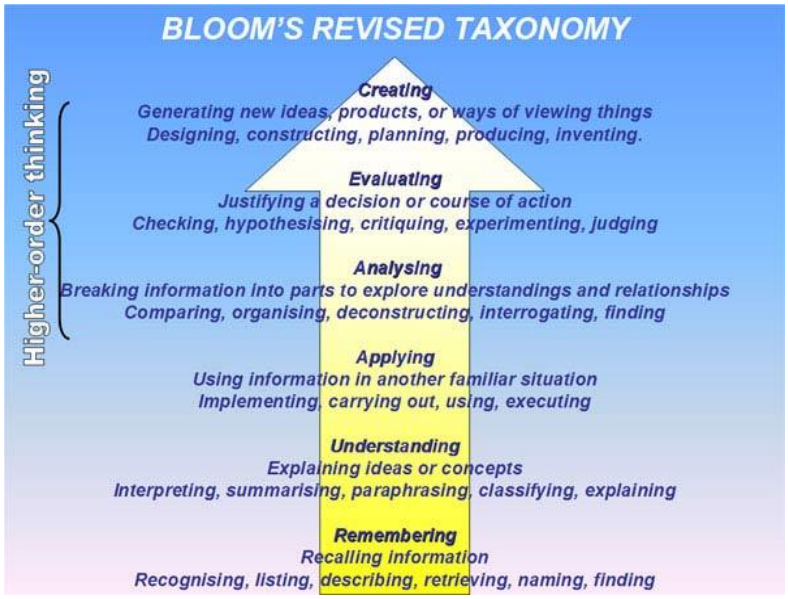
The CAPS for English language study distinguishes between questioning (assessment) which happens every day during lessons (assessment for learning) and questioning that occurs at the end of the learning unit or term (assessment of learning) (Department of Basic Education, 2011). The CAPS document further suggests that both questioning (assessment) techniques are meant to help learners develop creative thinking. Through the use of CAPS, the Department of Basic Education (2011) declares that the questions for English literature should promote higher-order-thinking. Moodley (2013)'s expatiation of creative questions as highest order cognition in the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy can promote critical thinking in learners. This is where learners are confronted with questions that require them to provide their own opinions and be creative. Providing one's opinion is vital in teaching and learning of critical thinking and, like Goldman (1984) suggests, it should not instil disrespect for adults but rather promote higher level of thinking.

The CAPS also advocates self-evaluation as an attempt to promote critical thinking, especially in relation to English literary works (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

This means that learners should be taught how to ask themselves questions about a topic, as self-evaluation can promote critical thinking. Some studies on self-questioning demonstrate that it can contribute to learners' self-efficacy, motivation and higher achievement (Hughes, Sullivan & Mosley, 1985). Despite its widespread success, this questioning technique seems to be shunned by some teachers because they feel that learners may have inflated perceptions of their accomplishments motivated by self-interests (Ross, 2006). Another way to enhance critical thinking through questioning, even though it is mistaken as just mere motivation, is what Ennis (1993, p.180) calls "giving students feedback about their critical thinking prowess". What Ennis is saying is that providing learners with critical questions and helping them to realise their level of thinking may help them to think about their ideas (metacognition) to improve their thinking skills. This can be achieved by giving learners what Ennis calls "general-content-based tests, to check for transfer of critical thinking instruction to everyday life" (Ennis, 1993, p.182). In contrast to the above testing method, Fischer, Spiker and Riedel (2009) declare that content specific questions are ideal for critical thinking, as content knowledge may also enhance general knowledge. This means that the more content knowledge learners acquire, the more this knowledge opens more room for general life knowledge and skills and promote critical thinking. This also means that as learners are exposed to different ideas through literary content, their scope of thinking also expands. While the exposure to different ideas is true, the thinking about content would depend on the type of questions teachers ask during lessons.

The Department of Basic Education (2011) states that the questions for English literature should promote higher-order-thinking. In continuing with the idea of higher-order-thinking as one of the objectives of teaching English literature, Anderson et al. (2001) believe that evaluative and creative questioning as the highest order in the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy can promote the kind of thinking which is typical of critical thinking. Here, a stark contrast is made between questioning that requires learners to remember knowledge and questioning that can help learners to be evaluative, analytical and creative, as presented in the illustration below.

Figure 1: Revised Bloom's Taxonomy



Source: Virtual Library

Higher-order thinking is where learners are confronted with questions that require them to provide their own opinions. Providing one's opinion and creativity is vital in teaching and learning critical thinking. It was an objective of this study to find out how and what kind of questions teachers engage while teaching English literature to promote critical thinking.

2.10. Learners' critical engagement with English literature

The previous section on questioning as a tool to promote critical thinking leads to the question of how learners engage with literary works. The inquiry here is whether the instructional and assessment strategies are effective enough to help learners develop critical engagement for critical cognition. In an attempt to clarify what critical engagement is, Monroe (2004, p.1) in her article titled "Teaching Critical Engagement" provides a lengthy explanation to differentiate critical engagement from normal engagement:

> Critical engagement differs from simple engagement in at least two regards. First, it requires, at least initially, teacher guidance. And second, it requires that literary analysis involves more than just talking about plot, characterisation,

> symbols, style and more than just talking about readers' personal responses to their reading. Rather, critical engagement entails a literary analysis that recontextualizes literature within the world of texts, events and facts, meaning and values.

The quotation here 'critically' explains that critical engagement is when the reading of a text goes beyond normal criticism of certain elements such as characters, themes, plot, language use and the likes. According to Monroe (2004), critical engagement involves placing the text with an 'ocean' of other texts, transferable facts and events to real-life situations, and meaning. To explain this further, critical engagement helps to find the meaning of the text in relation to the intended audience's reality. Therefore, the audience may come with their opinions after they have grasped the message of the text through critical reading that results in critical engagement. It is this kind of engagement with English literary content that can propel learners' understanding of content in the classroom and help learners find the relevance of the message to their own lives and communities.

In trying to further understand what critical engagement in literature entails, Wohlwend and Lewis (2010) in their article "Critical Literacy, Critical Engagement, and Digital Technology: Convergence and Embodiment in Glocal Spheres" provide a crucial viewpoint which is worth scrutinizing. These researchers declared that "critical engagement considers how quality of participation enables or limits the ability to produce and not just consume and how participation affects life chances" (Wohlwend & Lewis, 2010, p.6). This perspective is profound because it hints at the quality of teaching that encourages students' participation, which can in turn influence learners to transform their lives for the better. Wohlwend and Lewis (2010) see critical engagement as an encounter which can change students' lives from normal to critical studying of texts, from normal thinking to critical thinking. To continue with the idea of students' participation, Dicfors (2015) in her research paper titled "Teaching Literature in English at High School Level: A Discussion of the Socio-Cultural Learning Theory vs the Transmission Theory" provides a clear practical illustration of how learners can engage with English literature for critical thinking:

> When I myself have been teaching English as a second language (school years 7-9 and 10-12) and worked with English literature (such as novels, short stories, poetry and drama) in the classroom, I have found that many of the students seem to think that it has been a good way to work. Some students, who at first not seem to care at all about what we have been doing in the classroom, suddenly start to work really well when they get to work with English literature, especially with one of the tasks. Some students have even told me that they felt they learned a lot by working in this way. Of course, there probably are students who do not think it is so much fun, but at least I have not heard any loud complaints about the exercises and learning tasks I have presented in my classes so far. (Dicfors, 2015, p.1)

The quotation above comes from someone with first-hand experience on how to encourage learners to engage critically with English literature. According to Dicfors (2015), the learners found it a duty to learn, but after encouraging the learners using meaningful tasks they started to engage critically with English literary content to reach the stage where they actually enjoyed learning. Even though Dicfors (2015) did not specify the teaching and assessment strategies used, the fact is that the learners were encouraged to engage with the English literary content through various tasks that kept them working. The learners in this instance seemed to work hard through training until they started to appreciate and develop metacognition: how they learn and understand content. It was not just delivering information to learners but to keep them busy working for their knowledge. In this way, the learners felt involved and their efforts considered, which led to critical engagement with content.

It can thus be argued that it is the learner-centred curriculum and teaching strategies with liberatory characteristics that can give learners a voice to express how they feel about content in an English literature class. According to Marton and Säljö (1976) as cited by Chambers and Gregory (2006) learners' engagement with English literature may occur in two approaches. These two approaches are: a surface-level approach, in which the learners focus on the text ('the sign'), which relies mainly on memorisation and largely regurgitates what has been 'learned' in assignments and exams; and a deep-level approach, in which 'what is signified' is the focus for interpretation and greater understanding is the goal of study. The surface-level approach as discussed

here is not an ideal approach for learners to engage with English literary texts because the reading does not include the revelation of the deeper meaning of the text. This is the kind of reading to comprehend and gain the basic information about the text. This kind of engagement does not require text analysis and critique because the information is regarded as true; it does not need to be challenged. Normally, the kind of questions that follow this kind of engagement with texts are the ones that require remembering of information as it is. By contrast, the deeper-level approach is ideal for the development of critical cognition of texts as it involves interpretation and analysis of the author's message. This is the kind of reading where learners formulate their own opinions about English literary content rather than blindly accepting what is provided without questioning. Learners who use this approach to study English literary works cannot find the open-ended, higher-order questions challenging because their level of engagement prepares them for that kind of assessment.

2.11. Conclusion

To conclude, the literature review has explained the connection between English literature and promoting critical thinking in schools, which needs to be verified by thorough research, hence this study. Some scholars presented vivid arguments about the effective pedagogical approaches to be engaged while teaching English literature to promote critical thinking (Freire, 1970; Day, 2003). Other scholars believe that critical thinking is not easy to teach, so teachers should rather concentrate on language structure for fluency (Balsinger, 2002; Halpern, 2007), and that critical thinking is expected to follow once the learners are fluent.

The concept of critical reading has also been explored where some scholars agree that it is very important to teach learners critical reading as this may promote critical thinking. Others feel that critical reading is overrated, and that where learners are taught the structure and meaning of words critical reading occurs automatically (Kadir, Roose, Ahmad, Jamal & Ismail, 2014; Long, 2009). Their argument is based on the fact that teachers do not always successfully engage learners who have less command of English to be critical with literature readings. Therefore, it is better for them to enforce learning of language structure and comprehension when teaching English literature.

From the discussion in this chapter, it was also noted that the quality of teaching and assessing may lead to a higher or lower level of engagement. The clear differentiation of the two approaches (the surface-level and deeper-level approaches) concerning learners' engagement with literary texts (Chambers & Gregory, 2006) helped to determine how learners could study texts for critical cognition. The discussion on the two approaches revealed that the deeper-level approach is linked to critical engagement and critical thinking. The bottom line of the discussion is that the pedagogical/instructional strategies used by teachers determine if the teaching and learning experience promote critical thinking, or normal ordinary thinking.

The importance of teaching English literary texts was also explored in detail, where it was established that English literary texts are valuable sources of language skills. In addition to language skills, literature, if taught appropriately by using critical reading that produces critical engagement, can instil critical thinking skills in learners. With all the above information in mind, it is now necessary to look at the critical pedagogy theory which guides the interpretation of data in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

According to Grant and Osanloo (2014, p.12), a theoretical framework is “the foundation from which all knowledge is constructed (metaphorically and literally) for a research study”. This means that without a concept or a theory to model the study, the whole research may not make any sense, and ultimately may crumble. A framework provides a study with a clear direction and purpose to obtain the answers to the research questions. This study used Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy as its theoretical framework.

3.2. The origin of critical pedagogy theory

Some scholars such as Aliakbari and Faraji (2011), Benesch (2009) and Degener (2001) argue that critical pedagogy is a relatively old concept closely linked to the educational philosophy of Paulo Freire (1970). Freire is a Brazilian scholar, educationalist, theorist and political activist born in 1921 in Brazil. He started his educational journey as a secondary school teacher, and later began to develop adult literacy programmes. His political involvement in his native Brazil saw him imprisoned and exiled in Chile in the 1940s. Upon returning to Brazil in 1980, Freire continued with his work in adult pedagogy. He was appointed in 1988 as Secretary of Education in Sao Paulo by the Brazilian Workers Party (Garavan, 2008). This brief biography shows that Paulo Freire was active in the field of education, an activity which exposed him to the idea of the pedagogy of the oppressed or the pedagogy of liberation in the 1970s, a pedagogical theory which was revised and published several times until the present.

Even though his work as a theorist started in the early 1940s, his ideas were fully recognised and used in teaching in the 1990s. Freire (1972, p.9) believes that “critical pedagogy is the technique that can provide teachers, learners and researchers with a

better means of understanding the role that schools play within a race, class, and gender-divided society". Understanding the role played by schools in society can help eradicate the tendency by learners and parents to view schools as islands detached from their reality (Freire, 1972). In fact, critical pedagogy is all about the liberation of the victimized race from the dominant, usually minority, class through knowledge and skills acquired in schools, which is possible when learners are taught to be critical in the way they think. To continue with this argument, Freire (1972, p.27) declares that "this liberation should be both political, psychological, economical, societal and philosophical: meaning the change of thought patterns that resulted in the victimization of majority group of people by a powerful minority group". Critical pedagogy then offers a liberatory approach to teaching which grooms learners to become thinkers on their own and not just recipients of knowledge.

Critical pedagogy is relevant and appropriate for this study given the recurring situation in South Africa that is characterised by a historically marginalized race, a lower class, and a marked inequality when it comes to gender issues (Triegaardt, 2014). The marginalized race in South Africa, as Triegaardt (2014) notes, also suffers from the legacy of a certain kind of education (Bantu Education) which was aimed at oppressing and controlling the masses. This education system did not help black learners to think critically about content or to bring into the classroom other elements such as a critical view of learners' cultures, especially in the townships (as well as rural areas) where the privileging of male children over female ones persists. This kind of practice may have sparked the introduction of feminist critical pedagogy which advocates social structural change that includes giving women more voice in communities (Weiler, 2001). This study sought to determine whether the theory of critical pedagogy is reflected in teachers' choice of pedagogical strategies in teaching literature by assessing if the teaching promotes critical thinking among learners.

In order to achieve the objective expressed in the last statement of the preceding paragraph, it was crucial to trace the development of contemporary scholastic thoughts about this theory. One of the researchers in critical pedagogy Barnett (1997)

advocates for the theory and advises that education, especially higher education, should support the development of critical individuals who will display critical thinking prowess such as action, reason, and reflection. The Bantu Education, as Trigaaardt (2014) calls the apartheid education system discussed above, seemed to lack what Barnett (1997) regards as critical pedagogy in that it did not promote thinking at all, but rather manual skills. Under the subheading “The teaching of English literature in the South African context” in Chapter Two, the Department of Basic Education (2011) notes that the desirable aims of teaching literature in basic education are to promote creative thinking, which is equated to critical thinking. It was the objective of this study to find out whether the above goal was being achieved by observing the teaching and assessment strategies used by teachers in literature classrooms. Other scholars such as Giroux (1997) and Reynolds (1997) also see the value of critical pedagogy theory as they believe that critical pedagogy is useful in classrooms that regard critical thinking as the main objective of teaching content. This means that teachers should use pedagogical strategies that teaches learners to think and apply knowledge in the real world. This is not to say that schools are not real, but to bridge the gap between schools and the communities they are supposed to serve as this is one of the concerns of the theory.

Besides being considered one of the best theories that fosters critical thinking, critical pedagogy was also subjected to criticisms. Some scholars such as Ellsworth (1989) and Gore (1993) feel that the theory tends to be rationalistic and dialogical. By being rational, it means that critical pedagogy as a theory tends to seek for a superiority status and needs to enforce certain educational principles that are regarded as ideal for the ‘revolution’ of education. To further explain this, the above scholars feel that the theory tends to become more prescriptive in education than promoting criticality, as it can be dialogical, meaning it focusses more on dialogue in the classroom than individuals obtaining knowledge that can promote independence, which is one of the characteristics of critical thinking. The main argument here seems to be the fact that the theory should be more inclusive because, for example, the banking system of education (Freire 1972) is useful to acquire basic knowledge which is necessary for critical engagement.

In furthering the argument from the above paragraph, Burbules and Berk (1999, pp. 22-23) note that institutions and social relations may promote criticality or belie it. Criticality, as the above scholars put it, involves questioning, criticism, and creativity and therefore is more social in character and depends on others' perspectives. This social character of critical pedagogy could then determine the teaching of criticality, not only content and certain ideal teaching strategies as advocated by Freire (1970). Even though Burbules and Berk (1999) do not really agree with the ideals of the theory, they encourage teachers to experiment with various teaching strategies to promote dialogue in the form of discussion and argument to reach a level of critical engagement with content. In disagreement with the above scholars, Bakhtin (1981) argues that the dialogic learning which characterises critical pedagogy is more persuasive discourse, rather than authoritative discourse. Bakhtin (1981) went on to say that the term 'discourse' is used to "describe how sets of utterances interact, whether they 'invite a response', or if, alternatively, they present themselves as 'finished products'. Authoritative discourse demands acknowledgement and may be thought of as the unquestionable 'word of the father'. It manifests in 'tradition', the 'official line' or in the acknowledged truths of, for example, religion or science" (Bakhtin 1981, pp.342-346).

What Bakhtin (1981) is saying is that promoting dialogue in a classroom is an attempt to promote learners' participation rather than dictating content without a meaningful discussion that stimulates thinking. An authoritative discourse normally puts the teacher as an authority figure with knowledge which is deposited on passive learners who memorise information for reproduction in the future. It must be understood that such 'reproducing' is not 'application' but mere reiteration of information given. This represents the banking System of education that Freire (1972) despises. The last statement in Bakhtin's quotation above hints at the fact that critical thinking learners can become critical of oppressive traditional, religious and scientific elements that could hinder freedom and progress in education and life in general, elements which the theory attempts to fight against. This kind of thinking about the theory was also supported by scholars and researchers such as Wegerif (2011) and Barnes (2008), and Howe (2010) even went further to explain that a dialogue in teaching and learning is a useful conversation that contains a range of viewpoints that encourage learners to compare and assess different perspectives and to develop their own opinions. This is what critical pedagogy promotes in education: the sharing of ideas and knowledge

than mere receiving of information which is meaningless to learners' reality (Freire, 1970).

To emphasize the value of dialogism as one of the main elements that define critical pedagogy, Freire (1972, p.61) explains: "Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world … If 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. Dialogue is thus an existential necessity". This quotation suggests that it is through dialogue that humans navigate the world and become custodians of the earth, and that all our actions stem from meaningful dialogism that enables societal structures to function. It is also clear that the theory promotes communication in the form of active participation in the classrooms to stimulate a critical view of knowledge and the world at large.

In the South African context, current educational policies recast teachers as agents of educational transformation tasked with promoting the Constitutional values of the nation, as opposed to being just public servants functioning under authoritative principles. In the article, "Enacting Critical Pedagogy in an Emerging South African Democracy: Narratives of Pleasure and Pain", Perumal (2014, p.5) asserts that "this requires [teachers] to champion the values of deep democracy, social justice and equity, non-racism and non-sexism, ubuntu (human dignity), an open society, accountability (responsibility), respect, the rule of law, and reconciliation". The question here is: does teaching and learning promote all or some of the ideas Perumal addresses or is it still rigid, authoritative and valueless? It was the intention of this study to find out if the teaching of literature in particular does this.

3.3. Critical pedagogy and education

Critical pedagogy is also regarded as a philosophy of education which is steered by the mission to help learners develop a higher state of awareness and become conscientious by developing their analytical skills. Education, teaching and learning is not supposed to be an authoritarian preconceived practice but a progressive process with the aim of developing individuals as valuable entities of society. Critical pedagogy

aims to get learners to recognise the origins of fallacy in literary content and to begin to interrogate systems, beliefs and cultural tendencies that were unquestioned and regarded as reality to the point that any ideas of change were seen as impossible. Fallacy in literary content can arise from wrong beliefs, tendencies and behaviours that could steer learners in the wrong moral direction. The theory seeks to equip learners with a new way to study society, and qualifies them to comprehend the reality that with knowledge comes the power that can bring positive and constructive revolution (Freire, 1985).

In his seminal work “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” Paulo Freire (1972) constructs critical pedagogy as the educational process capable of liberating the mind, and this liberation can be achieved by empowering learners to develop a critical perspective. Freire (1985) notes that humanizing education is the major task to liberate the mind which is the superlative objective of this theory (critical pedagogy). This end goal of the theory is related to the concepts of the final stages in the hierarchy of needs which are self-esteem and self actualization **(**Abdelaziz & Ibtissam, 2017). This means that in an education system guided by critical pedagogy learners will ultimately achieve critical thinking to be able to speak with confidence and live with freedom of mind.

With regard to teaching, it is believed that the traditional pedagogical paradigm of scientific channelling of educational knowledge undermines rather than enhances learners’ ability to engage critically with knowledge (de Castell, Luke & Luke, 1989). With such traditional pedagogical strategies, “learners are exposed only to the primary experience of literature, which include style, structure, flow, immediacy and emotional persuasiveness of the text” (Rosenblatt, 1978, p.7). This belief echoes what has been discussed in Chapter One where Freire (1972) expressed disdain for a certain narrative teaching strategy which cannot promote critical thinking in learners. As already discussed, this narrative pedagogical strategy encourages narration of content which is not related to the learners’ reality, a strategy which Freire calls the “banking concept of education” (Freire, 1972, p.3). This teaching strategy puts the teacher as source of information that is delivered to passive learners who only need to memorise the information in order to reproduce it when required. This teaching strategy seemed

to be popular in South Africa during the apartheid era due to the nature of the education system and how teachers were trained and guided to deliver a mediocre education to the learners (Gardner, 2008).

According to the theory of critical pedagogy, teaching should be both humanistic and revolutionary (Freire, 1972). As discussed in Chapter One, teaching should incite the natural creativity of learners to the point that they become revolutionaries in the way they engage with knowledge. This may become possible when teaching focuses on enabling learners to think critically about what they learn. This also means that teaching should help learners to think, not to memorise content without understanding, so that through the change in the mental process there can be societal transformation (Freire, 1972, pp.12-16). In this way, the teacher becomes an 'agent for change' (Brown, 2001). This means that the teacher's role progresses from just delivering of information to "become a source of inspiration and in the best case scenario a trigger to bring the learners to the threshold of taking constructive actions and become themselves 'agents of change' which is only possible through equipping the learners with 'critical thinking', because it is the most essential skill in order to enable the learners to think individually" **(**Abdelaziz & Ibtissam, 2017, p.7). According to Abdelaziz and Ibtissam (2017), Freire also declares that critical pedagogy has its ultimate stage which is called the Praxis. At this level, learners become "know-how and know-what" **(**Abdelaziz & Ibtissam, 2017, p.9), which can be achieved when teaching and learning focus on critical consciousness for a revolutionary transformation. Therefore, the Praxis stage is the final objective of education to provide society authentic individuals capable of thinking at higher-order thinking level that characterise critical thinking skill.

For Critical pedagogy to work in a classroom, teachers need to plan their lesson thoroughly in accordance with the theory's principles and suggestions, such as using learner-centred strategies (Ohara, Safe & Crookes, 2000). It is true that lesson planning acts as a guide for all the actions to be taken during and after a lesson and can determine the success or failure of the teaching and learning process. According to Aliakbari and Faraji (2011, p.80), a "lesson plan should be based on authentic materials such as TV, commercials, video movie, etc. which are representative of the

culture that are to be examined by the students and which serve as the basis for discussion and critical reflection of the culture". This quotation suggests the use of technology in education, a phenomenon that is already active in the contemporary education system. This view is also shared by Bradshaw (2017) who declares that the development of critical consciousness enables us to take advantage of what technology can offer to instil thinking in learners, but also warns that technology should not cause people to lose sight of humanity. This means that the technological advances in education should be safe enough to preserve human life and the environment.

Critical teaching strategies, lesson planning and teaching and learning materials are tools used to obtain meaning in a classroom. This argument is echoed by Kincheloe (2005) who advises that literary texts and their themes should be analysed and discussed equally by teachers and students. This dialogism creates a sense of liberty in the classroom, paving way for critical argument and the acquisition of critical thinking skills (Freire, 1972). The idea here is that critical pedagogy encourages dialogue between learners and teachers who place that knowledge with the context in which it was taken place. In their assignments students are able to pick up themes that are most meaningful and most relevant to their own lives and the context in which they work (Kessing-Styles, 2003). According to Okazaki (2005), who is also a modern scholar of critical pedagogy, the content should be relevant and meaningful to learners in order to bring awareness of human nature and the processes that sustain life on earth.

In tracing the education system and how critical pedagogy was neglected and recognised over the years, it was already discussed in the introductory section how attempts were made to redress apartheid's social channelling that reduced black South Africans to servitude through Bantu Education. The introduction of democracy heralded a superfluity of curriculum policies: the Outcomes Based Education (OBE), the Revised Curriculum Statement (RSC), and the Continuous Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). These policies were aimed at transforming education to benefit all South Africans, to create an education system that will result in a "prosperous, truly

united, democratic and internationally competitive country with literate, creative and critical citizens leading productive, self-fulfilled lives in a country free of violence, discrimination and prejudice" (Department of Basic Education, 2011, p.8). This statement by the Department of Basic Education characterises critical thinking and critical pedagogy. Prejudice and violence stem from ignorance which is perpetrated by an education system that hinders its learners from learning how to think. In addition to the argument here, the policy statements (Department of Basic Education, 2011) clearly sketches the archetypical teacher and learner that the new curriculum aspires to engender: teachers who would contribute to the transformation of education in South Africa. This aspiration was stated in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) Grades 10-12 which sees teachers who "are qualified, competent, dedicated and caring. They will be able to fulfil the various roles outlined in the Norms and Standards for Educators and learners" (Department of Basic Education, 2011, p.5).

In lieu of this argument, the portrayal of the transformative agent, the teacher, should take into account that the discourse on critical pedagogy is based on the acceptable moral and ethical subtlety aimed at alleviating the suffering and struggles of the disenfranchised (Yoon, 2005, p.727). This echoes Freire's pedagogy of liberation in education that seeks to empower the poor and powerless (Freire, 1985) that characterises the reality of the majority of black South Africans even after many years of democracy. Understanding such a noble cause to emancipate the oppressed helps teachers' identification with the cause and develops feelings of passion, appreciation, and reward that should accompany their support, care, recognition, and transformation of students. Such pedagogic philosophies and enactments should eventuate in an emancipated student identity (Perumal, 2014, pp.5-8).

The current CAPS curriculum seems to advocate critical pedagogy and critical thinking (Department of Basic Education, 2011). For example, the policy on teaching literature recognises one of the teaching strategies believed to promote critical thinking: class discussion. According to the policy, "class discussions can be fruitful as long as everyone is involved. But class discussions that lead to written work activities serve a clearer purpose and benefit both" (Department of Basic Education, 2011, p.17). It

however seems like a contradiction when the same Department of Basic Education says something different about literary interpretation which also forms part of critical pedagogy. According to the Department of Basic Education, “literary interpretation is essentially a University level activity, and learners in this phase do not have to learn this advanced level of interpretation” (Department of Basic Education, 2011, p.17). Therefore, the current study needed to find out whether the critical teaching and engagement advocated by the education policies in the area of English literature guided teachers of literature to teach and promote critical thinking in their classrooms.

To conclude, it is clear that different opinions exist in the understanding and analysis of critical pedagogy. This is understandable; judging from the popularity of the theory varying perspectives are surely bound to emanate. However, the united belief is that any relevant learner centred pedagogical practice necessitates a commitment to social transformation in solidarity with disenfranchised groups (Riasati & Mollaei, 2012, p.229). In spite of the known contestations against the theory, it is relevant to teaching and learning in the post-apartheid South African context where a valuable pedagogy is one that liberates learners’ minds and redresses the damages caused by Bantu Education. The area where data was collected (Soweto) for this study fits the description of the disenfranchised communities mentioned above which need the pedagogy of liberation (Freire, 1985) from atrocities such as poverty, deprivation, religious fanaticism, oppressive beliefs, crime and violence.

3.4. Critical pedagogy and the teaching of English literature

The focus of the current study is to determine whether teachers employ pedagogical strategies that help learners develop critical thinking when they teach English literary texts. Critical pedagogy is relevant here because learners’ achievement of critical thinking is largely dependent on whether the pedagogy is critically oriented. The ideas around critical pedagogy would also apply to and influence the way African teachers

view literary texts. Nyirenda (1996, p.6) notes that critical pedagogy "rests on value assumptions of equality of all people, their right to knowledge and culture, and their right to criticise their situation and act upon it". What Nyirenda is saying is that the concept of critical pedagogy addresses fundamental human issues such as equality, the right to learn, and the desire to acquire a better quality of life. This is true and applicable in South Africa whereas a result of the inferior quality of Bantu Education, black learners have been disadvantaged and need to now gain access to high quality education which puts them at an equal level of intelligence with white South Africans. Literature plays a vital role in this process as the study of literature is necessarily a way to challenge colonial knowledge and unearth new ways of seeing the world. The question is whether there are adequate English literary texts written by African authors which can 'conscientise' learners to the point of true mental emancipation. There is a need for such texts to be part of the English literature curriculum so that teachers can use them to ignite critical thinking in learners and liberate their minds from past oppressive ways of thinking. However, it must be noted that this liberation can only be achieved depending on how teachers interpret the messages of the texts they teach and the extent to which they involve learners in that process of interpretation.

Critical pedagogy as a 'liberal art' can help learners to understand that there is a way out of the trap of poverty and ignorance (Freire, 1970) and that they can take charge of their learning to the point of even influencing curriculum development and implementation. Education, as presented by Freire (1970), should be engaged in such a way that it exposes learners to the possibilities of freedom from oppressive elements that can trap them to continue in the mediocre life that characterise township schools in South Africa. English literature, in this regard, should be no exception; it should help learners to develop skills to transform their communities, with the assistance of the teachers (Vavrus, Thomas & Bartlett 2011). The importance of teachers in education is universal, and teachers need knowledge and skills to interpret English literary texts and be able to use questions that may promote critical thinking. The strategies they engage to achieve this objective are very important.

While authors like Vavrus, Thomas and Bartlett (2011) focus on the theoretical part of critical pedagogy, Shor (1996) focuses on the instructional praxis of critical pedagogy

for both teachers and learners who are regarded as agents for social change, and not just transmitters of information. This emphasises the argument by Freire (1972) that critical pedagogy looks at schools and how they positively relate to communities, as entities of societal transformation. This means that learners can become solutions to challenges in their communities, which can in turn enhance the value of schools. It is one of the aims of this study to find out whether English literature can help learners to be aware of the need for change and to initiate the necessary changes in their communities. Literature (English literature included) can expose learners to different ideas and concepts, cultures and traditions, ideologies and religions, and is therefore a tool to instil valuable life lessons in learners which may in turn validate the intricate relationship between education and liberation. The role of teachers and the way they teach is of extreme importance in this regard.

Literature classrooms have been trying to ignore the postmodern idea with regard to teaching and learning, mainly because of the insistence on centralizing the written text and maintaining the authoritarian structures of discipline. The postmodern literature classroom becomes an ideal tool to unveil the hidden misconceptions of formal education, and the sociocultural discourses that describe individuals as members of communities (Usher and Edwards,1994). This 'unveiling' can only be possible if teaching and learning focus on the emancipation of the mind, and not the collection of information without an element of critique. Elements of value and relevance can be acquired as constructs when literary texts are discussed; differences and similarities in interpretations, reactions and opinions concerning literary texts are a fertile ground for the perception of difference, of the Other in the constitution of the Self (Lacan, 1977, pp.22-24).

To add to the ideas of Usher and Edwards (1994) and Lacan (1977) about postmodernism in teaching literature for literary consciousness, another scholar, Giroux (2004), also considers critical pedagogy as an attempt to use postmodern discourse. Critical pedagogy tries to problematize the tendency to treat literary texts as tools for mere language acquisition. Basic language acquisition for learners who

study English as their Second Language or First Additional Language is crucial to derive meaning and basic knowledge from the text. Language skills become important during discussions and arguments about content as discussed in Chapter Two. This means that in addition to language learning and acquisition, there should be deconstruction of outdated teaching strategies and the reconstruction of discourses and ideas. Giroux (2004, p.41) states the following:

> Educators need to develop a language of possibility for both raising critical questions about the aim of schooling and the purpose and meaning of what and how educators teach... In doing so pedagogy draws attention to engaging classroom practice as a moral and political consideration animated by a fierce sense of commitment to provide the conditions that enable students to become critical agents capable of linking knowledge to social responsibility, and learning to democratic social change.

From this quotation, it seems there is a strong connection between critical pedagogy and the idea of democracy and liberation that result from teaching learners critical thinking skills through literary texts. Critical pedagogy therefore encourages learners to analyse literary texts as active and conscious members of society.

In the article, “Critical Pedagogy and the Teaching of Literature”, Jordão (1999) points out that in a literature classroom, the teacher, students and the text are the main elements; and the text is considered as more important of the three. This author states: “the amount of time spent with reading aloud, the insistence of teachers so that students ‘justify’ their interpretations by referring to specific parts of the texts, the value given to critical texts, evaluations being mostly in written form, all point to the importance attributed to written language, to text, to centrality and the legitimised” (Jordão, 1999, p.12). In this quotation, there are two specific teaching strategies disclosed, namely, reading aloud and critical reading. Even though critical reading is not outrightly mentioned, the reference to “interpretations by referring to specific parts of the text” points to critical reading. This means that in a literature class, reading aloud is necessary for the acquisition of basic knowledge about the text, an activity also approved by the Department of Basic Education (2011). However, reading aloud alone

does not promote thinking in learners; critical pedagogy therefore becomes crucial in the form of critical reading. To emphasize the importance of critical reading, as was discussed in Chapter Two, Colucciello (1997) regards the critical reading of literary works as an important effect on the development of critical thinking because readers must see patterns within texts, fit details into these patterns, and then relate them to other texts and experiences.

In the article “Paulo Freire’s Critical Pedagogy in the Classroom: Promotion of Critical Thinking in South African English First Additional Language (FAL) Students”, Motlhaka (2016, p.65) notes: “the purpose of CAPS in South Africa was not only to change the education system, but also to transform the society, to become an answer for economic growth, which was contrary to Bantu Education, where rote learning and a curriculum were not related to the aspirations and practical job qualifications for Africans”. To achieve this, there should be an overhaul in the way literature, especially English literature which is a compulsory part of the syllabus, is taught. It is for this reason that the Department of Basic Education (2011) encourages critical engagement with English literary texts to the point of appreciation and application of the themes learned, as discussed in the preceding paragraph.

3.5. Limitations of critical pedagogy

It is somehow strange that the major criticism of this pedagogy comes from the ideas of critical thinking. The concept of critical thinking encourages higher-order thinking where conclusions are based on empirical research. This is contrary to critical pedagogy which is based more on dialogical discourse than factual knowledge data (Bakhtin, 1981). This means that the application of critical pedagogy principles in education may become the same as a mere prescription of ideas in education that could become rigid in the long run. In continuing with this idea, fostering critical thinking through dialogism may reproduce the same elements of the banking system of teaching (Fairclough, 2003). Fairclough (2003) argues that enforcing critical pedagogy principles in education should be a conscious process rather than subjectively

assuming it will bring different admirable results. This argument is based on Freire's conscientization idea of using critical pedagogy in education, meaning the theory encourages a conscious teaching and learning of literary content rather than transmitting basic knowledge (Freire and Macedo, 1995).

The somehow hidden challenge about critical pedagogy is that while some scholars, researchers and educators may self-identify as critical pedagogues, chances are that such individuals may not have a clear conception of what the theory entails (Breuing 2011). According to Breuing (2011, p.10), such pedagogues "may have little ability to articulate any clear definitions of the principles, let alone the justice-oriented nature of the pedagogical approach". Clearly put, it becomes a shortcoming when limited knowledge about a concept or theory is utilised since it can lead to misrepresentations and misinterpretations. To continue with this limitation of the theory, a study conducted by Ruiz and Fernandez-Balboa (2005) found out that many educators did not have a clear understanding of critical pedagogy despite their identification with the theory. This inability to define the term may lead to wrong application of the principles of the theory with unwanted results. This lack of understanding, however, can be a thing of the past as more researchers and scholars develop an interest in the theory due to its popularity and effectiveness in the sphere of education. The central aims and purposes of critical pedagogy and its social justice orientation may point to the value of broadening people's understanding by encouraging an increased self-examination and assessment of one's own view in this regard (Freire & Macedo 1995).

Another challenging idea is the preconceived mentality that critical pedagogy would be readily applicable in the structured and standardized learning environment of schools. However, it has proven to be quite impossible to achieve due to lack of ample time and large classrooms (Carter and Long, 1991). Thus, other crucial elements in education such as time management and the sizes of classes should be considered when experimenting with critical pedagogy in the educational environment. Continuing with the idea on application of knowledge, there is abundant literature that appraises the theory of critical pedagogy, such as Gore (1993) and Sweet (1998). These

scholars declare that there are very few instances where the theory was practised successfully. Gore (1993) even went further to say that some of the best works of critical pedagogy do not give much information on exactly which teaching strategies are ideal to promote critical pedagogy principles to teach critical thinking skills. This seems to suggest that critical pedagogy theory is expected to prescribe teaching strategies for use in the classroom, which would then be ironic since one of the early criticisms of critical pedagogy is that it is prescriptive. One notes from here that scholars respond to the theory from differing perspectives which offer contradictory ideas, meaning that student researchers should also be sceptical about some of the criticisms launched against critical pedagogy.

The implementation of the post-apartheid curriculum in South Africa today, after many years of apartheid, seems to be another challenge for teachers. According to Soudien (2010), while the changes in curriculum were aimed at redressing the legacy of apartheid, they still favoured the privileged class and perpetrated inequity against black and indigent learners. If the present curriculum still encourages class division and inequality, it means the suggestion of criticality in education becomes a vain exercise. Critical pedagogy encourages the abolishment of societal classes for a harmonious existence of all individuals despite differences in race, colour, religion and gender. Hugo (2010) also declares that teachers lack material resources to navigate a compounded, burdensome curriculum that could work with smaller classes, rather than the cumbersome classrooms found in most South African public schools.

Despite the limitations of the theory outlined above, critical pedagogy has been used successfully in English literature classrooms around the world. One particular example of such success is described by Huang (2011) who investigated an English reading and writing classroom in Taiwan. According to Sarroub and Quadros (2015, p.255), Huang “explains that reading became a conscious process through which students uncovered hidden messages and contemplated multiple perspectives. In writing, students were encouraged to write because writing became, in some way, meaningful”. Critical pedagogy, therefore, can be applied with encouraging results in

both reading and writing English literature classrooms. The learners in Huang's study have a stark resemblance to the type of learners in the schools where data was collected for this study: both sets of learners study English as First Additional Language. The argument here is not say that the theory is a one-size-fits-all solution, but if it has worked in other contexts similar to South Africa then it is likely to work in the South African scenario as well. This is the hypothesis the study wanted to validate.

This study chooses critical pedagogy as an appropriate theory to be applied in analysing data despite the limitations identified above. Critical pedagogy, according to Freire (1970), embodies two facets of education: the classroom which represents teaching and learning and the activities that happen outside of the school environment. The theory encourages the development of radical critical teaching strategies whereby teachers examine how the different environments, meaning schools and communities, interact and benefit from each other. To explain this further, teaching and learning should become a tool to combat and solve challenges happening in the communities, and for this and other reasons the theory is crucial in education. The theory provides teachers with a means to introduce learners in the social construction of knowledge, so that leaners can understand the relationship between education, politics, the economy and culture. When utilised correctly in the classroom, critical pedagogy helps teachers to evaluate their own practices while trying to construct knowledge which will be useful in liberating the minds of the learners who in turn become solutions to societal challenges. Through this emancipatory knowledge, teachers use practical and technical tools in unison to enable the comprehension of the relations of power and privilege that manipulate and distort social relationships and interactions (Habermas 1981).

In conclusion, scholars and fans of critical pedagogy are urged to have a collective voice and conduct more studies to make the theory more relevant to the changes and improvements made in education and its curricula. It is one of the theories that can legitimise the system of formal education to achieve the objective of producing an ideal

human being capable of thinking at a higher level, a factor that characterises critical thinking.

3.6. Conclusion

Critical pedagogy is the theory that encourages the application of critical teaching and learning strategies that promote dialogue as the main activity in the classroom to instil critical thinking skills. The two concepts, critical pedagogy and critical thinking, are interrelated because they both promote thinking at a higher level to the point of moving learners to critique aspects of everyday life, such as politics, culture, religion, education and the economy.

The theory is useful in education as it promotes the ultimate educational objective of producing a certain kind of human being, one who is capable of applying knowledge gained in the classroom to solve challenges in real-life situations. The theory promotes the idea of liberty through education, which means education becomes a weapon to free the minds of the oppressed (Freire, 1972). This social objective can be achieved by using learner-centred teaching strategies that promote mutual communication between teachers and learners, instead of a one-sided monologue that results in transmission of information which is detached from learners' reality (Gore, 1993). Critical pedagogy enthusiasts believe that teaching should involve various pedagogical strategies that not only help to connect knowledge gained in the classrooms to professional endeavours, but also to discern and be aware of challenges facing fellow human beings. Teaching, according to the theory, should stir the natural creativity in humans for the benefit of society, and not to perpetrate divisions and any sort of discrimination. It is this social character of the theory that makes it relevant in the South African educational and societal spheres as the government and the Department of Basic Education try to redress the atrocities of the past, such as unequal education system, racism and gender inequality (Department of Basic Education and Higher Education and Training 2011; Soudien, 2010). The theory is suitable for the study because it supports the idea of an education system that seeks to teach learners how to think using information, and not gullibly learn to reproduce information.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

According to Rajasekar, Philominathan and Chinnathambi (2013, p.5), “the procedures by which researchers go about their work of describing, explaining and predicting phenomena are called research methodology”. This elucidation describes research methodology as the strategy that researchers use to collect, describe analyse, explain and make predictions about a study. Therefore, researchers should be careful when it comes to the selection of a methodology or design as that forms the skeletal representation of their study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p.20). A research design describes the procedures for conducting the study, from whom and under what conditions the data would be obtained (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Burns and Grove (2003, p.488) declare that “methodology includes the design, setting, sample, methodological limitations, and the data collection and analysis techniques in a study”. This chapter therefore presents the research methodology of the current study.

4.2. Contextual background of the study

The study was conducted in Soweto, which is a township located in the west of Johannesburg in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. The focus was on the Grade 12 learners in three secondary schools. According to the Social Surveys Africa, South African schools, including secondary schools, face challenges such as lack of proper resources, overcrowding and violence (Strassburg, Meny-Gibert & Russell, 2010). Even though the study was not about the above challenges, it was deemed educational to examine the pedagogical strategies teachers use to impart critical thinking skills despite such challenges.

The secondary schools where data was collected are a sample of the public secondary education system which caters for the majority of learners in South African townships.

The study needed to find out the manner in which teachers in such schools teach and assess English literary texts, which would inform the reasons behind the uncritical engagement with content at institutions of higher learning as stipulated by researchers such as Samuel (1995) discussed in the purpose of the study section in Chapter One. Furthermore, the history of education in South Africa is characterised by marked divisions to the effect that learners in areas like Soweto were affected by the demise of Bantu Education. According to scholars such as Balfour (2006, p.46), also discussed in Chapter One under background of the study, “Bantu education was more vocational orientated to prepare learners for semi-skilled labour than critical literacy”. The current research studied the changes brought by the abolishment of apartheid and its Bantu Education to find out if the teaching and assessment strategies consolidated the change for the better by equipping learners with critical thinking skills using English literary content. Further information on the contextual background of the study is provided in the analysis of data collected from each secondary school.

4.3. Research approach

The research approach used for this study is qualitative. A qualitative research approach enables the researcher to use interpretative inquiry to discover facts and phenomena to establish if critical thinking is one of the objectives in teaching and learning English literature in secondary schools in Johannesburg West. Responses from qualitative research are, according to Miles and Huberman (1984, p.24), “an investigative process where the researcher makes sense of social phenomena”. The qualitative approach is relevant for collection of data, and for use of the analysis of data to provide meaningful insights into how teachers use literary texts to inspire and promote critical thinking. For this reason, the qualitative approach was chosen to help study phenomena, describe and interpret the data collected.

4.4. Research design

Case study was preferred for this study because it lends itself to a variety of conceptual lenses and is more flexible in approach in collecting data (Conrad & Serlin, 2006). The advantage of the case study approach for this research involves the researcher eliciting extensive data from the people being interviewed or observed, trying to extract

meaning that is not apparent or has not previously been substantiated and then trying to express this in a cogent form to an audience (Bassey, 1999). As mentioned in the literature, questions and observations used for this study illuminate the meaningful insight into how teachers use literary texts to inspire and promote critical thinking. To be more precise, the study used the Theory-Guided Case Study, which according to Levy (2008, p.4), “aim[s] to explain and/or interpret a single historical episode rather than to generalize beyond the data”. The Theory-Guided Case Study, also called the interpretive case study, was used because it is guided by the theoretical framework of the study and the literature to interpret and explain data.

The study utilised a multiple case study approach as there were three cases to look at. Each case study was treated as an isolated case and as a representative sample of other schools within the same area or category. As each case study was treated individually, certain information is repeated in the data analysis, for example, the teaching and assessment strategies and the English literary texts taught. This happened because the three case studies were studied and analysed separately to obtain recurring and different themes as presented on Chapter Eight. The collection and analysis of data using the three separate, but related, case studies also helped to produce the recommendations outlined on Chapter Nine. Before the decision to use case study as research design for this study, several researchers were consulted on the topic such as Cohen and Manion (1997) who consider case study methods best when the interpretative subjective dimensions of educational phenomenon are explored. Through interaction with participants, it was also possible to ascertain a range of educators’ knowledge of educational processes of using questioning techniques to promote critical thinking as a process of teaching and learning. Besides the teachers, data was collected from the learners to obtain their views on the English literary texts they studied. In this way, first-hand data was collected through interaction with the participants. Using this research design, it became possible to observe, interview and record participants using audio-visual devises for accurate, believable analysis to answer all research questions of the study. For the above range of reasons, the case study design was deemed appropriate for this study.

4.5. Data collection

Research method provides a detailed description of data collection which includes: the setting; the participants; how participants are recruited; techniques to collect data; and plans for analysis (Bricki & Green, 2017). This means that the research population and size, the participants and how they are selected, as well as data collection processes and analysis are guided by the research method used. As stated already, the study used the qualitative research method that guided the researcher to embark on the collection of data.

After gaining permission from the authorities of the three schools, consent forms were handed out to all participants and the elements of anonymity and confidentiality were explained. The participants included one teacher per school whose lessons were observed and videotaped, and who was also interviewed. Permission from parents of Grade 12 learners was requested from the parents of twelve learners, four from each of the three secondary schools selected. The teachers were asked to help in the sampling of the learners to be interviewed, preferably two high achievers and two average performers in each group. These learners were interviewed as three separate focus groups. The advantages of focus group interviews are that they allow the researcher to gather multiple perspectives about the researched topic in one sitting. It is also economical in that data collection can be done with more than forty interviewees in a few focus group sittings (Conrad & Serlin, 2006). The researcher used semi-structured questions to conduct interviews with participants. Semi-structured interviews were used because of their characteristic nature to encourage respondents to talk freely and openly about the significance of their practice in school improvement and participants' involvement in interviews was audiotaped. Field notes were also taken as additional data to interviews and observations. These data was used to support data from the interviews (learners focus groups and individual teachers), observations and document reviews.

4.6. Research sampling

After a careful study of several sampling techniques, the researcher determined that the probability sampling (also called random sampling) was appropriate for this study. In this kind of sampling, a group of subjects are selected randomly from a large

population (McMillan, 2004). According to Burns and Grove (2003, p.43), “a population includes all elements that meet certain criteria for inclusion in a study”. The population for this study was the schools that have all the elements necessary for this study to investigate, namely, Grade 12 teachers and learners, English literary texts, pedagogies of teaching and learning in the classrooms, and school location in the townships of West Johannesburg. Out of this population, three schools were selected based on their representativeness and not any particular special pedagogies that teachers were using to teach literary texts. Each school was selected as representative of public schools in the area. The participants were Grade 12 learners (four at each secondary school) and teachers (one at each school) who were selected for observations and interviews. The researcher observed the whole Grade 12 class at each school. This was done to collect data from the participants in their natural teaching and learning environment to answer the questions on pedagogical and assessment strategies used, and the effectiveness of English literary content to promote critical thinking skills. Since the only criterion for selection of the schools was their representativeness, it put all the three schools at the same level so that none had an advantage over the other. This would then enable the researcher to be able to make generalisations about the teaching of English literary texts in these schools. Random sampling was deemed more suitable because the aim of the study was to determine if teachers of Grade 12 learners were promoting critical thinking in their use of pedagogical and assessment strategies in the literature classroom. If the sampling was purposive i.e. targeting only schools where teachers were using innovative pedagogies in teaching literature, it would mean that the research aim had already been achieved, which would not be a true picture of the situation of literature classrooms in Johannesburg West.

4.7. The role of the researcher

The role of the researcher was that of a passive observer, a non-participant. The only moments where the researcher was actively communicating with the participants was during interviews. However, Punch (1998) argues that the researcher may start as an outsider (emic), but later become an active participant (etic) due to changing circumstances during data collection. Even though what Punch (1998) is saying may

happen during data collection, the role of the researcher was explained to the participants (teachers and learners) that it was and remained a passive observer.

4.8. Data analysis

Data in qualitative research is normally analysed inductively, meaning moving from the specific data to general categories and patterns (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). According to Coffey and Atkinson (1996), qualitative research allows the analysis of data during and after data collection. The researcher engaged the Inductive Data Analysis technique, where collected data was coded and categorised to determine recurring patterns and themes. The researcher used Open Coding, where line-by-line analysis and coding of original data was done and data was categorised into codes that the researcher determined to be valuable. This means that all data collected was coded in the form of different topics and sub-topics to steer the methodical arrangement of data as collected in the field. The topics and sub-topics appear to be similar as each case study was analysed individually. In addition, the researcher used what McMillan and Schumacher (2012, p.275) call the “rich narrative description method to explain and describe all field findings”. In this way, data collected in the form of observation and interviews was described and analysed and the report presented in a narrative form in conjunction with the literature that was reviewed earlier. The rich narrative description of data was used to transport the reader mentally to the actual background context of the study so that they can fully comprehend the content of the study.

4.9. Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability

Like any other research, qualitative studies should be credible, the findings transferable, the research techniques dependable, and the results eligible for confirmation.

4.9.1. Credibility

A qualitative research can be credible if the data collection procedure and analysis techniques are trustworthy. According to Green and Thorogood (2004, p.11), “the questions we ask, for instance, and the ways in which we ask them should be

reasonable ones for generating valid (or 'truthful') accounts of phenomena". Applying this counsel, the researcher made sure that the questions asked during the interviews (both individual and focus group interviews) were reasonable. The researcher also conducted himself in a credible manner in the way he interacted with the subjects while observing and conducting interviews as he was professional at all times. There was no attempt to influence participants' responses on any occasion, thus all responses can be taken as reliable.

4.9.2. Transferability

A credible qualitative research is characterised by the transferability of its findings. According to Bitsch (2005, p.85), "transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts with other respondents – it is the interpretive equivalent of generalizability''. This explains that transferability in qualitative research is the flexibility or accessibility of research findings that can be used in other studies. This can be achieved if the researcher undertakes detailed descriptions of their data collection and sampling methods (Bitsch, 2005). In this study, the researcher ensured transferability by providing careful descriptions of the research design and careful selection of subjects for the study.

4.9.3. Dependability

A qualitative research should be dependable. According to Bitsch (2005, p.86), "dependability means the stability of findings over time". This means that dependable research findings and recommendations can withstand the test of time without distortion and amendments and can only be improved by discovering more valuable facts related to it. In this study, the researcher ensured dependability by analysing data to find the correspondence between findings and recommendations made.

4.9.4. Confirmability

Confirmability, according to Baxter and Eyles (1997), is the degree to which the results of an inquiry can be confirmed by other researchers. Research results may have remarkable influence and can be used as an instrument of change, and therefore should be confirmed by other researchers, meaning that they should be susceptible to

confirmation and criticism by peer reviewers (Baxter & Eyles 1997). The researcher in this study made the study to be confirmable by: an audit trail which is evidence of how data was collected, recorded and analysed; reflective journal of all activities during data collection; and triangulation which is the use of different methods and theories to eliminate bias (Lincoln & Guba 1985).

4.10. Ethics

Many researchers who prefer the qualitative approach, such as Locke et al. (1982), posit the view that ethical consideration is a crucial part when embarking on this kind of study. Ethics in qualitative research means researchers are obligated to respect the rights, needs, values and desires of the informant(s). The researcher for this study proceeded with the study only after his ethics application with the institution he is enrolled with was approved. In addition, the researcher ensured the safety and confidentiality of the participants, as well as that of the environment, by making sure that all interviews were conducted in safe places during the day where the possibility of non-participants eavesdropping was limited. All data collected was free of participants' names or identity markers to ensure participants' anonymity. Furthermore, the participants selected were not coerced to participate in the study, which means they volunteered on their own free will. The researcher observed the terms of the ethics clearance issued to him from the beginning to the conclusion of the study. The researcher obtained the ethics clearance from the institution (University of the Witwatersrand) through its ethics committee to conduct the study.

4.10.1 Confidentiality

The results/findings of a qualitative research can be accessible once published, but during the data collection process, confidentiality is crucial, especially when it comes to participants. In research ethics, the concept of confidentiality is closely equated to the term 'privacy' (Oliver, 2003). The concept of confidentiality informs researchers to be mindful of individuals' rights to privacy even when they consented to participate in the research. However, this right may be difficult to uphold, especially in this information-led society and age (Bulmer, 2001). In this study, the researcher maintained participants' rights to confidentiality even after the data collection process was over.

4.10.2. Informed consent

The researcher gave the participants informed consent forms to read and sign in order to confirm that they were willing to be participants in the study. The definition of informed consent in research is explained by Bulger (2002, p.3) as “the process in which participants’ consent to participate in a research after being fully informed of its procedures, risks, and benefits”. This seems to be a mere formality, but according to Homan (1991), it is a crucial step that can determine whether the participants would continue with the research or decline. Before this study commenced, the researcher explained the study’s aims and the contents of the informed consent forms vividly to the participants in order to obtain their willing offer to participate.

4.10.3. Anonymity

Anonymity in research, according to Wiles, Crow, Heath and Charles (2006), refers to the participants’ status of being active but their identities remaining hidden. This study used audio-visual devices to collect data but did not expose this data to the public. The researcher used pseudonyms and not participants’ real identities when analysing the data (Alexander, 2001) so that no participant can be identified.

4.10.4 Limitations of the study

A qualitative research requires detailed observation and explanation and assumes that it is impossible to define exactly what elements are crucial and should be considered to the exclusion of others (Atieno, 2009). The above statement may be true as qualitative research depends on the interpretation of data, which then justifies the conclusion the study reaches. This, on its own, can be a limitation because a researcher may collect valid data but be railed for failing to interpret it convincingly for everyone. The time-frame (as the researcher is required to finish the study within a set period as per enrolment requirement) and scarce resources also added to the limitations of the current study. Such limitations, as Simon and Goes (2013) explain them, are matters and occurrences that arise in a study which are out of the researcher’s control.

4.11. Conclusion

This chapter on research methodology is the blueprint of how data was collected to answer the questions the researcher has that prompted the study. The discussion on research methodology provided information about the place where the study was conducted, and the procedure of the study as well as the participants involved. The nature of the study is qualitative, meaning it depended on the value of the observation and interview data to reach an empirical conclusion, rather than on statistical calculations. The criterion to select the subjects or the research sampling (random sampling) also determined the size of both sample and population. The research design for this study is case study but specifically 'Theory-Guided Case Study', which allowed data to be collected based on the literature and theoretical framework employed to guide the study. The research approach and the design helped the researcher to study human activities like teaching and learning in their natural environments such as schools.

The researcher established that some ethical considerations had to be observed in order to obtain permission from relevant stakeholders to conduct the study. The research ethics acted as regulations that guided the research and protected the rights of participants. The need for confidentiality and anonymity was further emphasised even as the researcher obtained informed consent from the participants. This contributed to the credibility and confirmability of the study. The credibility of a study enables it to become transferable, dependable and confirmable. The next chapter presents the data collected in the first school, Ripfumelo.

CHAPTER FIVE

CASE STUDY 1: RIPFUMELO

5.1 Introduction

> Literature-based reading has an important effect on the development of critical thinking. A reader must recognise patterns within text, fit details into these patterns, then relate them to other texts and remembered experiences.
> Colucciello (1997, p.3)

English literature at Ripfumelo (a pseudonymous name) is a compulsory subject, as in any other secondary school in South Africa,. The only teacher who taught English First Additional Language (EFAL), with the help of the School Management Group (SMT), chose to teach drama and short stories from the list of literature genres provided by the Department of Basic Education (DBE). This means that the novel and poetry genres were not selected by the school. The study determined whether the content of English literary texts chosen by the teacher for Grade 12 promoted critical thinking by the learners. The study needed to find out the pedagogical and assessment strategies used by the teacher while teaching English literary texts, and if the teaching-learning experience promoted critical thinking in learners. In order to explore these goals, the study paid special attention to themes such as critical reading, the questions teachers asked during lessons, and how learners engaged with English literary texts.

5.2. Ripfumelo Secondary School: Background

The school is a typical public secondary school in Soweto, categorised as quintile 1. According to Van Wyk (2015), a quintile is an indication of the socio-economic status of a school. Therefore, schools are ranked according to how poor or wealthy the school community is. The quintile categorisation does not only look at the school resources (the availability or lack thereof) but the community from which the learners come. In order to classify the different quintiles, the Limpopo Department of Basic Education (2006) declares that quintile 1 schools are the poorest and quintile 5 schools are the least poor. According to this classification, Ripfumelo Secondary School is categorised as quintile 1. This conclusion was not merely based on the stereotypical mentality that

many Soweto residents live in poverty, but by the fact that quintile 1 school learners do not pay school fees, therefore the DBE tries to fund such schools in order to eliminate the gap between the different quintiles in the future (Human Sciences Research Council, 2010). For schools such as Ripfumelo Secondary School, the government organises feeding schemes to provide food for the learners as most cannot afford to buy food as they are from poor families.

From the information obtained during informal conversations with the teachers, the school was opened in the early eighties, and it started from the then standard 6 (Grade 8) to standard 9 (Grade 11). Grade 12 was later added in the year 2000 to cater for learners who used to travel many kilometres to other secondary schools after passing Grade 11. The language of teaching and learning (LoTL) is English, but both teachers and learners use their Home Languages (SeTswana, IsiZulu and IsiXhosa), which are spoken in the community. This means the school is what Stein (2017) calls a 'single-medium school' where only one language is used as a medium of instruction, but other Home Languages are studied as compulsory subjects. Thus, English is studied as a First Additional Language or FAL, while Home Languages (HL) such as SeTswana, IsiZulu and IsiXhosa are taught to individual groups of learners speaking or choosing to learn these languages. The other subjects (besides the Home Languages) are taught in English as it is the medium of instruction. It is common practice for both teachers and learners to communicate in their Home Languages outside the classroom, but they engage in English as a medium of instruction in the classrooms.

The authority hierarchy at the school starts from the principal as the head of the school, followed by the deputy principal. The deputy principal and some of the heads of department and selected teachers from the School Management Team (SMT) make most of the decisions in the school, but those decisions must be approved by the principal. There is also the Subject Representatives (SR) who represent all the subjects offered. The school governing body (SGB) is another authority structure which is instrumental in making decisions pertaining to matters of the school, such as hiring temporary teachers and the maintenance of the school.

Ripfumelo Secondary School is predominantly black, accommodating both teachers and learners from other parts of South Africa. There are also possibilities that some

learners may be children of migrant parents who settled in South Africa coming from neighbouring countries such as Lesotho, Swaziland, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. The teachers and learners who participated in this research confirmed that all the learners are residents from the local vicinity of the school and mostly speak the same language, SeTswana, with some learners speaking IsiZulu and IsiXhosa. Even the children of the migrants seemed to have learned (some of them mastered) the local languages. Learners in the school are mostly from families of middle-class workers, but many of their parents are unemployed. This information was freely provided by the teachers as they tried to justify and explain the presence of the feeding scheme for the learners, which characterises the quintile 1 schools in South Africa. What is interesting about these parents is that, when they were invited for a parents' meeting by the school, they came in great numbers, as observed during one of the observation sessions at the school. The principal said that the parents attend meetings because companies which need unskilled labourers sometimes ask to use the school premises when recruiting new workers. The parents thus attend meetings in the hope that there may be an opportunity for employment.

The school, just like many schools in Soweto, has its fair share of vandalism, judging from the many broken windows and doors. The computer lab where the computers were stored for learners' use was broken into and all computers were stolen. Discipline was a serious challenge in this school. This could be indicative of the type of value some members of the community have for the school: meaning there is no regard for it. As discussed in Chapter Three, critical pedagogy tries to bridge the gap between communities and schools. According to Lacan (1977) as discussed in Chapter Three, teaching and learning should focus on the emancipation of the mind to think critically about all facets of life. The hostility depicted in the form of vandalism maybe the products of the mentality that the school is viewed as valueless because it does not produce individuals who are able to lead the people out of their plight which is characterised by poverty and lack.

It takes up to 10 to 15 minutes to get the learners settled in class for lessons, even in the Grade 12 classes. Some of the teachers openly showed their fear of certain learners who are believed to be gang members. The police frequented the school and

at times would be seen searching some learners for weapons and illegal drugs. Surprisingly, absenteeism was not a big challenge, and the teachers attributed this to the feeding scheme that has been going on for many years.

On my second observational visit, two District Office officials came to the school to support the teachers with teaching and learning materials. The teachers explained that there are different officials for each subject offered at each secondary school. A guidance and motivational speaker from the DBE came to motivate the Grade 12 learners as it was close to final examinations, an activity which happens yearly. Despite all the efforts, the school did not improve in its results over the years.

5.3. Data collection

Permission to conduct the study was granted by the principal after submitting relevant request letters with an explanation as to what the study was about. A week after obtaining permission from the principal, a meeting was arranged with the head of the English department, who happened to be the only English teacher for Grade 12. A letter and a consent form were handed to and discussed with the teacher, who then helped in explaining the purpose of the study to the learners; the confidentiality and anonymity clauses were thoroughly discussed. The letters and consent forms for the parents were given to the learners to pass to their parents, but only a few parents signed the consent forms or came to school for clarity. Most of the learners declared that their parents did not mind but would not sign the consent forms. Out of thirty-seven forms given to learners, only three were signed. The principal gave permission for the research to go ahead despite this setback. The Grade 12 class was observed in order to record the lesson where English literary texts were taught.

5.3.1. First observation at Ripfumelo

The first lesson observed was a lesson on an English short story from an anthology of stories called *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* compiled by Brian Walter. According to the teacher, this is one of the texts prescribed by the DBE to replace the old list of English literature texts studied from 2015 to 2016. The title of the story was “The New Tribe”, which was written by Buchi Emecheta. The story is about a white

English family who cannot have children of their own and decide to adopt two children. One of the children, Chester, is black and of Nigerian descent. As expected, Chester faces several challenges in the family and community, which consists of mostly white people, such as discrimination. As he grows up, he starts asking his parents questions about his identity. The story has universal themes such as adoption and racialism which are potential topics for discussion (both verbally and written), and debate. Before the teacher could read the story aloud to the learners, some background information about short stories and literature in general was provided by the teacher as it was in the text. The information included the different types of writing styles, narration and different literary genres.

The background information of the author (which included a short synopsis of the story) was read by a learner who volunteered to read aloud. The teacher explained what was read and did not ask additional questions about what the learner read to include the learners in the lesson. An analysis of the story, which could have included a critical look at the title, setting, themes, characters and plot, was not done. It was only the reading aloud and general explanation that was done, with frequent short questions to get the learners involved in the lesson. According to critical pedagogy theory, the analysis of literary content helps with the acquisition of basic knowledge Joldersma (1999), meaning that good teaching and learning could lead to acquisition of knowledge that is relevant and useful to the students.

This could have helped the teacher because if the learners had that limited knowledge of content, the reading of the stories could focus on literary interpretation and close reading, also called critical reading. The reading aloud which took place during observation was aimed at equipping the learners with knowledge and comprehension of content, rather than critically engaging with content. This kind of teaching and learning is what Freire (1970) calls the banking system of education: the kind that promotes memorisation of basic information without critical analysis of content.

As the lesson continued, the teacher asked one of the learners to explain what they understood about a particular paragraph which was read aloud from the story, in their

own words. This was good as the learners had an opportunity to give their viewpoints, but the teacher could not build on their answers, or do what Mays, Criticos, Long, Moletsane and Mthiyane (2009, p.227) call “probing the answers” which entails pushing learners to more deep and complex systems of thinking about content. Furthermore, the learners were not given ample time to express their opinions in the form of a discussion or a debate. It was discussed in Chapter Two that the Department of Basic Education (2011), recommends the inclusion of discussions and debates in the teaching of English literary texts. The teacher’s explanation of content was not coupled with relevant questions to initiate the teaching or instructional strategies of discussion and debate, which critical pedagogy theory terms dialogical teaching and learning, since the teacher and learners engage in a dialogue. When asked about this, the teacher explained that the time allocation (set by the DBE) for reading and reviewing English literary texts is limited. This hindered full engagement with the texts.

Reading aloud (RA) was used as a teaching strategy to involve learners in reading the story. According to Laminack and Wadsworth (2006), RA is good when reading is coupled with debates through questioning, as this could promote critical engagement with content rather than mere comprehension. What the above authors mean is that when learners are given a chance to read aloud, discuss or debate about content, the different opinions could help learners to develop critical thinking skills. Sanacore (1992, p.1) states that “it is an important motivational strategy not only for primary school children but also for upper-elementary, middle, and high school students”. Sanacore (1992) further mentions that educators can use the RA strategy to extend learners’ vocabulary and concept development; and that it is an ideal strategy for learners for whom English is not their First Language (FL). This supports the fact that the strategy used by the teacher for teaching English literature was not conducive to promote critical thinking. The deeper-level of engagement with literary content approach believed to be associated with critical cognition as discussed in Chapter Two was not stimulated by the teacher’s teaching strategy. What was observed during the lesson was the teacher explaining content without giving learners a chance to reflect on the new information or to discuss about it.

To add to the argument in the preceding paragraph, another researcher on the reading aloud (RA) instructional strategy, Furtado (2008), declares that it plays the role of an

instructional strategy used to facilitate comprehension skills among children during the reading of stories. This means that reading aloud, according to Furtado (2008), is an acceptable teaching strategy to promote comprehension of stories, but not critical thinking. This confirms what was observed during data collection at the school, which was only reading aloud and engagement of learners through verbal questioning, of which most of the questions did not elicit or promote critical engagement with the content of the story. To illustrate this, when the teacher explained the different English literary genres, especially the differences between fictional texts and real stories, the teacher posed the following question:

The book Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom*, is it fiction or reality?

According to the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy on levels of questioning as discussed in Chapter Two, the above question is on the lower level of knowledge and comprehension. This lower level, or level 1, could equip learners with skills such as to: arrange, define, duplicate, label, list, memorise, name, order, recognise, relate, recall, repeat, reproduce, and state (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). The argument here is that even though knowledge and comprehension are crucial skills, it is necessary that questions asked in a lesson be used to promote critical thinking skills in learners. The level 1 questions are questions to test basic knowledge about a text. The themes in the stories (for example) could help learners to apply the knowledge outside the classroom only if critical engagement is promoted through teaching and questioning, as critical pedagogy theory suggests. The teacher, as observed, did not build on the knowledge by using other types of questioning, such as open-ended questions which could have helped the learners to develop higher-order thinking skills which characterises critical thinking.

The learners' response to the question was a guess-work in unison, until one of them provided the correct, short, one-word answer that did not include reasoning: *reality!* The mundane answer to the question was expected as the question was closed-ended, which did not require more explanations or perspectives from the learners. The teacher could have continued explaining the next part of the lesson, which was about the differences between a biography and an autobiography, by asking a question like: how do you know that the text is a biography? This is an example of questions which

require learners to think before they answer, and if several learners were given the opportunity to add their opinions, the reading aloud teaching strategy could have been coupled with discussion, which could escalate into a debate. The dialogical teaching and learning encouraged by Freire (1970), therefore, becomes ideal as it promotes active learning through meaningful dialogue.

5.3.2 Second observation at Ripfumelo

The second observation took place in the same class, with the same group of learners and teacher. The lesson was a continuation of the one observed previously and like in the first lesson, one learner volunteered to read aloud followed by the teacher's explanation of content. During the lesson, the teacher tried to engage the learners by asking verbal questions that required verbal answers. This continued as the reading of the story progressed. After another learner volunteered to read half the first page of the story, the teacher asked the following question: *"*Now what is happening guys*?"* The structuring of the question above was very informal and not according to what is expected at Grade 12 level. Unfortunately, it seemed that was the questioning style the learners were accustomed to, but the questions set by the DBE, as seen from some of the previous question papers, were better structured. Back to the lesson, one of the learners answered the question by providing a comprehensive explanation of how the Arlington family adopted their first child, Julia, who was found by the boy who delivered mail after she was abandoned by her mother. The boy's name was Julian, a fact that caused the Arlingtons to name the child 'Julia'. The learner also described how excited the family was to adopt the child as they did not have any children of their own.

The learner's answer indicated comprehension of basic facts about the story, not critical engagement with content. The expected question for critical engagement at that stage could have been on the learners' viewpoints on adoption: whether they thought it was a noble thing to do or not; or what challenges could be faced by both the adoptive parents and the child. Critical pedagogy as a social theory encourages analysis of such social themes so that knowledge and skills gained in the classroom are used effectively to navigate through life outside the school premises (Freire, 1972). If the teacher had asked such questions, different opinions could have been provided

which may have incited the whole class to reflect on the keywords in the story. A lack of higher-order questions to encourage learners to think, reason or reflect, and to allow more learners to participate in the lesson, resulted in no opportunity being created to promote critical mentality. The lesson continued in the same manner of reading and explanation by the teacher.

In continuing with the type of question asked by the teacher during lessons, the question quoted in the paragraph above is also categorised as level 1 (literal) questioning in the CAPS (Department of Basic Education, 2011) for English literature in the FAL class. According to this policy, the level 1 questions deal with information explicitly stated in the text. This kind of questions require answers about the information from the text without altering and thinking outside it or linking the information to other texts and real-life situations. This is contrary to what the critical pedagogy discussed in Chapter Two and Chapter Three say about literature content: that literary works taught at schools should be used to address challenges in communities.

To further explain the nature of these level 1 questions, the verbs that identify them are name, list, identify, describe, state, and relate, which require comprehension and basic knowledge of literary content (Department of Basic Education, 2011, pp.78-79). It should be noted that even though this level of cognitive probing is basic, it is a crucial first step to test the level of understanding; however, the teacher was expected to move on to the level 2 questioning technique, also referred to as ‘Reorganisation’ in the same policy statement. Level 2 questions require analysis, synthesis or organisation of information explicitly stated in the text (Department of Basic Education, 2011, p.79). The policy also provides level 3 (inference), level 4 (evaluation), and level 5 (appreciation) questions. This is how the CAPS policy (Department of Basic Education, 2011) classifies and requires assessment to be conducted for English FAL literature at Grade 12.

A careful study of the classification of questions in the CAPS document revealed that the DBE emulated Barret’s Taxonomy for Reading Comprehension. According to Reeves (2012, p.36), “the Barrett’s Taxonomy comprises five main ‘comprehension’

levels as opposed to the Revised Bloom's six cognitive process levels. These are: (1) literal comprehension; (2) reorganisation; (3) inferential comprehension; (4) evaluation; and (5) appreciation". Even though this taxonomy is regarded as more simplified and understandable than Revised Bloom's Taxonomy, the fact remains that it was designed to categorise the cognitive levels on reading comprehension, not critical thinking skills. This emphasises the fact that the DBE policy's objective for teaching English literature in the FAL at Grade 12 level is knowledge and comprehension, without critical engagement.

The classification by the DBE, therefore, did not use the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy which are universally agreed upon tools to determine the level of critical thinking skills. This taxonomy or classification, according to Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), is more suited to determining the different levels of cognition and clearly promotes metacognitive knowledge engagement to help learners become aware of their own cognitive learning. In this way, learners become aware of their cognitive learning processes leading to strategic or reflective knowledge about how to tackle cognitive tasks, solving of complex problems, and knowledge of self (Anderson and Krathwohl 2001, pp.3-4). With this kind of valuable characteristics, it is surprising that the DBE ignored this taxonomy in favour of Barret's, which focuses more on comprehension than critical teaching and learning. The point of argument here is that Bloom's Taxonomy is more suited to promoting critical thinking skills than Barret' Taxonomy.

The learner's answer to the earlier question showed comprehension of content, also called 'factual knowledge' (Moll et al. 2010). According to Moll et al. (2010), factual questions teach learners to remember facts rather than to think about the new information. This explains the learner's explanation which reiterated facts without providing any viewpoints. The learner explained content the way the teacher did, meaning the teaching and assessment strategies used by the teacher created a certain kind of learners: the kind that reproduces information and seldom thinks about it. The point here is that the teacher was not creative enough to give the learners questions that moved them to contemplate, reason and reflect on content. The following quote presents the learner's answer to the question:

> The newspaper boy found an abandoned baby and gave her to Ginny so that she can take care of her….

After the above response from the learner, the teacher further explained what the learner said and added that Ginny (one of the characters) did not have children of her own, therefore it was pleasing to her to accept the abandoned baby. The teacher's explanation provided factual information about the story, which was crucial for the learners to know and comprehend. The challenge here is that knowledge and comprehension questions are only good to answer low-order questions, but the learners may find it difficult to answer questions that require their thoughts if the teacher did not practice with them.

Another learner was asked to read aloud as the lesson continued in the same manner of reading and explanations by the teacher. At the end of the lesson, no written work (homework, assignment or research work) was given to the learners as assessment. The importance of written assessment work cannot be emphasised enough because literary works (depending on effective teaching and assessment strategies) can teach learners basic writing. To expand on this argument, Yelin (1978) declares that the critical pedagogy theory discussed in Chapter Three can enrich educators' work by providing a way of viewing the institutional context in which they teach, and also a way of understanding what to teach. This means that the theory can give guidance on how to approach the relationship between basic writing and language, literacy, and values. What Yelin (1978) means, among other things, is that there is a connection between the critical pedagogy theory and teaching language and literacy through basic writing. To further explain this, teaching and assessment should (in addition to verbal discussions) include basic writing, which can be achieved by using written tasks such as essays to consolidate learners' language and literacy skills. It could have been beneficial to assess the learners who participated in this study in written tasks since they study English language and literature as their FAL. This could have also helped the learners to practice for their final written examination. Creative writing, in turn, might have produced critical writers whose written works could have been an illumination and a reflection of their communities as critical pedagogy theory suggests.

5.3.3. Third observation at Ripfumelo

During the third lesson's observation, most of the Grade 12 learners had to attend the revision camp organised by the DBE. This is one of the attempts by DBE to improve results at Grade 12 level. As a result, there were fewer learners in the class. The class did not take very long, as the teacher needed to attend to other matters in the office. Before the teacher left, some more elements of short stories were discussed in preparation for the second story to be studied. The teacher advised the learners to go study different ways of characterisation and narration styles (first, second and third person narration styles) to prepare for the next story to be studied. To end the lesson the teacher explained that, due to limited time, the focus would be on preparation for the final examinations, which included studying all the prescribed short stories as it was not known which ones would appear in the question paper.

To conclude the discussion above, I can say that at Ripfumelo Secondary School, the teacher used the reading aloud (RA) strategy to teach English literary texts. This teaching technique, coupled with some obscure explanation and short, factual questioning, is not conducive to promote a critical view of the world as English literature is believed to provide learners. The critical pedagogy theory discussed in Chapter Three encourages teachers to conduct a critical reading of literary texts, thus trying to get into the mind of the author to enable learners to think critically about content (Kincheloe, 2005). In this way, the message in English literary texts can transform the learners into active, independent thinkers who can challenge any misconceptions and wrong beliefs in their communities.

5.3.4. Interview with the teacher

As mentioned in Chapter Four, data collection for the study included observations and interviews. The interview with the teacher was meant to collect data to supplement the information recorded during observation. It was anticipated that the interview data would reveal more about the teaching and assessment strategies used by the teacher to teach English literary texts. The interview was also used to determine the viewpoint of the teacher regarding the texts, which could influence the teacher's attitude towards the texts and performance as discussed in Chapter Two. In Chapter Two, some information on teachers' perspectives about teaching English literature was discussed,

and the interview with the participant teacher was meant to shed some light on what was established in the literature review chapter. For example, researchers like Collie and Slater (1990) believe that literature is important in the societal viewpoint of reflecting what happens in the communities. A contrasting view from this perspective was also provided by scholars such as Butler (2006) whose view on teachers' perspectives on teaching English literary texts was to equip learners with language skills.

The first participant to be interviewed at Ripfumelo Secondary School (as already indicated in the first paragraph) was the teacher who was observed teaching English literature for three lessons. The interview was conducted to find out (among other things), what teaching and assessment strategies were preferred while teaching English literary texts. It was established during observation that the teacher read content aloud and some of the learners were also afforded an opportunity to read aloud. The interview data was used to establish if there were other teaching and assessment strategies used by the teacher, and if the teaching-learning experience was designed to promote critical thinking.

Despite a longer interview than expected, the responses did not provide in-depth answers to show full understanding of what the term 'critical thinking' entails. A question was asked to explore how critical thinking is relevant to teaching English literature. This means that engaging literature should encourage learners to explore awareness of their society and what happens in their own environments. In response to the question, the teacher said:

> Yes, it helps a lot. Some of them, you know, they are critical, and then it' so interesting when you teach [the text] 'My Children! My Africa!' You know, they love it, they will ask so many questions as to say, 'Ma'am, is it possible? Is it possible it really happened?' And I said, 'Yes, everything happened. It's very much possible'. And they ask so many questions and they are critical again, about the apartheid and everything. And then when it comes to the short stories, but these ones as compared to the other ones these here they're doing now, the new short stories, as compared to the other ones, like 'The Dube Train'. The white learners cannot relate to the train, that Dube train. Exactly what is happening inside the Dube train? Now our township learners are able to relate to the Dube train because most of them have been there. They saw exactly what was happening inside the Dube train. Now those white learners are

> there in the suburbs, they just see these trains and they don't know exactly what is happening, and they don't want to associate themselves with the train. Now when it comes to assessment, they will try their best, but they will not be good. Now our township learners will be able to score more marks, [than] the white learners.

There are several ideas that the teacher revealed about the way teaching was conducted, critical thinking, attitude towards the short story studied, and the relevance of the English literary texts prescribed by the DBE, as well as teaching and assessment. First and foremost, the teacher declared that the learners displayed critical thinking skills because they are critical about the content of the English literary texts. It may be true that the learners asked questions, but it depends on the types of questions asked because the ones they posed during observation were not critical, they just needed more information. For example, if the learners were critical in the way the teacher thought, they could not only have asked a question like "is it possible…?" and ended there. This kind of question only showed curiosity and not critical thinking. The learners could have posed follow-up questions like, "how did it happen?" to open a platform for discussion (Allen, 2013). This type of questioning requires a response that can provide detailed information to think differently about information, to even change how they think, which would be the beginning of critical engagement with content and the development of critical skills. The simple, factual questions however introduced learners to crucial basic terms and understanding of events, in this case, apartheid, but the teacher should have helped the learners to think about this frequently used term. This also shows that the teacher did not have a clear comprehension of the concept of critical thinking by declaring that the learners are 'critical' while they were merely interested in the information.

On the idea of content, the teacher explained that some of the stories were relevant to a certain racial group, while another group may not understand because they were not exposed to it, referring to one of the short stories: "The Dube Train". The teacher used this story to explain that it was relevant for the black learners in the townships as it is about violence experienced by people who use trains as a means of transportation, of which black people are a majority. The insinuation here was that black learners would relate to the story more than white learners as black learners were exposed to the kind of violence in the story because some of them used trains daily to school.

To continue with the idea of some learners being disadvantaged by English literary content, such as the white learners as the teacher claimed, Madondo (2012) offered a different opinion as explored in the introductory section of Chapter One. This author said that the importance of literature is to expose and introduce learners to new concepts, ideas, cultural and traditional practices foreign to them. He further mentioned that if learners are exposed to new ideas, concepts, cultures and traditions, they may start to view their own reality in a critical way. It is true that learners may experience challenges when exposed to concepts foreign to them, as the teacher claimed, but according to Madondo's (2012) explanation, challenges may stretch learners' thinking capabilities. It depends on the way the message is related to the learners, meaning the teaching and assessment methods employed to transfer knowledge and skills.

Another issue expressed by the teacher is on assessment, claiming that a certain group of learners find it difficult to answer questions due to the content being irrelevant to their environment. Contrary to this, it was discussed in Chapter One that using literature critically in the classroom can widen learners' understanding of their own and other cultures (Snelson & Elison-Bowers, 2009). This means through that literature, students are exposed to different environments and experiences, and it is the duty of the teacher to interpret and promote active participation with a critical thinking objective. The teacher failed to understand that in education and English literature in particular, the teacher is supposed to expose learners to the world in which they live. If learners were only taught and assessed on their environment, this would create challenges as learners would have limited or no exposure to knowledge about other parts of the world. While 'scoring marks' is crucial to advance to the next level, learners should also be taught to become critical about content; they should be given content not only about their known environments, but also about unfamiliar territories. The teacher's attitude towards some of the English literary content, as revealed in the quotation above, was one of discrimination, as the teacher decided that some short stories – like "The Dube Train" – may not be suitable for a certain race of students. It seemed that the teacher also questioned the relevance of content regarding this story using a 'discriminatory' viewpoint.

During the interview, a question was posed to explore whether there were other teaching strategies considered besides reading aloud (RA) as observed. The question was posed to find out whether the teacher considered or used other strategies which could promote critical engagement during lessons not observed. Based on the teacher's response below, it can be concluded that the teacher was inclined or preferred to use one strategy in teaching English literary texts. The teacher responded:

> Mm…what I normally do is, I read the story with them. And like, I don't read, at first, I used to read and then they would complain to say, 'Ma'am, you are too fast, we don't understand'. Then I would say, 'Okay, guys read then I'll explain. Read and I'll explain'. Then as they read, I explain thoroughly, and I ask them questions: what is the story all about? And then after we have read the whole story, then I'll ask them what is it that you have learned from this story? Then everybody will come with views and their own idea, and then, you know, they will debate about that. And then others will see something else, then others will see something else. And then I will come in to help as they engage.

The teacher's response emphasised what was already observed: that the teacher mostly used RA and minimal verbal questioning that required short verbal answers. However, if the sharing of ideas and debating happened in the past lessons, or would happen in the future English literary lessons, the learners may probably develop critical thinking skills. The teaching strategy that the teacher employed (RA) is only appropriate to teach vocabulary and fluency as already discussed above. Fluency, however, is a skill associated with verbal language use, which learners could utilise in discussions and debates to develop critical viewpoints about what they learn. This depends on how teachers teach and assess, because the teacher taught only to enable learners to pass summative evaluations in their final examinations to advance to the next level without developing critical thinking skills.

In Chapter One, Spaull (2013) was paraphrased as saying that the education system in South Africa fails the youth as it cannot produce the desired results of instilling educational and vocational skills. To validate this claim, Spaull (2013) also found that compared to other learners around the world, the South African learners perform poorly in international standardized tests such as the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMS) and the Progress in international Reading and Literacy Studies (PIRLS). Even though these tests were conducted on learners from lower grades, the same learners were likely to advance to Grade 12 with low levels of

literacy. Therefore, critical thinking skills could become an unachievable objective. Contrary to Spaull's perspective, Simkins (2013) had a different viewpoint as he concluded that much [in education] had been achieved in South Africa: average educational levels continue to rise, and more and more pupils are reaching to and succeeding at tertiary level. While Simkins (2013) may be correct in saying that more learners advance to tertiary levels, according to Samuel (1995), as discussed in Chapter One, these learners lack critical thinking skills to engage with content beyond mere comprehension. It seems Simkins' view is based on quantity, while Spaull's opinion is based on quality. Even though the teacher responded that there was the inclusion of some types of questions during the English literary lessons, there was not enough use of such varied questions to promote critical thinking. The teacher was also asked about the assessment strategies engaged for English literary texts at Grade 12 level.

Before moving on to the teacher's response to the question, it should be understood that assessment and instruction go hand-in-hand in a classroom that focuses on the student (Regier, 2012). This means that teaching without assessing is direct instruction or lecturing, and it does not actively include learners' participation. According to Regier (2012), there are many types of assessment or questioning strategies that could be used during and after lessons, the distinction being lower-order questions and higher-order questions. On the question of assessment strategies, the teacher provided the following answer:

> I normally use the high-order questions, middle-order questions, and the low-order questions.

What the teacher is saying here is that different kinds of questions are used during lessons, namely, the higher-order questions, middle-order questions, and lower-order questions. According to Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) cited earlier, the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy of questions and answers is categorised into cognitive levels: the "Remembering" level can be achieved through lower-order questions; "Understanding and Applying" levels are a result of middle-order questions; "Analysing, Evaluating and Creating" can be achieved by employing the higher-order questions. As can be noted from the illustration in Chapter Two, the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy amended the nouns into verbs, such as knowledge into remembering, and comprehension into

understanding. From what was observed, the questioning strategies the teacher employed during observation fall under the lower-order questions category, of which the cognition level is remembering. Theoretically, the teacher's response seemed ideal for promoting critical thinking as she claimed to include lower-, middle- and higher-order questions, but practically the teacher did not really include all questioning categories as claimed.

The study also needed to explore if the content of English literary texts could promote learners' critical thinking at Grade 12 level. On the issue of the role that English literary texts play in promoting critical thinking, the teacher was asked if critical thinking is an achievable goal through English literary teaching. The teacher's response was:

> It is achievable, it is achievable, but to only a few, only a few, but it is achievable.

Even though the teaching and questioning methods used were not enough to promote critical thinking, the teacher believed that there was hope, but further admitted that the hope for critical thinking was for a few learners and not all of them. This hope could only be achieved if the teacher would experiment with other teaching and assessment methods rather than the ones used during observation. According to Jaffer (2004), learners who study literature are expected to think critically and apply their critical and analytical skills to the texts they study. This researcher further argues that it is generally assumed that students who have studied a text would be able to appraise it critically, when in reality, the case is quite the contrary (Jaffer, 2004). This means that most of the learners studied by the above researcher did not have the ability and tendency to gather, evaluate, and use information effectively. Only a few learners who have natural critical ability showed critical engagement with content that has the potential to promote critical thinking skills. This argument aligns with the teacher's response that not all learners have the capability to engage critically with literary texts.

On the contrary, Kurland (1990) believes that with proper teaching and assessment strategies, English literature has various themes that can help learners develop critical thinking skills. The teacher's teaching and assessment strategies, as observed, did not and could not strengthen the learners' thinking capacity to the point of developing

critical engagement with English literary texts. Therefore, the teacher needed to experiment with other strategies that could take learners beyond just comprehension of content in order for them to 'think' about what they learn, an idea encouraged by Freire's critical pedagogy.

5.3.5. Interview with learners at Ripfumelo

In Chapter Two, the different perspectives and attitudes of learners towards English literary texts were explored. The learners' different attitudes associated with English literature revealed that the teaching and assessment strategies used by teachers are crucial as they affect how learners perceive what they learn. Those attitudes explored, which ranged from viewing English literature as the source of language skills to viewing it as complicated works of art, influenced how learners engaged with the texts as discussed in Chapter Two. The interview data was collected to answer the research questions and to validate or disagree with the literature as discussed.

The teacher was instrumental in selecting the ideal learners to form a focus group as required. Four learners were selected by the teacher to participate in the interview. As explained in Chapter Four, the focus group consisted of two learners who were high achievers and two average-performing learners. Since the teacher initially explained the purpose of this study to the learners, further explanation to the selected focus group of learners was on the confidentiality and anonymity clauses to reassure them that their identities in the whole interview would be safe from the public. Of the four selected learners, one learner was shy and uneasy with engaging with interviews; the learner withdrew from participating in the focus group, a behaviour which Pajak (1986) calls lack of self-esteem and self-actualization as discussed in 3.4 above. Halfway through the interview, the learners who participated again needed reassurance that the interview was confidential. After the reassurance, the participants became free to air their views about any of the questions. They also added what they wished their teacher would do more to help them comprehend English literary content.

During and after the interview, some of the learners displayed skills such as analysing, evaluating and creating, and reflected their higher-order thinking as they engaged with questions asked. There was a vast difference in the manner the learners responded

to the interview questions to the way they answered questions posed by the teacher during lessons. This could be the result of how the teacher's teaching and assessment strategies failed to encourage and promote critical engagement as the learners did not actively participate in the lessons. The importance of the teaching strategies to promote critical thinking was emphasised by Majiet (2016) who stressed that the teaching strategies that teachers use are critical in order to help learners to think and reflect on content. When asked about their teacher's way of teaching English literary texts, one of the learners responded:

> Our teacher teaches us in such a way that we normally read [the texts] in class and also advises us to go home and re-read the book for full understanding, and so we can be able to share our knowledge and views in class.

This response emphasises the teaching strategy observed during the three English literature lessons, which is reading aloud (RA). According to the learners, the RA strategy was the most used teaching strategy by the teacher while teaching English literary texts, meaning there were other teaching strategies employed when the teacher taught creative writing and language (grammar), even though the learners did not specify which teaching strategies were used. The learner's response above also provided crucial information that indicated that there was somehow attempts at promoting critical thinking, which is encouragement of the learners to read the texts on their own in order to share their views with other learners in class. The sharing of information is what Totten, Sills, Digby and Russ (1991) call shared learning. According to these researchers, shared learning is when learners share information about content, especially information they found on their own when encouraged to do so. When learners are given an opportunity to engage in discussion or sharing of information, they take responsibility for their own learning and how they learn (a process called metacognition) which shows critical thinking skills development. Unfortunately, there was no shared learning during the lessons observed. Instead, the teacher was the one who did most of the explanation rather than engaging the learners or asking their perspectives. The learners were not given the opportunity to share information because the level of participation was restricted to the particular learner who was supposed to answer a particular question. There was no noted communication between the learners during lessons that could be described as

shared learning. Another learner added the following in response to the question about the teaching strategies used in class:

> The teacher teaches new terms in whatever we're reading, those experiences, so that [it can] boosts our vocabulary.

Vocabulary involves the conscious studying of the definitions of words, which may help improve learners' thinking ability (Washburn, 2010). Washburn (2010) notes that the conscious study of vocabulary can ultimately result in learners' mastery of language to communicate effectively in discussions and writing. This may result in the development of critical opinions about what they learn in the English literary class. Judging from the way in which the learners formulated their answers during the interview, vocabulary lessons are crucial to them to learn basic sentence construction skills.

In continuing with the idea of vocabulary, it is true that English literature study, especially in the FAL, includes learning new words, which can be possible through critical reading to acquire critical thinking skills (Colucciello, 1997). This means that reading aloud as a teaching strategy may help learners' comprehension and knowledge of content, but teachers need to employ other learner-centred strategies to promote critical thinking skills. It is the responsibility of teachers to engage learners in critical reading to instil critical thinking in learners.

To continue with the idea of teaching and assessment, many scholars and researchers in the field of education agree that the two cannot be separated (Thomson, 1999; Warburton, 1996). Therefore, when teachers teach, they have to assess using a variety of questions to critically engage learners at all stages of the lessons. To emphasise the importance of assessment during teaching, Sleborger and McIntosh (2004) state that the procedure of educational assessment becomes more effective when it is used as part of the learning process, not a separate process. This means that assessment and learning should be regarded and treated simultaneously, not separately. After observing how the teacher assessed the learners during the lesson, it was necessary to explore how the learners felt about the questions and how they were encouraged to respond. A question was posed to find out if the learners were aware of the kinds of questions asked, and to explore learners' cognition of the level

of comprehension at which questions were asked to engage with knowledge. A learner's response to the above question was:

> Yes, because when asked, we [give] out different views and there's a debate there, so from my perspective and her perspective they are different. So, if she takes out a perspective and I take out a perspective … I learn from her perspective and she also learn from my perspective.

While the learner was responding, he was pointing at the other learners, the assumption was that they were encouraged to provide their opinions to the point of debating due to the questions asked by the teacher. What was further implied in this quotation was the teacher asked open-ended questions that required the learners to provide their own perspectives, which was contrary to what was observed during the lessons. During observation, the teacher only asked short, closed-ended questions which did not provide opportunities for the learners to engage in meaningful exchange of ideas. It is possible, however, that learners were given opportunities to give answers that could have led to discussions and debates but that is not what was observed. The few, mostly short and close-ended answers, were provided by some learners with further explanations by the teacher.

To explore more on the term 'debate' as used by the learner in the response above, Parcher (1998) posits the view that debate helps develop such humanistic capabilities of analysis, critical evaluation of claims, construction of judgement, and meaningful argument on important social issues. What Parcher (1998) says here is crucial because this teaching strategy can also, among other things, help learners to evaluate important societal issues. This fact is supported by the critical pedagogy theory which advocates the utilisation of skills acquired in the classroom to help learners make sense of the world around them. The 'analysis and evaluation of claims' is possible through close reading of the words used by authors to obtain meaning.

There are different manners and purposes for asking questions during the lesson and after the lesson. For example, there is formative and summative assessment. The learners were asked when they preferred to be assessed, whether during or after lessons, as the CAPS for English FAL suggests that assessment should be both informal (assessment for learning) and formal (assessment of learning) (Department

of Basic Education, 2011). In both cases, regular feedback should be provided to learners to enhance the learning experience. One of the learners said:

> I struggle with my homework, but when we are asked questions in class maybe [this helps us] to understand better because some of us don't. So, we won't understand what happened [in what we read]. So, for me it is better [if the teacher] ask questions in class so we [can] understand.

The learner's explanation here reveals that some learners prefer questions during the lesson to help them understand content better than when they study on their own. This also explains the fact that the learners were used to listening to the teacher's clarification of content as observed. While explanation of content is crucial, the teachers should also allow learners to think on their own to avoid total dependence. Independence (as opposed the dependence) is one of the outcomes of critical thinking as discussed in Chapter One. Contrary to the previous response, another learner responded to the same question by saying the following:

> I can say both that when we are given questions in class we do them in class and when we are given a homework we do it at home cause when the teacher asks questions we can answer even though sometimes I'm scared but I will gain confidence and answer that question. And then when the teacher gives us homework we are able to do things ourselves, the ones we don't know, or can't even answer will go back to school and ask the teacher about those questions.

Unlike the previous learner, this learner seemed to understand that both engagements with questions are crucial, meaning assessment during and after lessons were important for learning. It is true that both types of questioning and assessment are important. According to the learner quoted, asking questions during lessons helped them to understand the stories. While assessment after the lessons helped them to work on their own, which may promote independent engagement and learning. On the idea of written assessment work, Boye (2016, p.1) notes that "while exams and quizzes are certainly favourite and useful methods of assessment, out of class assignments may offer similar insights into our students' learning". This means that written assessment work like homework or a research assignment is as important as the verbal questioning the teacher used while teaching. The importance of the teacher's guidance was also made clear in the learner's quotation. The assessment tasks, both verbal and written (if there were any), were activities to prepare the learners for the end-of-year examinations, which would determine whether or not they

pass and advance to the next level of learning. This made practising in the form of class work, homework and assignments crucial.

The learners were also interviewed about the types of questions they were asked during and after lessons. One learner responded:

> I think we have questions that require us to think deeper, like for example, they can ask us if whether the action taken by someone was justified. I think that's a question that they are going to get deep into your thoughts. And you also have those simple questions like, what is the setting of the book? I think [that is] the simplest question one can ever get. But I think also those…I think we have challenging questions and simple questions.

The learner here revealed that they are exposed to both simple and complex questions, questions that need their understanding of content and those that need them to 'think deeper'. The combination of questions requires factual knowledge and deeper critical cognitive knowledge. As already discussed under sub-topic number 5.3.2 above, such a combination of a questioning strategy could help learners develop critical engagement with English literary content. The challenge is that the learner may be referring to questions expected in the final formal assessment (also called the end-of-year examinations) because, during observation, the teacher only asked short, closed-ended questions. According to this learner's response, they have experienced critical questions that required them to think deeper before they could provide the answers. However, in the lessons observed, the questions asked did not promote critical engagement with the English short stories studied in terms of preparing the learners for such questions that require them to 'think deeper'. To emphasise the critical intensity of such questions, another learner added:

> Okay, those questions, those deep questions, I think sometimes, Okay, personally, I do feel like okay, I'm no longer doing English, I'm doing rocket science, but I get to a point I'm like, okay, this is a relevant question, it is relevant, it will prove my knowledge, it will also improve my critical thinking.

It is kind of an exaggeration or hyperbole, as one of the English literary devices, that the questions the learners encountered needed a rocket scientist, but the learner here wanted to explain how difficult the questions could be for them. It is encouraging to learn that the learner understood that those higher-order questions could help them not only to reproduce information but to also develop critical thinking skills. The teacher

claimed in 5.3.4 that the lower-, middle- and higher-order questions are used during and after lessons, but if that were true, the learners would not need to be ‘rocket scientists’ to answer any type of question on English literary texts.

The learners were also asked if they thought the English literary texts were relevant to their reality, meaning their everyday lives. This question was based on the idea explored in Chapter One and Chapter Two that Freire (1972) believes that literature should be relevant to the audience and their situations. In that way, literature could help by offering another viewpoint on issues of concern to the people, whereby learners may start questioning some values such as culture, tradition, religion and politics. One of the learners said the following on the topic:

> Okay, mine is based on the story that we were reading today, the “New Tribe”. Okay, I think that would boost my ways of thinking in such a way that white people are getting to mix with a black person. That's in reality as we can see even now, so it sort of does boost my critical thinking that there are differences among us blacks and whites than just a [skin pigmentation].

What the learner said here is that the story made him realise that there are other differences between black and white people than merely skin pigmentation. It does not require critical analysis to see outward differences such as colour, but as the learner mentioned, one needs a certain level of reasoning to discover other hidden differences as explored in the story. The hidden differences were revealed as the two children, Julia (a white girl) and Oscar (a black boy) went to school. Julia was widely accepted but Oscar faced discrimination at school and in the community. The learner also mentioned other differences such as cultures, traditions and value systems, as these are some of the themes in the story. The critical studying of such themes may teach learners to think and compare their own reality to what they were exposed to. This suggests that English literary content has the potential to promote critical thinking in learners, but the transmission of this skill is not automatic. It depends on the teaching and assessment strategies used by the teacher. In addition to the above viewpoint about English literary content, another learner said:

> I would also like to offer a different one, [the text] “Changes” talks about different religions, cultures and other countries, so it might help me in future to think, specifically now I know about my religion and culture…

This view on English literature was shared by Madondo (2012) as discussed in Chapter One to the effect that literature, also known as literary art or literary works, can transport learners mentally to different environments and introduce them to new concepts, ideas, cultural and traditional practices foreign to them. The setting of the story, which was studied in class, presented these themes. The challenge here, as explained several times already, is that the teacher’s narration of the stories did not provoke active participation from the learners, which resulted in mere absorption of information without critical analysis.

5.4. Challenges in teaching critical thinking

Many researchers, like Portelli (1994), believe that to impart critical thinking skills teachers should depict a certain degree of critical thinking mentality themselves, and more importantly, have a clear conception of the notion. One of the challenges, according to Portelli (1994), is that some teachers think critical thinking is all about criticising what is deemed wrong. This misunderstanding of the term results in teachers teaching learners how to criticise rather than to reflect on information to provide their own views. From the observation stage to the interview, in particular, the teacher (on several occasions) confessed having knowledge of the term ‘critical thinking’, but did not have a clear conception of how it could be implemented in the teaching and learning environment.

Another crucial challenge was on lesson planning, which could help teachers to decide on the best pedagogical strategies to use to impart the skill. It is common knowledge among teachers that the success of every lesson stems from planning, and the participant (teacher) also confirmed this fact. The teacher was asked if the English literary lessons were planned with critical engagement in mind. The teacher responded as follows:

> Yes, we have lesson plans based on that. We do plan for [critical thinking] and creative thinking, and then when it comes to that it’s a problem. Our learners, let me say most of them do not prefer to read, reading actually becomes a

> problem. Creative, they don't become creative enough, and you can see that also in their essay writing. They become bored, uninterested… they don't want to think, they don't want to be creative. Like also in their essays. It's a problem.

The teacher (in the above quotation) disclosed that there was lesson planning for critical thinking through teaching English literature, but the learners' participation, especially when it comes to reading, was not encouraging. The teacher continued to explain the choice of the teaching strategy: reading aloud (RA), to also reveal that the learners become 'bored', meaning disinterested in learning. During the three days of observation, the learners seemed to be interested and attentive to the lessons. The teacher also repeated that the learners did not want to think about what they learn. This could be a serious issue because if they do not think, then they were just absorbing information so that they could reproduce it during assessment tasks. According to the teacher, lack of interest and the inability to think about content affected their creative writing skills. The teacher ended the response by admitting that the learners' disinterest in the lessons and their inability to think critically about content was a 'problem'. The realization of a problem should be the first step to dealing with it, but it seemed the teacher was not making any attempts to solve the problem.

After being asked about the intensity of learners' disinterest in the stories contained in the English literary texts, the teacher said:

> They don't want to think, and I normally tell them that, 'guys, think of anything that comes to your mind, put it down, put it in writing'. But I'm telling you that they are not interested. And they will be like 'Ma'am, this is too much we [don't understand]', they become bored. [There are] those who are interested in books, reading, the analysis of [content], but it's only a few of them, only a few.

According to the teacher's response, the challenge of learners' inability to think and lack of interest in English literary content could be solved by encouraging them to read and to write down their ideas about content. This could be a helpful advice if the learners were given enough time and encouraged to share their ideas in class. The teacher also mentioned that learners thought that reading on their own and recording their ideas was 'too much for them', meaning there was lack of confidence, disobedience and laziness on the part of learners. The only hope the teacher perceived was that there were a few learners who were interested in reading the texts

on their own, who attempted to analyse the texts as they read. On being asked more about the analysis of texts, the teacher responded:

> We do have lesson preps to show them [learners] exactly that we have characters in the book, we have setting, we have the plot, we have the end, the dénouement of the book, and the themes-the message that you get from the books, we have lessons for that. And it only counts on the learners how they see it.

What the teacher said aligns to what was observed during the first lesson. The analysis of short stories and English literature in general were taught. The challenge is that, during the reading of the story, the analytical techniques were not incorporated and explained. To clarify this, in the explanations and interpretation of content, the teacher did not engage terms such as setting, plot, characters, and themes. However, other elements of literary analysis, such as figurative language used by the author to create meaning, were explored and explained. The traditional literature analysis, as explained by the teacher above, is supported by the critical pedagogy theory presented in Chapter Three, with its emphasis on the author and the society as represented by the characters' activities in the stories. However, this theory advises teachers to interpret content in such a way that it becomes relevant to the learners' experiences.

On how the learners respond to the way the teacher teaches English literary content, this was the response from the teacher:

> They get bored as you read the story ('A Chip of Glass Ruby') because everything is about apartheid and they cannot relate to that. They cannot relate to that and they will say 'Ma'am what is happening?' Really what happened during that time, they do not understand.

With this response, the teacher made an example with the lesson taught in the past, in which a short story titled "A Chip of Glass Ruby" by Nadine Gordimer was taught. The setting of the story is an urban township, which makes it relevant to the learners. Furthermore, the story narrates how a simple, Indian housewife interacted with people from different social levels and races to fight against apartheid. Naturally, this relentless resistance against authority resulted in her incarceration. While in jail, the

woman cared more about the people she left behind, especially her family. In all this, her selfish husband did not show any support nor visit her in jail.

It was surprising to hear the teacher say that learners found the story uninteresting as the plot and themes are about the apartheid era, which made this country famous across the world. The reasons learners may have shown a lack of interest in the lesson could be the poor choice of teaching strategies, and the inability to experiment with various pedagogical and assessment techniques. The teacher should have stirred learners' curiosity and desire to know more about the events of that period to make their own inquiries about the topic introduced. Teachers should do whatever possible to make their lessons interesting for learners; therefore, the sign of boredom should be an indication for the teacher to become more creative in planning and presenting lessons.

The teacher was also asked if there was anything that could be changed with English literary texts to help learners develop critical thinking skills. The response was as follows:

> … so far there is nothing that I can change, according to my opinion, there is nothing that I can change, especially now we are in a multi-racial society. Some of the texts ill accommodate whites, some will accommodate blacks. So obviously, we won't change anything. The whites will say 'guys, accommodate us' and [we] as blacks will say 'accommodate us'.

The diversity issue raised by the teacher should be motivation enough to teach learners to become critical in the way they think in order to reject some of the atrocities of the past, such as apartheid, as it was one of the themes in the story "A Chip of Glass Ruby". The teacher seemed to claim that the English literary texts in South Africa for Grade 12 reflect the diversity that exists in the country. This is good in the sense that if interpreted effectively, learners may learn to appreciate this diversity. This may help them to learn about another cultures, traditions, beliefs and value systems to widen the scope of thinking, as one of the learners put it: "thinking out of the box". To conclude, the English literary texts studied at Grade 12 level offer a wide variety of themes capable of promoting critical thinking. The pedagogical and assessment strategies, on the other hand, were not good enough to achieve this goal.

5.5. Learners' engagement with English literary texts at Ripfumelo

During the three lessons observed, some of the learners actively participated in the teaching and learning process, especially when the teacher asked questions. Even though the teacher did not write anything on the board during lessons, some of the learners could be seen writing their own notes after listening to how the teacher explained the stories. During the interview, the selected learners shared their opinions as best they could. According to the teacher's response as discussed in 5.3.6, most of the learners did not want to engage with English literary texts studied because they were not interesting for them. However, one of the learners had the following to say about the English texts prescribed for them:

> I only enjoy the short stories because sometimes they teach about life and how to behave. 'My Children! My Africa' I think is a book about politics.

The learner here disclosed the enjoyment derived from reading the English short stories, and also knew that the play *My Children! My Africa!* is about politics. It is this basic knowledge that needs nurturing to the point of critical thinking. The point here is not to dispute the teacher's viewpoint of learners' lack of interest in English literary content, but to explore the learners' opinion too, especially how they study or read the texts. The learner's answer shows that the learners' boredom stems from the way the teacher taught and assessed the literary texts, not their content. Another learner compared the short stories and the play studied in this way:

> I prefer *My Children! My Africa!* because [as] compared to other short stories books, I think those stories… some parts were cut out, but I think with *My Children! My Africa!* we have been told the whole story.

The above response shows that the learner studied the short stories and the play to make such a reflective comparison. Structurally, short stories and plays are different, as plays are longer than short stories. Here the learner went further and read some of the short stories and the play to reach the conclusion that some short stories did not provide enough information to help the audience fully comprehend the message, as is the case with the play. It must be understood that this was the learner's opinion and may not necessarily be true, but the skill of inter-textual referencing showed that the learner was critical in the way the texts were engaged. As discussed in Chapter Two,

Colucciello (1997) regards inter-textual referencing as the cognisance of details in literature, to remember and relate content to other literary works, which is what the learner displayed in his response. Such critical cognition skill should be nurtured to help learners relate what was learned in the English literary class to other subjects studied in the English language.

After observing the teacher in action, it became conceivable that learners' engagement with content depends on the way teachers use pedagogical strategies to teach, assess and monitor the progress of the teaching and learning experience. The participating learners who were interviewed were asked whether they preferred reading aloud in class or studying the texts on their own, especially after lessons to consolidate the knowledge gained in the classroom. The idea was to establish the degree of effort or motivation required for learners to study English literary texts on their own. It must be understood that the learners do not have a choice but to study the texts with their teacher in class, and they are expected to further engage with the text after the lesson, either at home or in class on their own. This was evident when the teacher encouraged the learners to finish reading the stories for their own benefit, so that they could share what they have read with the class. The learners were asked if they preferred studying English literary texts with the teacher in class as observed, or to read on their own. One of the learners responded:

> I prefer both. When I'm reading in class I can understand it more when the teacher is explaining. When I'm reading at home alone there may be things I don't get. I prefer a little bit of both.

The response shows that the preferred method is to study the texts both with the teacher and other learners in class and also alone. The latter may be ideal as learners would have ample time to read, reflect, appreciate and evaluate content, which could also help learners to develop a critical understanding of content. This could also instil independent thinking in learners, which could be a product of independent learning. The teaching strategy used by the teacher as observed did not encourage independence; on the contrary, it promoted learners' dependence on the teacher as the main source of information. On these concepts of independent thinking and independent learning, Meyer (2010) notes that there is a consensus in the literature that independent learning does not involve pupils merely working alone. Instead,

teachers must play an important role in enabling and supporting learners to become independent. Thus, to reach the level of thinking critically, learners need the teacher's guidance; in this case, a suitable method of reading texts in class is necessary. Another learner had a different opinion:

> I prefer reading alone [be]cause I think in class when reading and you commit a mistake the whole class or some individuals will make it a joke, but while I'm reading alone, I can make a mistake and laugh at myself, and I can correct that mistake, that [I] also gain some kind of self-knowledge. I can understand the book fully when I'm reading by myself.

This learner's response captures the variety of learners' preferences within a class; something teachers should take into consideration as some learners do not participate in class because they are shy, which could affect their level of engagement. The learner also mentioned self-correction, called self-evaluation and self-knowledge, which is one of the characteristics of critical thinking skills. According to the learner, it is better to study alone because participation in class may result in errors that would become humourous for the other learners. Therefore, for the learner, studying alone is ideal because it is easier to correct one's self without being ridiculed in class. This may mean that the English literary texts were interesting enough for some learners to read and assess on their own, in addition to the teaching in class. Another learner responded and said the following:

> Not everybody participates in class. So, it is few people who would debate and understand, and some would read it just for the sake of reading it.

Reading for the sake of reading could be linked to the surface-level approach discussed in Chapter Two. This is meaningless reading, where there is no meaning to the reading. What is interesting about this response is the inclusion of the debate idea, which was discussed in 5.3.5, where Parcher (1998) said it is the best strategy to promote critical thinking. The teacher confirmed afterwards that learners are sometimes given the chance – for about 10 to 15 minutes – to provide their opinions and debate about content. According to the teacher, this interaction among the learners helps them to think about what they learn, but this claim could not be confirmed because the teacher used the same strategy of teaching during the three lessons observed.

Another factor that may cause learners to refrain from actively participating in discussions and debates, as one of the learners revealed in her response above, is shyness. To ensure that all learners, including the shy ones, participate in the teaching and learning process, the teacher could have used other learner-centred techniques such as pair or group work, where questions can be given for each group to engage with. This would have enabled even the shy learners who do not participate to actively engage with the texts as they would be working with a few other learners. On the advantages of this strategy, Burke (2011) asserts that despite the 'hate group' tendency of some students (the students who hate to work in pairs or in groups), groups stimulate creativity and problem-solving, which are some of the objectives of teaching English literature at Grade 12 level according to the Department of Basic Education (2011).

5.6. Conclusion

The teacher who was observed and interviewed at Ripfumelo Secondary School used the reading aloud (RA) teaching strategy while teaching English literary texts. According to the teacher, the strategy was preferred as it was more convenient to help learners gain knowledge of content as a way of preparing learners for the final, end-of-year examinations. The teacher further explained that RA in class also helps learners who experience challenges when it comes to reading and comprehending texts written in the English language, to gain the basic knowledge they need, and hopefully encourages them to conduct closer reading on their own.

After consulting literature on reading aloud as a teaching strategy, the logical conclusion is that it could only help to transmit critical thinking when coupled with other learner-centred teaching strategies such as discussion and debate. The teaching strategy used by the teacher did not fully incorporate critical reading as discussed in the literature review chapter (Chapter Two), because the teacher only explained content superficially, without critical engagement of content. This resulted in lessons that were mostly a transmission of information to learners, which also produced minimal learner participation and engagement.

With regard to assessment, the teacher primarily used the lower-order, closed-ended questions during lessons. When asked about assessments during the interview, the teacher claimed to engage lower-, middle- and higher-order questions, but this was not what was observed. Failure to engage high-order questions in the teaching of English literature resulted in the learners engaging with content for the sake of preparing for formal assessments rather than transforming the way they think. The teacher also did not give the learners written assessment work, which could have taught the learners creative writing skills. The only assessment was in the form of verbal questioning using some of the questions found in the text studied. The teacher justified this by saying that they still had several short stories to study before the start of the final examinations, meaning the time factor prevented the teacher from teaching critical thinking using English literary texts. The learners seemed to be aware of certain difficult questions based on English literary texts, and also expressed their need to be prepared for the higher-order questioning strategy.

The teacher also admitted that critical thinking is possible through English literary content as the themes are relevant to the reality of the learners' lives but added that some learners might find the content difficult to comprehend as it is not relevant to their reality. The learners' responses to the teaching and questioning by the teacher showed that they were eager to learn, and the answers they provided during the interview depicted that with the right pedagogical and assessment strategies, they could develop critical thinking skills. This was contrary to the teacher's claim that the learners were not interested, and that it was difficult to teach such a group of learners. The logical conclusion here is that critical thinking is possible through the teaching of English literary texts, but the teacher should consider other teaching and assessment strategies conducive to promoting such skills.

The teacher-centred strategy resulted in the non-existence of learners' engagement with the content. This was because the main activity the learners engaged in was listening, except those few learners who participated in the form of reading aloud or answering questions. The majority of the learners only listened, and some nodded to show approval and understanding of what the teacher explained. The teaching-learning experience did not stimulate critical thinking.

CHAPTER SIX

CASE STUDY 2: RILAVETA

6.1. Background

Rilaveta Secondary School is a public co-ed (mixed gender) secondary school with double-storied classes. The principal could not provide an accurate date as to when this school was opened but estimated that it was opened in the early 1980s. The school has a history of performing very well when it comes to matric results, with an 87% matric (Grade 12) pass rate in 2016. The HOD for English added that three Grade 12 learners from 2016 got distinctions in English First Additional Language. The information was readily provided by the principal of the school, who also produced records of the Grade 12 learners' performance over the years. This performance might be the reason some of the learners travel long distances to come to the school, some as far as the East Rand. The other secondary schools around the area had learners who also came from afar, but the numbers are lower compared to that of Rilaveta Secondary School. The school was clean and tidy, with no sign of vandalism.

Rilaveta Secondary School had a large enrolment of learners, about 1647 according to the principal. This fact was supported by the overcrowded classes, especially the Grade 12 class observed. Overcrowded classes may cause challenges such as lack of control and discipline, but from the observation this was not the case. The learners took only a few minutes to move from one class to the next, and they did so quietly. The teachers and learners were all black and from different sections of Soweto and other parts of the Gauteng Province. The Language of teaching and learning (LoTL) is English, except the Home Language (HL) classes. Like other secondary schools in Soweto, both teachers and learners communicate in their respective mother tongues or Home Languages outside the classes, such as IsiZulu, SeTswana, and IsiXhosa. There were very few learners who spoke Xitsonga and Tshivenda.

The school had enough resources to support the process of teaching and learning, such as textbooks, over-head projectors, television sets, and whiteboards, especially

for the Grade 12 classes. The resources were enough in the sense that all learners in the class observed had textbooks, unlike in other schools where learners had to share. The principal reported that additional materials like textbooks were donated by private companies and NGOs. The teachers disclosed that every classroom has one television set and the Grade 11 and 12 classes have over-head projectors. They believed more projectors would be received soon to cater for every classroom in the school. Despite sufficient resources for teaching and learning, the school is categorised as quintile 1, based on the location where it is, which is one of the poorest parts of Soweto. The principal further explained that certain private organisations (which he did not mention by name) were instrumental in supplying the school with teaching-learning aids to add to what the school received from the Department of Basic Education (DBE). He further explained that the School Management Team (SMT), with the help of the teachers and some parents, work very hard to involve private companies to support the school. Discipline at the school seemed not to be a challenge. The teachers and the principal provided helpful information about the school and the learners. The principal was also enthusiastic and offered to help in any way he could with the current research.

6.2. Data collection at Rilaveta

At the first meeting with the principal permission was granted to conduct the study as soon as possible. The two English Grade 12 teachers were called to the principal's office, together with the Head of Department (HOD) of English. After they were provided with the letters and consent forms, one of the teachers consented to become the participant in the study. The other teacher promised to be helpful with any information needed to continue with the study, as best he could. Another meeting was scheduled by the teacher for the following day in order to meet the learners.

There were about forty-eight learners in one class which could be termed an overcrowded class as the ratio for secondary schools in South Africa is 35:1 maximum (Department of Basic Education, 2011). This means that a normal class should consist of a maximum of thirty-five learners and one teacher. At 48, the class was overcrowded and it is not easy for teachers to control overcrowded classes (Mustafa, Mahmoud, Assaf, Al-Hamadi & Abdulhamid, 2014). Such a situation makes it difficult

to have that teacher-learner relationship, where the teacher knows the names of their learners and understands their learning needs; and it can take time to monitor and give feedback on their work as well (Mustafa, Mahmoud, Assaf, Al-Hamadi & Abdulhamid, 2014). Consequently, one study concludes that “the effects of overcrowded classrooms are far-reaching for teachers and learners. Many parents base their decision on whether to send their child to a particular school on the prospective number of learners in the child’s classroom” (Mustafa, Mahmoud, Assaf, Al-Hamadi & Abdulhamid, 2014, p.178). In this kind of classes, it could be difficult for the teacher to maintain control for effective teaching and learning to impart critical thinking skills.

Contrary to what the researchers cited above found in their study, the classroom observed at Rilaveta was conducive for learning as the learners very quiet and eager to hear from the teacher, even though there were some learners who arrived late, and others seemed restless, moving to get something such as a pen or a book from other learners. The class was quite orderly and conducive for the process of teaching and learning to continue. The purpose of the study was explained to the learners, and the teacher helped to distribute the letters and consent forms to all learners as they agreed to participate in the study. Most of the learners also consented to be interviewed, but with the help of the teacher, only four were selected.

The sampling criterion was that two high achieving learners (male and female) and two average performers (also male and female) should be selected, and that was how the teacher helped to select the learners. This sample was used to gain insights from different types of learners, unlike when only the high achievers (for example) were selected to represent those learners in the same level with the sample participants, which could result in biased data. An agreement was reached that observations would begin on Monday of the following week. This was done to allow students ample time to distribute letters and consent forms to their parents. These were handed to the learners to pass on to their parents and guardians, but only three out of forty forms were signed and returned. Other parents contacted the school to demand substantial compensation in order to agree to take part in the study. The teacher could not exempt those learners whose parents or guardians wanted to be compensated in order for their children to be included in the study. The principal and the teacher resolved that

the study should go ahead as agreed from an English class of forty-eight learners, but those learners were not selected for the interview.

6.3. First observation at Rilaveta

The number of learners in the class was even more than the previous week, as four learners who were absent joined the class to make a total of fifty-two learners in one class. Permission was granted by the teacher to briefly explain the purpose of the visit for the benefit of the learners who were absent during the first meeting, which took a few minutes, as the teacher advised for the sake of time. The lesson for the day was on literature, namely short stories from the anthology of short stories titled *Changes*. The title of the chosen short story was “Next Door”, written by Kurt Vonnegut. The teacher started by providing a brief summary of the story, highlighting characterisation and plot. The synopsis of the story, according to the teacher, was about an eight-year-old boy who was left alone in the house by his parents for the first time since he was born. After this summary, the teacher asked the learners if they thought the action of the parents was responsible or pure negligence, and to provide a justification for their answer. One of the learners responded in this way:

> I don’t see it as child negligence but a blessing in disguise. The fact that he is eight years old means he must stay in the house and obey the rules and learn the values of important matters of the house like [the danger of] fires and all…I see it as an eight-year-old opening his eyes to anything in the world…

To add to this explanation by the learner, the teacher finished the argument by saying the boy was becoming an adult at his young age.

Firstly, the question the teacher asked was open-ended, which is good to help learners provide their own opinions. Secondly, the answer provided by the learner showed that he had basic knowledge of the story which he was willing to share with the class; this could have triggered different viewpoints from different learners if they were given ample opportunity to discuss. In that way, the learners could have learned, not only from the teacher, but from each other as well. The teacher did not open a platform for discussion to hear from the other learners. To ‘justify’ this, the teacher said that there was not enough time since the end of the year summative assessment was near. He further explained that it was better to finish the syllabus so that ‘at least’ the learners

would have some knowledge of all the stories prescribed, rather than wasting time on one (story) which may not even appear on the final examination question paper. Based on this explanation, it seemed the teacher was more concerned with finishing the syllabus than the transference of critical knowledge and skills, hence the rush to get to the next short story. What the teacher said about finishing the syllabus was true because they do not know which story would be included in the question paper. On the other hand, there should be another way of teaching all the short stories without compromising the quality of teaching and learning, which could teach the learners to think about what they were taught, rather than hastening to cover all the stories without promoting critical engagement.

As the lesson continued, the teacher taught about the characters. One of the characters in the story, Mr Harger, who was married, had a mistress on the side. On this revelation, the teacher asked the learners a question about this character as follows: “what is a mistress?” The question was short and closed-ended, meaning it required one short answer. What is remarkable about the question is that it drew some attention and more interest from the learners because it seemed most of them had a wrong conception about the word ‘mistress’. One of the learners responded to the question and said: “a mistress is a female teacher”. The teacher corrected the learner by explaining that a mistress is a woman who has an affair with a married man, adding that learners should stop referring to female teachers as mistresses. The explanation caused a slight commotion in the classroom as the learners took in the new information, meaning the learners learned something that erased their misconception about the word “mistress”. The teacher went on to explain that the word was used to describe a female teacher in the past, but in the contemporary educational environment the word is no longer acceptable because it is associated with infidelity. This kind of basic knowledge, which Papak, Vujičić and Ivković (2017) call ‘conceptual learning’ is crucial, but they also advised that contemporary teaching and learning activities should move from just teaching concepts to active learning, where learners are more active or involved in their learning to develop a critical mentality. To continue with this line of thinking, Thomas (2009, p.254) notes that in his critical pedagogy theory, Freire “premised much of his work on the idea that education was a crucial element in either perpetuating the existing conditions of oppression, or conversely, sparking a transformation to a more free and democratic society”. The teaching and

assessment strategies used by the teacher were not conducive to effect what Thomas and Freire declare above because the dialogue between the teacher and the students was limited.

The teacher did not share the background information of the short story author with the learners. Upon realising this, the teacher drew the learners' attention to the text to read the background information of the author as provided in the text. The author's background, Kurt Vonnegut, was very brief and informative, but the teacher may have researched more in order to teach the learners to not rely only on the given information, but to search for more on their own, an activity known as exploratory learning (Terhart, 2001). Terhart (2001, p.157) explains the importance of this kind of learning, noting that "the goal of learning through exploration is to transcend the available material; the fact is that in learning through exploration the pupil in the creative act transcends the boundaries of the transferred, that is, of the already known or tried in the direction of new and expanded knowledge". According to this explanation, not only would exploratory learning equip learners with research and critical skills, but it would also enforce their transformation into life-long learners and scholars, which is one of the characteristics of academic scholarship. Furthermore, the significance of the author and content was explained by the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter Three used to shape this study: the critical pedagogy theory. Critical pedagogy emphasises the environment that the author and the audience come from, meaning the value of schools to the communities to bridge the gap between the two (Freire, 1972). The point here is that the author's biography is crucial and may help the learners to comprehend the place and era in which the author lived; and to 'get in the mind of the author' as well, which may promote critical scrutiny of English literary texts.

To continue with the lesson, the teacher started to read the story while the learners listened attentively, looking at their texts to see where the teacher was reading as advised. The reading was constantly interrupted by the teacher explaining content and asking learners verbal questions about the story, what the teacher later called 'assessment for learning', which is part of the learning process. The teacher continued in this way (reading and explaining content, with some questioning) until the end of the lesson. Some of the questions were open-ended enough to trigger some

arguments and discussions from the learners, which could have kept the learners involved in the lesson, but this did not happen because the teacher allowed only one learner to answer a question and did not give other learners an opportunity to provide their answers and opinions as well. To end the lesson, the teacher advised the learners to go and read the story on their own to prepare for the next lesson.

6.4. Second observation at Rilaveta

The second observation took place in the same classroom. The teacher started by writing some notes on the whiteboard about what was taught the previous day, such as characterisation, followed by a short explanation of the notes. The teacher asked the learners to mention the characters in the story “Next Door” by Kurt Vonnegut. This was a comprehension exercise to jog the learners’ memory of the lesson offered the previous day. The learners provided the names of the characters while the teacher wrote on the board without any further information; only the names were mentioned. According to the teacher, that was the information they needed in order to continue with the story.

The learners were also asked whether they finished reading the story on their own as advised. Only one learner disclosed that she finished the story and explained what she read and understood. As there was no other learner who bothered to read the story on their own, the teacher went on to provide a brief synopsis of how the story ended. To proceed with the lesson, the teacher asked one learner to read aloud. In order to encourage the learners to volunteer reading aloud in class, the teacher explained that it is essential for pronunciation and confidence for public speaking. While the learner was reading, the others listened and looked at their texts attentively. The teacher interrupted the learner who was reading aloud to correct mispronounced words or to help in reading words the learner failed to read. After the learner had read aloud for about three minutes, the teacher interrupted to ask the learners about the figure of speech used in one of the lines in the story. The teacher gave the learners about a minute to provide the answer, but no one knew the answer. The teacher then decided to help the learners in this way:

> the figure of speech in which animals and things are given human characteristics or qualities…

One of the learners answered that it was personification. The teacher then asked the same learner who was reading to continue to read the story aloud without any further explanation or follow-up questions. The question the teacher asked required only knowledge of the figure of speech used, meaning it required basic knowledge. In order to impart critical thinking, the teacher should have asked other questions such as:

- What is being personified?
- In your opinion, what did the author want to emphasise by using the figure of speech (personification)?
- Did the author succeed in painting a picture in the mind of the reader by using this figure of speech? Critically explain your answer.

The above examples are how the teacher may have built on the closed-ended question to create more open, higher-order questions. To continue with the idea and benefits of using higher-order questions, Adu-Gyamfi et al. (2014), in their article titled "Instructional Strategy Lessons for Educators Secondary Education (ISLES-S)", explain that higher-order questions are beneficial because they: (1) elicit responses that go beyond simple information and rote memorisation; (2) are open-ended and may have many possible 'right' answers; (3) engage students in higher-order thinking skills, such as interpretation and problem solving; (4) require more complex thinking, such as evaluating and justifying opinions and synthesising ideas; and (5) develop skills that are used in real-life decision making, such as generating and supporting hypotheses.

To explain some of the benefits of higher-order questions as provided here, the third benefit mentioned was that these kinds of questions could equip learners with higher-order thinking skills. This indicates that if teaching and assessment are to focus on promoting critical engagement and critical thinking skills, higher-order questions during and after lessons are ideal tools to reach that level of thinking in learners. With these benefits of open-ended questioning, the teacher may have considered using them rather than just reading aloud, explaining content, and using short, closed-ended questions. This is not to say that the teaching and assessment strategies used by the

teacher were completely ineffective; however, those lower-order questions should have been followed by other types of questions that would spark active, critical involvement in the lessons. The last point on the list of potential benefits of using higher-order questions indicates that these type of questions could equip learners with the knowledge of how to apply knowledge and skills in real-life decision making, which is explained in the 'revolutionary' educational idea shared by Freire's critical pedagogy theory discussed in Chapter Three. As Freire (1970) puts it, critical pedagogy involves the revelation of reality while striving for the emerging of consciousness and critical thinking in reality. This means that critical thinking skills could be effected to revolutionise the lives of the learners. The idea of higher-order thinking, according to the theory, is achievable through deeper analysis of the words used in literary texts.

Contrary to the argument presented in the preceding paragraph, the teacher continued with the strategy of reading the text aloud and frequently interrupted the learner reading in order to provide brief explanations, without initiating active participation in the lesson by using the type of higher-order questions discussed. The explanations usually happened after the teacher or a learner had read a paragraph or more from the text. After one of the learners had read one of the paragraphs, the teacher interrupted again to ask the learners about another type of figure of speech used in the story.

> "The music picked up the house and shook it."

One learner answered that the figure of speech used was a simile, to which the teacher replied that it was not correct and proceeded to explain what a simile is. After some deliberation from the learners, it was established that the figure of speech used there was a metaphor. The teacher proceeded to explain the literary device 'metaphor', "saying the music is compared to a giant that could shake the whole house". The learners accepted the explanation without questions. As the lesson and observation continued, it seemed the teacher's purpose of teaching the short story was transmission of knowledge, not teaching the learners to think about the content. According to Tung and Chang (2009), literature reading could help average thinking learners to improve their overall critical thinking abilities, and especially demonstrate

better skills in the analysis of content. What Tung and Chang (2009) mean here is that if taught appropriately, literature could help to strengthen the minds of learners whose thinking level is low to become more critical in the way they think. Another idea expressed in Chang's opinion is that of critical analysis. The message here is that if teaching promotes critical thinking, learners acquire critical analytical skills necessary to read and analyse English literary content instead of the surface reading that characterised the teaching and learning activities observed. Again, it requires a critical thinking mentality to plan for a critical lesson which could initiate critical engagement with literary content to promote critical thinking skills.

To continue with the lesson, another learner volunteered to read aloud while the teacher also continued to explain and narrate information in the story at times. The learners listened attentively to the teacher's explanation and narration of the story, and it seemed they understood what the teacher was 'transmitting' to them because they would nod and sometimes laugh when the explanation became humorous. That was another way the learners participated in the lesson. This 'activity' of nodding and laughing seemed to create an understanding between the learners and the teacher. The connection between the two parties was evident because the learners would sometimes join in and finish some of the sentences with the teacher. It would have helped if the learners asked questions to take their understanding to another level rather than to finish each other's sentences, but they seemed content with just receiving the information without asking any questions.

One particular example where the teacher's explanation could have been expanded was where one of the learners finished reading a paragraph in which the title of the song playing on the radio at the other side of the wall was mentioned. The title of the song was "Love, don't play with my heart". To explain the inclusion of the song, the teacher said that the song had a certain effect on both characters. The learners seemed to expect more information at that stage. Though they did not ask any questions, it seemed they needed more explanation on, for example, the characters affected by the song, how it affected those characters, what the song symbolised, and how it linked to the theme of infidelity as one of the major themes in the story. The inclusion of this scenario in this argument is to show that the teacher's explanation of content, at times, did not clarify certain important elements which could have

contributed to greater understanding and perhaps a certain degree of thinking on the side of the learners.

The reading aloud by learners and explanation by the teacher continued. In addition to correcting the learners on the pronunciation of words, the teacher also taught the learners different voice pitches to imitate the characters who spoke in the story. This, the teacher later explained, was to make the story alive for better comprehension. This emphasised the fact that the teacher used his teaching and assessing not to help the learners to engage critically with the English literary texts but for the learners to comprehend and acquire basic knowledge about the short stories taught. Towards the end of the lesson, the teacher advised the learners to read the story and finish on their own, and that at the end of the story, there are questions that they would answer together (the teacher and the learners) in class. The lesson verdict is that the teacher did his best to try and teach the learners comprehension and acquisition of basic knowledge about the short story, but the teaching and learning activities did not help the learners to develop critical thinking skills.

6.5. Third observation at Rilaveta

On the third day of observation, the English First Additional Class Grade 12 had a double-period.

6.5.1. First period

As the teacher asked the learners to finish the story on their own during the previous lesson, during the third observation the teacher did not ask the learners to continue reading the story. The teacher asked the learners short, comprehension questions such as “who are the characters in the story?” The learners seemed to know the answers, and the teacher wrote the answers on the board while the learners also copied what the teacher wrote in their notebooks. Some learners asked the teacher to continue to read the story to finish it together in class, and after he had asked the whole class what to do, he agreed. The reading aloud continued and this time the teacher read and explained content. The learners responded by nodding and finishing some of the sentences as they did during the previous lesson. During the lesson, the teacher expanded on one of the themes which was about independence and, in the

context of the story, children becoming independent while still young. To explain more on the theme, the teacher provided an example from an article he read about a local singer whose parents died when she was nineteen and she had to become an adult in order to take care of her younger siblings. The example seemed to be appropriate because the learners responded to the illustration with sighs that indicated pity for the person the teacher was talking about. After that example, which managed to generate more interest from the learners, the reading continued as usual until the end of the story. The teacher continued to discuss the themes of the story briefly, and then read the synopsis of the story the way he summarised it from typed notes he prepared for the learners as a resource for the lesson.

More analysis of the story was conducted, for example, the narration style of the story such as first, second and third-person narration styles. The teacher explained that the story was told in a third-person narration style, and that the writer displayed some elements of an omniscient writing technique. An omniscient writer in English literature is the one who writes about a particular topic as if they are more knowledgeable than anyone else, also known as authorial subjectivity (Dawson, 2009). Authorial subjectivity is different from other forms of narration because, for example, in the narrator-protagonist, the narrator may engage the audience to make up their minds about a certain issue, rather than dictate ideas (Dawson, 2009). The teacher only explained that an omniscient writer is the one who knows everything and does not ask the audience about any matter.

The anthology that the teacher and learners read from (*Changes*) provided the background of the author and summaries of the stories as pre-reading activities, before the actual story. The end of the stories is followed by some questions on that particular story as a post-reading exercise. The teacher decided to treat the post-reading exercise as a verbal question and answer session where the learners were asked the questions verbally (aloud) and they also responded by providing the answers aloud. The teacher asked the questions as they were in the text without adding or omitting anything, but there were moments where the teacher elaborated on the learners' answers. This meant that the assessment of learning after studying the short story was verbal questioning that required verbal answers. Contrary to what the class was doing (the teacher and learners involved in the verbal exchange of question

and answers), the heading of the assessment task on the text was as follows: “Questions for group discussion or for written work”.

According to the above heading, the teacher was supposed to have given the learners the assessment task as group work, where learners were supposed to discuss content and find the answers on their own. The benefit of using this pedagogical strategy is explained by Orlich et al. (2013), as discussed in Chapter Two, that discussion (including group discussions) is a teaching strategy that involves an exchange of ideas, which also includes active learning and participation by all involved in the discussion. Unlike what happened during the question and answer session conducted by the teacher, group discussion encourages active participation by all members of the different groups. This means that all the learners could have participated in the task, unlike what happened where only a few of the learners participated in answering the questions. The teacher justified his choice of assessment by stating that a group discussion could have taken longer. It is true that group discussions need enough time, but there was another option as the title suggested: giving the task to learners as a homework.

To further explain the justification provided in the paragraph above, the teacher said that most of the learners do not do their homework, so it was better to work together with the learners in class with the hope of promoting active participation. When queried about this further, the teacher explained that there was not enough time for such exercises as the final examination was near, and they were supposed to finish all the short stories before then. To conclude this argument, it was therefore revealed that there was no written class work, homework, group work or assignment given to learners as an after reading exercise. The teacher, however, provided more explanations on some of the answers for more clarity. The lesson ended with the questions, answers and further explanation session, but this time the questions asked were from the text itself as provided at the end of each short story as a post-activity for the learners. The assessment task questions are presented below.

Figure 2: Questions for group discussion or for written work

1. When referring to music players, how is the phrase ‘high fidelity’ usually abbreviated? (1)
2. What does ‘fidelity’ mean? (1)
3. What was the ‘friendly argument’ about at the beginning of the story? (1)
4. Why was the argument conducted with their voices kept down? (2)
5. When Mrs. Leonard says: “Oh-it isn’t for children”, what “it” is she referring to? (1)
6. In what way can a film be unsuitable for children? (3)
7. Mrs. Leonard asks, “You can dial, can’t you dear?”
 (a) What is she wanting to know from her son? (2)
 (b) What does this tell us about when the story is set? (2)
8. What two things could Paul hear through the wall at first? (2)
9. How did Paul try to stop the fight from the next door house? (3)
10. What figure of speech does the DJ, All-Night Sam, use when he says that marriage “isn’t any bowl of cherries”? Explain the effectiveness of the figure of speech. (3)
11. In what way does the following quotation reflect the main theme of the story: “Childhood dropped away, and he hung, dizzy, on the brink of life, rich, violent, rewarding”. (4)
12. A chrysanthemum is a flower that has many colourful petals: why do you think Vonnegut uses it in the metaphor at the end of the story? (In your answer, say what is being described in the metaphor). (4)
13. From the context of the story, what do you think *Tabu i*s brand name for? (1)

Source: *An Anthology of Short Stories* (Walter, 2015, p.131).

The questions are included here to determine whether they were the type of questions discussed in Chapter Two which could promote critical engagement with the message in the story. To analyse the questions, most of them (as provided above) are categorised as lower-order questions, also called lower-order cognitive questions. According to Gul Nazir Khan and Hafiz Muhammad Inamullah (2011, p.150), “lower-

order cognitive questions embrace chiefly recall, comprehension and application.… Lower-order questions tend to be closed questions (when a known response is sought)".

According to the definition provided by Wilayat Bibi Khan and Hafiz Muhammad Inamullah (2011), questions 1-9 are typical comprehension and knowledge questions which require basic comprehension knowledge of content. Unlike the other questions, number 10 is different because, in addition to basic knowledge, the learners were required to explain, in their own words, the effectiveness of the figure of speech used to transmit meaning. This is where different learners may provide different answers, which may trigger more discussions about content and develop critical perspectives about the story. The only setback is that the question, like the others, ask about information in the story without leading learners to find the connection of the message in the story to real-life situations. One of the learners, who realised that there was a memorandum of answers for the same exercise towards the last few pages of the text, read the answer as provided:

> That marriage isn't any bowl of cherries means that it is not always pleasant and attractive, it is not always easy. There are difficult patches. While it is a cliché, it does enable one picture an already picked bowl of cherries, as something tasty and enjoyable: he is effectively suggesting that marriage is not always as easy as a ready picked bowl waiting for one.

It was very thoughtful of the author/compiler of the short stories to include the memorandum of possible answers to the questions because the learners could be exposed to the manner in which critical questions could be answered. The answer provided is an ideal specimen of what critical thinking is all about, as both sides of the subject, which is marriage, was provided, making the answer more objective than a one-sided answer depicting subjectivity (Willingham, 2007). Willingham (2007, p.8) explains the character of a critically thinking individual as "seeing both sides of an issue, being open to new evidence that disconfirms your ideas, reasoning dispassionately, demanding that claims be backed by evidence, deducing and inferring conclusions from available facts, solving problems, and so forth". The lower-order questions in the post-reading exercise could not lead learners to think and engage with ideas in the story the way Willingham describes it. It would have been informative if the teacher continued to assess the learners by asking questions like the

one included above (question number 10) to stimulate and promote critical engagement, which would also teach the learners how to think and not only to store information for recalling. The learners could not provide answers that showed critical thinking skills because the teaching and learning activities did not promote the skill.

To end the lesson, the teacher told the learners that they will start reading another short story during the next period as they were about to go for a breakfast break. The conclusion here is that the teacher, just like in the previous lessons, planned to teach for comprehension and basic knowledge. This was evident in the way lower-order questions were used to enhance learning, but such questions did not promote critical thinking skills. In addition to this, there was no other assessment task given to the learners, like homework or an assignment. Another issue was that the teacher did not give the learners enough time to think and provide the answers but would ask the question and give the answers after only a few minutes, a behaviour which could be equated to spoon-feeding.

6.5.2. Second period

The second period was the last lesson to be observed at Rilaveta Secondary School. The lesson was on a new short story titled “The New Tribe”, written by Buchi Emecheta, from the collection of short stories *Changes* compiled by Brian Walter (2015). The teacher started the lesson by writing some information about the story on the whiteboard, which included the title of the story, the author and characters’ names. The introduction of the story was done by presenting general factual information which helped the learners to comprehend what the story was all about. According to the teacher, the story is about a mixed-race family that came into being because a white couple could not have children of their own and decided to adopt their first child, who was a white girl named Julia. After a year, the adoption agency contacted the couple to inquire if they were interested in adopting another child, Chester, who was of Nigerian ancestry. The teacher went on to provide an explanation that in most cases, mixed families consist of parents from different race groups, for example, a black man and his white wife with coloured children. It was different in the story because, according to the teacher, the difference was with the adopted children: the first child to be adopted in the family was white, while the second child was black. The universal

themes of racial integration and adoption were then explained by the teacher, followed by a synopsis of the story which the teacher read aloud to the learners who each had a copy of the text. Unlike with the previous short story, the teacher read the prepared summary to the learners at the beginning of the story, not towards the end. The summary was informative enough to cover most of the events in the story.

The long summary was followed by the usual reading of the story, and this time the teacher read the story himself without asking the learners if they would like to read. The teacher read the story and explained content until one of the learners asked the teacher's permission to read, and it pleased the teacher that the learner volunteered to read in her own free will. After the learner had read a page of the story, the teacher explained how the husband was not readily willing to adopt the first child who was found abandoned by her mother. That information was crucial in view of the setting of the story, which was England, and the baby abandoned was white. This kind of information is crucial to the learners to remove the misconception that child abandonment only occurs in Africa by black African mothers. The teacher did not explain the situation in that way but emphasised on how the father was unwilling to adopt the child in the first place. It could have been helpful if the teacher asked the learners' opinions about the theme of child abandonment to stimulate active participation, but the teacher asked the learners if any of them would like to read the story further. Another learner volunteered and continued where the last learner stopped. The lesson continued with more reading aloud by the learners and the teacher, with less explanation from the teacher. At one stage of the lesson, the teacher asked the learners if they could adopt a child who is racially different from them, to be exact, a white child, and to explain their answer. This question caused some murmuring among the learners as they talked to each other, sounding 'disturbed' by the question. After a moment, one of the learners answered:

> I cannot adopt a white child because of the differences in culture and traditions, besides I do not know what to feed white children…. There will be conflicts…

After this answer, several learners raised their hands to indicate that they wanted to give their opinions as well. This time most of the learners were given an opportunity to say something about the topic at hand, and they agreed with the first learner who was

quoted above, citing different challenges such as discrimination and anger which could be directed against the child due to the historical events of apartheid in South Africa. The remarkable thing was that since the teacher asked the question about adoption, almost every learner seemed to be provoked to say something which resulted in some noise that the teacher easily controlled. In an argument about discussion as one of the pedagogical strategies in Chapter Two, Dallimore, Hertenstein and Platt (2004) advised selecting proper, interesting topics to avoid boredom on the side of the learners during lessons. The question asked by the teacher is one of these examples Dallimore, Hertenstein and Platt were talking about, because even though the teacher avoided discussions during the previous lessons, the question initiated an unstoppable discussion, especially when another learner answered as follows:

> I can adopt a white child because children are the same whether black or white.

There could have been an intense debate after this answer, but the teacher decided to move on by asking another learner to continue to read. The events that followed were typical: just reading and explanation until the end of the lesson. As with the previous lessons, the teacher again advised the learners to try and read the story on their own. What was observed during that lesson was that critical engagement was possible if teachers initiate active participation by asking 'thought-provoking' questions. The challenge was that the learners were not given enough time to discuss the topic to the point that enough learners could present their views.

6.6. Interview with the teacher

Deciding which pedagogical strategy to employ is a complex issue faced daily by secondary school teachers. According to many scholars who study pedagogical strategies that promote critical thinking skills, like Weimer (2015), teachers should choose strategies that are learner-centred. Learner-centred pedagogical strategies focus on how learners learn to reach certain educational objectives, and not on the fulfilment of the 'feelings' of the teacher. Weimer (2015, p.5) explains that when teachers use such strategies, "students are actively engaged in learning, exploring new ideas, and grasping the conceptual nature of the discipline, they are learning in a deeper and more meaningful way to apply that knowledge and those skills to other

parts of their lives". The application of knowledge and skills outside the classroom is a vital component of a critical mind which was explored by Freire (1970) in his concept of critical pedagogy where education was explained as humanistic, meaning to stir the innate abilities gained through teaching and learning to solve challenges, as discussed in Chapters One and Two. With this concept of critical pedagogy, Freire (1970) explains that schools should become solutions to challenges that confront communities; therefore, teachers should teach learners to become solutions to those problems. With this argument in mind, it was imperative to find out from the teacher what pedagogical and assessment strategies were used to incite active participation and critical engagement with English literary texts to promote critical thinking skills. To achieve this, teachers should use effective pedagogical strategies which would teach learners not only to think but to realise the value of teaching and learning English literary works. As already revealed and discussed in this study, one of the major objectives of the study is to investigate the pedagogical strategies that teachers use while teaching English literary texts. One of the questions posed was on this subject. On the subject of pedagogical strategies during the interview with the teacher, the response was:

> I try to make sure that the children focus; they are able to think otherwise; they are able to communicate in a proper way, and…they are also in a position to see the different kind of languages that are used in literature, especially be able to differentiate between formal and informal English. And be able to see how English is used in other countries wherever.

The teacher's response above did not convey the knowledge of the pedagogical strategies used to teach English literary content, but rather what is expected of the learners during and after lessons, for instance, "make sure that the children focus". It is crucial to study the different languages used by authors in English literary texts in order to derive meaning from content as the critical pedagogy theory supports this kind of literary analysis. It takes certain or a combination of teaching strategies to analyse what the teacher called 'different kind of languages' used, which seemed to be different dialects used in English literary texts. Whether the teacher meant languages or dialects, the point is that the teaching strategies enquired about were not disclosed. It is also true that English literary authors may use formal or informal language (or a combination of both) in their writing, which is crucial to note as learners are exposed to different styles of writing.

Using data collected through observations, it was concluded that the teacher used only one kind of teaching strategy: reading aloud. Even though only three lessons were observed, the enquiry was on whether the teacher used or would use other teaching strategies in the future, but at the rate which the teacher was 'rushing' to finish teaching the short stories, it could be concluded that the same instructional strategy will be employed to teach the remaining stories. The teacher's response above indicated that if there were other pedagogical strategies, besides reading aloud, he had no intention of using them, judging from the lack of knowledge of teaching strategies. On the issue of the importance of pedagogical strategies to promote critical thinking, Redecker and Punie (2013) argue that until teachers become familiar with learners' individual strengths and needs, it would be difficult to know which learning methods and pedagogy can be used to have a positive impact on those learners. This means that in order to be effective in imparting critical thinking skills, teachers should employ certain pedagogical strategies (they know) that are appropriate for the needs of the individual learner. Knowledge of the needs of individual learners could have been difficult because of the noted overcrowding of the class as discussed at the beginning of the chapter. However, the teacher could have researched techniques that are suitable to instil in the learners the desire to participate in the lessons. Furthermore, teachers should also be able to describe the teaching strategies they use to show that teaching is not just a duty, but a platform to impart valuable knowledge and skills, especially critical thinking skills.

The knowledge and comprehension of certain concepts (Papak, Vujičić & Ivković, 2017) is one of the basic requirements to elevate learners to the level of critical thinking as discussed on 6.3 above. Teachers who teach English literary texts to promote critical thinking should at least have a basic understanding of the term 'critical thinking'. This will help teachers to plan lessons with the objective of imparting the skill (critical thinking). On the importance of critical thinking skills, the teacher said:

> It is, so that we can be in a position to have future leaders who can think critically, who can be able to take decisions and take our country forward.

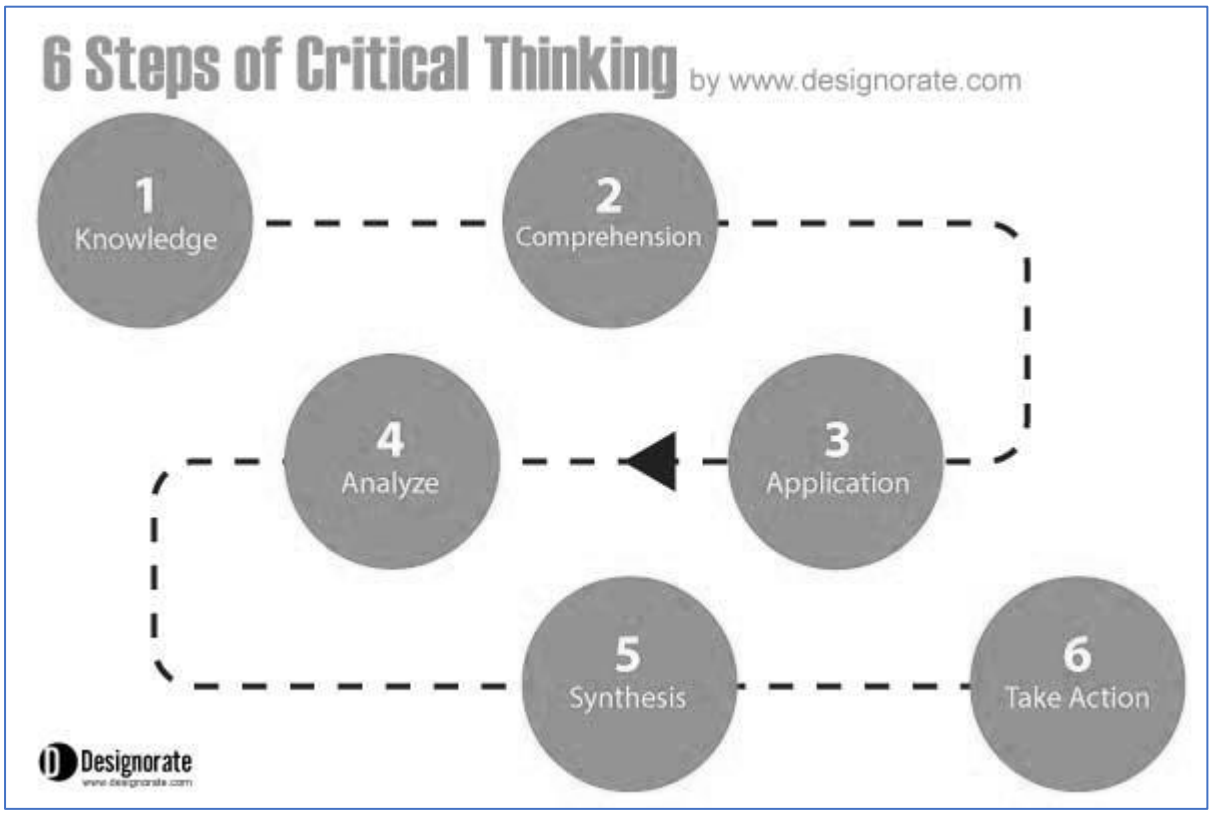
The teacher's response showed that critical thinking is a valuable skill, not only for the learners to use it to pass examinations for advancement to the next level, but to

become future leaders who depict critical thinking aptitudes. What the teacher said about future leaders is valuable because leaders should have problem solving skills, which is a characteristic of a critical thinking person. The issue here is that even though the teacher admitted that critical thinking skills are valuable, the teaching strategy employed during observation (reading aloud) did not support the admission. If the teacher believed in the value of teaching critical thinking, the pedagogical and assessment strategies would have supported it. It is also widely believed that to impart a certain skill, one should have clear knowledge, and more importantly, possess the skill (Van Gelder, 2005). Van Gelder (2005, p.42) notes that the first and most important lesson for teachers should be that critical thinking is a hard skill to teach and to learn. This scholar also states that although teaching critical thinking seems quite basic, it is actually a complicated process, and most people are just not very good at it. This is not to imply that the teacher did not depict critical thinking skills at all, but the point is that the teaching and assessment strategies used (according to literature consulted) did not promote or involve learners' critical engagement with content. The teacher was also asked if he thought teaching English literary texts should focus on critical thinking. The answer was as follows:

> Yes, I think it should focus on that. But it should also concentrate on the language as well, giving them some knowledge about the language, how to communicate with other people as well as critical thinking.

Knowledge of the language or language skills, as the teacher said, is not a bad idea, especially because the class observed study English as First Additional Language (FAL). As discussed on the analysis of the observations above, the teacher taught the learners mostly for the acquisition of knowledge of content, with some analysis of the language used in the short stories, such as the pronunciation of words and diction. From what the teacher said, it seemed critical thinking was an afterthought while teaching English literary texts. The important skill, according to the teacher, was language skills to communicate effectively or fluently in the English language. The teacher was correct in helping the learners to acquire knowledge and comprehension, but should move on to other steps to teach learners how to engage critically with knowledge to promote critical thinking as illustrated below:

Figure 3. Six steps of critical thinking



Source: Designorate

To explain the diagram and the reason it was included here, it is important to consider the words of the teacher quoted above which refer to learners who can "think critically, who can be able to take decisions and take our country forward". This phrase can be aligned with step number six (take action) on the diagram above. According to the diagram, teaching for critical thinking does not end with knowledge and comprehension; teachers should move on to the other steps of application, analysis, synthesis, and most of all, taking action, which can be equated to the idea of critical application of knowledge in real-life situations as expressed by the critical pedagogy theory. Even though the wording on the diagram is based on the Old Bloom's Taxonomy, the part which is valuable for this study is the sixth part, where learners can use the knowledge acquired to critically and creatively do something to tackle challenges outside the classroom environment.

Due to the responses the teacher provided during the interview, it was established that even though the teacher claimed to know what critical thinking was about, the observed data and the answers did not support the knowledge as the lessons were not planned to focus specifically on the topic of the skill (critical thinking). Even though the teacher did not show any plans to teach critical thinking skills in the future, there is always room to learn. Hopefully, the teacher might use the right pedagogical/teaching strategies in future to promote critical thinking because what was observed did not indicate that there was any desire to instil thinking skills on the learners. On being asked about the assessment strategies or questions used during and after the lessons, the teacher responded in this way:

> I think assessment should be based more on critical thinking rather than on objectivity. I think it should be more subjective. The learner should be able to give account of what they've learned in class and be able to apply it in real situations.

The first statement in the teacher's response above would be agreeable if the teacher did not add the term 'objectivity'. It is true that assessment should focus on helping learners develop critical thinking skills (judging from what different scholars have said about the skill, as discussed in Chapters One and Two) and become objective in the way they look at and use new information. According to the teacher's statement above, assessment should promote subjectivity in learners, and that does not characterise critical thinking skills. Another issue is that the teacher did not exactly specify the assessment strategies, nor the types of questions used during and after English literary lessons as the question required. The response was more on what the learners could reproduce when asked about what they have been taught, and if they could apply content in real-life situations. It is true that knowledge and comprehension of content are crucial, and that such knowledge should be applied in the real world, but a critical view should be guidance in the application of learned content (Styron, 2013). Application of knowledge and skills should not be viewed as an 'accountability', as the teacher said, but a critical awareness of the need to transform theory into practice where applicable. It need not be a duty, but a desire to use critical knowledge and skills for the improvement of the standard of life. Styron (2013, p.1) advises that educators should increasingly come to the realisation that teaching skills and vague concepts without connection to real world applications are seen by students as irrelevant, and in turn, are easily forgotten. Thus, assessing English literary content

should be designed not only for knowledge and skills (such as language skills) acquisition, but for critical thinking skills (and the application thereof) in the real world. Without this application of knowledge into the real world, the value of education diminishes.

In continuing with this crucial element of the study of assessment strategies, meaning the types of questions teachers use during and after lessons as a means to promote critical engagement, more information was required. The vitality of appropriate questioning strategies, in particular, was provided by Abosalem (2016, p.2) who says that “the designing of assessment techniques that are to be employed in classes requires giving our attention to the processes of student expected learning”. To expatiate what Abosalem (2016) says, it is necessary to utilise particular assessments geared towards the promotion of critical thinking skills, if that is the objective. In addition, assessment should be planned in an appropriate manner that focuses on the learners, through using strategies that stimulate active participation and thinking about what they learn.

In Chapter Two (literature review), it was established that in South Africa, the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for English literature study (which acts as a guide for teachers on teaching and assessment) recognises and suggests that assessment should happen every day during lessons (assessment for learning) and at the end of the learning unit or term (assessment of learning). With this information in mind, it was established during observation that the teacher asked questions during lessons, which is assessment for learning, but the challenge was that most of the questions were knowledge based or factual questions. As for the assessment of learning, which is an assessment (in this case) at the end of the short stories studied, the teacher only asked the learners after reading the questions aloud, whereby the learners were required to provide the answers aloud as well. This means that the teacher followed the guidance of the policy document, but the questions asked during the lessons could not promote higher-order thinking. The verbal questioning used after lessons also could not promote the language skills which the teacher focused on, as revealed during the interview, because the communication was limited to few learners who were willing to answer the questions.

Another crucial objective of the study is on the potential of teaching English literary content to promote learners' critical engagement with the English literary texts. The teaching strategy the teacher used (reading aloud) cannot and did not promote critical engagement with content. The questions used, as already discussed, were not escalated or built upon to help the learners to engage critically with the short stories studied. The content of English literary texts (the short stories studied) contained valuable life lessons, but the explanation and narration by the teacher did not stimulate the learners to engage with knowledge. As the content of the stories studied had relevant, valuable information for both the teacher and the learners, it was up to the teacher to interpret those themes for the learners to procure meaning from the stories. This is not to say that the teacher failed to extract and transfer meaning from the stories to the learners. However, the instructional and assessment methods used did not enable the teacher to exhaust all elements of the stories for critical cognition through critical engagement. To expand on this, the content was relevant, but the interpretation was not enough to help the learners think about what they learned. The point here is to promote teaching and interpretation of content, which is more important because even if the content is relevant, the choice of delivery should also be effective. On being asked about the relevance of English literary content that the teacher teaches to the learners, the teacher had the following opinion:

> I think so. Because some of the short stories that we [study] are somehow related to their real-life situations. So, they may be able to make decisions and be able to begin [to be] critical.

The teacher's opinion revealed that the English literary content taught was relevant enough (as already discussed in the paragraph above) for the learners to start viewing their world in a different light because the new information is relatable to their reality. The teaching and assessment strategies, however, did not support the teacher's opinion. The knowledge and comprehension questions used by the teacher during lessons did not promote critical thinking skills.

The relationship of effective teaching strategies and relevance of content is emphasised by Frymier and Shulman (2009) who note that relevance of content is associated with motivation to study. Motivation to study is derived from the attitudes and perceptions of the text by the audience, but as observed, it was the sole

responsibility of the teacher. This is true because while interviewing the learners, it was established that some them were more enthusiastic and interested in certain stories than others. This variance in motivation towards English literary content, therefore, is the result of the teacher's teaching and interpretational style which did not effectively motivate all students as Hughes, Sullivan and Mosley (1985) discussed in Chapter Two suggest.

6.7. Interview with the learners

The second interview at the school was with the learners. As indicated in 6.3. above, most of the learners wanted to be participants in the interview, but for the purpose of the study, only four learners were selected. The teacher was very helpful in selecting the four participants, who consisted of two high achievers and two average learners. Of the four participants, two were males and the other two were females. The four learners were interviewed as a focus group, where questions were posed while any of the participants were allowed to provide their answers. As the learners were divided into two high achievers and two average achievers, the preconceived mentality was that the high performing learners would be the ones to actively participate (in answering the questions) more than the average-performing learners, but it was not always the case. One of the learners who was regarded as an average performer by the teacher was more eloquent and precise in providing answers, while his explanations and examples were exquisite. For example, on the question about the knowledge of the concept of 'critical thinking', the learner replied as follows: "thinking out of the box".

Before exploring the learner's response here, in Chapter Two there are several definitions of the concept 'critical thinking', which were quoted and discussed. Most of those definitions explored hinted that the term means thinking at a certain higher level that depicts maturity and objectivity, reasoning, sound judgement and inference (among other things). The short, simple definition provided by the learner seems to support this view. The learner's answer is acceptable because according to researchers, such as Darn (2006), individuals who think out of the box display the following elements which are related to critical thinking skills: questioning the status quo, solving problems creatively, breaking free of routine, reframing questions,

stepping out of their shoes, managing creativity, challenging assumptions, turning failure into opportunity. It would be presumptuous to actually believe that the learner also displayed all the above attributes, but unlike the teacher, the learner was able to provide his own version of the concept, which was impressive, judging from the fact that the learner was considered an average performer. During the lessons observed, the concept was not mentioned, and for a learner categorised as an average performer, the response was perceptive, and more was expected from the higher-performing learners.

As the interview progressed, the learners were asked about the pedagogical or teaching strategies the teacher used while teaching English literature. The question was also posed to find out whether they were content with the way they were taught. Even though the same learners were observed during the English literary periods while the teacher was teaching, it was necessary to find out from the learners the teaching strategies the teacher used in order to determine whether they approve of the teaching-learning experience. This was also done to explore if the teacher used one or different teaching strategies besides what was observed already. One of the learners answered the question in the following manner:

> He reads the text with us, and he [provides] examples on real-life situations.

The above response highlights what was observed already, which is reading the texts aloud to the learners in class. The learner also revealed that in addition to reading aloud, the teacher used relevant real-life examples to explain content. This could be beneficial for the learners because if the examples were relevant to their reality, they would not only comprehend content but also lead to thinking about what they learn, which would mean critical engagement with the stories, leading to critical cognition. Furthermore, making content relevant is supported by Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy which advocates the usefulness of knowledge learned at schools to resolve challenges in learners' communities.

Interviewing more than one participant at the same time (focus group) helped in gaining different perspectives about certain issues relevant to the study. On the issue of the examples explored above, another participant had a different opinion:

> The examples [are about] real-life situations, but I think sometimes they may be a bit far-fetched. They're not really aligned with the stories.

This shows the different responses the learners provided about how the teacher taught and the examples used in an attempt to interpret English literary content. The first learner revealed that the explanation of content by the teacher is comprehensible because relevant examples were used, while the second learner believed that the examples were not always relevant and could often deviate from the content of the stories. The point here is that the learners responded differently to the way the teacher taught, and that is something the teacher should be aware of. Knowledge of how an individual learner responds to how the teacher taught, however, can be difficult due to the overcrowded classroom as discussed in the background information of the school (6.2) above. Another learner had a suggestion on how the teacher was supposed to teach them the English literary texts studied in Grade 12 at the school:

> I would have wanted him to [teach us] thorough analysis, summary of every chapter, character analysis…and all that.

This suggestion indicates that some of the learners were critical of how the teacher delivered content and would have liked to be taught in a different manner. Reading aloud as a teaching strategy was not enough for this type of learners as represented by the learner who made this suggestion. This also suggests that the teacher could have explored other pedagogical strategies that could have broken down the stories before the reading aloud took place. It was observed that the teacher did what the learner suggested, but at a minimal level; one of the short stories was analysed the way the learner suggested, but it was only character analysis, or rather the list of characters as observed. According to what the learner said above, the teacher should have analysed all the elements that made up the story, not only characterisation. This opinion also shows that the teacher should have asked the learners' opinions on how they would like to be taught so as to experiment with different pedagogical strategies. In this way, teaching would have become learner-centred.

On the types of pedagogical or instructional strategies, Esplugas & Lundwehr (1996, p.1) opine that "there must be a shift that involves the change from a didactic paradigm in which students are passive recipients of information to a critically reflective one, in which they actively analyse and assess knowledge by engaging in a process of

exploration and evaluation". This view is shared by Freire (1972), as discussed in Chapter One, who also believes that teaching should be revolutionary (meaning it should bring about change) in the way learners think. The exposure to the new information and ideas in English literary texts should provoke learners to think, in addition to gaining knowledge. Esplugas & Lundwehr (1996) also hint at something which is believed to be another pedagogical strategy to promote independent, critical thinking skills: learning through exploration. The concept and benefits of exploratory learning were discussed while analysing data for the first observation at the beginning of this chapter where, besides the promotion of independence, this learning strategy can help learners to think at a higher level due to exposure to different sources about the topic discussed. With such benefits, it was unfortunate that the only 'exploration' the teacher encouraged was for the learners to go and read the short stories studied on their own, which many of the learners did not do.

It should be remembered that this discussion on teaching strategies stems from the suggestion of one of the participating learners who shared that the teacher should have used another strategy which was more analytical than the reading that took place. To gain more insight on this issue, other researchers and scholars in the field of pedagogical strategies to promote critical engagement with knowledge were consulted. One such researcher is Valenzuela (2013) who notes that the learner-centred approach, which could be considered as having a strong focus on the learners' collective participation, is ideal for the transmission of critical thinking. This means that any teaching strategy used during English literary content should be learner-centred, an approach that should dominate in any teaching and learning situation, where learners are offered opportunities to communicate in the form of, for example, the group or pair works. If the teacher used the above approach, or similar, it would have been possible for the learners to critically engage and acquire skills (such as critical thinking skills) rather than using the reading aloud strategy which appealed to their memory instead of their thinking abilities.

The interview with the learners was also conducted to explore the assessment strategies or questions the teacher uses while teaching English literary texts. During that particular interview, the learners were asked about the kind of assessment

strategies and types of questions the teacher posed during and after English literature lessons. One of the learners responded:

> Most of the questions [are the same as the ones in] exams, they are not only objective questions but they are also subjective where learners are expected to interpret the question, analyse it and be able to give their own views about the story that they have read.

The learner's response here was extraordinary because the learner showed knowledge of the different types of questions. The idea that the learner knew and was aware of the different questions (objective and subjective) indicates potential for critical cognition. The learner knew about question categories and hierarchies such as lower-order and higher-order questions, and factual and critical questions – knowledge which the teacher should have displayed. The only setback which could prevent learners like this one from engaging with literary content at a level more than memorising is learning which is focused on the final examination rather than the gradual process of gaining knowledge and skills. Even though the learner's viewpoint on assessment shows maturity, the inclusion of the acronym 'exams' for examinations indicates that the focus was on the final summative assessment. It seemed that, according to the teacher and the learners, assessment is synonymous with the final examination; therefore teaching, learning, assessment and acquisition of knowledge and skills were less valuable than the final examinations.

To continue with the argument above, the learners' tendency to value the final examinations is understandable at their level because they are looking forward to advancing to the next level, which is universities and colleges, or even employment to improve the quality of their lives. The argument is that in addition to the focus on the examinations, the learners should also take the process of learning seriously because that was the way to determine what kind of professionals they would be: academics or leaders with good grades but lacking in critical thinking skills such as problem solving ability.

In order to explore more on the learners' viewpoints on the issue of assessment, other questions were asked pertaining to the times they preferred to be assessed, during lessons or afterwards. The learners, it seemed, did not mind being asked questions

during lessons as it kept them focused, but added that it would be beneficial if they were given another assessment task such as homework to reflect on what they learned in class, which is supported by the exploratory learning discussed in 6.3 at the beginning of this chapter. One of the learners provided the following perspective:

> I prefer when the teacher asks us questions [in class] because if I give the answer and it is wrong, then another one will give the correct one. Also, it makes sure that I don't commit the same mistake when writing exams, so I think the questions also helps us [to] correct ourselves.

This learner revealed her approval of the teacher's style of assessment, which is asking questions during lessons while the learners provide their answers. The learner, however, added something to the effect that different answers from different learners were ideal, and the idea to 'correct themselves' was important. However, during observations it was only on few occasions that the learners were awarded opportunities to give different opinions. In most cases, it was one learner and one answer; then the reading would continue. The more remarkable part of the response is the 'correcting ourselves' at the end, which is called self-assessment. According to Denscombe and Robins (1980, p.2), self-assessment "encourages students to become self-conscious about their own development and progress rather than receivers of preordained judgements from external sources". To be self-conscious is an inner subconscious metacognition explained by critical pedagogy theory which indicates critical thinking aptitude. This means that through self-assessment, learners are empowered to the point of self-actualization, which shows a critical outlook on their learning processes or metacognition. Another learner added his voice by saying:

> I share the same sentiment in that you should be given a homework so that we may actually be thought provoked when writing the homework and check whether we understand the things we've been doing in class.

The learner thus felt that homework would have helped them to revisit what they learned in class, reflect on content and provide their answers, which would require some modest level of thinking, which, if nurtured, could develop a higher level of intelligence. The more interesting part of the response is the phrase 'thought provoked', meaning the questions posed in class should have been thought-provoking or deep enough to challenge them to reason at a higher level, which can be defined as critical thinking. As it was already explored in the analysis of observation data

above, most of the verbal questions the teacher asked were knowledge and comprehension questions, which are lower-order questions capable of promoting lower-order thinking skills such as memorising information to reproduce as it was memorised. These types of questions did not 'provoke' the learners to think deeper about content but led to short, comprehensive answers. The learner's response revealed that some learners expected higher-order questions that would require more thinking and reflection before providing answers. Another learner revealed that some of the questions asked, especially during examinations, are critical and they need to have critical analysis skills to be able to answer them:

> I really love thought-provoking questions, because they tend to give you … to advance. So, I do love them but then the problem is having the skill to critically analyse.

In one of the informal conversations with the teacher, it was revealed that due to time constraints, the learners were being prepared to tackle examination questions, that is, in addition to knowledge acquisition of English literary content. The learner's opinion on this matter shows that learners were aware of the difficult questions to expect during formal assessments like the final examinations but were not prepared on how to critically engage with such questions. This means that the assessment strategy used during lessons did not equip them with critical analysis skills to face those deeper knowledge questions. Another learner added his frustration on the assessment strategy of not only the teacher, but the Department of Basic Education, as evident in the following statement:

> I would like it when real questions…they say, in your own view, in your own perception. But there is already a mental framework as to how you answer those questions. You don't actually think like the person who writes a memorandum, or the examiner. You need to be open-minded. They need to accommodate different perceptions, not ask me how I think in my view and [expect] an answer [similar] to the one in the memorandum [of possible answers].

This learner's response shows that the formal assessment questions allow learners to provide their own perceptions and opinions, but further claimed that there is a restriction because the examiners (people who set examination question papers and memoranda) and markers have certain preconceived expectations on how answers

should be formulated. This means that even though some questioning techniques require learners to provide their own opinions and viewpoints, their answers may still be considered wrong if they do not meet the expectations of the examiners. While the learner's argument is legitimate, it should be understood that learners are assessed against certain standards (Department of Basic Education, 2011). The Department of Basic Education (2011) declares that assessment for English literature is designed to promote creative thinking, which is related to critical thinking. According to the learner above, the examiners do not 'accommodate different perceptions' and if this is true, then assessment is not used to promote critical thinking skills. Another challenge was that the learners were not entirely taught critical engagement through questioning, which means the questions that required them to think may prove to be challenging. The questioning strategies the teacher used while teaching English literary texts were confirmed by one of the participants in this way:

> Okay, he actually does, for instance, when we are reading, and asks the reader what she picks up from the story. And that is the only assessment strategy. And if… like what she said about being opinionated, okay, okay, so if [the teacher] feels your understanding of the story does not suit his understanding, it's wrong.

What the participant said above confirmed the researcher's observation that the teacher asked questions during lessons, and sometimes would ask the learner who was reading aloud their opinion about what they had read. To say what the teacher asked for in this regard was an opinion, is not really accurate; it was more requiring the learners to explain what had been read. It is a pity that the learner claimed the teacher's opinion was final, even when the learners had their own viewpoints. If this is true, then the teacher was using what Carl (2012) calls the autocratic style of teaching and learning and Freire (1972) calls the banking system of teaching and learning, where the teacher's opinion is final, and cannot be questioned. Carl (2012) also advised that teachers should understand that teaching and learning cannot be separated; when teachers teach, they also learn from their learners. It is, therefore, safe to conclude that learners' perspectives can help teachers to comprehend content in a different light; and teachers can advance their critical thinking capabilities during the act of teaching, learning and assessment (Marton & Booth, 1997).

The learners all had different opinions on how they would like to be assessed. There were those who felt the way the teacher assessed them during lessons was enough for them to derive meaning from content. One such learner said:

> I think it is better if we are taught and questioned at the same time.

As already discussed above, many researchers in the field of teaching and learning agree that teaching and learning go together (Spaull, 2013; Valenzuela, 2013; Carl, 2012). What the learner said above confirmed this theory. This kind of assessment, which is termed 'assessment for learning', can only be effective if learners are given enough time to air their views about a particular higher-order question. While this kind of assessment was a favourite for the teacher and some of the learners, as represented by the interviewed focus group, other learners thought the assessment of learning (assessment task after a lesson or learning unit) was ideal. One of the learners said:

> I think learning without questions is better to avoid confusions, then ask questions later.

This learner felt that questioning during lessons was confusing, therefore assessment after lessons, for example, in the form of homework or an assignment, was ideal. This opinion supports the delivery of information without assessment which could be equated to rote learning. This kind of learning cannot promote critical engagement because it promotes silence on the side of the learners while the teacher does all the talking. It should be mentioned that learners' expression of different opinions, as evident above, does not necessarily mean they have critical thinking skills, but if the teacher could consider their perspectives and try to cater for the needs of the learners (learner-centred), the teaching, learning and assessment activities could foster critical cognition in the learners. Another interesting response on assessment was provided by one of the learners in this way:

> In any way. So, what I do, I believe in English and answer questions just for getting marks. I don't [have to think] about it.

The learner's viewpoint is interesting because it emphasises what was already discussed here: that the teaching and learning observed focused more on preparing

the learners for the end of the year assessment. This learner put it bluntly, that it does not matter whether the questions were lower-order or higher-order, as long as they were answerable to obtain marks, pass and advance to the next level. The response above shows that critical thinking was not necessary, only knowledge and comprehension of content. The danger here is that these kinds of learners may acquire knowledge as it was, and never think and reflect about information which could result in unformed decisions. It also becomes difficult to apply such knowledge in real-life situations. The learner's response shows that some learners were accustomed to the way the teacher taught and assessed. They were content with the way they learned, which was receiving information from the teacher, storing, and retrieving it when required. The result of this kind of learning is that those learners would have dormant knowledge which is not utilised at all; they will have to be told what to do because the ones who possess critical thinking skills are likely to lead those who learn without thinking.

6.8. Transference of critical thinking skills

About thirty one years ago, the psychologist Jean Piaget argued that true learning does not consist of the memorisation of facts, but the construction of knowledge (Resnick & Klopfer, 1989). While this is true, constructing knowledge, according to the Bloom's Taxonomy (which is regarded as the best instrument for measuring critical cognition and critical thinking skills), is a necessary foundation stage which should be escalated to another level of thinking called higher-order thinking, exemplifying critical thinking skills. The transference of critical thinking skills, therefore, depends on the teacher's possession and ability to effectively transfer it during lessons. Effective transference also depends on how content is interpreted for the construction of meaningful knowledge, and the application of the newly acquired knowledge to view the world in a different light. This may only be possible through the use of effective teaching and assessment strategies. Despite what is generally believed about the teaching and assessment strategies the teacher at Rilaveta used (the reading aloud, explanation and use of lower-order questions), some of the learners displayed some degree of critical thinking skills and awareness of what and how they learn, and their environment, like the learner who gave his opinion on the English literary texts as quoted below:

> I think…I think…contrary to what they both say, all things are politics, I'm interested in it. And I think the motive behind having to choose short stories with a context in politics, and our drama having a context in politics, is to make us aware of the racial discriminative history of South Africa and it's not really about having to like politics; it's you having to learn and understand this and understand why you need to engage it.

This learner conducted an inter-textual reference, meaning he compared the meaning of content from different texts, which is the drama (*My Children! My Africa!*) and the collection of short stories (*Changes*). According to Cancogni (1985, p.13), "intertextuality is a literary device that creates an 'interrelationship between texts' and generates related understanding in separate works". This skill shows that in addition to comprehension and knowledge of content, the learner could also find the similarities between different English literary texts studied at their level (Grade 12). Inter-textual referencing depicts a critical thinking mentality of a certain degree, and the learner here displayed that skill despite the teaching and assessment strategies used by the teacher, which could be described as of mundane nature. The point here is that some learners may display CT prowess despite the teaching-learning environment that seemed to concentrate on knowledge and comprehension only. The awareness of the need to engage with knowledge, in this case the history and politics of South Africa as displayed by the learner, suggests that there was a critical capability to recognise and place English literary content in the reality of the learner's life. This is what Freire's critical pedagogy means about literary content, that it should be relevant to the audience so that they can learn, engage, conduct research, and infer about what they read.

To conclude this argument, even though the teaching and assessing did not help the learners to engage critically with knowledge, some learners displayed some characteristics of critical thought. With the right pedagogical and assessment strategies, those learners may become solutions to challenges such as poverty and unemployment in their communities, an outcome which defines the ultimate objective of education.

6.8.1. Pedagogical strategies used to promote critical thinking

At Rilaveta Secondary School, the teacher observed (for English First Additional Language) used one type of pedagogical strategy, namely reading aloud, to teach English literary texts. As discussed several times from the beginning of Chapter Six, this strategy was suggested and recommended by the Department of Basic Education (2011). The department, however, also recommended that reading English literary texts should be conducted in three stages: pre-reading, reading and post-reading. The teacher engaged pre-reading as provided by the text (*Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*) being studied. This included the reading aloud of the background information of the author and a brief summary of the story. The pre-reading activity gave the learners an idea of who the author was, and what the story was all about. The reading stage, according to the Department of Basic Education (2011), should involve a close reading of the text. The 'close reading' idea, as suggested here, is similar to critical reading discussed in Chapter Two, where the reader should recognise patterns in the story through analysis of the author and content to reach a conclusion based on critical engagement with knowledge.

On the idea of teaching for critical engagement, the department further recommended that learners should answer questions about the meaning of the text. They should be asked to consider how word choice, use of language, imagery and other literary devices affect the meaning of the text; and be expected to use comprehension strategies such as inferencing (Department of Basic Education, 2011). What the department says here constitutes critical reading, which could be more effective when literary content is interpreted to promote learners' meaningful learning. It is, however, questionable to associate comprehension of knowledge with one of the critical thinking skills which is inference, as the policy statement puts it. To continue with this argument, the point the department made (about comprehension strategies, and the example being inferencing) needs further exploration. Even though comprehension is considered a lower-order level of thinking, some scholars such as Nation and Norbury (2005) value comprehension as one of the major steps of learning. Nation and Norbury (2005) explain that students with poor comprehension are poor at making inferences and integrating text information to real-life situations. Such learners tend to read superficially, are less likely to participate in constructive processes, and are unsure of

when to apply their prior knowledge (Nation and Norbury, 2005). Therefore, according to Nation and Norbury (2005), without inferencing and application of knowledge, there may be no transference of critical thinking, as these (inferencing and application) are some of the vital characteristics of developing critical thinking skills. Therefore, the reading aloud and verbal short, closed-ended questioning the teacher used were not enough to promote such thinking.

To continue and offer a different argument on this, the two terms (comprehension and inference) are far apart according to the categorising levels of knowledge and cognition on the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy presented in Chapter Two. Comprehension is the lowest form of cognition while inference describes the conclusion reached after critical engagement with knowledge; therefore, the noted similarity between the two terms is that they are both cognition level abilities. While the first (comprehension) is at the lowest level of cognitive development, the other (inference) conveys higher-order thinking achieved through learner-centred pedagogical strategies and higher-order questions (as discussed in Chapter Two). Contrary to the argument towards the end of the paragraph above, the teacher observed at Rilaveta Secondary School read content with the learners and posed some short questions which the learners answered. Again, unlike what was recommended by the Department of Basic Education, most of the questions were not about the meaning of content, but to test basic knowledge and comprehension of content. For instance, during one of the lessons observed, the teacher asked the learners to do the following:

> Name any character that you remember [in the story being studied].

In response to what the teacher asked, the learners provided the names of the characters without any further information. Basic knowledge teaching and assessment, according to Marin and Halpern (2011), cannot promote a critical thinking mentality in learners. These researchers explain that trying to teach critical thinking using only basic knowledge (domain-specific knowledge) may even hinder learners from being critical in that subject, which in this case is English literature. What this means is that the skill should be taught as a separate subject, rather than infusing it in basic knowledge in subject matter like English literature, although what Marin and

Halpern (2011) recommend sounds like a solution to the lack of critical engagement with literary texts. Ennis (2011) differs with this opinion as discussed in Chapter Two, arguing that critical thinking literacy should be infused in all subjects.

What was interesting about the teaching and assessment observed was that it was conducted as one unit, as an attempt to transfer knowledge to the learners. What is implied here is that the teacher taught short stories only for the duration of the lessons observed without breaking to teach other parts of the English language such as creative writing or grammar. The only major setback is that the teacher could not use the knowledge taught to promote critical thinking that could be used in the study of the other aspects such as creative writing and language.

6.8.2. Assessment strategies used to promote critical thinking

In addition to the questioning during reading, the teacher assessed the learners by asking them the post-reading activity questions as provided in 6.5(a) above. As already discussed, the activity was meant to be given to the learners as a group discussion or for them to work individually as homework. The teacher decided to treat the activity as classwork, whereby the learners were asked the questions aloud while they provided the answers aloud as well. According to Wahjudi (2010), the post-reading stage is where learners are supposed to apply what they possess, meaning knowledge. This means that at this stage, learners were supposed to apply the knowledge of content to tackle a challenge (in this case, an activity). Some of the questions would hopefully require them to think with the anticipation that this would promote critical engagement and the development of a certain degree of critical thinking. Instead, the teacher asked the questions aloud and, because of the urgency to complete the story, could not provide the learners with enough time to ‘infer’ so that they could give well-thought out answers.

During that questioning and answer session, the teacher (for the sake of time, as explained at the end of the lesson), provided answers for the learners. In this way, the learners were not given the opportunity to work on the task independently to develop independent thinking skills which characterise critical thinking capabilities. The conclusion is that the assessment strategies used during and after lessons were not

conducive to encourage thinking because the focus was on learners' recalling or remembering of information hoped to have been acquired and stored during lessons.

6.9. Conclusion

In the background information about Rilaveta Secondary School, it was established that there is a need to teach learners critical thinking. The teacher who was observed and interviewed admitted that teaching critical thinking skills would not only help learners to answer questions that require thinking 'out of the box' but can ensure strong-minded future leaders to lead the country with wisdom and dignity. The principal added that the value of education in South Africa depends on teaching learners how to think, not only how to reproduce content as given. What is intriguing is that even with the above knowledge, the teacher did not show a desire to teach learners this skill, but rather equipped learners with knowledge and comprehension of content.

At Rilaveta Secondary School, the English department for Grade 12 consisted of three teachers and one HOD, who seemed to work collaboratively with each other. It would help if they could agree to come up with other teaching and assessment strategies that would help transfer critical thinking skills to learners. Even though the time constraint factor is legitimate, the teacher who participated in the study could have taught the learners critical reading skills using a few of the short stories to prepare learners to study the rest on their own, which could have helped the learners' exploratory and independent learning. In that way, the teacher would be promoting independence and critical reasoning as learners acquire the knowledge on their own and think about English literary content. If learners fail to think about English literary content and apply it to their lived realities, their knowledge of content remains valueless.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CASE STUDY 3: NHLUVUKO

7.1. Background

Nhluvuko Secondary School (a pseudonym for the third school involved in this study) is in Soweto, about thirty-five kilometres west of the city of Johannesburg. The school is one of the many public secondary schools in Soweto which caters for both male and female learners, a trend that characterises public secondary schools in South Africa, also known as a co-ed secondary schools. Nhluvuko Secondary School was opened in January 1968 and is therefore one of the oldest schools in the area with about 1376 learners during the academic year 2017 (information provided by the administration of the school). The principal also confirmed that it was the highest enrolment since the opening of another secondary school in a nearby location. The school is categorised as quintile 1, therefore the learners do not pay school fees and lunch is provided for the learners by the government in the form of a feeding scheme.

7.1.1. Authority hierarchy

At Nhluvuko, the highest authority of the school is the principal, followed by the deputy principal. Each learning area (subject) has a head of department (HOD) who oversees the teaching and learning activities of those particular subjects. The teachers report any teaching-learning related matters to their HODs, who would, in turn, escalate the matter to the principal if they cannot come with a solution to some of the challenges. The administration staff helps the teachers with typing and photocopying teaching-learning materials, among other things. The school governing body (SGB) also has authority at the school as it represents the parents, and according to the principal the school cannot take any crucial decision, such as the appointment of new staff, without the consent and approval of the SGB. The School Management Team (SMT), which comprises HODs and teachers, also has a notable voice in the decision making at the school and the management and allocation of funds for teaching-learning activities, such as field trips, and for supplementary teaching-learning materials.

7.1.2. The learners

Most of the learners at Nhluvuko are local residents of Soweto, residing next to the school. The few who are not permanent residents of Soweto come from other provinces such as KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Limpopo and Mpumalanga. These learners stay with their parents who are migrant workers moving from their original homes to Gauteng Province where they found work. As they spend more time in Gauteng, these parents often invite their children to come and stay and learn at schools like Nhluvuko. It becomes easier for learners who relocated from their homes to learn at this school because it caters for several South African indigenous languages such as IsiZulu, IsiXhosa, Xitsonga, Sepedi and Tshivenda.

7.1.3. Languages

The Language of teaching and learning (LoTL) is English, therefore all subjects (except the home languages) are offered or taught in English. The only language not on the list of South African languages is Afrikaans. The principal made it clear that Afrikaans is not even a prospective language to be offered in the future because all the learners are black who speak different indigenous languages; hence, the school tries to cater for all the black learners from different cultural and traditional backgrounds. Some of the learners, however, complained that there were teachers who use indigenous languages a lot while teaching subjects which are supposed to be taught in English. Some teachers agreed with this allegation, saying they do this (code switching) to help the learners understand content as English is not their First or Home Language.

7.1.4. School resources

According to the principal and some of the teachers, the school premises, meaning the classes, are used by the community for several different functions, such as community meetings, three different churches and a gym. The principal alleged that he was against some of these activities, especially the gym which takes place in the school hall on Saturdays, but the school governing body thought it was good to keep the youth busy instead of them indulging in bad habits such as alcoholism and drug

abuse. The principal and his deputy admitted that the school had become a pillar for the community as many residents who live within the threshold of the school depend on it for various activities listed above. As for the teaching and learning resources, the principal explained that the Department of Basic Education (DBE) provides all the resources such as textbooks and exercise books necessary for the process of teaching and learning to take place. The principal also added that the supplementary teaching and learning resources found in the library of the school are mostly donations from Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Non-profit Organisations (NPOs).

7.2. Data collection at Nhluvuko

To gain access to the school for data collection was not easy and it took longer than expected. The principal was delighted to be visited by a researcher from a reputable institution of higher learning but made it clear that a decision to allow anyone who needs to interact with the teachers and the learners is taken jointly with the school governing body. As the head of the SGB was not available (out of the province on business), a meeting was scheduled for the following two weeks where all the members would be present. The principal, however, accepted the letter and promised to call in order to confirm the next meeting.

During the second meeting, the members were briefed about the intention to conduct the study which included observing and interviewing teachers and learners at Grade 12 level. After a series of questions from almost all the members, the SGB finally consented to the study, but this took a thorough explanation of what the study was all about and how it would benefit both the teachers and the learners, as well as the Department of Basic Education. The consent to conduct the study by the SGB and the principal was then followed by an introduction of the HOD of English, who in turn extended the introduction to include the teachers for Grade 12 English FAL who were three in number. After another presentation to explain the reason for the visit at the school, out of the three teachers, one consented to become a participant, and the Grade 12B classroom was chosen by the teacher for observation, as that was the venue where English FAL literature was taught. The teacher also helped to select four learners for the interview as required for the study: two high achievers and two average learners (males and females).

Before the observations started, the teacher explained that as the schools had just reopened after the preliminary examinations (examinations to prepare for the end of the year/summative assessment), the main activity would be corrections for the paper they wrote on English literature. According to the teacher, these corrections, which were part of formative assessment, were a perfect revision exercise that the learners needed as preparation for the final examinations (summative assessment) to determine whether the learners advance to the next level which would be institutions of higher learning such as colleges and universities. To expatiate what formative assessment is all about, Chappuis (2005) notes that the reality of this level of testing is often little more than just a series of '*minisummative tests'* which are not always tightly aligned to what was taught in the classroom. According to this scholar, "there is nothing inherently formative in such tests – they may or may not be used to make changes in teaching that will lead to greater student learning" (Chappuis 2005, p.5). Upon comparing the questions in the question paper used as a resource and the previous final examinations, the revelation was that what Chappuis (2005) said here was true. There were marked similarities; therefore, the '*minisummative'* term used to describe formative assessments is accurate. It is also true that if the teaching and assessing did not manage to teach valuable knowledge and skills, the formative exercise would not automatically teach learners cognitive knowledge and critical thinking competence. However, this conclusion could only be confirmed after observing the lessons.

During the address of the class, the teacher added that some of the Grade 12 learners went to a revision camp which was organised by the Department of Basic Education; therefore he arranged with the other teachers to allow the learners from their classes to join his class so that it becomes a full class. The teacher asked for time to decide which part of the question paper to start with (the short story or the drama part), meaning he needed time to go and prepare the lessons, which was understandable. The first observation was arranged for Monday, 13 August 2018.

7.3. First observation at Nhluvuko

The class observed was a combined Grade 12 English FAL class. The teacher collaborated with the other teachers as promised, to combine the learners into one class as some of the learners went to the revision camp organised by the Department of Basic Education. It seemed many of the learners went to the camp, as there were about twenty-two out of fifty-seven Grade 12 learners left at the school. Even though twenty-two learners in one class is considered normal in secondary schools around Soweto and the whole of South Africa, the teacher took a while to finally get the learners settled because according to him, he was used to a smaller class of fourteen learners which was the original number of learners in his class.

The lesson was a revision exercise on the preparatory examinations, also called the preliminary examinations. The teacher needed to decide which part to start with, and the result of that decision was to cover the part which was based on the play *My Children! My Africa!* written by Athol Fugard. The teacher enthusiastically explained before the lesson started that it would not be just a mere remedial exercise or corrections, but a formative assessment coupled with more acquisition of knowledge about the play. This, he said, would help the learners to understand the play more as many of them did not do well in the past assessment task based on the said play. The first thing the teacher did after the learners were settled was to ask them to take out their question papers and the texts to make sure they had the materials for the lesson. It was established that some of the learners answered questions based on texts which were not selected to be studied at Nhluvuko, hence the high failure rate for the paper which became a matter of concern for the teacher.

According to the teacher, the preliminary examination papers were set regionally, meaning the papers were set by the province of Gauteng, including the Johannesburg West District. The paper was created to be written by secondary schools found in the whole province. It is only the end of-year examinations and the supplementary examinations that are set nationally, meaning all Grade 12 learners around South Africa write the same question paper. This means that all the English texts are included in one paper, even the ones which were not selected by the school. This caused confusion to some learners who answered questions based on other texts they did not

even study at their own school. To remedy this, the teacher warned the learners that they must only answer questions based on the texts they studied, which are the play text *My Children! My Africa!* and the collection of short stories titled *Changes*. The teacher's frustration was understandable since some of the learners could not even figure out that they had to select sections of the question paper meant for them. However, during the learners' interview, it was evident that learners knew exactly which texts were selected by their school. For example, on being asked which English literary texts were selected by the school and whether they enjoyed reading the stories, one of the learners answered:

> I only enjoy the short stories [from *Changes*] because sometimes…like they teach about life and how to help people. *My Children! My Africa!* I think, well, it's just a book.

This shows that not all the learners did not know which texts were studied at the school. The different attitudes that learners had towards the texts were also revealed in this response because the learner here talked well about the short stories but did not have anything good to say about the play.

The confusion could also be the result of poor class attendance. According to the teacher, there were learners who usually come to school but did not attend classes because they thought English literature was easier compared to the other subjects like Mathematics and Physical Science. After the teacher had reiterated the same words to clarify the confusion, the lesson started with a brief narration of the summary of the play by the teacher. After the narration, the teacher went on to ask the first question which was not on the question paper. The question was about the main characters in the play, and the learners were required to raise their hands to be selected so that they could provide the answer. In this instance, most of the learners mumbled the answer in unison, to which the teacher said something remarkable to the learners as follows:

> Don't shout the answer [in unison] because you deny others the opportunity to think.

What the teacher meant here was that the learners must wait to be selected to provide the answer to the question. Allowing other learners to think about the question is a

good idea, but the most important aspect here is that the teacher posed a short, factual question which required the learners to remember, not to think. The learners were required to name the characters, not to think about, for example, the actions of the characters that were affected by situations around them. Retrieval of information from memory as the learners were required to do, according to May and Einstein (2013), is crucial in order to make sense of or to connect with new information. These researchers also noted that the retrieval of memorised information could be the only way in which learners could engage critically with knowledge through remembering content, but critical engagement could happen when they engage the 'deep processing or elaborative rehearsal' strategy. This strategy "focuses on the meaning of an item and involves forming associations between old and new information, with an effort on making elaborate connections with existing knowledge" (May & Einstein, 2013, p.19). To explain this argument further, the researchers believe that retrieval of stored information is good to help connect old and new knowledge, but critical engagement happens when learners conduct deep analysis which is more elaborative than plain memorisation. To achieve this kind of information processing system would require learners to think deeply about content, to engage higher-order thinking, which was contrary to what the learners were asked to do with the question asked by the teacher.

It must also be understood that remembering information is good as it is the basis for knowledge. Knowledge alone, however, may not deepen learners' cognitive engagement and utilisation of content at a critical level. The short, factual questions which require comprehension and knowledge of content should be followed by more challenging ones that would require a certain degree of thinking. The memory-level questions, also called lower-order questions, only ask for factual recalling and are likely to promote learners' involvement in the lesson only to a minimal degree. The argument in favour of knowledge based teaching and assessment is offered by The Open University in their booklet titled "Thinking Critically" as follows: "You may encounter some activities during your study that don't require high levels of critical thinking. For example, some multiple-choice questions might simply elicit your knowledge and understanding of your topic" (The Open University, 2008, p.9). This is true in the sense that the teacher's question was the first for that particular lesson and

it was important to test the learners' basic knowledge of content before asking more challenging questions.

As the lesson continued, the teacher asked more challenging questions that required more than one-word answers, where learners were asked to provide reasons for the actions of the characters. One such question from the question paper was formulated in this way:

> Why did Thami [one of the characters] decide to quit practicing for the literature competition?

This question still required learners to remember and reproduce information from their knowledge of the text. The difference with the first question asked by the teacher at the beginning of the lesson is that the latter question required some degree of thinking and formulation of information to provide a correct and meaningful answer which deserved the allocation of marks, which were two marks. Some of the learners seemed to know the correct answer because when one of them was selected and provided the wrong one (which was about the character not liking school), there was a commotion of amusement which took some time for the teacher to control. According to the teacher, the same learner who provided the wrong answer was among the list of learners with many days of absenteeism. Without giving another learner an opportunity to give the correct answer, the teacher started to explain the reasons that caused the character (Thami) to quit the literature practice. His explanation included the character's awareness of the societal and educational differences in South Africa, which resulted in one group (white people) receiving better treatment than the other (black people). In that explanation, the themes of an unequal educational system in South Africa, Bantu education and fighting for freedom during the apartheid regime were explored, but to a limited extent. The teacher was trying to fulfil his resolution of explaining content for the benefit of those learners who still did not have enough basic knowledge of the text. His explanation was good, and it could have been even better if it was coupled with questions that would provoke the learners to think deeper, especially about the themes briefly described.

Another question asked during that particular lesson was about comparing and contrasting the three main characters in the play in terms of their geographical location

and cultural background. Here, the teacher gave several learners the opportunity to provide and explain their answers to the effect that the differences were vast because two of them came from a very impoverished community while the other came from a lavish suburb symbolising the wealth of the minority upper class during the apartheid government: a legacy still evident today. What is more interesting about this play, according to the teacher, is that the playwright belonged to the minority ruling race, but it seems the main objective of the play was to expose the injustices and consequences of racial division and oppression that characterised the system of governance in South Africa before the attainment of freedom and democracy. The relevance of the content in this instance is unquestionable to the audience, meaning the learners, as it was about what happened in their own country in the past which affected the political, societal and economic situation still evident in the present. Critical pedagogy theory supports these kinds of themes and advises critical interpretation for critical knowledge. In this instance, effective critical interpretation could have helped the learners to think at a certain higher level to even come with solutions to persistent challenges, such as unequal distribution of resources for equal, better-quality life for all in the future.

On the fifth page of the play text *My Children! My Africa!* there was the background information of the playwright, Athol Fugard; the teacher said he discussed the information with the learners in the past lessons. The teacher explained that knowledge of an author might help in understanding the reason behind writing a certain text, which, according to critical pedagogy, is true. To elaborate on this, the teacher's line of thinking is supported by the critical pedagogy theory used as the basis for this study, which states that in order to be successful in creating literary texts, authors should write about their own environments and experiences. In this case, it seems the playwright was more sympathetic to the plight of the marginalized group, meaning black people. In his own words, the playwright said: "My point is obvious. Anything that will get people to think and feel for themselves, that will stop them delegating these functions to the politicians, is important to our survival. Theatre can help do this" (Fugard quoted in Seale, 2015, p.8). From this quotation, it seems the playwright's objective of writing the play was for the audience to think and feel the message which could be useful to the survival of South Africans. The 'think' and 'feel' part of the quote supports what critical pedagogy theory (Freire, 1970) says about

literature: that it can help to understand literary content if the audience can think deep about the content and the external factors that persuaded an author to write about a certain topic. This theory also states that some authors may express their deep desires to effect change but only live in the characters they created, as Fugard seemed to have done in the play (Triegaardt, 2014; Garavan, 2008; Weiler 2001).

It is quite obvious that so far the questions the teacher asked were a combination of lower-order and higher-order questions. Close-ended questions, according to Cotton (1988), are lower cognitive questions which ask the student merely to recall verbatim or in his or her own words material previously read or taught by the teacher. Lower cognitive questions are also referred to as fact, closed, direct, recall, and knowledge questions where learners may not think deeply about content. Higher-order questions, in contrast to lower cognitive questions, promote the idea of thinking about content. One of such questions which required the learners to think and give their opinions was as follows:

> Do you think the title [of the play] is relevant [to the content]?

Before the learners could give their answers, the teacher reminded the learners that the question was the type where learners were supposed to offer their opinions. This means that they were free to agree or disagree as long as they provided suitable reasons. The teacher reiterated the word ‘opinion’ several times so that the learners could understand that their critical perspectives and cognition about content matters a lot with this kind of question. This question was different from the others the teacher asked because it was open-ended, also called a higher cognitive question. According to Lee, Kinzie and Whittaker (2012), open-ended questions are believed to be useful for developing students’ cognitive skills, as these questions encourage them to express and elaborate upon their thinking and provide rationales for their thought processes. Cognitive skills development means the learners are able to think cognitively about content, reflect on information and provide their opinions based on objective reasoning, which is a typical critical thinking skill. The importance of these types of questions, according to Roth (1996), is that they are likely to engage learners in higher-order thinking, which is a character of metacognitive knowledge and skills.

On realising that the learners failed to answer the question, the teacher tried to break the title of the play into halves, which are “My Children” and “My Africa”, to explain them separately. He resorted to asking them closed-ended questions like: who are “My Children” in the title of the play, and what is meant by “My Africa”? This seemed to help as the leaners could understand the title better, but they still could not formulate a meaningful answer that displayed a critical mentality. The teacher proceeded to write the one-sided answer on the whiteboard for the learners to copy. The answer was one-sided because it only agreed with the title being relevant to the content of the play. The teacher also said that he did not believe that there was anyone who would disagree that the title was not appropriate for the play, which was flawed and contrary to the reiteration of the word ‘opinion’ after introducing the question. Instead, the learners were led into believing that there was only one answer to an open-ended question; therefore they were deprived of the opportunity to think critically about the story.

Teaching literature (English literature included) involves teaching literary devices. The next question the teacher asked involved one of the literary devices: tone. In the book *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, Abrams (1999) defines the literary device ‘tone’ as the expression of a literary speaker's attitude to his listener, meaning the feelings and attitudes of the author about the topic that may influence how the audience feels and thinks about content. To explain the relationship between the author and the reader in the literary world, Abrams (1999, p.218) states that “the tone of [the author’s] utterance reflects ... his sense of how he stands towards those he is addressing”. In order to really grasp the author’s message, teachers should use suitable pedagogical and assessment strategies.

The question on tone was from the question paper used as a resource for revision and it was as follows:

> If you were the director, in which tone would you instruct Mr M to say the above line?

In order to answer this question, learners should know the meaning of the term ‘tone’ in literature, and particularly in the context of the words spoken by the character named Mr M. The words were: “Slogans don’t need much in the way of grammar, do they?”

The teacher had to explain the story to the point where the character said the words above, which was about an event in the play where Mr M, a teacher who did not like violent protesting, was making a demonstration to Thami (a Grade 12 black student involved in the group conducting school boycotts). The demonstration was a stone and a dictionary, where Mr M was explained that the two weigh the same, but the dictionary contains more valuable knowledge than the stones that Thami and his friends threw at the police. It was expected that after the narration by the teacher the learners would have a clue, but still the learners had no idea on how to answer the question. The learners' lack of response to the question and explanation showed a lack of comprehension of content. The teacher admitted at the end of the lesson that a lot needed to be done for the learners to advance to the next level. One remarkable issue the teacher raised was that he was forced to 'spoon-feed' the learners in the form of providing the answers to some of the questions because there was not enough time as the final evaluation or examinations were near.

To better understand the issue of spoon-feeding as raised by the teacher, it was imperative to find out more about this teaching practice. According to Mohanan (2000, p.21), the term spoon-feeding in a literal sense refers to "performing a physical action for children that they can actually do on their own, or which they are actually ready to learn to do it with some effort". This pedagogical strategy, according to other scholars like Whitman and Fife (1988), creates a teacher-centred class with students playing a passive role; however, it is somewhat preferred by the students. What Whitman and Fife (1988) say here is true because as observed, the learners seemed at ease when the teacher provided the answers, where they could copy from what the teacher wrote on the board. The challenge with this instructional strategy is that it promotes laziness and dependency whereby the learners depend on the teacher for information which they receive without any effort of thinking about it. Based on the information discussed here, it is clear that critical engagement for critical thinking cannot be achieved by employing spoon-feeding as a teaching strategy.

To conclude the analysis of data for the first observation at Nhluvuko Secondary School, I would say that the teaching and assessment strategies used by the teacher were not conducive to promoting critical thinking. The reading of content aloud as a teaching strategy helped to attract the learners' attention to the task at hand, but their

lack of basic knowledge about content showed that there was lack of critical engagement with English literary content. Some of the learners seemed to be skilled at answering questions that required them to remember content but would not show cognition with open-ended questions that required them to think.

7.4. Second observation at Nhluvuko

During the second day of observation which was on 14 August 2018, the teacher said that he intended to explain the story to the learners more as he realised that many of them did not have the basic knowledge of the plot, meaning the arrangement of events happening in the play. The lesson took place in the same classroom with the same learners. The teacher continued to ask the questions from the same question paper, aloud, while the learners tried to provide the answers as best they could. As the teacher promised before the beginning of the lesson, the questioning and answering activity was interrupted by the narration of certain parts of the play. This narrative pedagogical strategy, as the teacher explained after the lesson, was to help the learners to comprehend content to the point of remembering the events of the story when they write their final examinations.

To explore the narrative instructional strategy, researchers in this field such as Hymes (1996) assert that it is more about recounting than critiquing literature. Hymes (1996) notes that the narrative storytelling teaching strategy is the social and discursive practice of recounting and temporally ordering human experience and events. To explain what Hymes (1996) says, the narrative teaching strategy is described as a storytelling technique that explains the eventful human phenomena as told by an author. To clarify this further, the strategy is a way of telling a story to the point that the audience follows what happens from the beginning to the end. This means that the storyteller makes an effort to even act the different parts of the characters in the story. This definition is relevant because that is what the teacher was doing: recounting the events in the play to the point of imitating the characters and mimicking their actions through different voice pitch, which the learners seemed to enjoy.

The important question here is whether this narrative strategy could promote critical engagement with English literary content to the point of learners thinking critically

inside and outside the classroom. To answer this question, Sedaghat and Baria (2016), in their article titled “The Effect of Narrative Techniques for Cultivating CT and Improving Oral Proficiency of Intermediate Iranian EFL Learners”, concluded that the narrative teaching method, coupled with other CT strategies, may produce learners who display a critical mentality. This means that the narrative technique as a teaching strategy on its own cannot instil CT capabilities, but if used effectively it could improve learners’ oral proficiency needed to improve language skills, especially for learners who are learning English as Foreign or First Additional Language (FAL), like the learners observed. This oral proficiency, according to Sedaghat and Baria (2016), could help learners to communicate fluently during lessons which improve their cognitive systems. The conclusion here is that there are no direct effects of the narrative/storytelling teaching method on critical thinking, but it may be effective in transferring oral and language skills needed to teach the skill.

The teaching strategies the teacher used, reading aloud and the narrative methods, as discussed in the preceding paragraph, could not incite critical engagement on their own. This means that the teacher was consciously more focused on basic knowledge and comprehension of the play than teaching the learners to think. This did not come as a surprise because that was the teacher’s plan all along, as promised before the beginning of the lessons. In continuing with the questions, the teacher asked the learners a question and because the answers he received from the learners were not satisfactory, he was forced to narrate more about one of the characters. The question was as follows:

> How do you know that Mr M (one of the characters) was committed to his Job?

This question, like several others asked by the teacher, required the learners to remember information about the character. This means that they were supposed to find information from the play that would support the fact that Mr M was a committed and passionate teacher. According to the teacher, Mr M, who was the principal and teacher at Zolile High School, was a man who loved his job. His life revolved around going to school and returning to his room which he was renting at the location (a township called Brakwater). This character was a confirmed bachelor and a loner who only enjoyed reading and teaching his students. During his spare time, he would take

a walk around the location but what he saw there made him sad (e.g. poverty, deprivation, crime, illiteracy, unemployment, starvation, and malnutrition). It was these kinds of atrocities that motivated him to do what he did, which was teaching with the hope that he could save his students from all the suffering they had to endure.

The learners were required to think, but the thinking here was that of recalling information about what they knew about the character in the context of the play, and not their opinions. There is a distinction between teaching for normal thinking and teaching for CT. The question being analysed here and others similar to it promote normal thinking, where learners do not need to be creative but reproduce information as provided. On the other hand, teaching for critical cognition would involve asking questions that require learners to think deeply about content to acquire different opinions and reach an informed conclusion based on an intensive and extensive study. According to critical pedagogy theory, the dominant pedagogy should include questions that produce critical consciousness in learners (Dauhty, 2006) through analysis of authors and content. The learners observed did not display critical consciousness of the English literary text studied. On the contrary, they were waiting for the teacher to feed them information.

To expand on what Doughty (2006) says about critical pedagogy theory in the preceding paragraph, the main pedagogical strategy teachers should use is the one that helps learners to develop critical consciousness and awareness (Freire, 1970). Since the theory is more concerned about the social structures and the activities within communities that depict the economic system/s which is based on the inequality in distribution of resources, pedagogy should help learners to be aware of these structures. The play that the teacher and the learners studied (*My Children! My Africa*!) is about such inequalities, as evident in the problems that Mr M saw while walking through the location – problems still evident in South Africa today. The teaching and assessment strategies used by the teacher here did not teach learners to engage with the story critically, but to remember information about the story, so that the learners may answer such questions during their final examinations to advance to the next level. Advancing to institutions of higher learning shows progress, but the challenge is that when learners will be confronted with new teaching and assessment strategies

while at university or college, it will take time for them to cope and adjust, while frustration may result in dropouts, especially at first-year level, as Van Zyl (2007) discussed in Chapter One noted.

One of the definitions of CT is “the art of analysing and evaluating thinking with a view to improving it” (Paul & Elder, 2006, p.4). This means that with CT comes improvements in the way one thinks. For the learners observed at Nhluvuko, the only improvement was that of knowledge about the play taught during observation. Some of the learners could comprehend the events in the story as revealed by their ability to answer those questions that required their basic knowledge of the story. This conclusion was reached as the learners would often nod or comment to show that they now understood the story after the teacher took some time to narrate the events in the play. Still, that did not mean they were critical in their learning. What seemed to be happening was that the teacher was delivering information to learners who could not see the connection between the content they were being taught and their own lives. As already discussed, the play’s message was about South Africa during the apartheid regime, and therefore it was relevant to the learners; the challenge was that the teacher could not interpret Fugard’s views critically enough for the learners to start asking questions and to think about the information. This is what Freire’s (1970) critical pedagogy, discussed in detail in Chapter Two, condemned: a teaching strategy that only delivers information which is detached from the audience, in this case, the learners. This kind of teaching and learning activity does not promote critical thinking.

In the preceding paragraph, it was discussed that the teacher did not interpret the message of the play clearly to the learners so that they could critically engage with content. This may not be the fault of the teacher as the policy that governs the teaching of English literature states that “literary interpretation is essentially a University level activity, and learners in this phase do not have to learn this advanced level of interpretation” (Department of Basic Education, 2011, p.17). It must be understood that ‘this phase’ means Further Education and Training (FET) which is Grades 10 to 12, and the quoted statement especially refers to Grade 12 English FAL literature teaching. The question is: can creative thinking (as the main objective of teaching English literature at Grade 12 level according to the Department of Basic Education) be achieved without thorough interpretation of literary content?

It has already been established that the observation at Nhluvuko involved reading the extracts from the question paper and text aloud with the learners and explaining content to the best of the teacher's ability. According to Facione (2015, p.6), explanation of content means "being able to present in a cogent and coherent way the results of one's reasoning". This strategy seems to be ideal for teaching learners CT as it involves reasoning, but what was observed was the teacher 'explaining' only the content as it was, without encouraging learners to think and reason about the information. Browne and Keeley (2003, p.7) discussed what the department encourages, which is interpretation, saying "it is a method of comprehending and expressing the meaning or significance of a wide variety of experiences, situations, data, events, judgements, conventions and beliefs". The study is not about explanation and interpretation of content, but about teaching literary content; the terms are crucial for the acquisition of knowledge, and if used appropriately, could help learners to think about what they learn. Both Fascione (2015) and Browne and Keeley (2003) posit the view that the two terms, explanation and interpretation, are useful ways to include learners in active learning, but explanation requires more listening than involving the audience in the discussion, while interpretation includes the audience by asking their opinions as well, which can promote critical thinking. The researchers also added that appropriate questions that trigger thinking and reasoning are also crucial when explaining or interpreting literary content. If this is not done, the teacher becomes the sole possessor of knowledge which is delivered to passive learners.

One of the questions from the question paper that the teacher also admitted was very basic for Grade 12 learners, was as follows:

> Throughout the play, the learners refer to Mr M. What is his surname?

It seemed the teacher was right in referring to the question as the simplest because the learners voiced the answer "Myalatya" in unison without even thinking about it. This time, the teacher did not stop the learners from shouting the answer as he did in the previous lesson, saying they "deny others an opportunity to think". This was a question, among others, set by the department whose objective of teaching English literature is to instil creative thinking in learners who study the English language as the

First Additional Language. With this kind of questioning, critical cognition cannot be achieved at all. It should, however, be understood that there was a variety of questions in the exam paper: lower-order and higher-order questions. The learners, it seemed, were more comfortable with the lower-order questions as they engaged only their memories and recollection of knowledge. This was evident in the sense that when the teacher asked the learners a more challenging question, which required their thoughts rather than their memory, they were unable to provide the answers. This was one of the questions:

> In your opinion, do you think Mr M could have handled Thami's warning differently? Give reasons for your answer.

This question is different from the preceding one. Here the learners were required to think deep before they could offer their opinions. In addition to providing their opinions, the question required the learners to give reasons based on careful thinking about the play as a whole. This means that the learners were supposed to retrieve their knowledge and use it to formulate/create an opinion based on content. In short, the question needed a critical thinking skill to relate the knowledge about the scenario expressed in the question. The challenge here is that the pedagogical strategies used during observation could not prepare learners to think at this level, which the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy illustration used in Chapter Two calls higher-order thinking. It was not surprising when the learners failed to answer this question, because the teaching methods used were appropriate for comprehension and acquisition of knowledge rather than critical engagement with knowledge. To answer these kinds of questions, learners need to have knowledge of how they know something, so that they do not only remember, but can process the information and reason about it, which is a characteristic of metacognition.

The teacher offered a lengthy narration of some of the events about the play, as follows: the comrades who called for the school boycotts were on their way to Zolile High School where Mr M was. Thami, who was one of his students and a member of the comrades, rushed to warn him about the coming crowd, but Mr M did not heed Thami's warning until the comrades arrived at the school and assassinated Mr M, because he refused to join the school boycotts and therefore was suspected to be an informer (someone who provides information about the comrades during the apartheid

era). In that narration, the theme of violence was also explained by the teacher. The teacher proceeded to ask some short leading questions to help the learners get more information so that they would be able to answer the question. When the learners still could not provide the answer to the question, the teacher decided to provide the answer as it was in the marking guideline or memorandum of answers in point format as follows:

Figure 4: Marking memorandum

Yes

- *He could have handled the warning differently by taking Thami's idea to convince the comrades that he will no longer go to the school.*
- *He should have signed the declaration.*
- *He should have joined the struggle.*

OR

No

- *What he does is right because he takes responsibility for his actions.*
- *He cannot compromise his love for education for riots and boycotts.*
- *He realises that he cannot do anything to stop the crowd, they are there to kill him and they might even kill Thami, because Thami has come to warn him.*

Source: *My Children! My Africa*! by Athol Fugard

The information provided as the answer here is two-sided: a YES and a NO. This means that there are two different perspectives, which could start an interesting discussion or a debate, as discussed in Chapter Two, since open-ended questions could provoke different perspectives. Discussions and debates are viewed as suitable pedagogical strategies to promote and instil critical thinking skills to answer questions like this. It was unfortunate that the learners observed did not show any effort to think

about the play to the level of answering this type of question. Hopefully, the revision exercise exposed the learners to the type of questions which required them to think and not only to remember information.

What is confusing about the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for teaching English literature in First Additional Language is that it encourages teachers to employ a teaching strategy (reading aloud) which, as existing literature has shown, is not enough to promote critical thinking, but includes questions which require a critical mentality. Reading aloud (RA), as literature has provided, is good for comprehension of content only. Some of the questions asked by the teacher during observation, as already discussed, were factual questions or memory questions which did not prepare the learners to engage thinking in their learning process. The challenge is that the learners observed found it difficult to answer higher-order critical questions because the teaching and assessment strategies used by the teacher did not develop their critical thinking skills.

At one point during the lesson, the teacher pleaded with the learners to read the play on their own so that they may acquire more knowledge to enable them to answer the questions in the next lesson. The advice here was for the learners to go and read, not to study to recognise patterns within text, fit details into these patterns, then relate them to other texts and remembered experiences (Colucciello, 1997). In short, what Colucciello says, as discussed in Chapter Two, is what is termed ‘critical reading’, where learners are supposed to ‘think’ about what they read in addition to comprehension and acquiring knowledge. As the lesson continued with the teacher and the learners using the same question paper and literary text, one of the learners was asked to read the last question aloud. The question was about two of the themes in the play as follows:

> Discuss the theme of communication versus violence as explained in the extract.

The wording of the question starts with the term ‘discuss’. This is one of the words associated with appropriate pedagogical and assessment strategies explored in

Chapter Two, which are regarded as ideal for teaching critical engagement with content. This question required the learners only to discuss the themes in the context of the play and not to link the themes to real-life experiences. The teacher could have come with other follow-up questions pertaining to the themes, questions that could have instituted active participation in the form of a discussion, but the focus was on answering the question, and getting it right. In exploring this idea of right and wrong answers in discussions and debates, the philosophical nature of critical thinking stipulates that there are no right or wrong answers (Buckley, 2010). What Buckley (2010) says is that even in critical discussions or debates, there is no definite answer, only ideas based on relevant data to support claims. The confusing part is that the teacher required a definite answer to an open-ended question, which is impossible because the learners did not think alike.

In the play (*My Children! My Africa!*), the themes as stated in the question are about the tendency of South Africans (during the apartheid era) to resort to violence rather than to communicate to resolve challenges. It would be proper if the question started with “critically discuss” and also ended with, for example, “do you think these themes apply to the new democratic South Africa?” In this way, the question could have incited the learners to compare and contrast information about two different periods in the history of their own country, South Africa. This also is what critical pedagogy theory says about literary content being relevant to the audience. The linkage between information from English literary content to learners’ real world can be achieved through scrutinizing the message of the author.

The proposed structuring of the question in the preceding paragraph would have been better than asking learners to ‘discuss’, meanwhile they were only required to reproduce facts from the text when they were being taught. However, judging from the pedagogical and assessment strategies used by the teacher during observation, the question above was appropriate because it seemed the learners were being trained to comprehend and recollect information, and not to think about what they were learning. The problem with teaching and assessing learners in that way is that the value of teaching English literature diminishes as learners are taught how to repeat content instead of critically engage with it.

The conclusion here is that the teacher continued to use reading aloud as a teaching strategy, which, as literature consulted has revealed, is not appropriate to promote critical thinking. The questions used by the teacher were mostly short, closed-ended questions while those questions which required learners to discuss or elaborate were also factual and memory questions. Furthermore, the teaching and assessment strategies employed did not allow learners to reach a certain personal conclusion about the text, or to achieve what is termed 'reader-response criticism'. According to Norling (2009, p.5), "*reader-response criticism* is the term used to describe critical theories that focus on the response of the reader to the text rather than on the text itself as the source of meaning in a piece of literature". This means that reading for critical thinking requires that the reader fills in the blanks in the text, and the audience creates its own understanding and meaning of the literary works. In this manner, the individual reader creates his or her own meaning of the text, which promotes variety of thought in literary criticism. What was observed is the teacher convincing the learners of the meaning of content while the learners 'absorbed' the explanations and interpretation with little questioning, something that did not amount to critical engagement. This kind of teaching can be harmful because it can result in 'brainwashing' the learners, meaning emptying what they have and filling their minds with new information, which critical pedagogy theory warned against, especially when it comes to concepts and ideologies that affect the lives of people.

7.5. Third observation at Nhluvuko

During the last lesson observed, the teacher taught and assessed the learners using the same question paper, but this time the questions were based on the text *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*, compiled by Brian Walter. Before starting with the questions on short stories, which were contextual questions, the teacher wrote, defined and explained one of the literary devices called 'irony'. The definition provided in the text was that it is where the words mean, suggest or imply more than they do on the surface (Walter, 2015). The teacher summarised this definition to say that irony implies the opposite of what is said. The learners seemed to understand the term after the teacher explained in detail, using examples which seemed to support the meaning of the term. Literary devices like irony could be found and understood through critical

reading. The teacher's explanation of the term was impressive, especially with the inclusion of examples such as the following:

> When there is clear evidence that a family is starving, and someone say they have enough to eat, that is ironic.

This is not to say that the teacher's explanation was the best in the world, but to appreciate the manner in which he tried his best to make the learners understand the meaning of the term. The example above, as part of the explanation, shows that the teacher tried to use one of the problems affecting communities, poverty, to explain a literary term. The inclusion of a societal problem in this instance is what critical pedagogy requires of literature: that it should address challenges in everyday life. The teacher further explained that in irony, the speaker knows more than he says, and that could be revealed through analysing the speaker, especially through the words he or she speaks. How characters speak words explained the next literary device taught by the teacher: tone. The idea here is that merely reading a text aloud and explaining or narrating content is not enough for the learners to master the skill of critically observing the literary devices, let alone to find the relevance of what they learn to their lives, as required by Freire's critical pedagogy explained in Chapter Two.

The information explored in the preceding paragraph was the teacher's way of preparing the learners to answer the questions from the question paper based on the short stories featured. One of the short stories featured was "The New Tribe", written by Buchi Emecheta (same story taught to learners in the class observed at Rilaveta Secondary School). With this story, the teacher started by asking the learners to list the characters in the story:

> Who are the characters in the story "The New Tribe"?

As discussed in 7.4 above, it was clear that the learners were more comfortable in answering this kind of question, where they only had to remember certain information about content. However, even in real-life situations, knowing a person's name does not qualify one to say that they really know the person, and there is no wisdom applied in remembering names at all. In literature, the characters are used by authors to tell

the story, and as explored above (7.4), certain ideas/themes are revealed through them. It would take a critical interpretation of what the characters say and how they act to know the characters and the message of the author. Some authors' messages may not necessarily be true; therefore, an annotated explanation of literary content, such as the teacher provided, may lead to, for example, a morally wrong belief. It is through critical engagement with content that learners could be led to question the ideas expressed by authors.

The next question asked by the teacher based on the story was from the question paper. The question was of a multiple-choice format where learners were required to choose the correct answer from four possible answers. This was the question.

Figure 5: Multiple choice question

Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence. Write only the letter (A – D) next to the question number (5.2.2) in the ANSWER BOOK.

Refer to lines 2 – 3. ("… you little devil you started the uproar and now look at you …") This an example of...
A. oxymoron.
B. metaphor.
C. simile.
D. personification.

The question contained other literary devices/figures of speech which the teacher did not include in the introduction of the lesson, which means the learners may not have any knowledge of the terms. Furthermore, these types of questions, according to Kerkman and Johnson (2014, p.92) "tend to focus on rote memory rather than comprehension of the subject matter or thinking critically about it". Rote memory is inspired by teaching for retention, meaning to store information as it is in order to remember it when needed. This kind of questioning teaches learners to retain information instead of transferring and transforming it to knowledge and skills which can be applied to solve new challenges. Transference of knowledge in real-life situations can only happen if learners are taught how to think about information, to seek more information on the topic and reach an informed conclusion based on

empirical data. Transforming knowledge into skills is even better because it means learners can actually practise what they have learned in the classroom. Multiple-choice questions, just like other memory questions, are meant to test/assess how much of the presented material students can remember (Mayer, 2001), not their ability to think critically about what they learn.

In continuing with multiple-choice questions, there are scholars who declare that there is a noticeable relationship between critical thinking and multiple-choice test performance. These researchers, such as Appleby (1990), Scialfa, Legare, Wenger and Dingley (2001), Williams and Clark (2004), and Yoder and Hochevar (2005), assert that multiple-choice tests involve critical thinking to get the correct answer, meaning learners need to think critically to get to the correct answer. They conclude that critical thinking skills can be taught to learners if they are encouraged to challenge the validity of the answers in multiple-choice questions by arguing that more of the possible answers are also correct, providing empirical reasons. While it is true that learners have to think carefully to choose the best answer, the 'thinking' is only about what they learned, meaning they need to remember information previously provided. Retrieval of stored information does not constitute critical cognition. The challenging technique mentioned here depends on the teaching strategies used: if they are not geared towards critical thinking, learners may find it hard to question the validity of answers. For example, out of the four possible answers, one of the learners said option B (metaphor) was the answer and the others accepted it without further queries because the teacher also agreed.

One of the questions which revealed the main idea/theme of the story ("The New Tribe"), which is adoption, was formulated in this way:

> How does the revelation of the truth about Chester and Julia's adoption affect them?

One of the keywords from this question is the term 'adoption', which is also one of the universal themes in the story. It is a universal theme because adoption happens all over the world. Before the teacher allowed the learners to provide their answers, he

tried to narrate the scenario of the event in the context of the story, meaning how the revelation of the adoption had changed both Chester and Julia's behaviours. The narration was enough to help the learners to understand and answer the question, but it was more contextual, meaning the explanation was only about the story. It was not surprising when one of the learners answered the question by saying:

> Chester was trying to be independent and he was trying to be rude to his parents.

The answer here does not depict critical knowledge about the story; it was about one of the characters, Chester, while the question was asking about two characters. This answer was based on the fact of the story, but this was expected because the question required factual information about the characters in the story. There was no connection between content and the reality of the learners, something Freire's critical pedagogy supports: that literature should reflect what happens in real-life to become a guide and solution to challenges. The challenge here is that the teaching and assessment strategies did not teach learners how to think and apply what they learned in class in their real lives. In the story, the revelation of the adoption changed the two characters' lives, as often happens in real-life. The recurring dream about an African village that Chester experienced in the story is also explained by this theory critical analysis that dreams often explain an underlying phenomenon of identity or revelation as it was in the case of Chester. As for the other character mentioned in the question, Julia, after the revelation, the author said she became 'withdrawn', which was caused by the revelation of the truth. Withdrawal is a result of conflict within a person, a subject which needed critical analysis by the class. It was unfortunate that this kind of critical engagement that links content with real-life was not evident during the lesson observed.

Towards the end of the lesson, the teacher made an effort to actively involve the learners by asking more short, factual questions like: "what other themes are evident in the story?" "How do you know that there is a theme of discrimination in the story?" The learners provided answers to the questions with ease, because the questions required knowledge about the story, which some of the learners seemed to have.

According to the literature explored in this study, knowledge of content alone is not enough to teach or promote critical thinking skills. Knowledge gained in class should be a guiding theory to apply in real-life situations or apply to new challenges in learners' journey of learning. In this way, education becomes valuable.

7.6. Analysis of interview data

As explained in the fourth chapter (methodology chapter), interviews were conducted to supplement the data acquired through observations. It was one of the limitations of this study that the teacher observed left without notice after the last lesson was observed. The principal of the school declared that the teacher had to leave to another province as his transfer process was finalised, and he had to leave immediately. The only interview conducted was with the learners who were selected by the teacher before he left. It was crucial to obtain data on the knowledge of critical thinking by the learners, to find out if the teacher ever mentioned the term while teaching English literary texts. After the question was posed on the topic of critical thinking, one of the learners answered:

> I think it's someone who thinks so wise, [who] come[s] up with great ideas.

There are many definitions of the term 'critical thinking', but none included the term 'wisdom'. The learner's explanation above means that critical thinking is equated to wisdom. This is another way of looking at critical thinking as it is associated with terms such as rationality, accountability, inference: words that show wisdom. According to Maimon (2012, p.95), "wisdom is the capacity to apply knowledge effectively to new situations". Even though the application of knowledge is classified in the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy as remembering and understanding, which is lower-order cognition, applying knowledge effectively to new situations depicts critical thinking skill and the ability to invent new things. The new idea the learner mentioned in his response above showed creativity, which is the objective of teaching English literature according to the Department of Basic Education (2011). The point here is that even though the teaching and assessment strategies used by the teacher were not enough to promote critical thinking, some learners had an idea of what critical thinking is. To verify the types of pedagogical and assessment strategies used by the teacher while

teaching English literary texts, the learners were asked how the teacher taught and assessed them. One of the learners said:

> They [teachers] read and teach us at the same time.

Another learner added:

> And he or she explains the story.

These responses given by the learners emphasised what was observed while collecting data: that the teacher used reading aloud (RA) as a pedagogical strategy, coupled with explanation and narration of content. The second response also shows that it was not only the teacher observed who used this teaching strategy, but the other English literature teachers as well. With this additional data, it was evident that this RA strategy was the one used by the teachers who teach English FAL literature at the school. The discussion and literature in the preceding sections of this chapter indicated that RA and narrative strategies cannot promote critical thinking, unless used with other learner-centred strategies explored in Chapter Two. Learner-centred strategies are the ones that put learners at the centre of the teaching and learning activities, such as group discussion and debates, with the teacher as a facilitator. On the effectiveness of the RA strategy, one learner had the following to say:

> I think it is because it helps us to understand much better when someone explains to you. It's much better.

What the learner said is that the reading aloud strategy used by the teacher is effective because it helps the learners to understand, especially when the teacher explained content. It also shows that for those learners, learning means comprehension of content, not thinking about it. The consequence of absorbing content without thinking may lead to learners' lack of creativity as they were used to being given information and recalling. They cannot think on their own but will wait for someone to take the lead even when they join the labour force. Furthermore, reading aloud and explanation of content result in learners taking the viewpoint of the author without questioning, which is contrary to critical thinking mentality. Freire's critical pedagogy calls for teaching

strategies capable of emancipating the minds of learners. This emancipation of the mind means having the freedom to think and question content which may be used to enslave the powerless. This means that teaching literature should empower learners.

The learners were also asked about the assessment strategies that the teacher used to assess them during and after lessons. This was meant to find out if there were other assessment strategies the teacher used while teaching English literary works, besides the ones already observed. One learner responded this way:

> Most of the time they do ask questions to see that [we] understand the story.

What the learner said here tallies with what was observed. The teacher asked several questions, most of which came from the question paper used as a resource for the lessons. The learner's answer also showed that the questions asked during lessons were meant for understanding of content, not to help learners to think. Understanding is crucial in teaching and learning, but it should not be the end goal of teaching; learners should be taught how to think using content as a basis so that they can practice what they learn outside the classroom as Freire (1970) suggests. Another learner said:

> We read the story, and then sir [the teacher] explains. After that he give us classwork or homework.

This statement sums up the teaching and learning practice of a typical English FAL Grade 12 literature lesson at the school, which was reading aloud, explanation and assessment in the form of class work or homework. The reading of English literary content, according to Lankshear (1994, p.22), should focus on critical literacy where "analytical habits of thinking, reading, writing, speaking or discussing which go beneath the surface of impressions, traditional myths, mere opinions, and routine clichés, understanding the social contexts and consequences of any subject matter; discovering the deep meaning of any event, text, technique, process, object, statement, image, or situation; applying that meaning to your own context". This quotation encourages speaking or discussion that goes beyond the surface impressions, which is contrary to the way in which the teacher read the texts with the

learners. The reading was mostly superficial, while the explanations included some relevant examples. Simply put, the reading did not focus on critical literacy.

In Lancaster's quotation above, the last part about applying meaning to one's context is closely related to what critical pedagogy theory says: that literature should be about the relevant events of the audience, in this case, the learners. The application of meaning to everyday events displays critical thinking skill. The surface reading observed only equipped learners with information which would be stored as knowledge, but doormat kind of knowledge as it will be useless to the learners and their context. Application of content also depends on the relevance of the information to the audience. On whether English literary texts were relevant to the learners' reality, one of the learners spoke about one of the texts and said:

> *My Africa! My Children!* Yes, it tells me more about [how] black people fought for South Africa. [The text] also made me aware of how black people used to live their lives then.

The explanation above was impressive and would have been exceptional if there was link to the learner's personal life or black people at present. However, the response showed that the learner had basic knowledge of the text. The message of the text was relevant to the learners, but the teaching and assessment strategies used focused on basic knowledge of the text. The problem is that basic knowledge can create awareness of challenges but no wisdom to solve the challenges, such as the ones suffered by black people in the story. Problem solving is a skill associated with creativity and critical thinking, which was not the focus of the teaching/learning experience observed. According to Fortino (2015), teaching literature should be dynamic, meaning it should engage students to use different strategies when solving a problem, to consider multiple points of view, and to explore with other systems. In this way, teaching and assessment move from comprehension and knowledge to critical engagement and cognition.

Another learner spoke about one of the short stories titled "Village People" written by Bessie Head and said the following:

> The [short story] 'Village People' talks about drought in the village. It's about … drought, how people are longing for water, for rain, and how they are in poverty … how poverty strikes.

The learner quoted here was very passionate about this knowledge. One of the major themes of the story is poverty which plagued the people in a remote village in Botswana. The knowledge that there are people suffering in Africa, especially in the villages, is crucial, but if the teaching and assessment of this kind of knowledge do not offer solutions, it becomes just more information to be remembered during a summative examination. In the story, the author described poverty as a second skin worn by the villagers, meaning they became accustomed to it. This is the kind of information that needs critical analysis so that it is not accepted as just information from the story but as a reality that many people in Africa face, including some of the learners.

As revealed at the beginning of this analysis, the lessons were a preparation for the final assessment which would propel learners to institutions of higher learning. Since most of the questions on the question paper required the learners to remember facts about English literary content, the prediction is that the learners will pass their summative assessment only to be confronted with other critical approaches to teaching and learning English literature in the future. The question then is: will they cope with teaching strategies that require them to think? Samuel (1995) notes that in addition to students' lack of critical engagement with content at institutions of higher learning in South Africa, there is also a high rate of dropouts. The root of these problems, as this study has shown, is the absence of critical thinking training in English literature lessons in schools.

Another learner said the following:

> The drama [*My Children! My Africa*!] talks about the education through the apartheid system, the education back then… ja…like the way the people back then fought for us to have better education

The theme of education during the apartheid regime is one of the fundamental ideas in this play as the learner explicitly explained in the quotation above. One of the characters in the play, Thami, became aware of the objectives of Bantu education,

that it was designed to suit the oppressive nature of the apartheid regime. Upon this realisation, he started to despise the education system to the extent that he quitted school and left the country to join the liberation movement in exile. The critical pedagogy theory discussed in Chapter Three declares that ideologies like apartheid can be used to control, among other things, the education system to consolidate political power against the marginalized working class (Freire, 1972). This perspective is relevant to the reality of South Africa because Bantu education was an education system designed by the architects of apartheid to oppress black people. According to Wills (2011), as discussed in Chapter One, this education system focused on manual skills rather than critical knowledge. Still about Thami (one of the characters in the play), it was revealed that he aspired to be a doctor while he was a young boy at primary school. The change in character and dreams was caused by the realisation of the oppressive nature of the then government.

The teacher could have used this theme (education) to help learners to critically compare and contrast the education systems during and after apartheid, and to also evaluate the teaching and assessment strategies used then and now, which could help improve the manner in which he teaches and assesses English literature. Furthermore, critical engagement with knowledge would have encouraged the learners to seek differing opinions on this matter to reach an informed conclusion of which education system was better than the other. The idea here is that since some of the learners demonstrated knowledge of the stories, the teacher could have built on this knowledge to instil a critical view on the learners

Some scholars, like Ghosn (2002), believe that teaching English literature in the first additional and second language classrooms has benefits in several areas such as fluency and vocabulary. To explore this topic further, literature is beneficial for language development, which is crucial since the learners observed study English in FAL. Ghosn (2002) further declares that (English literature) is a good source of language skills, offering diverse sentence patterns and passionate narratives, and therefore should be taught effectively. Teaching English literature for the purpose of language and fluency seemed to be another focus for both the teacher and the learners. One of the learners put it this way:

> It [English Literature] helps me to communicate better with other people who don't understand your language.

For this learner, studying English literature vocabulary to communicate fluently is important. It was explored in Chapter One how English literature is a rich source of both literal and figurative language. What the learner is saying about communication is vital, but additional skills, especially critical thinking skills, would be an added commodity to communicate higher-order thinking ideas. Communication competence is good, but without critical thinking skills, learners would be ill equipped for entrance into institutions of higher learning. The argument here is that the teacher's pedagogical and assessment strategies only helped the learners to acquire and consolidate knowledge about the English literary texts. Both questions (the ones asked by the teacher and those from the question paper) required factual knowledge about the stories, nothing more.

7.7. Conclusion

The teaching and assessment strategies used by the teacher seem to be encouraged by the Department of Basic Education through the CAPS, which advocates reading the texts aloud during lessons. On assessment, the policy's stance is revealed in the type of questions from the question paper used by the teacher and other previous papers consulted. Some of the questions are very basic to the point of asking learners to remember one-word information like the names of characters or places. This kind of teaching and assessment, also called rote learning, promotes remembering information, which is the basic level in the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy, which symbolises lower-order cognition. In order for the learners to reach the higher-order cognitive level, the teacher could have experimented with other pedagogical and assessment strategies that promote active participation from the learners.

The challenge with the way the teacher instructed and assessed is that learners may struggle to cope in situations where critical thinking skills are needed, such as problem solving and creativity in the workplace. In the introduction of this study, it was revealed that that the value of education is measured in producing individuals who are expected to be solutions against challenges in their communities and the global village. The lack

of critical engagement with content in secondary schools in South Africa may result in the education system failing its youth who are supposed to be future leaders.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CROSS-CASE DATA ANALYSIS

8.1. Introduction

> Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today.
>
> Malcolm X

It is true that education has become the cornerstone to securing a better future, but it depends on the kind of education learners are exposed to. The success and failure of an education system also determines the type of future of individuals, academics, and leaders in various fields. It is therefore imperative to ensure that the education learners are exposed to today is the best to meet the needs and desires of a nation's future. It is also very crucial for teachers, as they are the ones tasked with the duty to transfer knowledge and skills to learners, to use pedagogical and assessment strategies that are appropriate to achieve the objectives of an educational system. The support of parents and all other stakeholders in education cannot be overemphasised. It is, therefore, the duty of everyone involved to ensure quality education for learners today in order to secure a better tomorrow.

In South Africa, there were several attempts to improve the quality of life for everyone through equal, accessible education to redress the inequality, segregation and inhumanity that characterised the apartheid regime. The end of apartheid and its Bantu education saw the introduction of the Outcomes Based Education (OBE). Since its inception, several changes have been made to improve content, teaching and assessment in pursuit of a quality education system. This study focused on the pedagogical and assessment strategies used by teachers while teaching English First Additional Language literary texts at Grade 12 level, and whether these teaching and learning strategies promote critical thinking. The inevitable question here would be why English literature? To answer this question, it must be understood that the English language is compulsory as the language of teaching and learning. The literature section of the English language curriculum is a rich source of vocabulary to enable

learners to master the language which could be useful in the study of other subjects taught in the English language, as the literature reviewed in this study has shown.

The pedagogical and assessment strategies are what teaching and learning are all about: the means to transfer knowledge and skills using content. This means that the types of teaching and assessment methodologies used determine the type of learners produced. In this chapter, the teaching and learning activities observed were further explored to infer the kind of teaching and assessing engaged while teachers taught English literary texts. The Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), which stipulates the policy on teaching and assessing English literature for learners who learn English as First Additional Language, was also examined to determine the view of the Department of Basic Education (DBE).

The concept of critical thinking was discussed in Chapters One and Two, but it was further explored in conjunction with data collected from the three secondary schools. The perspectives of the DBE, teachers, learners and scholars on the concept was necessary as they are the crucial stakeholders in education. The first element to discuss was English literature in the context of the contemporary South African education system.

8.2. Teaching English literature for critical thinking

As already revealed in the introductory section above, the teaching and learning of the English language and literature is compulsory in South African secondary schools. According to the teachers from the three secondary schools, the content and type of English literary texts for English FAL is determined by the DBE. This means that the department determines which texts are studied, as well as the duration in years. The teachers explained that the department prescribed English literary texts in the form of novels, plays, short stories and poetry. According to the teachers, the schools are given the liberty to choose two of the literary genres provided. The secondary schools where data was collected chose drama (play) and short stories.

The choice of those genres (drama and short stories) in the three schools was influenced by one identical reason: it is easier to teach plays and short stories, and

the learners find it better to read and comprehend. The teachers also believed that it was less time-consuming to teach plays and short stories. One of the teachers, however, noted that this selection hindered learners' exposure to other literary genres, especially poetry, which the learners would still be required to study at tertiary level. The teacher put it this way:

> I feel the learners should do more of Shakespeare and plays, because when they go to tertiary institutions, they are going to encounter problems when they have to [study] Shakespeare, and sometimes they lack knowledge when it comes to poetry. Because most of our schools don't do poetry.

The last part of the teacher's response clearly indicates that most secondary schools avoid poetry in favour of short stories. According to the Department of Basic Education's Circular E35 of 2017 on drama, secondary schools may select between two texts: *My Children! My Africa!* written by Athol Fugard and the Shakespeare 2000 series *Macbeth*, edited by Walter Saunders. Of these two texts, the three secondary schools all chose Fugard's *My Children! My Africa!* The reason for this choice was that the play is much easier to teach; and that the content is relevant to the learners as the context is South African. The choice of South African literary texts like Fugard's *My Children! My Africa!* is considered a useful choice by the teachers who participated in the study because they felt that the content was relevant to the learners' reality. Freire's critical pedagogy (1972) supports this mentality because it stipulates that literature should be relevant to the audience as it is the tool to expose the ideologies used by the powerful to oppress the weak and powerless. This kind of message, if taught appropriately, could help learners to think about what they learn rather than to accept information without reasoning. Furthermore, thinking and critical analysis of authors' ideas expressed in texts is what the theory encourages, to extract even the hidden meaning in texts.

The teaching of literary works, according to the Department of Basic Education (2011), should instil creative thinking in learners. As for the approach to teaching English literature, the CAPS advise teachers: "make every attempt to read as much of the text in class as possible without breaking for any other activity'' (Department of Basic Education, 2011, p.17). The document also states that this reading should not take more than two weeks and that "it is essential that learners have a clear idea of what is

going on at the most basic level of the text" (Department of Basic Education, 2011, p.17). This must have been the part of the document which informed the teachers observed to read English literary texts aloud with the learners in class, and the reading as observed was meant for the learners to acquire the 'most basic knowledge' of the texts. Creative thinking, as an objective of studying English literature according to the Department of Basic Education (2011), is closely linked to critical thinking, but the reading aloud, explanation and narration of content the teachers used as teaching strategies did not promote this creative thinking in the learners. As for the basic knowledge of the stories taught, there was evidence that the learners acquired it as they could readily answer most of the comprehension questions asked by the teachers.

In Chapter Two, the concept of critical reading which promotes critical engagement with content, was explored. It was also established that critical reading of literary texts includes literary interpretation, which is discouraged by the Department of Basic Education because "literary interpretation is essentially a University level activity, and learners in this phase do not have to learn this advanced level of interpretation" (Department of Basic Education, 2011, p.17). This explains the reason for the reading and surface explanation of content by the teachers observed, because critical reading and literary interpretation are reserved for institutions of higher learning like universities. In addition to this, CAPS also recommend that teachers should

> identify and explain figurative language and rhetorical devices as they appear in different texts, e.g., simile, metaphor, personification, alliteration, onomatopoeia, hyperbole, contrast, irony, sarcasm, anti-climax, symbol, euphemism, pun, understatement. (Department of Basic Education, 2011, p.31)

To achieve what is stated here, teachers should engage in critical reading, which is closely associated with Freire's critical pedagogy discussed in Chapter Three. The two are associated because when one applies critical reading of texts, there is also critical analysis (deeper understanding of) content through the author's background information, the text, characters and the audience, as stipulated by Hossain (2017) cited earlier in Chapter Three. The theory also suggests analysing literary content to critically explain the hidden meaning in texts in terms of what texts say about their

audiences, meaning the people who read them. Studying English literary content in this way may provoke learners to start thinking about what they are taught, rather than absorbing information without critical reasoning.

The teachers observed in this study did not display critical knowledge of the texts, as evident in the surface reading and assessment they employed in class which did not promote active participation in the lessons. While the teachers tried to explain some of the literary devices that convey hidden meaning in the texts, explanations focussed on the context of the texts, meaning there was no connection between content and life outside the classrooms. To validate the claim here, one of the teachers observed (from Nhluvuko) asked the following question pertaining to literary devices during one of the lessons from the question paper.

Figure 6: Multiple choice question on literary devices

4.2.3 (a) Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence.
Write only the letter (A – D) next to the question number (4.2.3(a)) in the ANSWER BOOK.
The sentence 'Every African soul is either carrying that bundle or in it,' (lines 8 – 9) is used as …

A an irony.
B a pun.
C a metaphor.
D a simile. *(1)*

(b) Explain your answer to Question 4.2.3 (a). *(2)*

In the question above (which was from the question paper set by the Department of Basic Education), the learners were encouraged to select the correct answer out of the four options. The second part of the question required the learners to explain the reason for their choice. A similar question (on literary devices) was asked by the teacher at Rilaveta Secondary School, where the teacher led the learners by saying "the figure of speech in which animals and things are given human characteristics or qualities". On both instances, the learners were not encouraged to think intensively

and extensively about content. This shows that the kind of teaching and questions the teachers used were not geared towards imparting critical thinking skills.

On the idea of teaching strategies used by the teachers during English literary lessons in particular, both of the teachers interviewed did not specify exactly which strategies were utilised. To add to this, the teachers claimed that they planned English literary lessons to teach critical engagement, but as already revealed, it was not the case. For example, on being asked to disclose the teaching strategy used during English literary lessons, one of the teachers said:

> After reading, everybody will come with views and their own idea[s], and then, you know, they will debate about that. And then others will see something else, then others will see something else. And then I will come in to help as they engage.

Even though the teacher does not specify which teaching strategy he used, in the quotation above he mentions an ideal practice recommended by scholars for promoting critical thinking, which is 'debate'. According to Halvorsen (2005), debate is an ideal teaching and learning activity which can be used to help learners with English as their second language (SL) to improve language skills. The choice of topics for debate can enable learners to develop a critical perspective on the subject matter to be debated. The problem here is that when the same teacher was observed, there was hardly any discussion in his class, let alone debate. This was the trend with the three teachers observed: they would claim to use certain teaching strategies ideal for critical thinking cognition, but the reality was characterised by delivering information while few learners participated in the lessons.

In continuing with the idea of learners' participation in the lessons, the DBE states that "class discussions can be fruitful as long as everyone is involved. But class discussions that lead to written work activities serve a clearer purpose and benefit both" (Department of Basic Education, 2011, p.17). What is implied here is that engaging in class discussion when teaching English literary texts in the First Additional Language is ideal as long as all learners participate in the discussion. As already shown in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven, the only short discussions that took place in the classes were with a few of the learners; therefore, the majority of the learners did not participate. The DBE agrees with scholars such as Paul (1997), Monyai (2010)

and Van Roekel (2011), who believe that stimulating class discussions is a learner-centred teaching strategy to promote critical thinking as discussed in Chapter Two, but the teachers observed did not use discussions effectively due to 'limited time'. The learners who were interviewed emphasised that the teachers read the texts with them in class, which means, in addition to what was observed, the reading aloud and explanation of content was the main instructional strategy used.

The last part of the quotation in the paragraph above about "class discussions that lead to written work activities" is what Dallimore, Hertenstein and Platt (2004) call group discussion, also discussed in Chapter Two, where learners are grouped to work on a written task. It has already been discussed that the teachers only assessed the learners verbally, whereby the teachers asked the learners to answer questions aloud. Some of the learners interviewed expressed their desire to be assessed in the form of a written task, saying that it would motivate them to read the texts on their own because they did not have the courage to answer the questions in class. The observation is that the way the teachers taught was contrary to some of the suggestions made in the policy statement for teaching English literature in First Additional Language Grade 12. The one teaching strategy that both the three teachers who participated in the study used was the reading aloud (RA). The other learner-centred strategies, like group discussions and debates also stipulated in the policy documents, were not used.

Based on the argument here, it can be concluded that what Samuel (1995) said, as discussed in Chapter One that university and college students still show uncritical engagement with content, is true. This conclusion is not only based on what the department says about literary interpretation, but on data collected from the three secondary schools where the teaching and assessment strategies used focused on knowledge and comprehension of content. The challenge is that if teachers continue to teach and assess in this way, the intellectual freedom and the mental liberation advocated by Freire in his critical pedagogy theory cannot be achieved. Learners may manage to acquire knowledge about English literary content but fail to critically apply the memorised information in their real lives.

8.3. Assessment to promote critical thinking

In continuing with the idea of assessment or the kind of questions the teachers used to engage learners while teaching, it was discussed in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven that most of the questions were short, closed-ended factual questions. These questions engaged learners' memory, not their ability to engage critically with content. As the DBE's objective of teaching English literature is to instil creative thinking in learners, it is vital to know the kind of questions that are recommended to achieve this goal. Through the CAPS, the DBE required teachers to use a variety of questions as illustrated below.

Table 2: Examples of question types for assessing reading

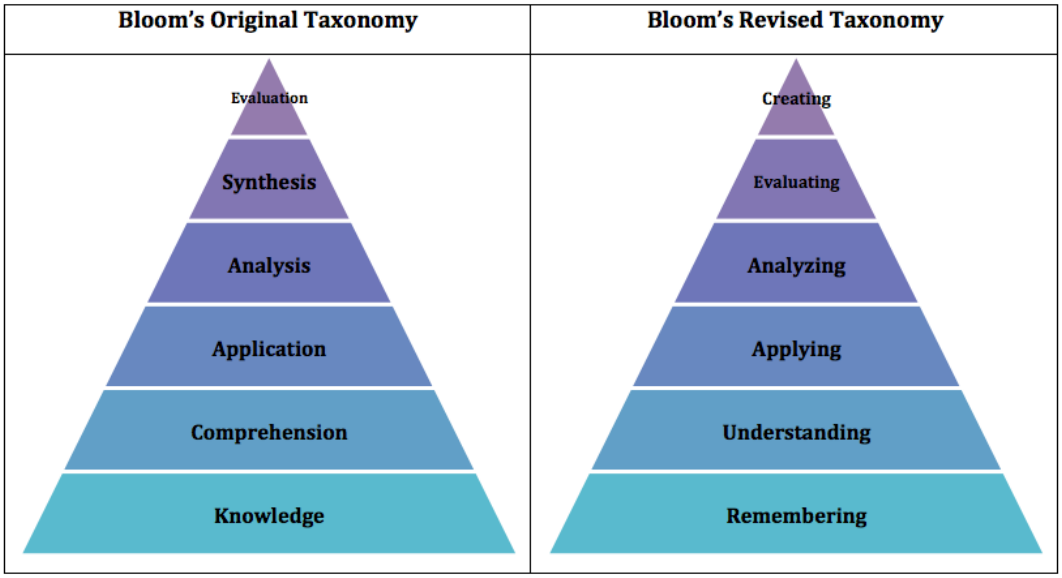
Knowledge questions	What happened after …? Name the … Describe what happened at … Who spoke to …? What is the meaning of ….?
Comprehension questions	Who was the key character …? Provide an example of …? Explain in your own words ….?
Application question	Can you think of any other instance where ….? Do you remember we were looking at metaphors – how would you explain the metaphor in this line?
Analysis questions	How was this similar to …? How was this different to …? What is the underlying theme of …? Why do you think …..?
Synthesis questions	We've learned a lot of different things about Romeo – can you put them all together and describe his character? What kind of person is he?
Evaluation questions	How effective is ……? Can you think of a better way of ….? Which of these two poems do you prefer? Why?

Source: Department of Basic Education (2011)

The classification of questions above is based on the Old Bloom's Taxonomy, as opposed to the revised one presented and discussed in Chapter Two. It should be noted that the Bloom's Taxonomy has been regarded as the recognised classification of critical cognitive levels to study critical thinking skills. The cognitive levels are classified from the lowest to the highest, from the bottom to the top. As evident from the table, the department's classification is top-down. In order to obtain more insight

into the original and the revised Bloom's Taxonomy, the following illustration shows both the similarities and differences.

Figure 7: Bloom's original and revised taxonomy in comparison



Source: The Learning Guild (2013)

As evident in the diagrams above, both taxonomies present six cognitive levels from the lowest to the highest. The highest levels are associated with critical thinking skills, while the lowest are lower cognitive skills such as basic knowledge or remembering. The noted difference is that the old taxonomy presented the cognitive levels in the form of nouns, as emulated by the Department of Basic Education in the table above. One very important characteristic that distinguishes the new taxonomy from the original one is that the cognitive domains are verbs and are also referred to as skills. According to Munzenmaie and Rubin (2013), the revised taxonomy was designed in such a way that it arranges skills from the most basic to the most complex, meaning from remembering to creating. This creates an impression that instead of teaching and assessing learners for the mere acquisition of knowledge, the revised taxonomy recommends that the objective of teaching and learning should be developing thinking and acquiring of skills. The idea here is that teaching, and learning should be practical, not only theoretical. The verbs (doing words) suggest that learners should show certain practical skills after the learning experience, hence this taxonomy is widely recommended by scholars in the field of critical thinking studies.

In analysing the classification of questions as illustrated in the table above, it is doubtful that the creativity objective the department needs to achieve through teaching English literature would be achievable. The evaluation questions (How effective is ……? Can you think of a better way of ….? Which of these two poems do you prefer? Why?) guide learners to think of content without encouraging them to use information to view events outside the classroom. Similarly, most of the questions used by the teachers who participated in this study are categorised as remembering and understanding questions, which are described as lower-order thinking skills. This means that higher-order thinking skills like creating, the highest domain in the revised taxonomy, were not the main learning outcomes. To emphasise this, teachers observed and interviewed revealed that their main aim of teaching the English texts was to prepare the learners for the final summative assessment, which means equipping learners with the basic knowledge of content. In relation to the 'preparing of learners' for the summative assessment as the teachers claimed, one would expect them to give the learners written assessment work as examinations are in written format, not just oral assessment as it was done during observation.

On assessment again, most of the questions in the past exam question papers do not support the objective of creativity. The majority of the questions, some of which were explored in chapter seven, do not encourage learners to think. For example, in the summative assessment the teachers were 'preparing the learners' for, there was the following contextual question based on the short story "The Doll's House" by Katherine Mansfield:

Give TWO examples from the story to prove that the Kelveys are poor.

The story's setting is rural New Zealand where the Kelvey family was discriminated against by the other families due to their social status, meaning that the family was poor. From this short explanation of the story, the universal themes of discrimination and poverty are conspicuous. The above question is taken directly from the summative assessment called 'final examination' which is the one that decides if the learners advance to institutions of higher learning or not. Looking at the examples of question types for assessing reading above, extracted from the Department of Basic Education's policy document, the question can only be placed under the knowledge and comprehension questions with similar labelling as on the Old Bloom's Taxonomy.

If the same question can be escalated to the next level on the table, which is application questions, the only application here for learners would be remembering information about the characters (the Kelveys) and writing the answer in their answer books. The only way that learners can be taught how to think using stories with themes like discrimination and poverty as discussed here is when the information is made transferable to their reality. The learners in this study were not taught to come up with solutions to the already existing discriminations of various forms in Soweto (such as gender discrimination, tribalism and xenophobia). While analysing the background of the schools and the surrounding communities as discussed in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, it was established that one of the elements that characterised those neighbourhoods was poverty, which is one of the major themes in the story "The Doll's House". It is not to say that factual questions are useless but escalating questions to the point where learners are influenced to think deeper about content is ideal. For example, if the learners were asked to think of solutions to discrimination and poverty, it may have pushed them to think critically about content; they may also have used the story about a foreign environment to think of challenges in their own communities.

The challenge, as observed during data collection and while consulting the previous question papers, is that the type of questions asked during and after lessons are what Fischer, Spiker and Riedel (2009) call 'content specific questions', as discussed in Chapter Two. These are questions that require learners to remember certain events in the story but fail to help learners to think critically about information. Fischer, Spiker and Riedel (2009) assert that these types of questions are vital as content knowledge may also enhance general knowledge, but follow-up questioning techniques are needed to equip learners with critical thinking skills. The intentional move from specific to general knowledge may help learners to use knowledge gained in the classroom in other areas to make teaching and learning meaningful and useful to the learners as suggested by Freire (1972) in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* discussed in Chapter Two.

8.4. Critical thinking as an ideal educational objective

There are many scholars who believe that teaching and assessment should focus on equipping learners with critical thinking skills. One of them is Barnes (2005, p.12) who

argues that “we now find ourselves in a time when learners are inundated with information, but have limited skills to decipher, question, validate and reason through its substantiality or validity. Teaching for critical thinking is therefore a necessity”. What Barnes (2005) is saying here is true because we are living in an era where information is easily accessible, mostly through technological devices. It is therefore crucial to teach learners skills such as critical reading so that they may decipher information and make inferences to reach informed conclusions based on critical reasoning. As critical thinking involves actual thinking rather than memorising, learners learn how to use their innate creativity (Freire, 1972) and critical evaluation skills (Freud, 1939) to reach informed decisions (inference), and most importantly to add their voices to issues that affect their lives.

It was this realisation of the necessity to teach learners to think that caused the South African educational system to see the need to produce independent, critical thinkers who can question, weigh evidence, make informed judgements and accept the incomplete nature of knowledge (Republic of South Africa, 1995). In a country experiencing changes that affect its peoples, politics, the economy and education, it is advisable to teach future leaders how to think at a higher level for the benefit of the state. To achieve this, the curriculum needed to be changed to accommodate all South Africans and to redress the inequalities of the past.

According to Grussendorff, Booyse and Burroughs (2014) in “A Comparative Study of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)”, the two policy documents (NCS and CAPS) have the following critical objectives in common: (1) Creative problem solving; (2) Cooperation; (3) Self-management; (4) Information handling; (5) Communication; (6) Responsibility towards society and the environment; (7) Application of knowledge to real world; and (8) Takes little or no account of current realities for learners, parents and teachers, the state of language and culture, or the challenges posed by the economy.

This information is crucial in ascertaining whether the curriculum and policies encouraged the teaching of critical thinking skills. Looking at the comparative observation by Grussendorff, Booyse and Burroughs (2014), it becomes clear that most of the objectives (1-7) are linked to the definition of the term ‘critical thinking’ as

provided by Paul (1997) quoted in Chapter Two. These objectives are aimed at producing a certain kind of individuals who are equipped with the skills listed above, which are some of the characteristics of critical thinkers. For example, being a creative problem-solver means that one exhibits independent thinking which can result in self-management, the application of knowledge in the real world, and showing responsibility towards society and the environment. All these characteristics mean that this person thinks at a higher level, which shows a critical thinking mentality.

By contrast, the eighth objective of the two policy documents mentioned by Grussendorff, Booyse and Burroughs (2014) above is different from the others as it shows a negative attribute, which was evident in the way the observed teachers in this study delivered content to their learners. There was no attempt to link English literary content to the learners' reality. Even though some of the stories studied mirrored certain valuable elements of South African society, such as politics, religion, culture and traditions, education, and the economy, the explanations by the teachers did not stimulate the learners' thinking abilities to engage content with a critical perspective. The communication of information, therefore, was not meant to help the learners to think, meaning there was no critical analysis of the authors' messages, resulting in just memorisation of content without a broader outlook. The end result of this kind of lessons is that even though the content was relevant, learners could feel detached from it since the deliverance methods did not encourage the connection between theory and reality as Freire (1972) suggests. It seemed the more the teachers prepared the learners for the final examination, as discussed in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, the more the learners tried to absorb as much information in preparation for the end-of-year examinations as well.

The reasons many scholars and researchers like Fascione (2015) believe that critical thinking is an ideal educational objective is because of the cognitive skills and dispositions, also called purposeful reflective judgement, that form the package of critical thinking. These cognitive skills are reflected in learners and individuals who show the following characteristics: interpretation, explanation, reflection, inference, self-regulation, and evaluation. As already discussed (in the last heading 8.2) above, literary interpretation is discouraged for Grade 12 learners, according to the DBE policy document. This could be the reason behind the lack of critical interpretation of

English literary texts as observed in the three secondary schools. The explanation of content as observed is not the same critical explanation that characterises a critical thinker. A critical explanation is described as “being able to present in a cogent and coherent way the results of one’s reasoning” (Fascione & Fascione, 2008, p.2). The explanations provided by the teachers observed were based on what was being read, not on inferential reasoning. There was hardly a cogent argument in their explanation of content because they repeated the viewpoints of the authors; therefore, there was no critical discussion or argument. The learners who were asked to explain concepts, as discussed in Chapter Five, also reiterated what had been read without critically thinking about content.

Another aspect that constitutes a critical thinking mentality is reflection, or what Demiralp and Kazu (2012) call reflective thinking. According to these researchers, reflective thinking, as part of critical thinking, “allows individuals (or students) to feel responsible for their own learning, to determine their own objectives, and to take part in learning processes” (Demiralp & Kazu 2012, p.17). This hints at students taking responsibility for their own learning. However, while the learners observed in this study showed eagerness to learn, they did not show the mental capacity to take charge of their learning. Instead, the learners seemed to wait for the teachers to feed them information which they received without reflecting on. Even when the teachers asked questions, the learners were not given enough time to think carefully about information to formulate answers based on reason. The time factor discussed in 8.3 above was the reason the teachers gave for the prevalence of this practice, which resulted in an uncritical engagement with content.

Still on reflection as a characteristic of critical thinking, during the interview with the learners at Rilaveta Secondary School one of the learners had the following to say about one of the short stories studied:

> There is, in the anthology of short stories [*Changes*]…there are certain stories that actually show you that certain people behave in a certain manner. It shows you different personalities. It shows you how people react to different situations, like maybe in a short story called ‘The Fur Coat’. In ‘The Fur Coat’, we find a lady called Molly Maguire, who wants to fit in the social classes, she wants to be seen for who she is, the wife of a parliamentary secretary.

This quotation shows that the learner had a vivid recollection of one of the short stories, and the explanation was ‘cogent’; it revealed a critical reflection of content. The learner also understood different characters and their behaviours, as well as what caused them to act in a certain way, which shows a deeper analysis of characters. This learner represents those who had potential to develop critical thinking skills if the teaching and questioning strategies the teachers used focused on promoting higher-order thinking. The learner’s statement is analytical, meaning the learner could critically analyse the story to the point of transferring the information to real-life situations. To clarify this, the learner said that he understood why some people act in a certain way after reading about the character (Molly Maguire) in the story “The Fur Coat” by Sean O’Faolain. The challenge is that although this kind of learners show critical reflection and inference, they are the few who participate during lessons.

Besides analytical skills, evaluation of the learning process and content is also one of the skills that characterises CT. According to Fascione (2015), critical evaluation is based on sound reasoning about content, and could help learners know how they learn. The learner’s evaluation of characters’ behaviour indicates a skill to make sense of situations based on evaluative analysis of content, which Fascione (2015) calls purposeful reflective judgement. This argument is based on the illustrated diagram below:

Figure 8: Purposeful reflective judgment



Source: Fascione (2015)

From the diagram above, the characteristics of critical thinking have been revealed and discussed, but not the benefits of teaching the skill to learners like the ones who participated in the study. In the article titled “What are the Importance and Benefits of ‘Critical Thinking Skills’?”, Rayhanul Islam (2015) provides a number of benefits that are worth reviewing here.

1. *Critical thinking enhances language and presentation skills*. As already discussed in the last three chapters, the secondary schools where this study was conducted offer English as First Additional Language (FAL), meaning English is not the learners’ mother tongue. During observations, some of the learners could not express themselves clearly in the English language, which was also evident in their responses during the interviews. The sad part about this is that those learners had to study other subjects in the English Language as well. It is believed that English literature is a rich source of language skills (Ihejirika, 2014); thus, the critical instruction of the subject could have equipped the learners with language skills for effective and meaningful sentence construction to communicate ideas clearly. Some of the learners interviewed revealed that they hoped to master the language by studying English literature, as expressed in the following quotation:

> I think some of the words…they are new to use, and they also boost our vocabulary. So, the English I think it’s in the right place, it’s understandable.

This quotation reveals that in addition to basic knowledge of the stories, the learners also wanted to master the language as they were exposed to new words from the texts. The teachers could have used English literary content to ‘boost’ the learners’ vocabulary, as the learner put it in the quotation above. Van (2009) cited in Chapter Two notes that literature provides meaningful contexts and through a wide range of vocabulary, and if taught critically could enhance the acquisition and application of critical thinking skills. The tabled illustration for literature teaching provided by the Department of Basic Education discussed in Chapter Nine (Table 4) also reflects what Van (2009) says about vocabulary teaching using English literature. Under the “language structures and conventions” section of the table, the phrase “vocabulary related to reading text” was repeated to emphasise this fact. This acts as a guideline that teaching English literature is related to teaching vocabulary and grammar for

effective communication and presentation skills needed for critical discussions and debates.

2. *Critical thinking promotes creativity*. The term ‘creativity’ comes from the word ‘creative’, which has been used in the CAPS as a guideline for teaching literature in English FAL. Creativity is the result of creative thinking, which is one of the attributes of a critical mentality. In Chapter Six, one of the learners defined ‘critical thinking’ as the ability to “come with new things”, meaning the capability to create something new. It should be noted that creativity warrants a certain kind of thinking known as higher-order-thinking (HOT), therefore the magnitude of critical thinking skills enhance the quality of creativity in learners. To continue with this argument, Paul and Elder (2006, p.22) “advocate that people’s life quality and everything they create, produce and build, depends on the quality of thinking”. What these scholars are saying is that any human activity depends on a certain degree of thinking in order to reach the status of being creative. The teaching and learning activities observed in this study did not show much creativity, and this resulted in most of the learners receiving information without thinking about it. Creativity, according to Freire (1972), is innate in humans but it must be initiated by teaching strategies which are learner-centred.

3. Good *critical thinking is the foundation of science and a liberal democratic society*. Science has been used as a tool to solve different challenges that plague societies. This fact (about critical thinking and science) is closely associated with the creativity benefit of teaching critical thinking because, to solve scientific challenges, one needs to be creative, which is the result of critical thinking. In addition, the world needs critical thinking even in politics in order to create and sustain ideologies like liberal democracy. The play which was studied at the secondary schools titled *My Children! My Africa!* by Athol Fugard (2015) is about a political ideology and how it affected the different population groups in South Africa, with learners still experiencing the effects of it. One of the teachers (from Ripfumelo) said that themes that involved politics were not favoured by many of the learners, but during the interviews with the learners some of them showed interest and were very knowledgeable about the subject. As much as critical thinking is crucial in science to think and innovate new things to improve the quality of life, it is also crucial with understanding political ideologies that shape societies. Critical pedagogy theory encourages the critical teaching of political

ideologies to the point where learners could make up their minds and associate with the ones that focus on uplifting the poor and powerless. Looking at the English FAL texts studied at the three secondary schools, the message contained covered a wide range of human activities, including science, politics, education and the economy. It was the teaching and assessment strategies that made learners' exposure to those varied themes ineffective because they were not encouraged to analyse the authors' messages to critically engage with the stories.

4. *Critical thinking is very important in the new knowledge economy*. It is true that we are living in a world where sharing of information and knowledge is becoming easier due to technology. While this 'wealth of information' is beneficial to the masses, including people in the academia, some of it needs a critical mind to evaluate and reach empirical inference. Some of the learners observed showed interest in the new information (stories) they read with the teachers in class. Even though receiving the information was important for the learners who participated in the study for the acquisition of basic knowledge and comprehension, the teachers did not try hard enough to involve them to think about that knowledge. The predicted result to this is that the learners will use their knowledge of English literary content to write and pass their summative assessment to advance to higher levels of learning without developing the ability to think critically about knowledge. It would be challenging for the learners in this study to add to the wealth of knowledge in the world since they were not taught to be critical thinkers but to accept the contents of literary texts without question.

To summarise, as Paul (1997) quoted in Chapter Two explicitly puts it, critical thinking is an ideal educational objective because it involves all areas of human existence: sociological, psychological, philosophical and intellectual. It is important to teach learners how to think at a higher level that involves critical cognition of English literary content, as it was established that English literature is the custodian of the English language, which is used in other subjects as well. This means that the critical thinking skills acquired in the English FAL literature class can be used in the other subjects. The result would be learners who exhibit Higher Order Thinking (HOT) skill that can be applied in the classrooms and is transferable to real-life situations.

8.5. Failure to impart critical thinking skills

In addition to the teaching and assessment strategies, the attitudes of both the teachers and the learners observed showed that they had one objective of studying the English literary texts: acquire as much knowledge for reproduction during the final examinations. Even though the teachers were not entirely using what Freire (1972) called the 'banking concept' of teaching, as discussed in Chapter One, their teaching and assessment strategies (as already discussed in the three analysis of data chapters) were not helpful in promoting critical engagement with English literary content. As observed, the texts were regarded as a source of information needed, which was vital to write the final examination to advance to universities or colleges, not as a tool to sharpen the mental state of the learners. For the teachers, the texts were taught as a requirement, which became a duty to fulfil the needs of the curriculum and not to equip the learners with thinking skills.

The failure to impart critical thinking skills was evident in the way the learners were engaged in the lessons, where they were posed questions that did not stimulate discussions which, according to existing literature, is one of the main instruments in teaching critical thinking skills. This resulted in the teaching and learning experience becoming teacher-centred, where the teachers delivered information to the learners who acted as recipients with limited contributions. This limited participation by the learners seemed to be a point of ignorance by the teachers who assumed that the learners were simply uninterested in the English literary content. Contrary to what the teachers said about the learners, the learners seemed motivated to learn, but again, their motivation could be based on the desire to pass matric (Grade 12) to become university and college students. This assumption is based on the fact that the teachers' only motivation for the learners was the examinations, not the need to learn and experience new ideas through critical analysis of content. This conclusion also came from interview data where, for example, one of the learners said:

> As I said before, (I'm not interested) in the two stories. So, what I do, I just answer questions just for getting marks, just a matter of taking in the information I'm given…

This response reveals that what the teachers said about lack of interest by the learners is probably true, but the last sentence of the quotation above shows that the instructional strategies used by the teachers, which leads to the absorption of information by the learners without critically thinking about it, also contribute to the disinterest shown by learners. This also means that the learners' only reason to study the English literary texts was to acquire basic information so that they could answer examination questions "for getting marks", which are points or grades to determine whether they advance to the next level of learning or not.

Concerning the knowledge of what critical thinking is all about, the teachers who participated in the study seemed to have a vague idea about the concept; hence, it was not a priority in their teaching. According to Alwadai (2014), teachers fail to teach critical thinking skills to learners due to their own lack of knowledge of the concept and how to implement it in the learning experience. This is true in the sense that it is generally difficult to impart what one does not have, as observed. Still about the concept of critical thinking, other researchers, such as Stedman and Adams (2012), declare that a lack of academic and applied knowledge of critical thinking and practice hinders students' critical thinking skills development. These researchers note that teachers often try to teach critical thinking skills to learners without sufficient knowledge of the concept and how to implement the strategies of teaching the skill (Stedman & Adams 2012). This lack of clear knowledge of the skill leads to teaching for comprehension and knowledge, knowledge which the learners may fail to apply in real-life situations, thus rendering their knowledge useless.

The teachers who participated in this study were aware of the lack of critical engagement with literary contents and the uncritical reading of English literary texts in their lessons. The reason they gave for this lack was the limited time allocated for teaching English language and literature; they claimed that the time was not enough to "really delve deeper into the stories", as one of the teachers put it. According to Wang, BrckaLorenz and Laird (2016, p.3), "instructional techniques, course design, and time commitment on teaching-related activities are all important factors that influence teaching and then have further impact on student learning outcomes". These scholars are saying that there is a noted connection between teachers' contact time with the learners and improvement on learning outcomes. The teachers' concern

about contact time may be legitimate, but according to the following table for time allocation, this claim may be baseless.

Table 3: Instructional times for Grades 10-12

Subject	**Time allocation per week (Hours)**
Home Language	4.5
First Additional Language	4.5
Mathematics	4.5
Life Orientation	2
A minimum of any three subjects selected from Group B Annexure B, Tables B1-B8 of the policy document, National policy pertaining to the program and promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statement grades R-12, subject to the provisos stipulated in paragraph 28 of the said policy document	12 (3x4h)
TOTAL	**27,5**

Source: Department of Basic Education (2011)

From the table above, both language subjects, that is Home Language and First Additional Language, are allocated four and a half hours per week. Judging from this allocation, it is clear that compared to other subjects like Life Orientation which was allocated only 2 hours per week, English First Additional Language was given ample time. The other subjects from Group B Annexure B as stipulated in the table above are Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Economics, and Management Sciences. When discussing this table with the teachers, they also brought forward the issue of the divisions in the English First Additional Language, meaning the language (Paper 1), literature (Paper 2) and creative writing (Paper 3) parts. This means that even though the time allocated for English FAL seems enough, the content is still too much to engage more fully with English literary texts as teachers are required to teach literature in addition to language and creative writing. The bottom line is that the teachers need to manage their time effectively in order to allocate ample opportunities for English literary lessons to achieve other objectives such as critical thinking, rather than simply

reading for basic knowledge acquisition. Creativity, in this regard, is needed on the part of the teachers to ensure that the learners are included in the English FAL lessons for activities that are learner-centred, thought-provoking and challenging to guide learners in practising how to think.

In addition to time management, studies have found other reasons that hinder the impartation of critical thinking skills in learners. In one study Martin (2005) found that learners who were given an opportunity to think systematically during teaching, using specific methods intended for the purpose, and working with adequately trained teachers demonstrated improvement in activities that demanded them to think. What the study shows is that there is a marked difference between learners who are taught by teachers who use appropriate teaching methods and are 'well trained' and those taught by teachers who are neither trained nor use effective teaching methods in terms of developing thinking ability. The interesting part here is the issue of teachers' training to teach critical thinking skills. In Chapter One of the current study, Mabunda (2008) was cited as asserting that it is necessary for teacher training institutions to offer some modest form of critical literacy to teacher trainees to be able to teach critical thinking skill. Based on the data collected in this study, it was clear that the teachers in the three secondary schools were trained to impart knowledge, not critical thinking skills. This was evident in the passionate manner that the teachers explained how their lessons were planned to equip the learners with basic knowledge and comprehension of the texts. It is this kind of planning that results in failure when it comes to the transference of critical engagement with English literary content.

The curriculum of the South African education system has undergone numerous changes as discussed in this chapter (see section 8.4). Despite the 'liberal' aspirations of the different curricula experimented on, it (the curriculum) is still viewed as the legal prescription to be followed to the end. For instance, the curriculum document recommends that teachers use the reading aloud (RA) teaching strategy to teach English literature for First Additional Language at Grade 12 level, and that is what happened in the literature classrooms of the teachers observed. It should be noted and emphasised that the policy document also recommends other activities such as discussions and debates to achieve the creativity objective of teaching English literary texts. The point here is that educational objectives are drafted and implemented by

departments or ministries of education and teachers merely follow the stipulations, but teachers may also choose to implement what is easier for them and ignore the more demanding tasks, as evident in what was observed throughout this study. It would be ideal if teachers and learners were consulted in the creation and dissemination of the curriculum (Carl, 2012) to add their views on what and how to teach and learn.

Another scholar, Purvis (2009), provides another reason that hinders the transference of critical thinking skills, also called 'reflective practice'. Here, Purvis (2009) makes a distinction between *reflection in practice* (the realisation of the effects of teaching during lessons) and *reflection on practice* (which involves reflection on the outcomes of the lesson). Both these phenomena are crucial, but reflection in practice focuses more on comprehension and understanding of content, which was what the teachers observed were doing: teaching for comprehension and the acquisition of knowledge. As discussed in the three data analysis chapters (Chapters Five, Six and Seven), comprehension and knowledge acquisition were vital for the learners, but the teaching and assessment strategies used did not enhance learners' critical cognition of the acquired knowledge. Reflection in practice, therefore, focuses on the transference of knowledge rather than skills, and encourages memorisation of information for retrieval in the future. This practice cannot help learners to develop higher-order thinking skills.

By contrast, the reflection on practice, according to Purvis (2009), is where teachers reflect on lessons to find out if the actual practice of instruction helps learners to not only memorise content but to think about what they are learning. This is the stage which also helps teachers to think on intervention mechanisms to improve teaching, to come up with different teaching strategies to help learners see the value in English literary content, not only in the classrooms but in their actual everyday lives. Contrary to this practice, the teachers observed in this study used the same teaching and assessment strategies, which revealed that there was no moment of reflection on what they taught, but as they repeatedly said: they were in a hurry to finish teaching the texts before the start of the final examination. The verdict here is that the teachers observed were concerned with the transference of knowledge to the learners and did not realise that their teaching and assessing practices did not stimulate thinking in the learners. There was more reflection in practice than reflection on practice.

As discussed previously, teachers may try to teach critical thinking but their efforts may be hindered by certain student factors. To continue with this argument, Mahapoonyanont (2012) explains that there are certain factors that could hinder learners from acquiring critical thinking skills. These factors include “learning outcomes such as reading ability, motivation for success, intention to study, learning attitude and emotional intellect. The sub-factor with the greatest influence on critical thinking skills was reading ability” (Mahapoonyanont, 2012, p.149). Some of the learners who were selected or who volunteered to read during lessons observed could not read very well, hence the teachers corrected then frequently. Those who were interviewed confirmed that they could not read English literary texts well, and that was the reason they avoided reading aloud during lessons. Those learners also revealed that reading or studying the texts on their own outside the classrooms was equally a challenge for them. The teachers were aware of this challenge, and one of the teachers remarked that it was the reason he insisted on reading the whole short story with the learners.

The assessment strategies used to evaluate the learners were also not designed to encourage critical engagement with the English literary texts studied at the three secondary schools. The way the teachers assessed the learners (using oral questions while the learners provided the answers) was not enough because few learners were courageous enough to answer the questions. The system of answering questions in class orally only encouraged the learners to read the texts so that they could remember information, not to think about the knowledge they were acquiring. During interviews with the learners, some of them revealed that they preferred assessment tasks such as written class work or homework that would encourage studying of the texts on their own. The challenge is that the teachers observed did not give the learners written work for the learners to get more information about the texts on their own, an activity which could have encouraged independent learning.

To continue with the argument, the learners’ critical engagement with the English literary texts was non-existent because the assessment strategy did not allow learners to think but to remember. Even though the teachers encouraged the learners to read the texts on their own after the lessons, the learners had not been taught critical

reading. The assessment or questions used during lessons focused on helping learners to gain knowledge, not critical cognition of the texts. As was shown in the data analysis, some of the learners indicated their desire to be given a written assessment task, as evident in this learner's desire to have

> a homework so that we may actually be thought provoked when writing homework and check whether we understand the…the things we've been doing in class.

This quotation is crucial because the learner used the words "thought provoked", which is what assessment in English literary texts was supposed to do: provoke learners to think. The learners interviewed seemed to understand the need for challenging assessment tasks that could instil critical thinking as opposed to the questions used during lessons. It is the higher-order questions (which the teacher at Ripfumelo Secondary School talked about) that could 'provoke' the learners to think at a higher-order thinking level. It was unfortunate that the questions asked during lessons were mostly lower-order questions.

According to researchers such as Ritzer (2011), social interactions is one of the known factors that hinder the development of critical thinking skills. By social interactions, Ritzer (2011) means the people the learners come into contact with and are exposed to on a daily basis. During the background analysis of the schools in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, it was noted that the schools were categoried as quintile 1; some of the characteristics of such schools are poverty and illiteracy (meaning the communities surrounding the schools were largely poor and illiterate). The learners who participated in this study lived in this environment of poverty and illiteracy where people were mainly concerned with daily survival, not the ability to think critically. Therefore, the environment where the learners came from itself did not encourage critical thinking or the application of those skills within the communities. Ritzer (2011, p.23) notes that "social interactions influence how people think as well as how each of the interacting parties interprets various situations. Essentially this means that mind and self are cultivated through social interactions". Thus, besides the failure of the teachers in applying teaching and assessment strategies that imparted critical thinking in learners, the learners' own home environment did not encourage the acquisition and application of critical thinking skills, making learners disempowered from the start.

Social interactions could also hinder the transference of critical thinking skills. During informal conversations with the teachers involved in this study, some of them expressed their dissatisfaction with some learners who interacted with gang members who did not go to school. This means that even if those learners were taught how to think at a higher level using English literary content, their knowledge gained in the classroom could be overpowered by the ignorance from their peers in the streets. Their perspectives on matters critically reflected upon may also be belittled by community members only interested in securing a meal for the day. As a consequence, the theme of social responsibility, which critical pedagogy advocates, will fail to materialise because of association, meaning the people learners are exposed to outside the classroom. Furthermore, due to illiteracy, some parents cannot help their children to develop critical thinking skills necessary in the contemporary global village. This is not to say that learners cannot learn anything of value from their illiterate parents, but the point is that where parents are illiterate then learners are less likely to acquire critical thinking skills from home or be encouraged to implement their ideas within the community.

8.6. Conclusion

The study wanted to find out the types of pedagogical and assessment strategies used to impart knowledge and skills to the learners in the Grade 12 English literature classes in secondary schools in the Soweto townships. The study also wanted to find out whether the teaching and assessing could incite learners' active participation and, in turn, promote critical thinking skills in the learners. The following findings were made while collecting data by observing the teachers and learners at the three secondary schools:

- The same pedagogical strategy, reading aloud (RA), was the main strategy used to teach English literary texts in the three schools. The reading was followed by an explanation or narration of content, which did not promote critical reading. After consulting several researchers, scholars and authors on the topic of reading aloud as a teaching strategy, it was concluded that the strategy (RA)

is good at promoting comprehension but not critical engagement with literary content.

- The assessment strategies used by the teachers consisted of lower-order questions which could not encourage critical engagement with content. The few open-ended, higher-order questions used were contextual, which did not promote the link between English literary content and the learners' real world. The learners also seemed to struggle in attempting to answer higher-order questions.
- Learners' participation was not encouraged by the said teaching and learning strategies, and thus the learners mainly participated by reading and listening; and at times a few of them answered the questions asked by the teacher.

The conclusion is that all teachers from the three different secondary schools used similar pedagogical and assessment strategies which did not encourage the learners' active participation for critical engagement with the English literary texts. These teachers' actions hindered the promotion of critical thinking skills to the point that the teaching and learning experiences resulted in the comprehension and acquisition of knowledge without the utilisation of reason or critical thinking.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

9.1. Summary of findings

This study was conducted to find out the teaching and assessment strategies that teachers employ while teaching English literary texts in English First Additional Language classes at Grade 12 level. The fact that English was studied as First Additional Language required teachers to use pedagogical strategies that promote critical literacy for critical learning in order for the teaching and learning practices to result in the promotion of critical thinking skills. As discussed at the beginning of the study, critical thinking skills can help learners to view English literary content as a means to navigate through life's journey as it is believed that literature reflects and is a reflection of society (Dubey, 2013). This means that the messages or themes in English literature define societal activities that people indulge in to navigate the journey of life.

In order for learners to critically understand the English literary messages they are taught, teachers need to use pedagogical strategies of a critical interpretational nature. As indicated in the literature cited throughout this study, critical thinking skills developed through effective teaching could help learners to become life-long learners as knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom will be valuable for the duration of their lives. With this argument in mind, it is pivotal to teach learners to view literature as a source of vital information that is relevant to their lives because it can move them to effect changes beneficial to humanity. This is the kind of education that Freire (1972) recommends in his theory of critical pedagogy.

This study also set out to answer the questions that prompted the investigation and collection of data as indicated in Chapter One. Through consulting the works of different researchers in the field of English literature, teaching and critical thinking and through the collection and analysis of data, the study has answered the two research questions that prompted the enquiry. The two questions were as follows:

1. What pedagogical strategies do teachers use to foster critical thinking when teaching English literature to Grade 12 learners in Soweto secondary schools, Gauteng Province?
2. What assessment methods do teachers use to promote critical thinking using English literary texts at Grade 12?

Data collected from the three secondary schools revealed that while the teachers believed that teaching English literature is valuable, the reading aloud instructional strategy and lower-order questions that they used in teaching and assessing English literary texts did not do much to help learners develop valuable critical thinking skills. This is because these strategies do not promote higher-order thinking which indicates critical thinking skill. In addition, the uncritical engagement with texts as observed during data collection could not help learners to relate content to their everyday lives. This means that teaching and learning in the public secondary schools in South Africa still focus on comprehension and the uncritical acquisition of basic knowledge. This also implies that the basic education in the country will continue to produce learned individuals who lack critical thinking skills and, in the larger scheme of things, will continue to lead lives of mediocrity. The fact that the findings from all the three secondary schools revealed a persistent lack of development of learners' critical thinking skills suggests that this problem is widespread across the basic education sector in the Johannesburg area.

This study's findings resonate with the arguments of researchers such as Van (2009) and Burke and Brumfit (2000) who have explored the value of teaching English literature and highlighted all the possible benefits, ranging from the development of language skills to the critical application of knowledge and skills for the improvement of one's quality of life. This kind of arguments, together with data collected through observations and interviews, leads to the conclusion that the act of teaching English literature is beneficial to learners. The challenge, as discussed in Chapter Eight, is that the teaching and assessing of literary texts in secondary schools in Soweto does not delve deep into the texts to ensure that all such benefits are achieved. According to the literature, learner-centred pedagogical and assessment strategies could help learners develop critical thinking skills. The data collected, however, showed the use

of teaching and assessment strategies that did not support the development of critical thinking skills. This was because the teaching and learning experience observed did not show critical engagement with the English literature texts; therefore, critical thinking was not the objective. The ideas of Freire's critical pedagogy which advocate critical analysis of the author's state of mind as well as characters' inner feelings and thoughts, adding meaning ascertained through critical reading, were not applied because the reading observed was superficial. The reading of the texts was only aimed at conveying factual knowledge, not developing critical understanding of the real world.

9.2 Limitations

The notable limitation of the study is the lack of the teacher's interview data from the last secondary school (Nhluvuko). As already stated in Chapter Eight, the teacher immediately moved to another province as his transfer was finalised before he could be interviewed. However, the observation data was rich enough to use in gauging possible responses to the interview questions. The lack of variety in the English literary texts from the three secondary schools also added another limitation: the schools chose the same texts (the short story collection *Changes* and the play *My Children! My Africa!*). These texts seemed to have been chosen by most secondary schools in the district where the study was granted permission to be conducted. It would have been educational to find out how teachers taught other literary genres such as novels and poetry that are prescribed by the Department of Basic Education.

Concerning the teaching and assessment strategies observed, it could have been beneficial for the teachers to use the ones that helped learners think about the content rather than to simply memorise what they were told in class. In continuing with this idea, the teachers are hereby encouraged to employ metacognitive strategies when reading English literary texts in order to enhance reading for higher-order learning and thinking. The importance of encouraging metacognition in reading texts is explained by Fauzan (2003) who said that metacognition, which is the concept of generative learning, has become popular in the contemporary teaching and learning of literary texts. This researcher states that by using metacognition in reading, "students generate ideas about the text and establish connections between their prior

knowledge and the existing text and try to extract something common to arrive at a conclusion" (Fauzan, 2003, p.72). This level of metacognition certainly did not happen in the classes observed as learners were not encouraged to generate their own ideas about the texts they were being taught and were not stimulated through discussions and debates to make connections between what they were reading and their everyday life experiences. The reading aloud strategy which dominated the teaching did not engage learners' thinking to be able to move them to higher-order thinking.

9.3 Recommendations for future research

As for assessing English literary content, it is highly recommended that teachers use a combination of lower-order and higher-order assessment questions during and after lessons. The first two teachers observed mainly employed lower-order questions while teaching. The third teacher tried to use the recommended combination as provided in the question paper, but the learners could not answer the questions as it seemed they were accustomed to short, lower-order questions. Higher-order questions could have encouraged learners to actively participate in the lessons, which could have also enhanced critical engagement with the English literary texts studied.

The encouragement of critical engagement with the texts could have helped the learners to link English literary content to real-life situations to realise the connection between what they learn in English literary classes and the world around them. In this way, the teaching and learning of English literature (which is compulsory) would be meaningful and effective. It is therefore highly recommended that the teaching and assessment of English literary texts be done in such a way it encourages critical engagement with texts instead of superficially reading aloud for comprehension or basic understanding. The three English literature teachers observed taught content with the sole objective of ensuring comprehension of content rather than encouraging critical analysis. Thus, there was no critical engagement with texts which could have helped learners to develop critical thinking around the texts.

Seeing that the teaching of English literary texts requires ample time for critical reading, it is advisable that teachers exercise effective time management and planning

of lessons to avoid rushing to finish the syllabus. On this crucial topic of time management, Le Blanc (2008) notes that time management represents a variety of techniques, skills and tools used to manage time in order to achieve specific jobs, assignments and objectives. What Le Blanc (2008) says implies that teachers should firstly be skilled enough to engage in a variety of teaching techniques and tools that could help them manage time for the instructional purpose of achieving specific educational objectives. The teachers observed could not show their own time regulations pertaining to their instructional sessions, except for the work schedule provided by the Department of Basic Education. This means that for these teachers, time management was in the hands of the department and not in their own hands, and they could not plan beyond what was stipulated in the teaching plan illustrated below.

Table 4: Grade 12 teaching plan

GRADE 12 TERM 3				
Weeks	**Listening & Speaking**	**Reading & Viewing**	**Writing & Presenting**	**Language structures and conventions**
27 and 28	Discussion of issues related to set work study	Literary text 15: Intensive reading appropriate to the text, for example, figurative language, structure, character etc. Literary text 16: Intensive reading appropriate to the text, for example, figurative language, structure, character etc.	Write an essay -argumentative/ reflective/ discursive/narrative/ descriptive Focus on: Process writing planning, drafting, revising, editing, proofreading and presenting Text structure and language features (see 3.3)	Formal style elements: vocabulary, longer sentences, no contractions Remedial grammar from learners' writing Vocabulary related to reading text
29 and 30	Listening to texts for appreciation and pleasure, for example, music, songs, poems, extracts from set works, etc.	Literary text 17: Intensive reading appropriate to the text, for example, figurative language, structure, character etc. Literary text 18: Intensive reading appropriate to the text, for example, figurative	Design a poster/CD cover Focus on: Process writing planning, drafting, revising, editing, proofreading and presenting text structure and language features (see 3.3)	Style elements related to written work Vocabulary related to reading text

		language, structure, character etc.		

Source: Department Basic of Education (2011)

The table above is part of the teaching plan, also called a work schedule, provided by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (Department of Basic Education, 2011). The table reveals not only a guide for time management, but also the pedagogy for reading English literary texts such as the use of intensive reading to teach appreciation for the texts. The teachers observed followed the time allocation, meaning the weeks 27 to 30 as shown in the table above, but not the other critical activities such as discussing the texts. The teachers' complaint about the time allocation for teaching English literary texts may be valid because judging from the lesson plan above, they were supposed to teach other elements of the English language such as grammar and essay writing during the same weeks allocated for literature studies. The recommendation here is that both the teachers and the curriculum planners should plan in such a way that the English literary lessons are given enough time for effective critical engagement.

As observed, the pedagogical and assessment strategies used by the teachers did not stimulate critical thinking in learners; it is therefore recommended that teachers who teach English literature (like the ones observed) come up with other methods of teaching and assessing for higher-order thinking. This could be achieved by consulting different resources on the topic of teaching and assessing English literary texts for critical thinking, for example, resources that discuss the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy on teaching and questioning for critical thinking. It would be highly beneficial for both teachers and learners if teachers could consult sources other than what is provided by the department. Such research skills could be passed on to the learners as well.

The idea of passing on skills to learners, such as sourcing information on their own, is crucial because learners may develop the desire to read critically on their own rather than to rely solely on the teachers for information. Reading for comprehension could be escalated to reading for critical analysis as the learners would use their researching skills to find out what other critics say about a particular text studied at their level. With

this argument in mind, it is advisable for English literature teachers to teach learners to seek more information on their own, rather than to tell them to read only the texts provided at their respective schools. In addition, this may help the learners to read and reflect, which is a way of thinking about information – something that was not seen during data collection at the three secondary schools.

The recommendations for similar studies in the future involve, among other things, the following:

- Research papers, articles and texts that include relevant pedagogical and questioning techniques to promote critical thinking.
- Resources that may provide knowledge and the ability to execute questioning techniques to promote CT during the teaching of literature.
- Teaching and assessing strategies with English literature at secondary schools in the urban areas.

To conclude the discussion and argument for the study, it is vital that the selection of pedagogical and assessment strategies be conducted in a manner that encourages learners to think. This is the only way to ensure future men and women who are problem solvers, as opposed to people without the decency to take responsibility for their actions. It is therefore necessary to teach literature with focus on promoting critical thinking skills so that the moral themes contained in literary texts can transform learners into better people who will steer this country (South Africa) towards a direction beneficial for all its citizens.

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Appendix A: Ethics Clearance Letter

Wits School of Education



27 St Andrews Road, Parktown, Johannesburg, 2193 Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, South Africa. Tel: +27 11 717-3064 Fax: +27 11 717-3100 E-mail: enquiries@educ.wits.ac.za Website: www.wits.ac.za

06 July 2017

Student Number: 871866

Protocol Number: 2017ECE009D

Dear John Simango

Application for ethics clearance: Doctor of Philosophy

Thank you very much for your ethics application. The Ethics Committee in Education of the Faculty of Humanities, acting on behalf of the Senate, has considered your application for ethics clearance for your proposal entitled:

Exploring grades 12 FAL teachers' pedagogical approaches and leaners' engagement with English literature to promote critical thinking at high schools in Soweto

The committee recently met and I am pleased to inform you that **clearance was granted.**

Please use the above protocol number in all correspondence to the relevant research parties (schools, parents, learners etc.) and include it in your research report or project on the title page.

The Protocol Number above should be submitted to the Graduate Studies in Education Committee upon submission of your final research report.

All the best with your research project.

Yours sincerely,

MMaseka

Wits School of Education

011 717-3416

cc Supervisor - Dr Mathakga Botha

Appendix B: Permission to Conduct Research

LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL, SGB Chair, etc.

Dear NAME DATE:

My name is John Simango. I am a student in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand.

I am conducting a research on the potential of English literary content to promote critical thinking in learners. My research involves studying the pedagogical strategies English teachers use to teach English literary works studied at your school. I can achieve this by observing teachers in the classroom while teaching, and in the process, observe how learners respond to teachers' interpretation of content. To give the study more value, audio-visual recording will be conducted, only on the participants, meaning, teachers and learners.

The use of videotape is necessary to record every detail of the activities that will take place during the observed English literary lessons. This will enable the researcher to access the videotaped data for reliable analysis and subsequent report. Audiotaping will be conducted on the teacher/s who teach English First Additional Language, and four selected learners only. The elements of confidentiality will guide this research, therefore, data collected at your school will be handled with utmost confidence, and the participants' anonymity is guaranteed.

The reason why I have chosen your school is because it has all the qualities necessary for the research. It is located in one of the townships in the west of Johannesburg and has Grade 12 English First Additional Language teachers and learners who are potential participants (subjects).

I request for your school to participate in this research, which I believe, will be beneficial to both teachers and learners, not only with regard to English literature, but with the other subjects as well. Most of the questions at Grade 12 level require learners to be critical, therefore this study may help both teachers and learners to regard critical thinking skills as vital.

The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. The participants will not be paid for this study.

The names of the research participants and identity of the school will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

All research data will be destroyed between 3-5 years after completion of the project.

Please let me know if you require any further information. I look forward to your response as soon as is convenient.

Yours sincerely,

JK. Simango

John Simango
18777 Platinum Close

Appendix C: Learners' Consent Form

Exploring teachers' pedagogical approaches and learners' engagement with English literary texts in First Additional Language (FAL) to promote critical thinking in three Grade 12 secondary schools in Soweto

Please fill in the reply slip below if you agree to participate in my study called:

My name is: _____

Permission to review/collect documents/artifacts	**Circle one**
I agree that (SPECIFY DOCUMENT) can be used for this study only.	YES/NO
Permission to observe you in class	
I agree to be observed in class.	YES/NO
Permission to be audiotaped	
I agree to be audiotaped during the interview or observation lesson	YES/NO
I know that the audiotapes will be used for this project only	YES/NO
Permission to be interviewed	
I would like to be interviewed for this study.	YES/NO
I know that I can stop the interview at any time and don't have to answer all the questions asked.	YES/NO
Permission to be videotaped	
I agree to be videotaped in class.	YES/NO
I know that the videotapes will be used for this project only.	YES/NO

Informed Consent

I understand that:

- my name and information will be kept confidential and safe and that my name and the name of my school will not be revealed.
- I do not have to answer every question and can withdraw from the study at any time.
- I can ask not to be audiotaped, photographed and/or videotape.
- all the data collected during this study will be destroyed within 3-5 years after completion of my project.

Sign_____ Date_____

Appendix D: Parent's Consent Form

Exploring teachers' pedagogical approaches and learners' engagement with English literary texts in First Additional Language (FAL) to promote critical thinking in three Grade 12 secondary schools in Soweto

Please fill in and return the reply slip below indicating your willingness to allow your child to participate in the research project called :

I, _____ the parent of _____

Permission to review/collect documents/artifacts	**Circle one**
I agree that my child's (SPECIFY DOCUMENT) can be used for this study only.	YES/NO
Permission to observe my child in class	
I agree that my child may be observed in class.	YES/NO
Permission to be audiotaped	
I agree that my child may be audiotaped during interview or observations.	YES/NO
I know that the audiotapes will be used for this project only	YES/NO
Permission to be interviewed	
I agree that my child may be interviewed for this study.	YES/NO
I know that he/she can stop the interview at any time and doesn't have to answer all the questions asked.	YES/NO
Permission to be videotaped	
I agree my child may be videotaped in class.	YES/NO
I know that the videotapes will be used for this project only.	YES/NO

Informed Consent

I understand that:

- my child's name and information will be kept confidential and safe and that my name and the name of my school will not be revealed.
- he/she does not have to answer every question and can withdraw from the study at any time.
- he/she can ask not to be audiotaped, photographed and/or videotape.
- all the data collected during this study will be destroyed within 3-5 years after completion of my project.

Sign_____ Date_____

Appendix E: Teachers' Consent Form

Exploring teachers' pedagogical approaches and learners' engagement with English literary texts in First Additional Language (FAL) to promote critical thinking in three Grade 12 secondary schools in Soweto

Please fill in and return the reply slip below indicating your willingness to be a participant in my voluntary research project called:

I, _____ give my consent for the following:

Permission to review/collect documents/artifacts	**Circle one**
I agree that (SPECIFY DOCUMENT) can be used for this study only.	YES/NO
Permission to observe you in class	
I agree to be observed in class.	YES/NO
Permission to be audiotaped	
I agree to be audiotaped during the interview or observation lesson	YES/NO
I know that the audiotapes will be used for this project only	YES/NO
Permission to be interviewed	
I would like to be interviewed for this study.	YES/NO
I know that I can stop the interview at any time and don't have to answer all the questions asked.	YES/NO
Permission to be videotaped	
I agree to be videotaped in class.	YES/NO
I know that the videotapes will be used for this project only.	YES/NO

Informed Consent

I understand that:

- my name and information will be kept confidential and safe and that my name and the name of my school will not be revealed.
- I do not have to answer every question and can withdraw from the study at any time.
- I can ask not to be audiotaped, photographed and/or videotape.
- all the data collected during this study will be destroyed within 3-5 years after completion of my project.

Sign_____ Date_____

Appendix F: Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Teachers

Exploring grades 12 FAL teachers' pedagogical approaches and leaners' engagement with English literature to promote critical thinking at high schools in Soweto

1. Which English texts do you teach and for how long have you been teaching these texts now?
2. Who influenced the choice of these texts? Were you included in making the selection of the texts?
3. What is your personal opinion about the choice of these texts? Are there any other texts you know and feel should be included as well?
4. What is your opinion on critical thinking? Do you think it is a valuable skill?
5. Do you think teaching English literary texts should focus on critical thinking?
6. Do you think the content and themes of the texts promote critical thinking?
7. Which teaching strategies do you engage to teach English texts?
8. Do you think your teaching strategies promote critical thinking? How?
9. How do your students respond to the messages/themes of the texts? Does your interpretation of the texts help students to appreciate the message of the texts?
10. What kind of assessment do you prefer to assess learners while and after teaching English literary texts?
11. Do you prepare your lessons on English literature for critical thinking and creativity as the CAPS document requires?
12. Do you think the English texts you teach contain relevant and appropriate message/s relevant for your environment and that of the learners?
13. Do you think critical thinking is an achievable educational objective through English literature?
14. If you could change anything on literature and critical thinking, what would it be, and why?

15. Do you think the English literary texts you teach addresses the issues on education, and how can this teach your students critical thinking?

Appendix G: Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Learners

Exploring grades 12 FAL teachers' pedagogical approaches and leaners' engagement with English literature to promote critical thinking at high schools in Soweto

1. What are the titles of the English literature texts that are studied in your Grade this year?
2. Do you understand and enjoy reading the texts on your own?
3. How does your teacher engage you in reading the texts in class?
4. Do you prefer the teacher to read the texts with you in class or to read alone? Why?
5. Do questions asked when readings make you think beyond what is presented in the text?

6. Do you think the English texts you read in your Grade help students (including you) to develop deeper thinking skills (critically) about the content in the text?

7. Can you think of an example of a question that made you engage critically with what you were reading? How did it make you feel?

8. Does English literature help you to understand your environment and other people's behaviour?

9. Do the English literary texts help you to comprehend broader issues including culture, environment and to appreciate and tolerate other people's views?

10. Do the teachers encourage the class to engage in discussions about a particular topic from reading the English text?

11. Do you think English literary texts help you to attain the language proficiency /ability necessary to make you feel confident to communicate your ideas effectively?

12. Do you feel confident to write your answers that require you to be critical?

13. What assessment strategies does your teacher use to test your knowledge on English texts? Is it effective to help you understand the text?

14. What is your general opinion about learning English literature and being engaged in promoting your critical thinking?