Language Learning Strategies:
An Action Research Study from a Sociocultural Perspective of Practices in Secondary
School English Classes in the Seychelles

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A thesis submitted to the Victoria University of Wellington
in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Victoria University of Wellington

2014

ABSTRACT

Research on language learning strategies (LLS) suggests that LLS are indispensable to helping second language learners learn English (Oxford, Crookall et al. 2008). However, most research studies to date have been experimental and have focused on listing certain aspects of learners' strategy use. By contrast, I have taken a sociocultural approach and carried out a collaborative Action Research project in which I have looked at learners' strategy use as "a cognitive choice and an emergent phenomenon" (Gao 2010, p.20). I have studied English language learning as embedded within social events and occurring as learners interact with people, objects and events in one secondary school in the Seychelles. I used an ethnographic approach which included classroom observation, interviews with teachers and journals, audio-recording and field notes.

Phase 1 of my study focused on current practices in three classes. In Phase 2, I analysed the data and reported back to the participating teachers. Common practices in the three classrooms were that the teachers taught students content knowledge only. For example, English lessons emphasized the development of English language literacy skills. In particular the teachers were concerned with getting students to understand ideas and facts about a topic being learnt such as writing a notice. They would also focus on linguistic topics such as grammar and vocabulary knowledge and writing mechanics in general. The teachers were seen as the main transmitters of knowledge while the students had very little voice in their learning, for example, choosing topics, purposes and audience. The students were given very few opportunities to talk among themselves about their work or strategies they used to solve their problems. Teacher talk consisted of giving instructions and asking students questions that tested their knowledge. There were few occasions where the teachers provided instruction that provoked new thinking and understanding about what was being taught.

The teachers felt that students depended too much on them for learning and wished to see their students becoming more independent learners, particularly in writing. Thus in Phase 3 of the research, the teachers and I focused on strategy instruction in the process approach to writing instruction with the aim of fostering dialogue among teachers and students about writing processes and problem-solving strategies. The analysis of findings of Phase 3 show that compared to Phase 1, the teachers minimised the practice of being merely transmitters of knowledge. Instead, they altered instruction and mediated learner writing strategies in a number of ways in a dialogic process through classroom instruction, use of collaborative

writing tasks, questions and students' L1. However, while this was a step forward in making their students strategic, the teachers were yet to emphasise writing as a more holistic strategic activity which could have been accomplished by modeling their own thinking or self-talk or strategies related to planning, drafting, revising and editing of texts. Evidence also suggests that students used a number of strategies to mediate their own writing processes. These included using their film knowledge, humour, mother tongue, thinking aloud, teacher and peers to help them create text. There were also times when a few students drew on teaching techniques such as teacher-like scaffolding questions to mediate their own and their peers' learning.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis would not have been completed had I not depended on my God, Jesus Christ, for He Himself said “without me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Therefore, I would like to thank Him primarily for the many individuals who have supported me during this challenging journey. My main guide and supervisor, Dr. Elaine Vine was instrumental in providing me the guidance, education and encouragement needed to complete this endeavour. Her gentle wisdom and constant nudging kept me going even during hard times.

My other guide and secondary supervisor on this journey was Dr. John Macalister, who despite his busy schedule was always available to provide support when needed.

I deeply thank the participating teachers and their students. Without their willingness to participate in this project a lot of what was accomplished would not have been possible.

My gratitude also goes to the Head of the Language Department in the participating school who provided support when needed throughout the research project.

Then there is my dear family— my husband Gustave and my children Ruby, Jade and Caleb, who shared the ups and downs of my research, my frustrations, and endured my joylessness on many occasions.

I would also like to thank Tony Quinn for his unfailing support with using endnote and generating literature search relevant to my research topic.

I would also like to thank my PhD Colleagues: Trang, Steve for their support and sharing their experiences during this PhD journey.

I am appreciative to have received some financial support from the Government of Seychelles that enabled me to pursue my studies. I acknowledge the Ministry of Education, Seychelles, for granting me study leave. I also thank VUW scholarship office for awarding me the Victoria PhD submission scholarship without which I would not have been able to complete my studies.

Last but not least, my sincere thanks go to Claire Naya and the Simanu family. I owe them great gratitude for being so available and providing social and emotional support.

I dedicate this thesis to my only son, Caleb Simeon (aged 8), who could not understand why Mum had very little time to play with him “Stop writing your thesis and play with me!”

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

During my 17-year career as an English Second Language (ESL) teacher at secondary and post-secondary levels in the Seychelles, I have begun to realize that regardless of the pedagogical opportunities that, I gave to my learners some would be more-successful than others. In trying to explain this difference in achievement, teachers including myself, would simply give answers such as “X is better than Y” or “Y is simply lazy or not motivated”. However, there is something curious here.

The developmental nature of my research began when I asked, myself “Why don’t all learners learn what teachers teach them?”, and “What can I do to help the less-successful learners achieve better in English?” These questions have been on my mind for as long as I have been an ESL teacher. Feelings of inadequacy worried me, as I felt that within my own practice, and that of my colleagues, we were not able to prevent students from failing. I also felt unable to help some of my lower-achieving students to overcome some of their problems by, for example, using their own strategies and abilities so as to transform their failing situations into successful learning experiences. I came to my present research with a sense of injustice on behalf of the students when they are simply labelled as “lazy” and “not motivated”. I felt that I and my fellow teachers were failing in our duty with reference to teaching English to secondary school learners, which according to the National Curriculum of the Seychelles (“Seychelles Ministry of Education,” 2001, p. 46) is to:

- Ensure that learners understand and use both the oral and written forms of English with confidence;
- Provide learners with opportunities to enjoy using English language for functional and creative purposes;
- Demonstrate confidence to communicate in a variety of situations for different purposes;
- Understand and appreciate the importance of English as an international language of communication and one that is continuously evolving;
- Provide a sound base of skill, knowledge and attitudes required for further study, work and leisure and;
- Develop intercultural competencies and promote creativity.

Through my reflections, literature search and discussions with my PhD supervisors, I realised that all forms of language could be greatly improved if we had a better understanding of not only the learner but the context in which the learning process takes place. There has been considerable research attention to second language (L2) learning with the main focus on individual differences in language learners. Language learning strategies (LLS) were one individual difference variable which gained increased popularity among positivist researchers in understanding how languages are learnt. Rubin's (1975) article "What the 'good language learner' can teach us" sheds light on the understanding of this problem. Her main aim was to identify the strategies that the 'good language learner' uses and draw on this information to help less-effective learners. In my search for reference materials related to this topic, I found that LLS has generated a lot of research from language learning specialists. These studies validated concerns I had as an ESL teacher. For example, these specialists assumed that language learning success is at least partially or potentially related to strategy use (Anderson, 1990; Chamot, 2004; A. Cohen, 1998; Macaro, 2006; Oxford, 1990) and that through LLS instruction students may develop into more autonomous learners.

However, most of these studies suggest that LLS use is the product of the learner's style, personality or hemispheric preference (Donato & MacCormick, 1994). It is now acknowledged, based on sociocultural theory that emphasises the "interdependence of social and individual processes in learning" (Coyle, 2007, p. 65), that LLS use is the by-product of mediation. Inspired by the work of Donato & MacCormick (1994), who stated that the classroom is itself strategic, my study aims to explore classroom practices that have potential for impacting strategic learning of ESL in three classrooms in the Seychelles. I chose Action Research (AR) methodology to conduct this enquiry because AR methodology is a potential tool for professional development with more focus on the teacher than ever before. It is increasingly becoming a tool for school reform which brings engagement in educational change. Hence, I developed an Action Research partnership between myself and a group of three ESL Seychellois teachers. In order to see how classroom context strategically impacts on the development of LLS, I wanted those in the role of making this happen to collaboratively inquire with me. I believe that in trying to advance knowledge and improve practices that surround a social situation such as teaching and learning ESL, it is useful to work with the people and ask them in that situation what is going on.

AR is appropriate to study LLS as it caters for dynamic change, provides research outcomes that have a high degree of relevance, is pragmatic, and can address complexity of systems. For example, the context and field of LLS is a dynamic one. I agree with McCutcheon and Jurg (1990) that traditional

approaches in scientific research do not seem to recognize the dynamic of organizational problems. AR has gained recognition mainly in the social sciences and especially in educational research where reproducible, controlled experiments are often impossible since the field has to do with real-life settings. Controlled experiments belong to traditional quantitative methods. In contrast, this study has to do with real-life institutional change as the teachers and I, who form part of the culture, seek ways to intervene to improve our practices. Cunningham (1993) observes that a positivistic research paradigm is problematic when it comes to carrying out research in real-life settings; therefore a qualitative methodology like AR is deemed more appropriate to this research problem.

In this study, a real-life problem is identified amongst Seychellois secondary school ESL students. The study views the interplay between a secondary school and the way learners and teachers use LLS in a complex and open real-life system. There are a large number of factors and LLS issues in which cause and effect are not necessarily closely linked. For example, according to Gao (2007) the sociocultural perspective to LLS may be underdeveloped and limited in size at this stage, but he argued that language learners' strategy use is not only the result of their individual cognitive choices but also of the mediation of particular learning communities. It is in this light that an AR approach can address this complexity through its holistic disposition since institutional problems, in this case in a secondary school in the Seychelles, are best understood by understanding the relationship of various activities as they interact (Cunningham, 1993).

In contrast to other research approaches where the members of the institution are treated as passive subjects, merely authorizing a project and receiving results, the participating teachers and I as Action Researchers advocate change through our involvement of the members of the system during the research process. It is with this view in mind that I show respect for the participants' knowledge and their ability to understand and address the issue of LLS which they may be confronted with.

As opposed to the many experimental studies, the few LLS qualitative studies suggest that it is problematic to view variables in a social setting such as a school or a classroom as being in causal relationships. This is because social settings are complex, so that it is not possible to control the variables or outcomes; therefore it is arguably right to suggest that one cannot convincingly study the outcomes without studying the process and its complexity (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008; Van Lier, 2004). From this perspective, if "the development of LLS is mainly a by-product of mediation and socialisation into a community of language learning practice" (Donato & MacCormick, 1994, p. 453), then as Halai argued (2004, p. 516), an appropriate research approach to study this complexity of LLS is AR because "Action Research embraces the notion of knowledge as socially constructed and

recognises that all research is embedded within a system of values and promotes some models of human interaction” (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, & Maguire, 2003, p. 4). AR is valuable because it

focuses attention on problems that experienced teachers know exist but that have not been examined systematically. Classroom experience, whatever its effects, clearly involves complex and subtle processes and many factors that can be handled by traditional formal behavioural measures which concentrate on a limited set of predetermined variables (Gumperz, 1983, p. 4).

Such reflections rightly describe the needed development in LLS research. While it is not the idea to discard systematic measurement of LLS in relation to academic achievement, I find it necessary to begin with “ethnographic work in order to isolate the processes that are demonstrably meaningful in terms of the participants’ perceptions” (Gumperz, 1983, p. 4) notably three Seychellois ESL teachers and their students. Moving in line with the sociocultural theory perspective of LLS research, I believe that AR is an appropriate research approach to study what the process of learning and teaching LLS is in each situation mentioned above, and to identify the factors that occurred from the perspectives of the participants in the process (Green & Wallat, 1983).

1.2 THE SEYCHELLES SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATION CONTEXT

It is compulsory to attend secondary school (either state or private) in the Seychelles. While the state schools provide both academic and pre-vocational education, the main focus of the private schools is academic studies. Since the 1990s students aged 13-17 years and who go to state schools have had to move from the districts in which they attended primary school to one of the 10 regional co-educational state secondary schools. These secondary schools are inclusive in nature and each enrolls 700 to 1000 students. The student-teacher ratio is approximately 20:1 (Purvis, 2004). Students have to attend four to five years of compulsory secondary education in the Seychelles (Purvis, 2004). Once they have reached the fourth year, students are given subject options to choose from. English as a second and/or first language, French and Mathematics are compulsory and are called core subjects. Non-core subjects are Geography, History, ICT, Art, Business Studies, Economics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Coordinated Science and Combined Science. The better students take their subjects at the Extended Level and their grades can range from an A* (highest grade) to a U (Unclassified, lowest grade), while the weaker students take their subjects at the Core Level and their grades can range from a C to a U. This allows a wide range of students to sit for Cambridge IGCSEs and leave secondary school with some recognized academic qualifications. Apart from the international examinations

mentioned above, secondary school students have to sit for standardised examinations that are given at various points in the educational system, for example, end of term and Secondary 3 (third year of secondary school) coordinated examinations. These examinations are all conducted in English. Students' results in these examinations determine their admission at tertiary institutions. However, students opting to do a non-academic course can exit at the fourth year of secondary school to attend institutions offering vocational studies.

1.3 ENGLISH IN EDUCATION IN THE SEYCHELLES

English language proficiency in the Seychelles is generally acquired through schools, and the medium of instruction at secondary school level is English. Teachers follow the syllabus and curriculum prepared by the Ministry of Education but they are also free to modify the syllabus and curriculum to meet the needs and levels of their learners. The Ministry of Education provides standardised textbooks and students are assessed in standardised public exams at Primary 6 and Secondary 3 and 5 levels. English is learnt as a second language and is taught as a compulsory subject not only at secondary level but at all levels of education. English is not only the official most prominent medium of instruction in the Seychelles secondary schools but it plays an important role in the media and the administration of the country in general. Influenced by historical, political and socioeconomic factors and together with the factor of globalisation, the language policy has undergone some reforms in Seychellois education. To understand these reforms, it is important to review English language teaching in the Seychelles from a historical perspective.

1.3.1 ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN SEYCHELLOIS EDUCATION: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The introduction of English language into the Seychelles education system dates back to the colonial times. The language was brought to the Seychelles when the British took over the administration from the French in 1811. Teaching in the Seychelles was done through either English or French depending on the native tongue of the religious missionaries (Brazeau & Mackey, 1992). "French missionaries set up an equivalent church-owned primary school in 1851 and primary education provided through parish schools using the French medium, remained in the hand of the catholic church until 1871" (Purvis, 2004, p. 46).

In 1940 the Anglican community organized a more formal primary education. English as a language of instruction gained more importance and became the principal language of instruction in 1944 (Bollee, 1993). By then, French was used as the language of instruction only in certain educational institutions. In 1970 it was decreed that English be used as the only principal language of instruction. French was taught only as a subject in the first classes of primary education. Bollee (1993, p. 88) stated the reason behind this change:

The reason for this measure was that it was thought to be easier for the learners to acquire literacy in a language completely different from their mother tongue and that their acquisition of English would not be disturbed by interferences from Creole in the same way as their acquisition of French...

However, according to Bollee (1993) this change did not produce desired results in the public schools. The situation was described as “nearly half of the school leavers could not write properly, read or express themselves in French or English after nine years of primary education” (“Seychelles Today,” 1985, pp. 10-11). This lack of success was attributed to the introduction of English as the medium of instruction. According to Lionnet in Bollee (1993, p. 88) “avec l’adoption de l’anglais comme langue vehiculaire de l’enseignement des les classes primaires, on commenca a enseigner l’inconnu par l’inconnu” (with the adoption of English as the teaching medium of teaching primary classes, we began to teach the unknown by the unknown). One question that needs to be asked, however, is whether the problem was with the medium of instruction (English) or with the way the learners were being taught how to learn the language.

With the change of government in 1977, educational principles were re-oriented (Purvis, 2004). In 1978 an amendment was made to the language of instruction policy. While English remained the main language of instruction, French was re-introduced to teach certain subjects during the early years in primary school.

The year 1981 saw a radical change in the language policy in the Seychelles. Creole, which was once totally forbidden in class, was introduced as a subject and language of instruction at primary school level and for teaching politics as a subject at secondary school level.

Although this change was generally not accepted by parents at first, because they saw learning Creole as an impediment to the acquisition of English and French, Bollee (1993) noted that this change was done to address the “inadequacy of the existing system” and “create a democratic system of education,

giving equal opportunities to learners of all social and linguistic backgrounds and promote a local culture” (p. 88). By 1982 a trilingual policy of education had been set up:

- That all learners entering school be given an opportunity to formulate the basic concepts in Kreol and that they acquire an understanding of, an ability to use, and an appreciation for their mother tongue, the first national language.
- That all learners acquire an ability to use English effectively, especially for the learning of technical subjects; that they have opportunities to apply this ability to the study of specified primary subjects, and that they attain a level of competence which will support advanced study or work.
- That all learners acquire an ability to use French effectively, especially for the learning of technical subjects, and that they attain a level of competence commensurate with that which is necessary for study or work in French (Bollee, 1993, pp. 88-89).

‘Kreol’ is the Creole spelling in this quote but in this review I am using the English spelling of Creole. Bollee (1993) reports that the introduction of Creole in the curriculum impacted positively on English and other subjects, but this view relied heavily on anecdotal evidence. Despite the effort to make all three languages equal, the fact remains that English was still used as the everyday language of administration. This appears to bestow upon it more power than the other two languages and English is viewed as an essential lever for success in the globalising economies. This is highlighted in the National Curriculum (“Seychelles Ministry of Education,” 2001, p. 5):

...English is a major international language involving trade cultural scientific and technological links between Seychelles and countries within the Indian Ocean and beyond... The learning of English broadens learners’ awareness and appreciation of the functions and purposes of language in general as well as enhancing their cognitive skills such as analyzing discriminating information etc [sic]. Being able to communicate effectively in English, understanding how the English language operates to make meaning, and being able to think in and learn through English, will provide our learners access to this international language of power and to the major cultural tradition which it encodes. The learning of English, therefore, enhances the intellectual, emotional and aesthetic developments of the learners.

In describing the role of English as a second language, the National Curriculum goes beyond using English for the acquisition of knowledge and recognises the humanistic value of a language in the transformation of the learners’ cognitive and personal development. The government of Seychelles, under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, has hired various external consultants and a local

national working committee to study the language policy in Seychelles schools. Two key recommendations were: (1) bringing the introduction of English in the curriculum forward from Primary 4 to Primary 2 and (2) replacing other languages as a medium of instruction for certain subjects such as mathematics (Nolan, 2008). These recommendations suggest that there is a need for Seychellois school learners to have longer exposure to English.

1.3.2 ENGLISH TEACHING AND LEARNING AT SECONDARY LEVEL IN THE SEYCHELLES.

One of the major impacts of these recommendations was to upgrade the English language curriculum in order to meet education goals. The aims of the English curriculum as specified in section 1.1 of this chapter are to develop the learner's communicative capacity so as to prepare them to use the target language for communication inside and outside the classroom. The document proposes communicative activities which fall into two broad categories:

- Functional communicative activities
- Social interaction activities

Teachers are encouraged to develop teaching materials which resemble those in real-life communicative situations. As noted in section 1.3.1, the National Curriculum highlights the humanistic value of English as a second language, which fosters students' cognitive and personal growth as individuals beyond its instrumental value in providing access to scientific knowledge in the world. The curriculum advocates a communicative approach to teaching English.

In the curriculum, it is specified that learners should develop in:

- Knowledge Skills and Attitudes. Cultural and intercultural competences related to the learning of second and/or foreign languages are integrated into three conventional domains.
- For knowledge, the focus is on linguistic competence - phonology, lexicon, and grammar.
- For the skills (communicative competence) the objectives are structured around the four major language areas: Listening and Speaking, Reading, and Writing.
- The General Objectives for Attitudes, refer not only to desirable behaviour for learning in general, but also to that which is crucial to the teaching and learning of English ("Seychelles Ministry of Education," 2001, p. 6).

These general objectives are guidelines which were developed in tandem with the change in overall second language education policy in Seychelles for the period reviewed. English language teaching changes from a teacher-centered and textbook-driven approach which emphasises students' linguistic knowledge to one in which learners have opportunities to use language for communicative and authentic purposes. The National Curriculum also emphasizes the need for learners to "develop strategies for relating these structures to their communicative functions in real situations and real time" ("Seychelles Ministry of Education," 2001, p. 38). Unfortunately, there are no empirical research studies that provide evidence to determine whether the Seychellois English curriculum has been successful in developing strategic learners. Therefore; I will draw on international research studies and literature about LLS.

The National Curriculum also specifies assessment methods and purposes for English. It introduces both formative and summative assessment:

Assessment is carried out primarily to reinforce learning and to motivate the students. It is also a way to find out how the learner is performing in the language ("Seychelles Ministry of Education," 2001, p. 40).

The curriculum promotes student-centered learning where students are supposed to take an active role in the learning process. The teacher's role switches from controller to facilitator and their responsibilities are to help students develop communicative competence and promote positive values and attitudes towards English language learning.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

My study aims to explore classroom practices that have potential for impacting learners' strategic learning of ESL in three classrooms in the Seychelles. The study has potential to look at how well the objectives of the National Curriculum in terms of teaching strategies ("Seychelles Ministry of Education," 2001, p. 38) to learners are being developed and implemented in the three ESL classrooms. It examines the nature of tasks, classroom activities, participation structure and instructional practices as used by teachers and whether these have potential for supporting learners' strategic learning. The study also examines students' participation in classroom practices. For this purpose, three classrooms with different levels of achievement in English language were purposively selected. While particular emphasis was given to the learners' interactions with the Teacher and peers,

their engagement with the tasks and activities were also examined in order to understand how they mediate their own learning of the English language. It was not my purpose to conduct a formal evaluation of the Action Research intervention. This could be pursued in future research. Instead, in this study, I embedded case studies on teaching practices within an Action Research project that focused on teacher professional development that supports strategic teaching and learning in ESL classrooms.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

My study was stimulated by two main factors:

1. There is a need for research that examines the role of classroom context in ESL learners' development of LLS.
2. There is a growing demand for more sociocultural research studies that provide valid and practical information for educators on how ESL learners learn English.

Hence, my study makes two contributions to the field of LLS. In this study, classroom context was considered strategic and integral to learners' strategic development. Particular emphasis was given to understand the role of mediation, scaffolding, Zone of proximal development and private speech in helping learners develop and learn LLS; hence the dynamic interactions between learner-learner and learner-teacher and the opportunities for LLS development were explored in three then later two classes in one secondary school in the Seychelles. Theoretically, this dynamic conceptualisation has potential to extend our understanding of the classroom context that supports strategic development.

The results of the study have strong implications for revisiting ESL instruction in order to promote strategic learning. The study was conducted in classroom settings, thus it has potential to inform ESL teachers by providing evidence of how and why particular classroom contexts either support or do not support students' strategic learning. The findings of this study provide teachers with a better understanding of how to enhance and develop ESL programs that support students' strategic development so that they can become self-regulated learners.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

My collaborative Action Research study is divided into three phases. Phase 1 explored current practices in three ESL classrooms in one secondary school in the Seychelles. Data collected in this phase helped to establish an area in the three classrooms that needed improving in order to foster more strategic learning in students. This phase answered the following research question:

What is the current state of the use and awareness of LLS amongst students and teachers in three ESL classes at secondary level in the Seychelles?

Phase 2 was the analysis of the Findings of Phase 1. This generated a collection of themes and was used to start the group process in Phase 3, which is an intervention study. The research question here is:

How does teacher awareness of writing strategies contribute to the teaching and learning processes of students and teachers in writing classes at the secondary level in the Seychelles?

1.7 THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

This thesis is made up of nine chapters. Chapter 1 contains background information on the research, purpose and significance of the research and the research questions. It also briefly describes and justifies the theoretical perspective and research methodology through which I explored the development of strategic learning in three ESL classrooms in the Seychelles. Chapter 2 provides a review of relevant literature in which I present the theoretical framework that informs my exploration of the ways teaching practices influence strategic learning of English in the Seychelles. Chapter 3 presents a brief history of AR and how this research design has evolved and been used in educational research, the different types of AR and the one used in this study. It also contains a brief account of major criticisms of AR and explains why AR is a suitable methodology for this study. In Chapter 4, I explain and justify the research design and methodology for the study including data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, setting, sampling, limitations of the research, ethical issues, trialing the instruments and rigor of AR. Chapter 5 presents the analysis of the findings of phase 1. Chapter 6 presents the AR procedures used to carry out phase 3 of the study. In chapter 7, I report on the two case studies. Cross-case analysis and discussion of the case studies is presented in chapter 8. Finally chapter 9 presents challenges of the study, a concluding remark of the study and directions for further research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the initial stage of my research, the theory that most influenced my understanding of LLS and classroom instruction was shaped by the constructivist model: the cognitive strategies approach (Oxford, 1986). This cognitive approach to teaching LLS aims to help students develop confidence and competence in all four communication skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. Although the teachers' role in this approach is to help learners develop declarative, procedural and conditional knowledge of cognitive strategies thereby building students' metacognitive control of the specific strategies, the process of this construction of knowledge has been criticized as a relatively solitary act with language learning strategies as residing inside the head of the learner (Donato & McCormick, 1994; Cole, 2007).

Challenged by my supervisors' views and my own reading, my understanding of LLS soon changed as I reviewed relevant literature while preparing my research proposal and submitting it to the University for approval. I spent time in reflection as I took stock of what I really wanted to do in this research. At that point, I knew that I needed to make a major detour as I wanted to understand what was going on in the ESL classrooms in the Seychelles. Already I was changing, and the knowledge I had from the reading and reflection was transforming my thinking. To make that detour, I returned to literature but this time with a focus on studying LLS using a sociocultural approach. I dropped my initial research epistemology (cognitive and social psychology) and methodology (experimental design) in favour of sociocultural theory and an action research methodology because they suited my ideology and research questions better and my need to illuminate data using a different approach to studying LLS. Not only did new information fill in gaps in my knowledge, but I was also alerted to a major gap that needed to be filled in the literature. The bulk of LLS research studies viewed LLS as a construct that resides within the individual (Bremner, 1999; A. Cohen, 1998; Grainger, 1997; Nacera, 2010; R. Oliver & Purdie, 1999; Oxford, 1990; J. Rubin & Wenden, 1987; Teh, Embi, Yusoff, & and Mahamod, 2009; Wenden, 1987, 1991; Wharton, 2000). The social aspects of LLS have been viewed mainly as marginal compared to the individual or intrapsychological processes (Palfreyman, 2003, 2006). The dichotomy between the individual and the social context has left the interactions between these two aspects largely under-explored (Coyle, 2007). These cognitive LLS studies did not consider the interdependence of social and individual processes in learning and that individuals develop through social interaction, which leads them towards self-regulation (Coyle, 2007, p. 65).

Filling that knowledge gap became the goal of my study. I discovered that sociocultural theory provides useful insights into the development of LLS use and the context that supports these forms of strategic learning. This suggests that activities and tasks in the ESL classroom do not occur in isolation but “are built on complex systems of relationships” (Coyle, 2007, p. 60). With this view in mind, my literature search began again but this time with a clearer focus. I began to explore the sociocultural theory of learning taking the view that this theory would enable me to examine language learning strategies as a social practice and consider students as active participants in constructing knowledge. Sociocultural theory views human activity as fundamentally mediated by cultural and textual resources and sees learners as agents that play a significant role in their own learning (Lantolf, 2000).

In the literature I have examined for this review, I have included studies involving all ages and levels of achievements of research participants. This is because although older learners can be expected to have higher level of reasoning skills and higher mental functions, still the processes involved in the development of more refined skills and different higher mental functions such as LLS are essentially the same in both younger and older learners

Throughout their life, of course human beings remain capable of learning, and the local learning process for more mature individuals acquiring new knowledge or skills is viewed essentially the same [as that of children] : (Mitchell & Myles, 2004, p. 198).

I have also included studies that have looked at languages other than English which were also learnt as a second language. This is because Vygotsky’s sociocultural framework of the ZPD, mediation, scaffolding and private speech have been used as a theoretical basis to study languages other than English in the area of second language writing with similar results.

2.2 STRUCTURE OF THIS REVIEW

This review is made up of eight major sections. The first four sections present the theoretical perspectives which underlie and inform this study: Section 2.3: Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), Section 2.4: Mediation, Section 2.5: Scaffolding and Section 2.6 Private Speech. Section 2.7 explains and justifies the change of my theoretical framework that informs this study. Section 2.8 presents my transition from focusing on LLS more broadly to learner writing strategies in particular. Section 2.9 also presents theoretical perspectives that underpin and inform this study but this time with more focus on empirical work on second language writing research. Finally Section 2.10 concludes this chapter by highlighting key issues examined in this review.

2.3 ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT

Vygotsky (1978, p. 86) defines the term ZPD as

The distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.

Other researchers have also interpreted the construct ZPD in ways that support Vygotsky's view. For example Swain, Kinnear, and Steinmann (2010) explained that it is "the difference between what an individual achieves by herself and what she might achieve when assisted" (p. 16). Mitchell and Myles (2004, p.196) saw the term ZPD as "the domain of knowledge or skills where the learner is not yet capable of independent functioning, but can achieve the desired outcome given relevant scaffolded help". Similarly, Harvard (1997, p. 40) regards the construct of ZPD as "the distance between the child's independent capacity to perform with assistance". These definitions all highlight the essential social factors, i.e. help from others or different forms of assistance such as modeling and feedback which are involved in the ZPD which are considered a "distance" or "domain" of abilities or skills that the learner still needs to learn, before reaching a state of being more capable and self-regulated.

According to Gibbons and Hammond (2005, p.8) Vygotsky's notion of the ZPD forms the "educational basis for a child's development". Lantolf (2009, p. 80) clarified this further:

The ZPD is an extremely fruitful concept for understanding and more accurately assessing the full extent of development of an individual or group. It claims that if all we know about individual or group performance is what can be done without assistance, we only know part of the picture. ...In Vygotsky's thinking to observe unassisted performance is to focus exclusively on the history of development, of equal, if not greater importance, is to focus on the future development.

Effective learning occurs within the learner's ZPD, for example, when the learner does a task that is ahead of his or her actual development. New learning will take place when support is required since the learner is then likely to be working within the ZPD (Gibbons & Hammond, 2005). Thompson (2013, pp.257-258) developed a framework based on the work of Tharp and Gallimore (1998) in which he explained four phases in the learner's ZPD as follows:

Phase 1: Where written performance is assisted by more capable others such as a teacher or more advanced peer (Assisted performance). The psychological function has begun to emerge but students cannot progress at this point without either more assistance or other contextual stimuli such as peer collaboration.

Phase 2: Where written performance is assisted by the self through the phenomenon of self-directed speech (Self-Assisted Performance). At this point, performance is not fully developed but control of the cognitive process is starting to move from instructor to learner. This phase is linked to tool usage and social interaction with either peers or between student teacher.

Phase 3: Where performance is developed and becomes automatic (developed performance). The cognitive process has now been appropriated and developed by the learner, and assistance at this point is not longer helpful.

Phase 4: Where a change in context leads to recursion back through the ZPD (recursion through ZPD). This is a situation whereby the cognitive process may have been forgotten for some reason (such as environmental or social change) and the learner goes through elements of previous phases in order to recall the cognitive process.

Van Lier (1996, p. 193) cautioned that adults and more capable others are not the only sources of help that learners use during the learning process. Van Lier pointed out that in some circumstances conversational interaction among language learners of similar level of achievement might be more beneficial than interaction with more capable peers or others. Van Lier (1996b, p. 193) explained that such interactions between learners of similar level of achievement "encourage the creation of different kinds of contingencies and discourse management strategies".

The construct ZPD also specifies that no development will take place in the learner if too much assistance is given to the learner; the task is too easy, help is given to the learner with tasks that he or she is already able to do and if assistance is not withdrawn as the learner develops his or her ability to work independently. In this study, I am conceptualising the ZPD as representing the stage of development of the learner where he or she is able to interpret the goal-directed nature of the intervention or mediation provided by the teacher or peer to where he or she is able to carry out a task

with minimal support from others. As Swain et al. (2011) stated mediation is not effective if the learner cannot recognise the purpose of the communicative moves of the 'expert'. In an ESL context, it is the role of the teacher to continually strive to open up and work within students' ZPDs by mediating in all ways possible to ensure that learners become self-regulated. Thompson (2013) pointed out that although some students may master certain skills in one or a series of lessons, they sometimes go back to their previous levels of performance in other lessons that follow. He suggested that forms of assistance, for example, models or collaboration with more capable peers may need to be repeated or used in a different order to transform learning.

2.4 MEDIATION IN SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY

Vygotsky (1978) argued that higher mental processes are mediated. Mediation is "the process through which humans deploy culturally constructed artefacts, concepts, and activities to regulate (i.e. gain voluntary control over and transform) the material world or their own and each other's social and mental activity" (Lantolf & Thorne, 2000, p. 79). As a key construct in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, mediation provides a means through which we can study the social processes which are involved in situated language learning and use (Cumming, 1989).

I use the term mediation to refer to the spoken and written activities, including the use of physical tools, that mediate one's own or others' learning in the dialogic interaction between teacher and student(s) in activities (spoken or written) in which the teacher and student(s) engage(s). Vygotsky (1978) identified three main classes of mediators: material tools, symbolic psychological tools and other human beings. In the following sections, I will look at each of these classes of mediators in turn.

2.4.1 MATERIAL TOOLS

Lantolf and Thorne (2009) made clear that material tools are concrete artefacts or physical objects. The term "tool" has been used interchangeably with "artefact" (John-Steiner, 2000; Moll, 1989). Lantolf (2000) explained that humans do not act on the physical world directly but rather make use of physical tools and labour activities. The physical tools are directed at the processes in nature which can only have an indirect influence on human psychological processes. Material resources in the form of objects such as textbooks, visual materials, blackboard and the media have potential to mediate strategic activities in the ESL classroom. Material tools which put new demands on human mental processes

(Kozulin & Pressein, 1995) do not exist as individual implements; they presuppose collective use, interpersonal communication and symbolic representation. This symbolic aspect of tool-mediated activity gives rise to a new and important class of mediators that Vygotsky (1978) designated *psychological tools*.

2.4.2 SYMBOLIC PSYCHOLOGICAL TOOLS

Lantolf (2000) explained that humans use symbolic tools or signs, known as psychological tools, to regulate their relationships with others which in turn change the nature of these relationships. Kozulin (2001, p. 1) defines psychological tools as “symbolic artefacts – signs, symbols, texts, formulae, graphic-symbolic devices – that help individuals master their own psychological functions like memory, perception, and attention in ways appropriate to our cultures”. As opposed to material tools which are directed at objects in nature, psychological tools mediate humans’ psychological processes. Psychological tools are also referred to as artefacts (Lantolf & Thorne, 2000). These higher-order symbolic mediators include natural and artificial language as well as discourses and cultural symbolic systems of different epochs and nations (Kozulin & Pressein, 1995).

For Vygotsky, language is the main vehicle of thought. Jones (2009, p. 167) concurred with Vygotsky’s view that “language (‘speech’) has a pivotal role to play in the emergence of distinctively human forms of thinking and actions in the child”. Gibbons (2003) also agreed with Vygotsky that human activities are most extensively mediated by language. In one particular illustrative qualitative study, Gibbons (2003) collected data from two classes of 9 and 10 year olds in an urban Australian school in a poor socio-economic area. At the time of the study, 92% of the learners spoke languages other than English. Gibbon’s aim was to identify the factors in science classroom discourse that enabled or constrained language development and to theorise through instances of language teaching in situ. Results offered support for language as the primary mediating tool. A key finding in this study was that the two participating teachers in the study, through their interactions with students, mediated between the students’ current linguistic levels of English and their understanding of the science lesson. The study suggests that language is the semiotic tool mediating the learning process in which learners in collaboration with more able individuals socially construct knowledge.

Donato and MacCormick (1994) conducted one of the first LLS studies using a sociocultural theory framework. They collected data from a fifth-semester French conversation course at the University of Pittsburgh. By drawing on activity theory, which argues that “the focus of inquiry on human psychological functioning must extend beyond the individual” (Donato & MacCormick, 1994, p. 454-

455) and the concept of mediation, they reconfigured the sociocultural context of the study classroom by asking students to keep a working portfolio of their language development. They then investigated the subsequent changes that occurred in the students' strategy use. The students were not given specific guidelines about what they would include and submit in their portfolios. The researchers found that the students developed strategies through four iterative stages at various times throughout one semester. First, they identified areas for improvement. Second, they set goals. Third, they implemented self-selected strategies or specific plans of action and fourth they connected to or reflected on past performance. As the students' use of the portfolio progressed, the students became increasingly focused and specific in the development of goals and strategy use.

Donato and MacCormick concluded that the students' success in identifying, refining and developing their own strategies can be attributed to two main mediators: their sociocultural milieu and the use of the portfolio, and that sociocultural theory "is a robust framework for investigating and explaining the development and use of strategies" (p. 462). Their study has four main implications:

- A reappraisal of what is meant by 'strategy training';
- The importance of establishing dialogic and reflective communities of language learning practice;
- The inclusion of mediation as a critical variable in the development of strategic learning; and
- Adopting a genetic research approach for capturing the emergence and restructuring of strategies (p. 462).

In a longitudinal foreign language classroom research study in state comprehensive schools in the UK, Coyle (2007) explored the role which the social context of learning plays in the development of learner strategies. Data consisted of field notes (teacher and researchers), video-recorded lessons, digital compilation of video extracts, audio-recorded and transcribed reflective discussions between teacher and researchers, lesson plans, evaluations and students' work. The findings suggest that an alternative starting point for exploring learner strategy development is to focus on the macro-level: a learning environment which enables teachers and learners to be more aware of the context-embedded strategies that will inform and support individual learner strategies. Evidence is presented which suggests that learner strategies can be conceptualized as 'by-products' of mediation and social activity in a learning community. The conclusion drawn is not one of 'cause and effect' but rather that a combined approach to learner strategies at both macro- (learning context) and micro- (individual) levels has powerful potential which merits further research.

Tools, whether symbolic or material, are created by humans under specific cultural and historical conditions, and hence carry with them the characteristics of the culture in question. Humans use tools to solve their problems, which could not be solved in the same way if those tools were not available. In turn, tools have reciprocal influence on the individuals who use them. They change the ways the individuals think and do things. Tools are also modified as they are passed from one generation to the next. Each generation reworks them in order to meet their specific needs, aspirations, individuals and communities (Kozulin & Pressein, 1995).

ESL learners need to be systematically introduced to the symbolic systems that serve as tools in their work and learning materials (Kozulin, 2002). However, Kozulin (2002) stated that a common practice in regular education is that the interweaving of content materials and the acquisition of symbolic tools often obscure the role of psychological tools. This usually happens when a wide range of symbolic tools is not available in the native culture of the learner or when specific handicaps of a learner interfere with the appropriation of symbolic tools available to others (p. 21). From this perspective, it can be argued that learners' strategic development not only depends on how they use these resources but also to a large extent on the availability and accessibility of material and cultural artefacts.

2.4.3 OTHER HUMAN BEINGS

In addition to material and symbolic tools, another mediator is the human mediator. Kozulin and Pressein (1995) explained that Vygotsky saw mediation through another individual in two possible approaches. The first one is expressed in the famous statement "every child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later on the individual level; first between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological)" (Kozulin & Pressein, 1995, p. 69). In the ESL classroom, the teacher is seen as the main human mediator who constructs meaning jointly with the learners. At the initial stage of learning, the learner depends on the teacher. Most of the time, it is the teacher who initiates the learner's actions by instructing him/her what to do, how to do and what not to do. The teacher as representative of school culture is the instrument through which the culture is passed to the learner. These instructions are actualized primarily through language. As stated earlier, according to Vygotsky learning first begins on an interpsychological plane meaning the learner acquires his knowledge through contacts and interactions with other people. On the intrapsychological plane, the learner then later assimilates and internalizes this knowledge by adding his/her values to it. In an ESL classroom this suggests that learners do not simply copy their teacher's capabilities but they also transform what the teacher offers them during the process of appropriation (Choul Turuk, 2008, p. 246).

The second approach has to do with the role of the human mediator whereby mediation through another individual was closely linked to the notion of symbolic function in Vygotsky's theory. The human mediator appeared first as a carrier of signs, symbols, and meanings. According to Kozulin (1995), Vygotsky did not elaborate on the activities of human mediators beyond their use of symbolic tools. This concept of human mediators was taken up by Feuerstein (1990), who further explored the role of human mediators through his work on mediated learning experience (MLE). Feuerstein (1990) explained that mediated learning is the interaction between human beings and their social environment. MLE occurs when another human being (e.g. caregiver, parent, teacher, and peer) interposes him or herself between the stimuli, for example homework, test tasks, or the students' response to the stimuli and the student with the intention of mediating the stimuli or response to the student. Feuerstein went on to explain that when the mediator problematises the stimuli, he or she intends to bring to the students' attention the teaching and learning aspect of the stimuli. He cautions that inadequate MLE leads to underdeveloped or sometimes impaired cognitive functions.

The concept of mediated learning highlights the importance of human beings as social agents, and important mediators in strategic learning in the ESL classroom. For example, teachers are likely to activate the materials and artefacts to mediate language learners' thinking and strategy use; hence they influence the development of learners' strategy use. Teachers not only mediate discourses to students but they also provide support and assistance which are crucial for "learners' engagement in acquiring linguistic competence" (Gao, 2010, p. 22). Students in turn interact with teachers as they seek assistance and support in their language learning and strategy use. Students also develop knowledge about strategy use and learning in general through social interactions with their peers. One way of promoting this social interaction among learners in the English language class is to involve them in collaborative or group language learning activities. This gives the students opportunities to share decision-making and responsibility. ESL teachers should not be viewed as merely knowledge providers, but should consider the needs, affective status (e.g. confidence or anxiety) of the learners during the mediation experience and aim to empower the learners with the necessary strategies that help them become self-directed learners.

Showing support for social mediation in learning, Lantolf (2000) conducted a comprehensive review of the research on second language learning as a mediated process. He found that the bulk of the research carried out on mediated learning and teaching focuses on social mediation. He also identified three main strands within the social mediation research: experts (e.g. teachers) and novices (students); comparative study of different mediating behaviours across classroom settings; and peer mediation.

In short, Vygotsky's interpretation of the construct of mediation shows the importance of mediated learning which is not only mediated through developing use and control of psychological tools such as language, but that also relies on interaction and shared processes. It is important to note that socially mediated processes involve individual and social aspects which can be applied to second language learning, by considering students as active learners who learn to control the use of tools as they engage in processes of interacting and co-constructing knowledge and experiences with others.

2.5 SCAFFOLDING

A third important construct of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is scaffolding. Scaffolding as a metaphor for the support offered by teachers to learners and learner to learner is often used in conjunction with the sociocultural constructs of the ZPD and mediation. The term scaffolding puts emphasis on the structure or guidance that a more experienced person provides in interaction so that a novice can extend to higher levels of achievement. With reference to the construct of scaffolding, assisted performance, involves not simply helping to do but helping to know how to do (Gibbons, 2003). In investigating social interaction between mothers and young children, Bruner (1996, p. 60) went on to define scaffolding as:

A process of "setting up" the situation to make the child's entry easy and successful and then gradually pulling back and handing the role to the child as he becomes skilled enough to manage it.

The construct of scaffolding closely related to the ZPD shows the dynamism of working within the ZPD. The scaffolding that learners obtain within the ZPD helps to construct the zone during the learning process which leads the learner to self-regulate his or her own learning. Applying this to an ESL classroom context, scaffolding is an instructional structure whereby the teacher models the desired learning strategy or task then gradually shifts responsibility to the learners. The teacher creates supportive conditions that foster the effective use of LLS in learners.

By drawing on the work of Mariani (1997), Gibbons and Hammond (2005, p. 9) pointed out what they saw as the crucial nature of teacher support and went on to describe what constitutes effective and ineffective classroom:

Effective classroom is one where there is both high challenge and high support for students. Ineffective classrooms are those where there is high challenge but inadequate support (resulting in learner frustration), low challenge but high support ('feel good' classrooms where students operate in their comfort zones but where little learning occurs), and low challenge and low support (classrooms where boredom sets in and where behavioural problems are likely outcome).

Gibbons and Hammond (2005) concluded that scaffolding is more likely to take place in classrooms with high challenge and high support. In this situation students are likely to work within their ZPD.

Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976, p. 98) offered six features of successful scaffolding that can be applied to help learners in various learning contexts: (1) recruiting the tutee's interest in the task; (2) reducing the degree of freedom in the task so that the tutee can manage the task; (3) maintaining goal direction; (4) marking critical features; (5) controlling frustration; and (6) modeling solutions to the task. Teachers apply these features in social interaction. In turn, learners extend their learning in order to reach higher levels of competence. Schwieter (2010, p. 34) summarized Lidz's (1991) extension to Wood et al.'s criteria of successful scaffolding as follows:

- Influence the learner's actions through interaction, engagement of attention, and goals.
- Highlight important aspects, mark relevant differences, and elaborate detailed information.
- Draw on the learner's past experiences and potential future ones.
- Visualize the learner's work through his/her eyes.
- Share experiences that may stimulate new ideas.
- Manipulate the task to facilitate problem solving and induce strategic thinking.
- Encourage the learner that he/she has done something good to boost self-esteem.
- Challenge the learner within but not beyond his/her ZPD.
- Remember that the learning experience is the learner's not the expert's to avoid competition.
- Be familiar with the learner's behavior and respond to it appropriately.
- Give the learner a sense of caring and enjoyment in the task.
- Find areas of improvement and communicate them to the learner.

Choul Turuk (2008, p. 252) listed the advantages of scaffolded instruction as follows:

- It provides clear directions for students.
- It clarifies purpose of the task.
- It keeps students on task.
- It offers assessment to clarify expectations.
- It points students to worthy sources.
- It reduces uncertainty, surprise and disappointment.
- It delivers efficiency.
- It creates momentum.

Englert et al. (2008) explained how learning can be scaffolded through use of procedural facilitators. Procedural facilitators are questions, prompts, or simply outlines of important structures that teachers use to assist learners to emulate the performance of expert writers (Baker, Gertsen, & Scanlon, 2002; Berieter & Scardamalia, 1987). These procedural facilitators provide a common language for discussing the cognitive task or activity. They provide learners with a 'plan of action' which helps them to do the tasks and a system for providing ongoing feedback and support. The 'plan of action' addresses the learners' need for help with organization and structure (Kolligian & Sternberg, 1987). Englert, et al. (2008) stated that procedural facilitators are an important pedagogical principle which helps support ESL learner' cognitive performance before they are asked to work independently. Englert, et al. (2008, p. 211) stated that "procedural facilitation can scaffold performance by reminding students of procedural steps, perspectives, tools, or higher order strategies that they can self-employ to plan, monitor, or revise their texts".

A number of studies have illustrated the role of procedural facilitators in supporting writing performance (Danoff, Harris, & Graham, 1990; De La Paz & Graham, 1997, 2002; Englert, 1992; Englert, Mariage, & Dunsmore, 2008; Englert et al., 1991). For example, in the study of Englert et al. (1991) Cognitive Strategy Instruction in Writing (CSIW) was a research programme that emphasised the use of procedural facilitators in supporting writing performance. The study evaluated the effectiveness of the CSIW, which had the aim of developing students' knowledge of the writing process and the role of expository text structures. The study involved upper elementary and secondary grade students and their teachers in regular and special education classrooms in the USA. In addition to teachers' emphasis on thinking aloud and modeling the strategies and inner talk related to the processes of writing (e.g. planning, organising, writing, editing, and revision), the teachers supported the students' writing of expository texts by giving students three different types of procedural facilitators: mnemonic,

think-sheets and graphic-organisers. (1) The teachers used the mnemonic POWER to remind students of the writing process (plan-organize-write-edit-revise). (2) The teachers gave students 'think-sheets' to externalize the self-talk, and key language that had been modeled to support and prompt students at strategies strategic points as they planned, organized, composed, and edited their own texts. (3) The teachers provided graphic organizers which helped students to organize their texts. In reporting on studies that use sociocultural theory as an interpretive lens, Englert et al. (2008) pointed out that use of procedural facilitators was identified as a tenet of the sociocultural theory that was used in writing-instruction research studies. The same authors categorise procedural facilitators as instructional strategies, which "offered social organizational mediators that made visible and accessible the language and higher order strategies of writers" (2008, p. 212).

Using a similar approach, De La Paz and Graham (1997) implemented the Self-regulated Strategy Development model (SRSD) for teaching writing to three 5th grade students with learning disabilities. They made use of procedural facilitators for planning and writing strategies. The students made use of a mnemonic STOP, to help them remember steps and also to remind them to stop, reflect, and plan before starting writing. The steps of the mnemonic prompted them to:

- Suspend judgment, which prevented students from simply recalling bits of information and writing them down without fully considering the topic.
- Take a side – allows students to decide which side they believed in or which side could be used to create the strongest arguments.
- Organize ideas – allows students to choose and identify ideas that strongly support their essays and refute arguments. At this stage students also arrange their ideas in the order they planned to use them.
- Plan more as you write – reminds students to continue planning while they write by adding and adjusting ideas as needed. During the Plan step, students were given another cue card DARE which means:
 - Develop your topic sentence.
 - Add supporting ideas.
 - Reject possible arguments for the other side.
 - End with a conclusion.

The concepts of scaffolding and mediation are indispensable in the L2 context because, as Choul Turuk (2008) argued, second language learners do not acquire an L2 as they did their L1. They need coaching and explicit instruction in order to appropriate the fundamental skills of L2, hence magnifying the roles that teachers need to play in helping the learner acquire knowledge and understanding before they are left on their own. One of the ways that teachers achieve this is through scaffolded instruction.

Drawing on her study of teaching writing, Englert (1992) used a sociocultural approach to show how teachers can scaffold learning that promotes development within students' learning zones. These are:

- When students have difficulty in editing text because they do not know what information to include, the teacher can help the students by asking a series of graduated questions. These will help the students to retrieve relevant information. The editing process is socially constituted because both the teacher and students contribute the necessary information to complete the editing activity successfully. In this way students do not learn in what Englert (1992) called a "rigid, lock-step fashion that ignores the knowledge and the needs of the students" (p.162).
- The teacher can also make use of students' everyday knowledge about writing and literacy, which he/she transforms into metacognitive knowledge by making that knowledge and experience the object of study. For example, the teacher can help students examine their own writing strategies by asking questions such as "What are we doing here?", "Why are we doing this?" These questions help the students to see the relationship of their strategies to performance.
- The teacher can relinquish strategies to students. For example, the teacher can instruct students to mark texts by using overhead markers to circle or underline key ideas in text, something that the students can appropriate later on in their own writing.
- The teacher can provide scaffolded support by providing think-sheets. In Englert's (1992) own project, Cognitive Strategy Instruction in Writing (CSIW), think-sheets were used to prompt students to take ownership of the writing strategies as they moved into a phase in which they wrote about self-selected topics with the support of the think-sheets. The think-sheets also prompted the inner language for thinking and supported students' conversations as they jointly constructed texts and monitored their activities.

In spite of its usefulness in teaching and learning, it is to be noted that not every support in relation to teacher-student interaction, ought to be considered scaffolding. Lantolf and Thorne (2006) supported this view when they said that because of the separation of the notion of scaffolding from social interaction and cultural tools, the use of scaffolding techniques by a teacher does not necessarily mean that some ZPD-related process is being activated. Gibbons (2003, p. 249) listed two criteria that determine whether a particular example of help can be considered as scaffolding. First, evidence must show whether a learner has successfully completed the task with the teacher's help. Second, there must be evidence of the learner's achieving at a greater level of independent competence as a result of the experience. Swain et al. (2010) explained that scaffolding has weaknesses. They state that in construction, the withdrawal of scaffolding is planned but in teaching the support sometimes falls apart rather suddenly at "inopportune time" (p. 26). Swain et al. (2010) indicated that the falling of the scaffolding in teaching could in part be attributed to the discontinuation of providing the scaffolding by the teachers.

Swain et al. (2010) reviewed and reported the ongoing debate about the definition and function of self-scaffolding. They stated that traditionally scaffolding is understood to mean the assistance provided by an expert to a novice. Swain et al. (2010) reported that Holton and Clarke (2006) listed two types of scaffolding: (1) Heuristic scaffolding is when the expert helps the novice complete a task which he or she is not able to do alone, either by modeling or simplifying the task. (2) Conceptual scaffolding is where the expert provides new knowledge to the novice or helps him/her extend existing knowledge. In short, heuristic scaffolding refers to the cooperative support that the expert provides to the learner and conceptual scaffolding is when the expert provides information to the novice as a form of support. According to Swain et al. (2010) critiques of the traditional definition of scaffolding see it as obliterating any role that the individual learner/novice plays and placing too much focus on the structuring role of the expert (p. 26).

The traditional definition of scaffolding is also said to “fail to reflect the dynamic, emergent and open-ended nature of development and depicts learning/development as a fixed, predetermined process” (Swain et al.; 2010, p.24). Contemporary definition of scaffolding argues that scaffolder versus scaffoldee knowledge and responsibility should be symmetrical. The focus from individuals (scaffolders and scaffoldees) called an “ensembles” (Granott 2005 in Swain et al., 2010, p. 26) should be shifted to the smallest group that work together and interact with one another during processes of learning and development relating to specific activity context. The “ensembles” can also mean a single individual “who having internalised the appropriate sociocultural, interactive, and communicative processes is able to self-scaffold” (Swain et al. 2010, p, 26). For example, a person who imagines talking to another person in an attempt to solve a difficulty is “self-scaffolding through dialogic self where other people are represented in multi-voiced self” (Swain et al. 2010, p, 26). The same authors argued that the reconceptualisation of scaffolding includes a richer and more holistic view of scaffolding where an individual is also able to reach higher levels of understanding and development through meditational input to him/herself knowledge that he or she does not possess.

2.6 PRIVATE SPEECH/THINKING ALOUD

Private speech or thinking aloud is speech spoken to oneself for communication, self-guidance, and self-regulation. A learner’s cognitive development originates in his or her social interaction with others, and then goes through a process of increasing individuation. McCafferty (1992, p. 179) posited because of its ability to mediate difficulties in cognitive activities, “private speech (speech for the self, or “thinking out loud”) is given a key role in the human psychological development which evolves through

social interaction from an interpersonal to an intrapersonal plane. McCafferty (1992) quoted Vygotsky's following protocol to illustrate how the child evoked private speech when confronted with cognitive difficulties:

Where's the pencil? I need a blue pencil. Never mind, I'll draw with the red one and wet it with water; it will become dark and look blue (Vygotsky in McCafferty 1992, p. 179).

McCafferty (1994) commented that the above vignette illustrates a child working alone and who talks to himself to find a way to solve his problem not having a coloured pen at his disposal. His thinking aloud enables him to reach conclusion to the task. McCafferty (1992, p. 422) explained that Vygotsky sees private speech as "the convergence of thought and language" that acts as an instrument of thought which helps the child to seek and plan the solution to his problem.

Unlike Piaget,(1969) Vygotsky believes that self-talk or thinking aloud does not show cognitive immaturity in the learner but rather shows some form of development. Vygotsky claimed that private speech, or when a child thinks aloud, represents a functional differentiation in the speech of the child or that the child is actually differentiating between speech that is directed at other and to oneself. The latter statement shows important cognitive functions, such as planning, monitoring and guiding oneself while being engaged in various activities. As the child grows older, this self-directed speech changes into silent inner speech. Vygotsky viewed thinking aloud as connected with children's thinking which helps them overcome difficulties.

Drawing on Frawley and Lantolf's work, MacCafferty (1992; 1994) explained the use of private speech in the study of L2 learning. For example, he affirmed that adults do not use private speech in a linear way from greater to lesser frequency regardless of contexts. Adults revert to private speech in L2 for the same purpose as in childhood and also in the same way that children do, that is, in frequency, form and function. MacCafferty (1992) argued that this same general principle also held true for intermediate and advanced learners of Spanish as an L2.

McCafferty (1992; 1994) reported Frawley and Lantolf's categories for the classification of forms of private speech: object-regulation, other-regulation and self-regulation. During the period of development before learners can use private speech for self-regulatory purposes, the learners are guided by environment stimuli that attract them. This object-regulation is reflected in his private speech when solving problems. For example, the learners would be more concerned with describing and naming certain aspects of the action and environment as opposed to planning and directing action. Before the learners can use self-regulated private speech, they are also guided by adults or more

capable others who lead them through the goal-directed activity. This is called other-regulation and it is a stage where the learners do not fully understand the overall structure of the action of the adult or more capable other leading them. In some cases, the learners may complete an action following the directives from an adult without necessarily realising that an action or goal was involved. When the learners reach the level of self-regulation in private speech, they will eventually appropriate the means to gain self-regulation and thus function independently. At this stage, the learners are able to focus on an abstract goal while ignoring task-irrelevant features in the environment.

Vygotsky's view about turning thoughts into words has various applications in the English language classroom. For example, learners who are not able to talk about their learning may need the help of a teacher or peer to help them expand or explore their ideas. The process of explaining one's ideas and thinking need time. Learners need to be given time to answer questions for which they are not prepared. They need time for reflection. Many learners are not comfortable with sharing their ideas to the entire class; therefore teachers need to allow learners to work in pairs or in small groups where they feel more comfortable sharing their ideas and thoughts to a few of their classmates.

Consistent with evidence emerging from the field of sociocultural theory, findings from this review of literature shape my understanding of LLS as sociocultural artifacts that are developed through everyday interactions and that are unique to groups or individuals. From this perspective, I present the main differences between the cognitive view and sociocultural view of studying LLS as the basis for the change in my theoretical framework which informs this study. The following section considers this.

2.7 A CHANGE IN THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY: FROM COGNITIVE TO SOCIOCULTURAL PERCEPTIONS OF STRATEGIC LANGUAGE LEARNING

O'Malley and Chamot (1990, p. 1) saw LLS as the "special thoughts or behaviours" that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information. Oxford (1990, p. 8) extended the meaning to "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations". Wenden (1987, p. 6) defines LLS as "language learning behaviours learners actually engage in to learn and regulate the learning of a second language". Similar to this cognitive view of learning, sociocultural theory claims that individuals are born with the basic abilities for intellectual development and that they are actively involved in their own learning and the discovery and development of new understanding. However, Vygotsky (1978) placed more emphasis on social contributions to the process of development where cognitivists would emphasize self-initiated discovery. Taking a sociocultural stance to study LLS in this study shifted my

perspective of LLS from “the product of the learner’s style, personality or hemispheric preference” (Donato & MacCormick, 1994) to one where “language learning strategies is mainly a by-product of mediation and socialisation into a community of language learning practice” (Donato & MacCormick, 1994, p. 453).

Cognitive LLS research studies were primarily concerned with the identification of strategy types, variables affecting the choice of strategies, or investigations of their teachability and learnability (A. Cohen & Scott, 1998; O’ Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Oxford & Ehrman, 1995; G. P. Park, 1997; J. Rubin, 1975; J Rubin, 1981). While these studies provided strong evidence for the statistically beneficial effect of LLS, and an indication of a general pattern of LLS used by successful and less successful learners, they failed to provide a thorough analysis of the ongoing process of cognitive change and development that occurs within social interactions. Sociocultural LLS researchers were, in the words of Donato & MacCormick (1994, p.453), pushing forward the notion that “emergence of strategies is a process directly connected to the practices of cultural groups through which novices develop into competent members of these communities”.

Most cognitive LLS research studies have been conducted in experimental contexts, designed deliberately for the purposes of the particular study. Such contexts are different from natural settings. I realised, for example, that while these studies are rigorous, they do not take account of the fact that in a typical ESL classroom, instruction is constrained by time demands, which limits teachers’ choices of activities and learners’ opportunities for choice and autonomy. ESL classrooms are also challenging places for promoting LLS because students’ performances are constantly assessed and their successes and failures are made public. Failing to examine students’ LLS in natural classroom settings means that the studies cannot capture the complexity of learning in classroom settings, which limits the practical implications of experimental studies.

I also apprehended that in cognitive LLS training studies, instruction did not go beyond providing information about the declarative, procedural and conditional knowledge necessary for effective strategic learning. Although research showed a link between the students’ participation in the strategy-training interventions and improved learning, very few studies reported the transfer of strategies across different contexts. As McKeachie, Pintrich, and Lin (1985, p. 154) stated, “knowledge about cognition, however, does not necessarily lead to improved cognition. The problems of getting students to actually use the strategies and become self-regulating in other situations, besides the training program, is one all learning strategy programs must confront”.

For example, Duffy (1993) conducted a five year study of how third-grade teachers help low-achieving students become strategic. These teachers volunteered to participate in a five-year staff development programme with the aim of helping teachers develop strategic readers. Following each lesson, students were also interviewed to determine what they understood from what they were supposed to have learnt. A key finding in this study was that strategy instruction focused on what is being taught, with the dominant pedagogical technique being drill and practice. Students were mainly taught to list or name strategies without developing a deep understanding of how and when to use strategies. The study teachers' main trouble was with modeling their reasoning process which is a key element of cognitive strategy-based instruction. Duffy (1993) argued that the instructional scripts, guides, packages, or programmes that are so often used in strategy training circumvented the minds of the teachers and impeded their ability to help their learners become strategic. Duffy (1993) argued that teacher preparation needed rethinking, in particular he pointed out that there is a need to "figure out how to help teachers take charge of their own instruction so that they can be creatively adaptive in shaping and modifying instructional interactions" (Duffy, 1993, p. 244). He criticised cognitive strategy training programmes as ones that cannot "capture either the complexity of being strategic or the complexity involved in responding appropriately to students' concept building" (Duffy, 1993, p. 244).

In the same vein, Dowhower (1999) presented evidence in support of Duffy's (1993) claim that teachers found little help in strategy-based manuals. Dowhower (1999) observed that teachers often mistook instructional techniques for strategies that might help learners to learn. Novice teachers particularly found it challenging to take a strategic approach to teaching comprehension. Dowhower (1990) instead proposed a comprehension strategy framework which was developed jointly with pre-service and in-service elementary teachers as they sought better ways to support and encourage both strategic and student-centered processing of text. These studies strengthened my conviction that one advantage of a sociocultural approach is that I would be able to study Seychellois students and teachers dynamically within their social circumstances in their full naturalness and completeness, and as opposed to LLS experimental studies, I would gain a more complete and valid understanding of my research participants.

The cognitive conceptions of strategic learning assume that language tasks and contexts are generalisable (Donato & MacCormick 1994). On the other hand, a sociocultural perspective views "language learning tasks and contexts as situated activities that are continuously under development and that are influential upon individual's strategic orientation to classroom learning" (Donato & Macormick, 1994, p. 453). This sociocultural view of investigating and understanding the development

of learner strategies within a learning community, in my study, goes beyond the learner and focuses on the classroom and the interactions that grow out of it. Coyle (2007, p, 67) supports this:

In sociocultural terms, the classroom as the locus of learning is a physical and social place where learners not only learn a foreign language but 'learn how to learn' in order that they can become effective future learners. The classroom is also a cognitive space where learning is constructed within each individual's ZPD. The different ways in which learning is mediated impact on learner affect and motivation. This in turn determines an individual's goal-orientation and engagement with activities.

Sociocultural theory is based on the concept that human activities, including learning to learn a language, take place in cultural contexts and are mediated by interaction and other symbol systems. A retrospective examination of my own research interest allowed me to make meaningful connections between theory and practice. I viewed my research interest as one in which I wanted to study the process of the teaching and learning of LLS in the Seychelles ESL classrooms by investigating classroom talk and interaction between teacher-students and student(s)-student(s). I realised, as Lantolf and Thorne (2006, p.28) explained, that "the only appropriate way of understanding and explaining higher, culturally organised, forms of human mental functioning is by studying the process and not the outcome of development" (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 28).

2.8 A SHIFT FROM LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES TO LEARNER WRITING STRATEGIES.

Having identified the area (LLS through sociocultural approach), which I hoped to research, and given that I intended to explore classroom practices in order to discover potential problems that needed intervention, I nevertheless had kept my research topic more general so as to allow myself an easy transition into future avenues to which this research project would lead me. My research changed its focus once more after analysis of data of Phase 1 and presenting the findings to the participating teachers. The teachers identified that writing was the main problem of their students that they wanted to address. At this point, I realised that my literature review needed another transition from LLS to learner writing strategies. The teachers and I agreed to focus on strategies in the writing process, and as both a facilitator and co-participant in this action research, I felt that I needed a deeper understanding of how to teach writing effectively and more guidance for my own knowledge on how to facilitate this research process. At this stage, I returned to literature once more, but this time I looked at second language writing research within the sociocultural framework. The transition was easily made because it has already been established that language learning strategy instruction is a teaching

approach that aims to raise learner awareness of learning strategies and provide learners with systematic practice, reinforcement and self-monitoring of their strategy use while attending to language learning activities (Kinoshita, 2003). In fact, Lei (2009) considered learner writing strategies as a 'sibling' of language learning strategies. The following presents a review of second language writing research.

2.9 SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING RESEARCH

Developing effective writing skills is one of the most difficult and complex forms of social and cultural activity. In the last three decades we have seen a change in the approach to the teaching of writing. The traditional way of teaching writing (the stage model) focuses on production of texts where individual learners often write under time constraint and in silence. It teaches composition writing by calling attention to planning and discovery as legitimate parts of the writing process. Writing in this model is considered as a linear process where emphasis is laid on the final written product, and an activity which is made up of several static stages (Lipson, Mosenthal, Daniels, & Woodside-Jiron, 2000).

Emig (1971) study entitled "The composing process of twelfth graders" transformed this teaching approach of writing. It not only demonstrated what could be learnt by using a qualitative approach for the study of writing but also introduced new understanding of writing as a process. For example, Emig argued that writing was under-conceptualised and over-simplified by teachers who taught composition and she challenged the view that writing was a three-phase activity, prewriting, writing and revising. As the focus of writing research shifted from text analyses and writing done by experts, researchers managed to show the complexity of planning, composing and editing. Since then, researchers have continuously built on Emig's and other related studies and thus during the past 30 years much more information has become available on writing as a process (Deane, Odendahl, Fowles, Welsh, & Bivens-Tatum, 2008; Edwards, 2005; Englert, 1992; Flower & Hayes, 1981). These studies suggest that writing is a difficult task which imposes heavy demands on cognition. It is both a strategic action and a thinking problem.

Pioneers of process writing research, Flower and Hayes (1981) formalized Emig's insights by conducting research using protocol analysis. Through this research they developed their model of the elements of the writing process. Bereiter and Scarmadalia (1987), Hayes (1996), Kellogg (1996), Field (2004) Grabe and Kaplan (1996) and Eysenck and Keane (2005) developed other writing models which were more or less similar to or largely based on Flower and Hayes' 1980 model. However, for the purpose of my study, I will focus on that of Flower and Hayes (1981) and Bereiter and Scarmadalia

(1987). These researchers agree that the stage model of writing does not accurately describe the composing process. The key problem with the stage model is that “it models the growth of the written product, not the inner process of the person producing it” (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 367). For example, in the stage model, pre-writing, writing, and re-writing are seen as clear-cut stages. It overlooks that the writing stages overlap, and may occur and recur at any point (Kostelnick, 1989). Flower and Hayes (1981, p. 367) further state that “because stage models take the final product as their reference point, they offer an inadequate account of the more intimate, moment-by-moment intellectual process of composing”.

2.10. FLOWER & HAYES (1981) MODEL OF THE COGNITIVE WRITING PROCESS

The cognitive process model (see Figure 2.1 below) has three main parts:

- Task environment
- The writer’s long-term memory; and
- Writing processes.

Figure 2.1: Cognitive Process Model Of Writing (Flower & Hayes, 1981, P.370)

These three parts, as detailed below, enlighten one’s understanding of the key steps and thoughts that occur throughout the writing process. Knowledge of this writing process might help composition researchers to discover effective ways to instruct novice writers to learn more easily and use strategies that foster better planning, composing and revision, thereby developing writing expertise. These elements are closely interrelated and constantly affect each other. Flower and Hayes assert that there is no order in which these elements and processes interact.

TASK ENVIRONMENT

This includes things outside the writer, starting with the rhetorical problem and including the text itself. It is a situation where the writer has to respond to a problem situation and tries to solve it. The rhetorical problem may include a topic, audience and an action which must be taken to deal with the problem. The problem can be in the form of an assignment. It includes the writer's own goals which are a major part of the writing process. It also represents multiple demands which the writer should be able to manage (Rimka, 2004). Similarly the text produced so far affects and creates new constraints for the writer. Reporting on the Flower and Hayes (1981) model, Rimka (2004) mentioned two main pitfalls which relate to the constraint of the text produced so far:

If the text has too little influence on the writing process, it tends to become incoherent, and usually it is a sign that the writer failed to integrate new ideas in the text. On the other hand, if the text has too strong influence, the writer follows blindly the direction of the last few paragraphs and sentences, and fails to see the overall structure of the text. Hence, the produced text places great demands on the writer's ability to control the writing process (p. 8).

THE WRITER'S LONG-TERM MEMORY

This is the writer's knowledge of the topic, audience and writing plans. The long-term memory has a complex organization. It contains a large amount of information, and not every part of this information can be easily retrieved in the writing process.

WRITING PROCESSES

Flower and Hayes' (1981) and Hayes' (1996) revised models contain three major processes that a writer goes through during the composing process. These are planning, composing and reviewing. They also reconfigured their 1980 model to include the monitor function which allows the writer to monitor and control the writing processes.

PLANNING

The process of planning involves three sub-processes (Flower & Hayes, 1981). These are generating, organizing and goal-setting. During the generating process, the writer retrieves information from long-

term memory for the writing task in either mental or written form. The retrieved information is then organized into a writing plan. During the goal-setting process, rhetorical purposes, such as the needs of the audience, are considered. The writer can activate these three sub-processes at any time during the composing process.

TRANSLATING

During translating the writer puts his/her ideas into words. The writer also juggles with all the demands of English language, which is overwhelming for the inexperienced writer because it burdens the short-term memory with demands on grammar and spelling, causing frustration in the writer. However, a key problem with the term 'translating' as used here is that it suggests a linear and perhaps automatic process which does not fit in well in this model. Composing is a more suitable term because it suggests a more flexible and multifaceted process.

REVIEWING

This depends on two sub-processes: evaluating and revising. It may be a conscious process when the writer chooses to re-read for new ideas or to evaluate and revise the text. It can also be an unconscious action which is triggered by an evaluation of the text or planning.

MONITORING

This functions as a writing strategist which determines when the writer moves to a new process. It is determined by the writer's goals as well as individual habits and process styles.

Flower and Hayes' (1981) model is important for my study as a basis for integrating strategy instruction through a process approach to teaching writing according to the process stages as postulated in their model. Based on the findings of Phase 1, the participating teachers said that their students were not able to self-regulate their writing in general. They also said that students depended on them to direct their actions and thinking about text and monitoring. Using Flower and Hayes' (1981) model to teach writing is useful to address the lack of metacognitive knowledge related to the process by which writers plan, draft, and monitor and revise their writing. Their model has been commonly used by other researchers in dealing with the writing process and strategies, especially planning and revision (De La

Paz & Graham, 1997; Englert, Raphael, & Anderson, 1992; Saddler, Moran, Graham, & Harris, 2004). Englert, et al. (1992) argued that students need to understand the vocabulary related to the writing process. Flower and Hayes' (1981) model portrays the writing process as a non-linear set of component sub-processes that include planning, drafting, editing, and revising, and students need to understand this and the way writers engage in self-regulated activities related to each sub-process. For example, during planning writers engage in self-questioning strategies to identify audience, purpose, topic, related background knowledge and relationships among ideas.

During drafting, writers transform their plans into text. They provide signal words that guide the reader to locate important ideas, and continue to refine their plans by selecting relevant ideas and excluding irrelevant ones. During editing, writers re-read their text to see if they have achieved their goals. They attend to concerns that their audience may have, such as "does everything make sense". Finally when revising, writers implement their writing plans by adding, deleting, substituting and modifying their text ideas.

ESL teachers are faced with many different levels of writing achievements. Given this disparity between more-successful and less-successful writers, writing researchers (Flower & Hayes, 1981) have tried to parse the process by developing different writing models. The writing model of Flower and Hayes (1981) suggests that writers go through a single process of writing. This suggests that more-successful learners would essentially do the same thing as the less-successful one do. Bereiter and Scardimalia (1987) contested this view and presented a writing model which shows the difference between the writing processes that more- and less-successful writers go through. Their writing model accounts for different kinds of writing processes between more- and less-successful writers. The authors show the differences between successful and less-successful writers as a contrast between knowledge-telling model of writing and knowledge-transforming model of writing (Bereiter & Scardimalia (1987, p. 9-10). The knowledge-telling model (Fig 2.2) of writing shows the writing processes that less-successful writers go through.

It suggests that writers use content knowledge (memory) and discourse knowledge to retrieve readily available information from memory and write in a form that generally meets the requirements of the writing task. The main concern of the writer is what to say next, hence his or her writing only displays planning as he or she writes and tells what he or she knows about the topic. They are not able to carry out sophisticated actions and so they pay little attention to goal-setting, planning and needs of the audience, organisation of text, problem solving, or revising. Their composing process is linear.

The knowledge-transforming model (Fig 2.3) illustrates what successful writers typically do when they write.

Figure 2.2: Knowledge-telling model of writing

Figure 2.3: Knowledge-transforming model of writing

They are not only involved in the knowledge-telling process because they think more reflectively and thus they are able to transform knowledge. For example, they re-work their ideas into more fully developed thoughts. They define goals, plan and organise their writing. They also use strategies for finding and solving problems in their writing and they monitor their writing process. They are able to deal with new writing problems which are created as a result of solving one problem. For example,

generating or solving content problems may result in new rhetorical problems and vice versa, hence composing is a recursive process. In support of Bereiter and Scardimalia's writing model and drawing on writing research studies such as (De La Paz & Graham, 2002; Graham & Harris, 1997), Troia (2002) listed the writing characteristics of more- and less-successful learners in the following areas:

PLANNING

Time spent on planning is a critical part in the composing process which is directly linked to quality of written work. Skilled writers engage in planning either before or during the composing process. Planning ahead avoids memory or attention disruptions during composing time. However, it has been found that less-successful writers spend little time on planning (even when they are prompted to plan) because they rely too much on knowledge-telling tactics for many writing tasks, such as generating content in a linear way. They start writing immediately after receiving instructions or a writing assignment. They also pause briefly "to formulate their first sentence so that it is related to the topic and conforms to the requirements of the genre, but they do not appear to establish broader rhetorical or personal goals for their compositions and plan accordingly" (Troia, 2002, p. 252). Troia stated that planning for less-successful writers entails listing potential content in a first draft format without elaboration, exploration and formation of new concepts. By contrast, successful writers do extensive planning which is recursive as they organise, develop and reflect on their thoughts at a "more abstracted level of representation within a framework that meets specific tasks audience demands and personal goals" (Troia, 2002, p. 252).

GENERATING CONTENT

Less-successful writers generate less content for their writing than their more-successful counterparts. The content of their writing is also superfluous and contains non-functional material. Englert and Raphael (1988) list reasons why less-successful writers face this problem. First, they find it hard to sustain their memory search for topic-relevant material. Second, they do not have enough knowledge about the topic. Third, they have limited knowledge about text-structures for particular genres such as narration and persuasion.

REVISING

According to Flower and Hayes' (1981) writing model, revision is about making changes at any point in the writing process. Revising written work is challenging for less-skilled writers. As with planning, they spend little time on revising their work. When they do revise, they focus more on changing words and phrase selections and edit mechanical mistakes which do not greatly improve the quality of their work. Graham (1997) stated that less-successful writers are not adept at making revisions because they cannot detect the mismatches between their intended meaning and what they wrote.

TRANSLATING CONTENT INTO WRITTEN TEXT

Writing of less-successful writers contains more spelling and punctuation errors than their more adept peers. They also write more slowly and less legibly than their more able peers. Graham & Harris (1997) explained that when students' lower level text production skill is disrupted, it hinders their ability to engage in higher-order composing behaviours such as planning and revising

2.11 MONITORING THE WRITING PROCESS

Troia (2002, p. 325) argued that less-successful writers "possess limited metacognitive awareness — awareness of domain-specific knowledge, skills and strategies, how to apply them, and when to deploy them for effective and efficient task performance". Supporting this stance, Welch (1992) went further to say that some learners become aware of metacognitive processes only after receiving direct instruction. This suggests that monitoring one's writing processes is difficult, but it can be facilitated through instruction. Reporting on research studies, Welch further stated that less-successful writers tend to overestimate their capabilities and do not make any strategic effort to write. They do not appreciate the value of strategy and find it too time consuming to use such strategy. When they make use of a strategy, they may corrupt its effectiveness because they fail to regulate their thoughts, feelings and behaviours. By contrast, De La Paz and Graham (1997) reported on studies of characteristics of professional writers (Safire & Safire, 1992). They stated that professional writers used self-regulated procedures such as goal-setting and self-assessment, to help them regulate their writing and maintain their motivation. Reporting on another study by Wallace and Pear (1977), De La Paz and Graham (1997) stated that a professional writer under study placed his writing notes on index cards and ordered and reordered them until he was satisfied. Managing the complexities of writing as illustrated above

requires a deeper metacognitive awareness of strategies that more and less-successful writers have at their disposal, how to apply them, and when to use them for effective writing performance.

2.12 SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING RESEARCH FROM A SOCIOCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

As pointed out earlier in this review, sociocultural theory emphasises the interdependence of social and individual processes in the development of human cognition. This suggests that human activities, including writing, occur in cultural contexts and are mediated by artifacts such as language and other symbolic systems (Lantolf & Thorne, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978). During this process humans use culturally “constructed artifacts, concepts and activities to regulate the material world of their own and each other’s social and mental activity” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2000, p. 62). All human actions are mediated either through external and visible means such as pencil and gesture or by internal and invisible means such as inner speech. Within this framework, it is arguably right to define learner writing strategies as “mediated actions which are consciously taken to facilitate writers’ practices in communities”. Therefore, in this review, I look at second language writing research that has specifically studied writing strategies from a sociocultural perspective and those studies that have adopted sociocultural theoretical perspectives on second language writing learning.

Research in second language writing abounds. However, those that look at learner writing strategies from a sociocultural perspective are limited. Much of second language writing research has focused on oral language and how learners or teachers and learners use language in interaction during writing activities. In the review that follows, I document those studies that were conducted with the perspective that a sociocultural theoretical approach provides a means to understand and elucidate the learning of writing.

Guided by Vygotsky’s theory that learning occurs in social interaction and is mediated by communicative language, Villamil and de Guerrero (1996) analysed 40 peer revision sessions of Spanish-speaking university students. One of the criteria to participate was that the participants should have a score of 500 to 599 on the College Board ESLAT3, the English as a Second Language Achievement Test used for admission purposes. This suggests that the research participants could be categorised as high achieving L2 students. In this study, students worked in pairs to revise either a narrative or persuasion text produced by one member of the pair. In each pair one student acted as the reader and provided assistance which the other student incorporated in his/her work which he/she submitted to the course instructor later. Villamil and de Guerrero found that students used five

mediating strategies during the revision sessions: use of symbols and external resources (e.g. dictionaries, prompt sheets, teacher and classmates); use of L1; scaffolded assistance (this includes scaffolding strategies such as advising, responding to advice, eliciting and responding to elicitation, reacting, and requesting clarification); deploying inter-language (e.g. correcting text by relying on their familiarity with word or grammatical structure in question); and externalising private speech.

A recent study conducted by Lei (2009) explored four more-skilled and four less-skilled Chinese EFL learners' writing strategy use within activity theory. The participants were selected from a total of 60 third-year English major students in an elite university in South China. Using qualitative research instruments, Lei collected data on how these students strategically mediated their writing processes with diverse resources, and found that the students used four types of writing strategies: artefact-mediated, rule-mediated, community-mediated, and role-mediated strategies. There were also subcategories of strategies within each category, which further explains the learners' strategy use. These categories and sub-categories are not exhaustive but they highlight the dialectic relationship between context and cognition and the importance of mediating resources in writing strategy use. Lei also discussed contradictions in strategy use, writers' agency, writing goals and interactions between strategies. Based on the findings of his study, Lei designed a new model which takes into account what, how, and why resources are used. The study adds to our understanding of the sociocultural nature and effectiveness of writing strategy use.

Ewert (2009) carried out a study in which she investigated the actual discourse of teachers and learners, particularly in face-to-face writing conferences. The participants in this study were two teachers and six ESL students of a six weeks seven-level intensive English language programme at a large U.S university. The conferences between the teachers and students were audio-recorded in regular classroom with the teacher meeting the student off to the side while the rest of the students were engaged in regular activities. Data collection was done mainly through audio recording of the conferences and interviews with the teachers. Data analysis was done using two frameworks: negotiation and scaffolding. The findings of the study show that the negotiation tactics and most of the scaffolding tactics (e.g. clarification request, comprehension/confirmation check and revision clarification) could be found in both teachers' conferences, although the distribution between the two teachers was different.

However, when the features of both frameworks are interfaced, a distinct profile of learner-engaging discourse can be seen for each teacher. Ewert used Wood et al.'s (1976) six scaffolding features (to code the teachers' talk (See section 2.5). It appears that both teachers used a variety of scaffolding behaviours in their talk with L2 writers. While certain scaffolding features were virtually absent from the

conferences, less frequent, or difficult to determine, others were plentiful in both. The less represented scaffolding features include recruitment, frustration control mechanisms, and direction maintenance. Recruitment is minimally present since the inherent nature of a writing conference has already recruited the learner.

In line with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of the relevance of social context in teaching and learning to write, Wigglesworth and Storch (2012) presented a paper based on findings of their own study and from various studies which have examined "the effect of learners working pairs or small groups on writing on writing tasks and the extent to which working predominantly in pairs, receiving feedback on their writing in pairs, can enhance the language learning opportunities for those learners through their ability to scaffold each other's contributions and knowledge" (p.364). Wigglesworth and Storch (2012) pointed out that those studies, including their own that examined learners' writing and their responses to feedback indicate that "collaborative writing may activate the mechanisms necessary for learning through a variety of language processes which occur during collaboration and particularly during writing collaboration where the object of the activity, the written work, is not ephemeral and transient as is the case in many collaborative oral tasks" (p.366). An important finding in those studies that examined learners' writing and their responses to feedback was that discussion which occurs around the written object may include a variety of interactive speech acts, such as disagreements, agreements and explanations. These helped the learners to focus on particular aspects of language and allowed them to engage with specific linguistic features. Another key finding was that collaborative activity may impact on the learners' composing processes which lessened the cognitive load of the written tasks for the learners. A general conclusion derived from those studies that examined learners' writing and their responses to feedback suggests that collaborative writing benefitted the learners by enhancing their accuracy, in particular those at or above the intermediate level.

In Wigglesworth and Storch's (2012) paper, the dynamics of writing in groups was also considered in relation to the role of learning in collaborative writing. This is because not all pairs work as effectively as other pairs and this may impact on learning outcomes. The differences among pairs arise because the dynamics of working in pairs or groups varies in relation to many other affective variables such as personality type, confidence, experience, and goals. By drawing on Storch's series of studies (2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004) that examined learners' writing and their responses to feedback, Wigglesworth and Storch (2012) reported the four different types of interaction in pair work which were more conducive and less conducive to learning. Pairs that worked together to solve a problem was labelled collaborative since their interaction showed high levels of equality and mutuality (+equality, +mutuality). In other cases both pairs attempted to dominate the interaction and did not engage with feedback or

advice provided by their partner (+equality –mutuality). In other cases, one partner was dominant while the other was passive (dominant/passive) suggesting less engagement (-equality –mutuality). The final type was the expert/novice (-equality. +mutuality), where one partner acted as the ‘expert’ but elicited contributions from the other participant. In the aforementioned Storch’s series of studies, two measures of interaction were developed: (1) ‘Equality’ which “measured the level of contribution of each participants to the task, and (2) ‘Mutuality’ which “evaluated the extent to which each member of the pair engaged with the other’s contribution” (Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012, p. 367). It is reported that there was greater evidence of learning in the collaborative and expert/novice pairs than was the case with the dominant/dominant, or dominant/passive pairs.

Wigglesworth and Storch (2012) also reported that for feedback to be effective, learners need to be able to process and act on the feedback received under optimal conditions. Feedback in this instance refers to corrective feedback, which means pointing out errors in the use of language. It is also to be noted that it is the quality of noticing that would determine the success of how feedback is addressed. From a sociocultural theoretical perspective which sees learning as occurring in social interaction, during the processing of feedback, peers pool their linguistic knowledge to reach resolutions which they may not have been able to do on their own. The co-constructed knowledge may be appropriated by the individual learner, hence “becoming an available linguistic resource for subsequent individual use” (Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012, p. 369).

Providing support for the sociocultural theory of the mind that maintains the relevance of social context in learning to write, Dobao (2010) carried out a study in which she compared the performance of the same writing tasks by groups of four learners (n=15), pairs (n=15), and individual learners (n=21). She also examined the effect of the number of participants on the fluency, complexity, and accuracy of the written texts produced, as well as the nature of the oral interaction between the pairs and the groups as they collaborated throughout the writing process. Like Wigglesworth and Storch (2012), Dobao (2012) shared the view that when learners pool their linguistic resources to solve problems encountered in their writing, they would be engaging in language-mediated cognitive activities. This potentially facilitates the co-construction of language and knowledge and learners are able to perform at a higher level. The participants in this study were English native speakers from six intermediate level classes of Spanish as a foreign language. In total there 111 participants: 83 females and 23 males. The participants’ ages were 18-30 years old.

Data was collected in the seventh week of the course. On the data collection day, a 15 minutes grammar review lesson focusing on the use of Spanish past tenses was done. Immediately following this review, learners completed a writing task which designed specifically for the purpose of the study. Data collected consisted of 722 minutes of audio recorded oral interaction and 15 written texts written by groups, 15 texts written in pairs and 21 individually written texts. Data was transcribed and analysed for language-related episodes (LREs) and classified according to their focus: form-focused, lexis-focused, or mechanics-focus and according to their outcome as correctly resolved, unresolved, or incorrectly resolved. All the written texts written by the pairs, groups, and individuals were analysed for accuracy, fluency and complexity. Using Swain and Lapkin's (1998) operationalising of LRE, LRE in the study was identified whenever the students explicitly focused their attention on language, questioning their language use or correcting themselves or others.

Key findings in this study were:

1. The comparative analysis of texts written by learners working in groups, pairs, and individually showed positive effect for collaboration on linguistic accuracy.
2. When assigned the same amount of time to complete written task, learners working alone produced longer texts than learners writing either in groups or pairs. Learners working in pairs needed more time to complete a writing task than learners working alone.
3. Learners working in pairs or groups deliberated lengthily before agreeing on the content of their stories and the language to be used in their texts. This helps to explain why they wrote shorter texts.
4. Texts produced by learners working collaboratively were linguistically more accurate than those working alone.
5. Texts produced by groups of learners contained fewer errors compared to those composed in dyads or individually.

In order to explain findings 4 and 5 above, the researcher conducted analysis of oral interactions in pairs and groups as they collaborated to write their texts. She found that learners working in groups focused their attention on language more often than the dyads. They produced more LREs and a higher percentage of these LREs were correctly resolved and directly transferred into the texts which led the texts written collaboratively to contain fewer errors than those written individually.

The study also confirmed that when learners shared ideas and engaged with each other's contributions they were more able to collaboratively solve their problems. On the other hand, when learners adopted a dominant or passive attitude their resulting pattern of interaction tended to correlate with lower LRE frequency. Hence, the study confirmed that not all peer interaction, whether in pairs or groups offered the same opportunities for scaffolded assistance and co-construction of knowledge.

The qualitative analysis of LREs suggests that the degree of success achieved by the groups was dependent on the result of the different members sharing their knowledge and collaborating to solve their problems, rather than the impact of one high achieving student. The study generally concluded that collaborative writing tasks are beneficial and offered support for the use of collaborative writing tasks in L2 classroom.

A common writing strategy of L2 writers, either skilled or unskilled is that they make use of their L1 as they plan, compose and revise texts (Lantolf, 2009; Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996). For example, Wang (2003) studied Chinese writers of differing L2 levels of achievement with the focus on language switching in their writing processes. Wang found that there was only a slight difference in the purposes and number of times language switching occurred among writers with differing L2 levels of achievement. Wang thus suggests that the level of achievement in the L2 might determine the writers' approaches and the way they think while composing in their L2. Uzawa (1996) investigated the significance of L1 use in L2 writing. The study shows that low-level achievers benefitted most from translation tasks, in terms of language use. Murphy & Roca de Larios (2010) used think-aloud protocol to explore the strategic use of the L1 in a group of seven advanced Spanish learners of EFL engaged in solving lexical problems in two tasks: a narrative and an argumentative essay. They found that the students used their L1 for seven purposes during the two tasks:

1. Generating lexical units;
2. Going back over the already written task;
3. Back-translating a word;
4. Evaluating their production and making decisions;
5. Self-questioning, problem focusing and problem-signalling;
6. Metalinguistic appeal and
7. Metacomment.

In a recent study in an American University, DiCamilla and Anton (2012) aimed to shed light on the general role of L1 in the L2 classroom and to gain insight into the use of L2 as a tool for thought. They reported how language learners used language while engaged in collaborative writing tasks and compared learners' collaborative interactions at two language levels: beginning-level students of Spanish and advanced-level students of Spanish. All the students were native speakers of English. In sum, the first-year students relied heavily on their L1 to mediate their performance of the assigned task, whereas the fourth-year students used L2 more frequently but quite possibly while still relying on L1 concepts and thus their L1 cognitive system. The pedagogical implication of this study is that language instructors should not fear the use of a student's L1, but should judiciously take advantage of it.

The authors support the view that L1 use in L2 learning has communicative, cognitive and pedagogical value.

Another area of inquiry in sociocultural theory has been concerned with the question of how language serves to mediate human activity on the intrapsychological plane in the form of private speech or writing. DiCamilla and Anton (2004) analysed occurrences of private speech in the interaction of English-speaking students of Spanish working in pairs to produce a composition in Spanish and examined how private speech served them. Their study lent support to the “role of language as the principal semiotic tool for mediating human cognition”. Fourteen dyads of university-level students of Spanish enrolled in their first year (beginning), third year (intermediate) and fourth year (advanced) classes participated in the study. Students’ interaction while collaboratively writing a composition was recorded and later transcribed. Data were drawn from the first three written compositions. Students were asked to write a composition on a specific topic without receiving further instruction as to how to complete the task or what language to use. They were asked to work together without using dictionaries, textbooks, etc. They were also instructed to write the same text each on separate sheets of paper. Evidence in the study aligned with other studies of private speech in second language writing. For example, data showed that the participants’ speech in the study was marked by both linguistic and paralinguistic features which have been presented in the literature as evidence of private speech. DiCamilla and Anton (2004) observed that speech was marked by low volume, whispering, mumbling, ellipsis, and odd or vague pronominalization. A hypothetical stance that is frequently associated with private speech was also observed in the use of modal verbs and other verbs (e.g. guess). In addition to this, students were also observed asking themselves questions and answering their own questions, commenting on their own knowledge, repeating forms to themselves, giving themselves commands and releasing tensions by using affective expressions. Analysis of data indicated that students’ use of private speech facilitated two fundamental cognitive operations: focusing of attention and the creation of psychological distance. To help them focus attention on the problem of creating content, students used repetition at critical moments in the task and self-addressed questions. It is also remarkable that students repeated the content in English. As new ideas needed to be deployed, data indicated not only how students worked through the task but also that the language of the task was English. A clear strategy used was that in simplifying the task, students recapitulated content in English as a tool for creating new ideas in English, and then translated them into Spanish. This finding is clearly connected with studies that show how L1 of students is “a vehicle of private speech when a learner was faced with a cognitively difficult task” (DiCamilla and Anton 2012, p. 164). To distance themselves from the problems they encountered when writing the composition, students in

the study read instructions aloud at a low volume. DiCamilla and Anton (2004) commented that reading aloud served to turn written language instructions into speech. That speech externalised the macrostructure of the task and marked a boundary in the mental operation of the student.

It was also found that use of private speech by students helped them to correct their mental operations leading to discovery of solutions to language problems (e.g. 'wait' telling oneself to interrupt a particular activity). Another use of private speech by students enabled them to control their frustration and anxiety as they faced problems that developed while composing texts. For example, DiCamilla and Anton (2004, p.54) explained: "'Oh my' an affective interjection used in the middle of a relatively simple reading of the composition had no discernible connection of anything having to do with the task of reading the composition or with the general task of writing the composition". However, the use of "Oh my" denoted anxiety or tension in Georges and by saying "oh my", Georges was able to release his tension through his private speech and then continued his task as if nothing had upset him at all.

Swain et al.'s (2010) paper presented a thorough analysis of the ongoing process of cognitive change triggered by verbalization. They used microgenetic analysis to analyse the languaging performance of a high language and a low language learner drawn from a sample of nine university learners of French in their original study. Their primary main in conducting this microgenetic analysis was to identify what good language users do that contributes to their learning of new concepts. On the basis of their findings, the authors proposed that languaging is a self-scaffolding tool that their research participants used to discover new meaning and to make sense of the teaching material presented to them. In M. Swain's (2006, p. 89) previous work, she defined languaging as "the process of making meaning and shaping knowledge/experience through language". In this paper Swain et al. (2010, p. 24) stated that "languaging may be equated to private speech: our speech to ourselves as we regulate our mental functions". This explanation highlights the mediating role of language as a semiotic tool in the development of higher forms of mental activity in which learner writing strategies fit well.

To collect data, the Swain et al. (2010) used a concept-based instructional unit which they developed to deal with the concept of voice in French: active, passive and middle. They presented this to nine FSL students in the form of an explanatory text divided into meaningful chunks of information. Each chunk was presented on a separate card. The text also included two diagrams and 12 examples to illustrate different aspects of the three voices and the range of meanings that can be expressed. The authors distinguished between two types of languaging during the languaging stage as the students were reading the explanatory cards and making sense of the conceptual unit(s) on each card: concept-bound languaging and non-concept-bound languaging (languaging which served for rereading and self-assessment). Concept-bound languaging consisted of cognitively complex talk directed at

understanding a conceptual unit. This took three possible forms: paraphrasing, inferencing, and analysing of a specific conceptual unit. The other two forms of languaging were also cognitively complex although they were not directly related to specific conceptual units: Self-assessment consisted of talk aimed at assessing the student's current state of understanding in general. Rereading consisted of the student rereading part of or an entire explanatory card.

The findings of this study suggest that:

1. Languaging mediates the conceptual development of language learners and facilitates the internalisation of declarative knowledge
2. The successful language learner self-scaffolded by making connections between different pieces of new knowledge presented to her but also the new knowledge and her prior knowledge. She created examples that helped link together her spontaneous and scientific concepts. She talked through her cognitive difficulties when they occurred. She hypothesized when in doubt which she later sought to confirm or reject.
3. The less successful language learner misinterpreted the task and function of languaging. She pursued different goals than what was expected and could not solve her cognitive conflicts. The authors argued that there was a possibility that the successful language learner's ZPD was different from that of the less successful language learner. Hence the latter needed more assistance to self-scaffold.

In Schwieter's (2007) study the theoretical framework of the ZPD and scaffolding writing formed the foundation to explore writing development in advanced English language learners of Spanish. A course project was developed and presented to these students, in which the students acted as authors and editors to create their own professional magazines for an authentic audience. Each student wrote four essays which were peer and instructor edited in stages using scaffolding techniques. Following each stage, editors who also facilitated feedback debriefing sessions rated the essays. Although, Schwieter did not qualitatively analyse the data to look at the students' writing processes during the writing project, statistical analysis revealed significant improvement within the four essays, demonstrating writing development of subsequent revisions of a single essay. There was also significant improvement between the four essays, revealing a linear continuous writing development. The latter findings did not align with the majority of writing research which found that ESL writers compose in a recursive manner. However, Schwieter concluded "the results supported the notion that scaffolding writing techniques and feedback debriefing sessions within the ZPD effectively develops writing skills in second language learning when contextualised through a writing workshop involving the creation of a professional magazine designed for an authentic audience" (p. 31).

The research studies reported above rest on certain tenets of sociocultural theory. As the theory advocates, higher forms of mental development and learning, which also include learner writing strategies have their origin in social interaction through a semiotic system.

Language is the primary semiotic system. Through interaction with others (expert or other learners) individuals are able to discover and achieve their highest level of development. When working within collaborative interaction, individuals use speech in two main ways: (1) speech directed to the self as a means of regulating their own cognitive activities and (2) speech directed to others eliciting and providing help as individuals collaborate. Hence, scaffolding serves to show how instructional moves can assist learners in building what they know in a manageable process.

2.13 CONCLUSION

The studies reported in this chapter add to the growing body of research that holds a sociocultural theory view that all higher forms of learning, for example, learner writing strategies have their origin in social interaction which is mediated by semiotic systems, with language being the primary semiotic system. The studies support Vygotsky's sociocultural theory as providing a perspective by which to view learning as a social practice, which echoes the call for a need to investigate LLS, particularly learner writing strategies from a social stance. Learning should not be seen merely as a cognitive process of gaining linguistic knowledge but through the central constructs (mediation, ZPD, scaffolding, and private speech) sociocultural theory offers a comprehensive framework to analyse, interpret and examine the interaction that goes on in ESL writing classrooms as learners and teachers engage in co-constructing the learning processes.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW: ACTION RESEARCH

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I present a brief account of the origin of Action Research (AR) and how it evolved to be used in the field of education. I also critically define Action Research and explain the different types of Action Research and how they relate to my study. I devote a section to criticisms of Action Research.

3.2 ORIGIN OF AR

Kurt Lewin, a social psychologist and a member of the group dynamics movement of 1940s, is one of the pioneers who initiated Action Research in their quest to develop a research methodology which was based on people's real-world experiences that they felt experimental methods were not able to address. He was the first to develop a theory of AR that made it a respectable form of research in the social sciences. This theory describes AR as "proceeding in a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of planning, action and the evaluation of the result of action" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1990, p. 8). Lewin believed that knowledge should be created from problem-solving in real-life situations where social scientists have to include practitioners from the real social world in all phases of inquiry as a means of understanding and changing social practices (McKernan, 1991, p. 10).

AR grew out of interest in dealing with social problems. The late 1940s saw its use in large scale research which dealt with intra-organisational and work-life problems. In the second half of the 20th century, most of AR practice continued in this line of research and one of the major topics was the issue of 'job satisfaction' and its dependence on several aspects of work situation (Kock, McQueen, & Scott, 1997). Lewin found that people change (take action) when they experience the need to change (reflect) and will adopt new behaviours (new action) based on their values. This research approach rests on socio-psychological studies of social and work-life issues. It has two primary goals: (I) to improve the organisation and (II) to generate knowledge (Kock et al., 1997) .

3.2.1 DEFINITION OF AR

AR is a “systemic inquiry that is collective, collaborative, self-reflective, critical and undertaken by participants in the inquiry” (McCutcheon & Jurg, 1990, p. 148). Kemmis and Taggart, (1990, p. 5) extended this definition to include AR as a tool to bring justice and improve social or educational practices:

A form of collective self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1990, p. 5).

From such definitions of AR flow the characteristics of AR. These are empowerment of participants; collaboration through participation; acquisition of knowledge; and social change. The process that the researcher goes through is spiral research cycles consisting of four major phases: planning, acting, observing and reflection. The principles of AR can be embedded within its very definition, as, for example, in the definition proposed by Reason and Bradbury (2001):

...a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview... it seeks to bring action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more general the flourishing of individual persons and their communities (p. 3).

This brings together five principles of AR:

- It addresses practical issues and makes links between theory and practice;
- It is democratic in that it involves people and enables them to create knowledge in learning organizations;
- It draws on an “extended epistemology” aesthetic, alongside the propositional and conceptual;
- It is value oriented. It asks how all can contribute to the economic, political, and spiritual aspects of individuals and communities; and
- It is developmental, that is, it evolves over time from tentative beginnings toward more significance (Reason & Bradbury, 2001b).

3.2.2 TYPES OF AR

Due to its qualitative methodology, there is no one philosophical framework to encompass all Action Research. John Dewey's conceptualisation of Action Research has its roots in American progressive education; the British base theirs in curriculum reform and increased professionalism in teaching; and Australian AR began with a move towards collaborative curriculum planning (Lothian, 2010). Carr and Kemmis (1986) distinguished between three types of Action Research: technical, practical, and emancipatory. Zuber-Skerritt (2010, p. 12) summarised these types of Action Research. (See Table 3.1 below)

Table 3.1: Types of Action Research and their main characteristics as summarised by Zuber-Skerritt (2010)

Types of AR	Aims	Facilitator's role	Relationship between facilitator & participants
1. Technical	Effectiveness/ proficiency of professional practice. Professional development	Outside "expert"	Co-option (of practitioners who depend on facilitators)
2. Practical	As (1) above Practitioner's understanding and transformation of their consciousnesses	Socratic role, encouraging participation and self-reflection.	Co-operation (process consultancy)
3. Emancipatory	As (2) above Participants' emancipation from the dictates of tradition, self-deception coercion. Their critique of bureaucratic systemisation, transformation of the organisation and its system	Process moderator (responsibility shared by participants)	Collaboration (symmetrical communication)

Lothian (2010, p. 58) explained these three methodological applications of Action Research as follows:

- Technical Action Research uses a scientific approach to solve problems and is product directed;
- Practical Action Research focuses on the 'how-to' and 'how do I' research questions which are not clearly framed theoretically; and
- Emancipatory Action Research also known as 'critical Action Research' draws from critical theory and from postmodernism. It shares democratic commitment in the seeking of knowledge and breaks away from traditional bureaucratic traditions for reform and social improvement.

Carr & Kemmis (1986) argued that emancipatory Action Research is the only true research among the three types of Action Research, I, however agree with Zuber-Skerrit (1996, p.12) who stated that

The three types are developmental stages, and it is quite legitimate to start with technical enquiry and progressively develop through practical to emancipatory Action Research. However, the ultimate aim should be to improve practice in a systematic way and, if warranted, to suggest and make changes to the environment, context or conditions in which that practice takes place, and which impede desirable improvement and effective future development.

The difference in the types of AR depends upon the participants involved, aims, facilitator's role and relationship between facilitator and participants. A plan of research can involve a single teacher investigating an issue in his or her classroom, a group of teachers working together on a common problem or a team of teachers and others focusing on an issue within a classroom, school or even district.

However, despite the differences among the three methodological approaches of AR, four basic themes emerge: empowerment of participants, collaboration through participation, acquisition of knowledge and social change. Despite their differences, these methodological approaches of AR follow similar iterative cyclical phases of inquiry:

- Identification of problem area
- Collection and organisation of data
- Interpretation of data
- Action based on data
- Reflection (Ferrance, 2000, p. 9).

AR is evolving and providing a framework for practitioners to reflect on their own practice and improving it. This is guided by "a series of action-reflection cycles, with proposed ethical solutions tested in the field, critically analyzed for validity and trustworthiness, subject to further action-reflection, and in the

final stage, refined or changed as required to effectively answer the research question” (Lothian, 2010, p.63). Since its origin and use in the 1940s, AR has been widely used, including in the field of education (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Stringer, 2007; Whitehead & McNiff, 2006).

3.2.3 AR IN EDUCATION

Corey (1953) was among the first to use AR in the field of education. Corey believed that if educators study their own teaching, they are more likely to change and improve their practice than if they read about what someone else has discovered of their teaching. More importantly, Corey believed that the value of AR is in the change that occurs in everyday practice rather than the generalisation to a broader audience. When taking this perspective to the field of education, particularly in an ESL classroom, it means that AR puts emphasis on teachers being involved in the problems in their own classrooms. As a primary goal, it aims to provide in-service training and development of teachers rather than acquiring general knowledge in the field of education. When teachers participate in action research, their nature of reflection is transformed because the research process led to informed reflection. This informed reflection impacts on practice and their students. It also impacts on the morale of the teachers/researchers. By participating in or conducting research, and particularly AR, teachers can become creators of knowledge (Johnson & Golombek, 2002). In that role teachers will interpret, socially negotiate and continually restructure knowledge within the classrooms and schools where they work as opposed to where training and use of materials have been imposed on them. In terms of strategy training research, there is a need, as Johnson and Golombek (2002, p. 2) argued, for “the establishment of the legitimacy of teachers’ experiences and the importance of reflection on inquiry into those experiences as mechanisms for change in teachers’ classroom practices as well as a forum for professional development over time”. In this type of research, Johnson and Golombek postulated that

What teachers know and how they use their knowledge in classrooms are highly interpretive and contingent on knowledge of self, students, curricula, and setting. Teacher learning is understood as normative and lifelong, built through experiences in social contexts: as learners in classrooms and schools, as participants in professional teacher education programs, and professional development emerges from a process of reshaping teachers’ existing knowledge, beliefs, and practices rather than simply imposing new theories, methods , or materials on teachers (p. 2).

However, although action research is recognised as a value means of professional development, it does not always lead to changes in teachers' practices. For example Haggarty and Postlethwaite,(2003, p. 435) reported

Action research led to understanding of new perspectives for some teachers but limited understanding for others. Where there was new understanding, that understanding led to changes for some, but confirmation of existing practice for others. For a third group, the teachers' perceptions were that new understandings and classroom practice were separate—they had not altered or even confirmed their practice as a result of their new understanding

According to Haggarty and Postlethwaite (2003) it was the teachers' attitudes to risk which affected their uptake of new ideas. These teachers were described as risk-averse teachers which were not likely to adopt new ideas even when they had been successfully used by others.

Although valuable and highly recognized as a tool to improve teaching and learning, AR studies have gained limited attention in the LLS research. Since the year 2000, there have been a few studies which have used an AR methodology to study LLS. For example, Nunan (2002) carried out a small-scale Action Research project in which he studied the effect that strategy training might have on the ability of his first year undergraduate students at the University of Hong Kong to reflect on and monitor their own learning processes. His study took place over a twelve-week period. During this time the participants took part in a programme which was designed to help them reflect on their own learning, to develop their knowledge of, and ability to apply learning strategies, to assess their own progress and to apply their language skills beyond the classroom. Students had to do a bank of tasks which comprised four structured categories:

Category 1: Stimulating a focus on the learning process

Category 2: Focusing on the context and environment for the learning process

Category 3: Dealing with the microskills

Category 4: Strategies for dealing with pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and discourse.

According to Nunan (2002), strategy training together with the systematic opportunities that he gave his students to reflect on the learning process led the students to be more sensitive to their learning process over time. For example, he claims that students were more likely to exploit opportunities that existed for learning and using language beyond the classroom than they were at the beginning. He also stated that students' diaries provided evidence that engaging in the tasks that focused on learning processes as well as language content enabled learners to develop skills for articulating what they want to learn and how they want to learn. He also concluded that giving learners opportunities to reflect on

the learning process led them to develop new learning skills, and helped them to identify and articulate differences between their school experiences and those encountered at the university.

Varasarin (2007) used an Action Research methodology to investigate the effect of pronunciation training and LLS and how they influenced the learning behaviours of students learning English in a Thai school. The research had two cycles. In the first one, the researcher taught five teachers pronunciation (both segmental and suprasegmental), and they in turn taught their students (grades eight to ten) in Cycle 2 by using the same syllabus. The five teachers were trained in how to teach pronunciation and language learning strategies in Cycle 2. The research showed pronunciation training is important in the Thai context. Students' dictionary usage helped learners to improve their competence and to have more confidence when speaking English.

Although the above two studies made use of AR design, LLS in both research paradigms were still studied from a cognitive perspective. My study has characteristics of all three types of AR as discussed in section 3.2.2. Three English teachers and their respective classes in one secondary school in the Seychelles participated in the research. Phase 1 of my study focused on current practice in the three classes. In Phase 2, I analysed the data and reported back to the participating teachers. In the light of the findings of Phase 1, the teachers identified an area in their practice that they wished to work on. Thus, in Phase 3 of the project, the teachers and I jointly focused on this issue and developed a plan to address it.

My study departs from the two AR studies above in some ways. I collected data on the participating teachers' current practices. On the basis of the findings, the teachers and I identified an area in the teachers' practices that needed working on. The work was jointly developed between the teachers and me. The teachers were not necessarily complying with the traditional strategy-based instruction. Instead they used their own professional judgment when responding to students' needs and altered instruction as the teaching of LLS unfolded in their classes (Ferrance, 2000).

3.3 CRITICISMS OF AR

AR has been criticised by advocates of positivist research approaches. It was attacked as being unscientific, work of amateurs and little more than common sense. This led to a loss of interest in this type of research over the following few years while experiments with research designs and quantitative data collection became popular. McNiff (1995, p. 7) stated that "Action Research is not the only answer to any and every educational problem", for example, issues which are based on statistical analysis or

comparative studies, where human unpredictability is not an issue or where a straightforward comparison between introductory and control situations is required.

AR has been described as a softer research paradigm and more feminine in its approach (Munn-Giddings & Winter, 2001) (Munn-Giddings & Winter, 2001) . Munn-Giddings and Winter argue that although AR has been described as personal and interpersonal rather than methodological, this does not mean that AR is ill-planned. "It means rather that Action Research has as philosophical base an overarching awareness and respect for the integrity of individuals, a quality that is often lacking in the more traditional theory-based approaches to educational research" (McNiff, 1995, p. 8). Its humanistic basis enables AR to make contributions "to the use of statistics-based and other theories in the empiric tradition" (McNiff, 1995, p. 8). McNiff (1995) argued that a theory has no real value unless it can be put into practice. Theories generated by statistical-based approaches, although they may be useful, must be tested in practice: their data must be collated and analyzed, and action must be taken on the analysis. From this perspective it is right to argue that "it is in the living reality of people that thought is turned into action" (McNiff, 1995, p. 8). For example, it is people who make decisions about selections and applications and it is peoples' lives which are affected by those decisions, therefore the applications of empirical theories are not neutral as is often claimed.

The rigour of AR, a characteristic of good research, has also been questioned. The rigour of traditional experimental research is based on routines which establish reliability and validity of the research. In AR, which is essentially qualitative, a different set of criteria is used to ensure the results of the research are trustworthy. These are credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability, and they are discussed in more detail in chapter 4, section 4.10.

Another alleged weakness of AR is the personal over-involvement of the researcher which may bias research results (Kock et al., 1997). This is particularly the case where there is a conflict of interest. Kock et al, (1997, p. 17) stated with reference to the socio-technical system which they were studying at the time of writing this article:

While personal over-involvement from the part of the researcher is likely to bias research results, it is inherent in AR because it is impossible for a researcher to both be in a detached position and exert positive intervention on the socio-technical system being studied (p. 17).

Low control of the environment has also been pointed out as a weakness of AR. It is in this light that AR has been seen "inappropriate to test or produce strong theories, or build up research models based on solid evidence" (Kock et al., 1997, p. 17). However, it should be noted that AR, being a subset of the qualitative paradigm, acknowledges the complexity of systems and that human behaviour is not

predictable (Dornyei, 2007). On the other hand, a high control of the environment can cause those being studied to behave in artificial ways which leads to irreversible bias in research results (Kock et al., 1997).

3.4 SUMMARY

This chapter has reviewed the origin of AR and its introduction in the field of education as a tool for teacher professional development and for examining and bringing change in teaching. It also pointed out the definition of AR and highlights that the characteristics of AR are embedded in the definition itself. These are empowerment of participants, collaboration through participation, acquisition of knowledge and social change. The different types of AR are also discussed together with their relevance to this study. The chapter also presents the major criticisms of AR since its conceptualisation in the 1940s. However, it is also argued the strengths and weaknesses of AR should be acknowledged.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the methodology of AR. I carried out this study based on the principles of AR, which is participatory, change-oriented, practical and cyclical in nature. This chapter also details the design of the study and the methods and processes used to carry out this AR. It also addresses ethical issues, rigour, the challenges of conducting AR and issues relating to myself in the dual roles of researcher and participant.

A three phase design was used. Phase 1 was used to gain a perspective of the teaching practices in three ESL classrooms in the Seychelles, which aligns with Stringer's (2007) view that the first cycle of an Action Research process requires "the researchers to gather information about participants' experiences and perspectives and to define the problems/issues in terms that make sense to the participants" (p. 65). I collected a data set from individual interviews and classroom observations. In Phase 2, I analyzed data collected in Phase 1 and presented the findings to the participating teachers as a basis for commencing the collaborative Action Research (CAR). The teachers could accept, disregard, negate or ignore these findings. This was the start of the cycle in the core AR (see Figure 4.2 in Section 4.7 below).

Phase 3 was the collaborative Action Research group. This commenced when the themes that emerged in the data analysis of Phase 1 were presented to the participating teachers with the aim of identifying an area in the teachers' practices which we wanted to work on. We jointly developed action plans which the teachers implemented.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN – QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

This study falls within a qualitative research paradigm and draws on ethnographic principles. Oxford (2011, p. 223) described the purpose of qualitative research as to "richly depict individuals and groups in authentic sociocultural environments".

Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 56) defined qualitative research as:

multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials - case study, personal experience, introspective, life story interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts - that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives.

This suggests that the characteristics of qualitative research are:

- It has an exploratory and descriptive focus;
- It has an emergent design;
- Data collection is done in the natural setting;
- The emphasis is on human as instrument;
- It uses qualitative methods of data collection;
- Data analysis is inductive and ongoing during the research process.

This study fits Watson-Gegeo's (1988, p. 576) profile of ethnographic research well, which is a qualitative mode of enquiry whose purpose is "to provide a description and an interpretive-explanatory account of what people do in a setting (such as a classroom, neighbourhood, or community), the outcome of their interactions, and the way they understand what they are doing (the meaning interactions have for them)".

Ethnographic research values the insider perspective where the researcher spends extensive and prolonged time to collect data in the field. This allows me to have an extended engagement with the research participants "in order to obtain 'thick description' and holistic understanding of the phenomenon under research" (Gao, 2010, p. 4). These descriptions embody the purposes of this study, further reinforcing the rationale behind utilizing a qualitative methodology.

This study was ethnographic in approach in the following respects:

- I sought to describe and understand the phenomenon that is LLS from the participants' perspectives.
- The study viewed the classroom as "a culture in which participants construct routine ways of acting, interacting, and perceiving and interpreting everyday classroom life in and through interactions with each other and it focuses on 'a particular cultural practice' (Ramanathan & Atkinson.D, 1999, p. 52) within the classroom, teacher-student interaction.
- I spent many hours in the selected school in the Seychelles to collect extensive data while I also laboured over field issues in trying to gain access, rapport and an "insider" perspective.

- Data were gathered from a range of sources. This included classroom observation, interviews with teachers and students, journals, audio-recording and field notes. The predominant sources of data were observations and the views of the participants. At times, I did impose my outsider's viewpoints in order to gain insight into the issue under study.
- I engaged in the complex, time-consuming process of data analysis whereby I worked through large amounts of data and reduced them to a few themes or categories. I used an unstructured approach to analyse the data in such a way that themes that emerged from the study were data driven.

An ethnographic lens is necessary to answer the two research questions which guided my study:

RQ1: What is the current state of the use and awareness of LLS amongst students and teachers in three ESL classes at secondary level in the Seychelles?

RQ2: How does teacher awareness of writing strategies contribute to the teaching and learning processes of students and teachers writing classes at the secondary level in the Seychelles?

The initial forays into the topic as depicted in the two research questions “what” and “how” describe what is going on. This is in contrast to quantitative questions that ask why and look for a comparison group or establish relationships between variables with the intent to establish cause and effect, and hence cannot explore the complexity of the language classroom where variables cannot be easily identified. A quantitative paradigm would not give me the opportunity to present a detailed view of the topic and would not suffice to present answers to the problem. I conducted this study from a qualitative perspective because I wanted to study the participants in their natural setting. If participants were removed from their setting, it would lead to contrived findings that are out of context. My use of the personal pronoun “I” throughout the writing up of this thesis indicates that I want to bring myself into the study as I engage in the storytelling form of the narration. Finally by employing a qualitative approach I am emphasizing my role not only as a researcher but an active learner who can tell the story from the participants’ view rather than as an expert who passes judgments on participants.

A case study approach, with its emphasis on the examination of one setting, is considered appropriate for this study since it places action and events in context. Multiple case study design and analysis were used to explore the LLS used by the students and how these were taught by their respective teachers in a Seychelles secondary school. The case study enabled me to carry out this research in the normal everyday context of the researched, in this case the Seychellois secondary school teachers and their students. A cross-case methodology provided me with “means to identify patterns and trends to gain insights into potential differences or similarities between cases” (O’Kane, 2004, p. 310).

Such use of cross-case analysis enabled me to:

- Search for patterns
- Go beyond the initial impressions using structured and diverse lenses on the data. As a result, the likelihood of achieving an accurate and reliable theory was improved. Three tactics I used were: 1) select categories and look for within-group similarities coupled with intergroup differences, 2) select pairs of cases and list the similarities and differences between each pair, and 3) divide the data by data source to exploit unique insights possible from different types of data collection
- Compare and contrast emerging issues from one case with issues from other cases. This not only enhanced the validity of findings, but also contributed to the robustness of the understandings established.

4.3 METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK - ACTION RESEARCH

Action Research methodology concerns itself with identifying a problematic situation in one's teaching and critically investigates it in collaboration with other stakeholders which "involves taking a self-reflective, critical, and systematic approach to exploring your own teaching context" (Burns, 2010, p. 2).

This leads to the action part where Burns (2010, p. 2) stated that:

The central aim of the action part of AR is to intervene in a deliberate way in the problematic situation in order to bring about changes and even better improvements in practice. Importantly, the improvements that happen in AR are ones based on information (or the research term, data) that an Action Researcher collects systematically. So the changes made in the teaching situation arise from solid information rather than from our hunches or assumptions about the way we think things are.

According to Finch (2001) a classroom should be regarded as a complex adaptive system in which details are all that matters and it is useless to search for causal relations. Such complexity, Hase and Phelps (2002, p. 507) argued, can be studied using an AR methodology. An experimental approach to this study was not taken because the issue to be researched involves looking at the behaviours and attitudes of teachers and students in relation to LLS. According to Stringer (2007) "the social and behavioural worlds cannot be operationalized in scientific terms because the phenomena to be tested lack the stability required by traditional scientific method" (p. 192). A more appropriate approach to this study is AR. AR enables one to study a social situation carried out by those involved in that situation in order to improve both their practice and the quality of their understanding. This improvement in a social situation is brought about through participation in cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting,

thereby creating possibilities for change and transformation of the outcomes of the intervention (Halai, 2004).

According to Kemmis and McTaggart (1988, pp. 22-25) Action Research has 17 characteristics. Table 4.1 illustrates the relevance of some these characteristics in relation to this study.

Table 4.1: The characteristics of Action Research and how it relates to this study

Kemmis and McTaggart,(1988, pp. 22-25)	How these characteristics apply to my research
Action Research is an approach to improving education by changing it and learning from the consequences	I sought through this study to improve English language teaching in a Seychelles secondary school, in particular three classes. This requires critically looking at the teaching and practices of these teachers in search of that positive change. The study was not conducted on these teachers but with them.
Action Research develops through the self-reflective spiral: a spiral of cycles of planning, acting, (implementing plans), observing (systematically), reflecting...and then re-planning, further implementation, observing and reflecting.	My study had three phases. Each phase contained my Action Research cycles: think-act-reflect that fluidly spiralled from one cycle into the next with each cycle marking a period of time for which very specific goals had been set.
Action Research is collaborative; it involves those responsible for action in improving it and those who are affected by the practices	The participating teachers and I chose an area in their practice that needed improving. We developed a plan, implemented and evaluated it in order to address the problem.
Action Research establishes self-critical communities of learners participating and collaborating in the process	The teachers and I used data to critically reflect on the way English is taught in their classes.
Action Research is a systematic learning process in which people act deliberately	Data were collected and analysed systematically and in a cyclical manner.
Action Research involves theorizing about one's pedagogical practices	On the basis of the data collected and analysed the teachers and I were able to contribute knowledge to understanding of what is more appropriate for Seychellois secondary school students learning English.
Action Research involves keeping a personal journal in which we record our progress and reflections about two parallel sets of learning: our learning about the practices we are studying (how our practices are developing) and our learnings {sic} about the process (the practice) of studying them (how our Action Research project is going).	We made use of reflective journal and meetings in the study where our thoughts, record of research decisions; feelings, impressions showed the increased understanding that comes with the action process.

4.4 RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS

Firstly, I wrote to the Ministry of Education in the Seychelles explaining the purpose of the research and requesting permission to carry out the study in a school. Through the Ministry of Education, the head teacher of the school was informed about the project. Through the head teacher, the class teachers were invited to participate in the project. Through the class teachers, the students were invited to participate in the project. My letter to the Ministry included an information sheet that provided detail about the opportunity to participate and what participating in the research entailed. The phases of the research were explained in the information sheet detailing the data collection methods and procedures and the duration of the research. The information sheet also included the options of contacting me or my supervisors should further information or clarifications be needed.

Secondly, I travelled to the Seychelles, the research setting, in order to finalise approval and participation in the research. I met with the head teacher of the selected school in order to further confirm my intention to carry out this research in her school and also to request permission to have a meeting with the teachers. On the 2nd February 2011 at 1:30 pm, I met with the three potential participating teachers. I opened the meeting by introducing myself and informed the participating teachers about the research project. Although the teachers at first seemed enthusiastic about the research project, they later informed me through their head of department that they would not be able to participate in the project. I met with them a second time to encourage them to participate in the project but without success.

Thirdly, with the consent of the Ministry of Education, I chose and met with the language department of a second secondary school. The aim was to select three case studies from volunteers. Reflecting on my meetings with the teachers in the first school, I spent more time highlighting the amount of the teachers' involvement in each stage of the project. This was because I felt that the teachers in the first school decided not to participate in the project because of their fear of the amount of work that they would need to do in addition to their normal load. I explained to the teachers that they would do more work in the third phase of the project and this would be about three months. After explaining the project, I invited teachers to volunteer to take part in the project if they were enthusiastic about doing an Action Research study in their classes. This approach was taken after thorough reflection on how I introduced the project in the first school. For example, I realized if the participants were indifferent about doing Action Research then the research would be less likely to be successful. In this case, three secondary two English teachers representing classes with more-successful and less-successful students were chosen. The secondary three level as originally planned was dropped because there

were not enough interested teachers that represented each level of achievement to participate in the project, and students at that level would be taking their national coordinated exams.

4.5 THE SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM CONTEXT

I conducted the research within a school district in a rural area in the west of the main island Mahe in the Seychelles. In this school district, like other secondary schools in other districts across the country, Rose Belle (pseudonym of school) accommodates students aged 13-16 years. Students in the three case study classrooms were all in secondary two and aged 13-14 years and they represented students of more and less-successful achievements. They were streamed based on their end of year 2010 examination results. There were approximately 30 students in each class. These students had previously studied English as a second language for eight years.

Three Seychellois ESL teachers, Teachers A, B, and C, were involved in this study. They were chosen because they were willing to participate. The three classes mentioned above were their respective English classes. These participants were selected for case study analysis because these students were in the same grade level. They worked on similar topics and tasks. However, although they were at the same grade level (secondary two), they were taught by different English teachers. Therefore, contrasting teaching and learning processes for these three classes provided an optimal opportunity to explore how pedagogical principles derived from sociocultural theory could be adapted or used to meet individual needs.

4.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Dornyei (2007, p. 67) stated “the primary principle of research ethics is that no mental or physical harm should come to the respondents as a result of their participation in the investigation”. The research participants for this study were human beings. The research was carried out in accordance with the ethics guidelines of Victoria University of Wellington’s Human Research Ethics Committee.

These ethical principles were implemented during this study in the following ways:

Informed consent

I sought consent to carry out the research by writing to the Ministry of Education in the Seychelles. I also made personal visits to the schools explaining to the head teachers, teachers, parents and students what the study would involve. Each teacher was given a file containing the information sheet

and consent form (see Appendix A; Appendix B and a handout about how to structure a reflective journal. I also gave the teachers the information sheets and consent forms for students and parents which they would distribute to the students and the students to their parents or guardians. I went through the information sheet with the teachers explaining to them aspects of the research project. I also answered the questions they had with regard to the research.

Confidentiality

I kept information provided by the participants confidential. I assigned pseudonyms to the school and the teachers, and a number to students. I also changed the students' names when mentioned in lesson transcripts. During meetings when teachers' names were mentioned these were replaced by XXX. To ensure privacy, the interviews were conducted in separate rooms during the teachers' non-teaching working hours. In reports on classroom observation data, students' identities were not revealed.

Voluntary participation

I informed the participants that they were not compelled to participate in this study. The participants were informed that within three weeks from the start date of the project, if any participant decided to withdraw from the study, the information he or she had given would not be used in the study. All raw data would be destroyed after the completion of the study.

4.7 ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

In Action Research the position of the researcher can be placed on a continuum from being an insider to being an outsider to the setting under study. Herr and Anderson (2005, p. 31) drawing on the views of different authors presented the different degrees of the positionality of the researcher This is illustrated in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Continuum and implications of positionality (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 31)

	<i>Positionality of Researcher</i>	<i>Validity Criteria</i>	<i>Contributes to:</i>	<i>Traditions</i>
Insider (1)	Insider (researcher studies own self/ practice)	Anderson & Herr (1999), Bullough & Pinnegar (2001), Connelly & Clandinin (1990)	Knowledge base, Improved/critiqued practice, Self/professional transformation	Practitioner research, Autobiography, Narrative research, Self study
(2)	Insider in collaboration with other insiders	Heron (1996), Saavedra (1996)	Knowledge base, Improved/critiqued practice, Professional/organizational transformation	Feminist consciousness raising groups, Inquiry/Study groups, Teams
(3)	Insider(s) in collaboration with outsider(s)	Anderson & Herr (1999), Heron (1996), Saavedra (1996)	Knowledge base, Improved/critiqued practice, Professional/organizational transformation	Inquiry/Study groups
(4)	Reciprocal collaboration (insider-outsider teams)	Anderson & Herr (1999), Bartunek & Louis (1996)	Knowledge base, Improved/critiqued practice, Professional/organizational transformation	Collaborative forms of participatory Action Research that achieve equitable power relations
(5)	Outsider(s) in collaboration with insider(s)	Anderson & Herr (1999), Bradbury & Reason (2001a), Heron (1996)	Knowledge base, Improved/critiqued practice, Organization development/transformation	Mainstream change agency : consultancies, industrial democracy, organizational learning; Radical change: community empowerment (Paulo Freire)
Outsider (6)	Outsider(s) studies insider(s)	Campbell & Stanley (1963), Lincoln & Guba (1985)	Knowledge base	University-based, academic research on Action Research methods or Action Research projects

The relationship between insider and outsider needs to be clear and is necessary for thinking through issues of research validity as well as research ethics. Herr and Anderson (2005, p. 30) stated that “while insider and outsider positions are at the extremes of the continuum, many studies are done by true collaborations among insiders and outsiders. These studies are known as participatory or collaborative research”. As Herr and Anderson,(2005, p. 39) argued “the notion of insider and outsider is often a matter of degree. On the continuum of the positionality table, positions 4, 5 and 6 illustrate the gradations from participatory insider-outsider teams all the way to non-participatory outsider research”. Using Herr & Anderson’s (2005) continuum of positionality, my Action Research is placed around position 5. As Herr and Anderson argued, this is the most common type of collaborative Action Research. I have taken this stance because in this study, my role of the researcher has elements of both outsider and insider:

- As an outsider, I initiated the research proposal and it was contingent on institutional approval (Herr & Anderson, 2005).
- I was an insider in that I am a member of the culture and have experience in similar teaching situations.
- My role was not to impose but to stimulate people to change, which was done by addressing issues that concerned them at the time.
- The teachers and I worked together to determine priorities but the responsibility remained with me for directing the process (Herr & Anderson, 2005).
- Co-learning took place with the teachers and I sharing our knowledge to create new understanding about LLS and working together to form action plans with my facilitation (Herr & Anderson, 2005).
- The essence of the work was process – the way things are done – rather than the results achieved.
- Action Research aims to enable people to develop their own analysis of their issues.
- Action Research aims to enable people to examine several courses of action and the probable results or consequences of each option. After a plan had been selected, I assisted in implementing the plan by raising issues and possible weaknesses and by helping to locate resources (Stringer, 2007, p. 25).

I drew on my outsider and insider perspectives to work towards the above goals.

4.7.1 WHAT DID IT MEAN TO BE AN INSIDER/OUTSIDER IN THIS RESEARCH?

In this section, I present my field experiences as a researcher, reflecting fluctuations in my researcher positionality and in the sense of affinity/alienness that took place in the field.

Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane and Muhamad (2001) used data from four case studies – a black woman interviewing Other black women, Asian graduate students in the US interviewing people from 'back home', an African professor learning from African business women, and a cross-cultural team studying in non-western culture. The authors stated

“The more one is like the participants in terms of culture, gender, race, socio-economic class and so on, the more it is assumed that access will be granted, meanings shared, and validity of findings assured” (Merriam et al., 2001, p. 406).

When I began my research, my status as an insider may have given me an advantage over researchers from outside the Seychellois culture. For example, I had no need to contend with familiarizing myself with local people, learning Creole or internalizing local codes that are generally unknown to outsiders. In terms of political, cultural, educational and historical experiences, I was similar to my research participants. The chosen field site was where I was born and grew up and attended school from primary to secondary level. My strong family ties where most of my relatives still lived made me familiar with such settings. I was also an ESL teacher for a number of years even though not in the research site. Many teachers in that school knew me as either a past colleague or simply as an acquaintance in the field of education.

Furthermore, having similar experiences to my participants and being fluent in our native language, Creole, placed me in a situation where I felt my expertise would be useful in eliciting reflections from participants and in making interpretations of the participants' inner worlds that would be undetectable to an 'outsider' researcher. Thus, I concur with Stephenson and Greer (1981, p. 125) that

Language is not only a tool for understanding the words, but a symbol and a means of closeness. Being a local researcher and part of the investigated group makes the understanding of the social truth easier ... depending on little clues”.

For example, I could readily perceive the teacher participants' struggles as they pointed out their problems in their practices. In our meetings and PD sessions for the planning of Phase 3 (See chapter 6), after presenting the result of Phase 1 to the teachers, the teachers and I seemed to be holding similar views on learning in the classroom. As Johnson-Bailey (1991, p. 669) stated “our culture-bound phrases which did not need interpretation and non-verbal discourses conveyed with hand gestures and facial expressions” united the teachers and me . I belonged to their linguistic and cultural community and this made me sensitive to local meanings. Here I was an insider, and studying a group of people to whom I belong gave

me an advantage because I was able to use our shared knowledge to gain more intimate insights into their views.

From a cultural standpoint, I had no feelings of alienation in the research setting. However, my personal experiences as a researcher studying my own culture revealed that such closeness may give rise to certain problems. I found myself at an inherent social disadvantage as my positionality as an insider increased cultural expectations regarding my contributions in the research project. In the Seychelles hierarchical culture in terms of qualifications and education, my status as a doctoral student in a developed country, New Zealand, positioned me as someone with ties to a prestigious educational institution implying that 'you are educated in a developed country and you know more'. Through the Seychelles sociocultural lens, my seniority was represented by my academic qualifications: I had a Diploma, a Bachelor's degree, a Masters degree and at that time was pursuing a doctoral degree, and by my 19 years of teaching experiences. By contrast, the three teachers had a local diploma in teaching with shorter teaching experiences, ranging from 1 month to 3 and half years. The role each of the team members played in this research was influenced by our position in this hierarchical structure. The three teachers were supportive. They assisted me to complete the research, but my academic status as a local researcher was affected by my position as an insider who differed from the teacher participants. In some ways I was an outsider and cultural expectations increased regarding my behaviour. I felt pressurized to provide 'expert' knowledge to help the teachers find a solution to their problems and in the decision making process. For example, it was I who proposed that we use strategy-based instruction through the process approach to teaching writing in the three classes. It was I who took the lead in suggesting ideas for the PD sessions. Although the teachers voiced their concerns about the PD sessions, they eventually agreed with my suggestions most of the time. Teacher A, for example held a more subservient role by accepting whatever was agreed upon without any persistent disagreement. This outsider role in terms of my academic qualifications placed me in a difficult situation in that any change implemented could be seen as owned by me, but not the teacher participants.

As both as a researcher (outsider) and a local person (insider), I felt a certain distance between myself and the teacher participants in the study. Within this space, I discovered I was an outsider. For example, in the process of negotiating observation of the teachers' lessons, the fact that I was not an employee in the school community or an official with authority from the Ministry of Education, rendered me an outsider. On some occasions, I had to schedule meetings of classroom observations through the Head of Language Department.

Indirectly I was constantly reminded of my status as a seeker of information wholly dependent on the research participants' willingness to participate in the study. Thus scheduled classroom observations and meetings would be either cancelled at the last minute or even not scheduled even when the dates and times had been agreed upon way in advance. Even when we were having the meetings and PD sessions, I was reminded by the participants that they had other things to attend to. These responses were powerful reminders of the fact that, however, important it may have been to me, my research did not figure very highly in the teachers' overall scale of priorities.

My 'outsider' status was exemplified by what was not said by the teachers. Close relationships are typically based on reciprocal trust and intimacy. Openness and the disclosure of private thoughts are mechanisms through which such familiarity is accomplished and there was little evidence of this between myself and the teachers in the early days of my fieldwork. In an attempt to develop closer and more intimate relationship with the teachers and gain their trust, I shifted my position to more of an insider by arriving at the school early enough and going to the staff room, so that I could have informal chats with my research participants or other teachers. Then, I would walk with the participating teachers to their respective classrooms for observation. On our way to class, I would often initiate conversations as a means of coming closer to the teachers. I assumed that in doing so, I would be seen as a member of the local community who was also interested in their work. However, I noted that the teachers rarely initiated a conversation with me, nor did they involve me in their conversations even when I sat amongst them during break time. I wanted to blend in to facilitate rapport and not intimidate. I feared not fitting in or not being accepted and this feeling remained with me for some months into the research until I became closer with each teacher.

Whilst the teachers treated me as someone with insider knowledge (See Chapter 6) during meetings and PD sessions, it was clear that they did not see me as one of them, and this came as a tremendous shock to me. For example, allowing the teachers to comment on their verbatim transcripts from their participants' view was driven by my desire to empower them and become closer to them in the process of the research (See section 4.8.7). However, one teacher viewed this experience as threatening and it may have prompted worry over how she was being represented by someone from the same culture.

During one of our informal chats, the Head of Language Department reported to me what this particular teacher said about my observing her: “When she observes us she writes everything”. There seemed to be concern that I would be making judgments about the quality of their practice. I believe that there are potential risks to participants when conducting insider research, in particular the potential power imbalance which alienates the researcher from his or her own community.

The researcher’s status as an insider or outsider changes at various points in a research project, and with different groups and individuals. In this study, I chose a non-participant role during classroom observation to align with my outsider position (See section 4.8.2). However, the fluidity of my position as an ESL teacher and researcher posed some dilemmas for me regarding the social dynamics involved in timing with regard to observing the lessons. I decided to enter the classes before each class began, but this option suggested to the students that I was an insider. In the Seychelles, students line up in front of their respective classrooms and wait for their teachers to signal to them when to enter the classes. So I stood there with them as well and entered the class with them at the instructions of the teacher. In so doing, I was complying with the suggestion that it is important to capture the whole social setting in which people function (Mulhall, 2003). However, despite planning what I thought would be appropriate points to enter the classes, positioning in the groups and dialogue with students, there were many situations where there was a conflict between my insider status as ESL teacher and my attempts to carry out observations as an outsider to the situation. For example, most of the time I chose a seat at the back of the room and took notes about what was going on in the class. No students attempted to engage me in conversation, but some students would glance at me. I tried not to make eye contact with them or enter into any conversation with them.

Nevertheless, on reflection, I believe my positioning impacted on them. The aim of being a non-participant is to avoid tainting the data, thus promoting objectivity in data collection (Turnock & Gibson, 2001). At times, I felt the students were oblivious to my presence. But was that true? To control misbehaviour, Teacher C would often remind the students that I was there to take note of their behaviour and report them to the Ministry of Education. This reinforced my powerful status of observer and the vulnerability of the students. My taking notes may have confirmed what Teacher C said to them – I was documenting information about them, recording their private conversations and their behaviour.

On some occasions, the students treated me as an insider. They would seek help from me. I would answer briefly and end the conversation with them or tell them to ask the teacher, suggesting it was better for me to remain outside the group. My behaviour created an additional discourse of power in their environment which might have an impact on their learning – and I did not recognize that.

During the collaborative research process, I was not only the facilitator of the project, but I also studied the research team experiences. In the development of the collaborative research project, I was a co-participant with the two teachers. Then in the implementation of the collaborative research project, I stepped back and took an observer role by observing their implementation of the plan. However, I reflected with them on the research process of the CAR. Although it was my intention to take a more distanced view of the project once it was being implemented, I realized that my role in this respect was also changing. It was difficult to isolate myself totally from the research project and I became more of a co-participant together with the two teachers because I was also studying my own experiences in participating in the CAR. Kanuha (2000) argued that there is an implicit contradiction in attempting to separate being an outside observer and being an insider with intimate knowledge of the population being studied. She said that distancing oneself is emotionally and intellectually impossible.

All in all my positionality in this research may be characterized as changing and fluctuating according to the context, content, feelings and ideas expressed.

4.7 2 MY ADOPTED CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF ACTION RESEARCH

My purpose in using a collaborative approach is well reflected in Burns' (1999, p. 13) statement that "policies and practices within the organization are more likely to be opened up to change when such changes are brought about through group processes and collective pressures. Collaborative action is potentially more empowering than Action Research conducted individually as it offers a strong framework for whole-school change".

AR is multifaceted and may be conceptualized and implemented in a variety of ways. I found it particularly challenging to establish an Action Research plan given the complexity of my dual roles in the study as participant and researcher. In addition to that, Zuber-Skerritt and Fletcher (2007, p. 420) state that one of the common dilemmas faced by AR candidates is "the question of how they as collaborative Action

Researchers can prove that their contribution to theory and practice is *original* and their *own work*". To address this problem I have adapted Perry and Zuber-Skerritt's (1992, p. 204) AR conceptual model to develop my own model of an AR thesis in order to make my roles and contributions to knowledge in this study more explicit. Perry and Zuber-Skerritt's model distinguished between independent and collaborative aspects of Action Research as illustrated in Figure 4.1 below.

Figure 4.1: Conceptual model of an Action Research thesis (Perry and Zuber-Skerritt, 1992, p. 204))

The candidate's individual research involves thesis research and thesis writing. The candidate also has to activate the core Action Research project (that is the fieldwork) and facilitate it. The core Action Research project is collaborative as participants may be involved in *planning* the team project with the candidate, *acting* and implementing their plan, *observing* and evaluating their action and *reflecting* on the results and on the whole process of the core Action Research. Thus participants are involved in the plan-act-observe-reflect-revise spiral of Action Research cycles until they are satisfied and ready to report to stakeholders. The candidate's individual work, as stated earlier, involves thesis research and writing, which are also depicted as two cycles in the model. During the first cycle, thesis research, the candidate *plans* where the research will take place, defines the research questions of the thesis, reviews literature about the methodology and the problem/content area. The candidate then proceeds by *acting* in the fieldwork - see description of core Action Research above. This is followed by the candidate's independent observation and evaluation of the fieldwork. At this point, the candidate *analyses and evaluates* the whole fieldwork in

the light of his/her literature review and theoretical framework. The candidate then proceeds to independently *reflect* on the results of the fieldwork, which will allow him/her to conceptualise and theorise the whole research process and results, thus leading to his/her contribution to knowledge in theory and in practice. The second cycle, thesis writing, involves the recursive processes of planning, drafting and revising of the thesis until the candidate is satisfied and ready to submit his/her thesis. The candidate would have also made some recommendations for further research, based on the analysis of his/her current findings.

Figure 4.2 shows my adaptation of Perry and Zuber-Skerritt's (1992) AR conceptual model where the distinction between independent and collaborative research is also seen.

Figure 4.2: Conceptual model of my AR thesis adapted from (Perry & Zuber-Skerritt, 1992)

My independent work is depicted by two cycles – Thesis Research I and Thesis Writing. During the Thesis Research I, I *planned* where the research would take place, defined the research questions of the thesis, and reviewed literature about the methodology and the problem/content area. I also compiled a

bibliography using Endnote. I then proceeded to the fieldwork. However, unlike the Perry and Zuber-Skerritt (1992) model, the fieldwork saw me taking on the role of an observer during the fieldwork, where I conducted classroom observations and interviews with teachers. Thus, this phase of my Action Research was entirely independent rather than collaborative. I went on to evaluate and analyse data collected from classroom observations and teacher interviews using Nvivo 9 software. Conclusions drawn from the fieldwork were presented to the teachers.

I then activated the core Action Research project with the team of teachers and then facilitated the whole process of planning, acting (implementing the plan), observing (evaluating, documenting the innovations and evidence for successes and failures) and reflecting on the above process. Given the contextual constraints (e.g. timing, unforeseen interruptions such as educational visits and ad hoc staff meetings) we were not able to go through several plan-act-observe-reflect-revise Action Research cycles as was the case in the original model (Perry & Zuber-Skerritt, 1992). We then evaluated the implementation and results of the core Action Research project through reflective meetings. I also took a more distant perspective as I needed to independently analyse and evaluate the whole team project in the light of the literature reviewed and theoretical framework – sociocultural theory. The teachers and I collaboratively reviewed the CAR as part of the core Action Research project also. I am now on the last cycle of my model – Thesis Writing. This involves independent writing of the thesis and the recursive processes of planning, drafting and revising as is the case in the Perry and Zuber-Skerritt (1992) model.

4.8 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURES

I gathered data through a variety of sources enabling clarification of the nature of the research problem (Burns, 2010; Whitehead & McNiff, 2006). Similar research data collection techniques and procedures were used in Phases 1 and 3 with the exception of teacher interviews which were replaced with reflective meetings in Phase 3. The following details the data collection techniques and procedures.

4.8.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS AT BEGINNING OF PROJECT

Cohen and Manion (1989, p. 241) stated that research interview has been defined as a ‘two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focused by him on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation’. Interviews, like questionnaires, vary depending on their degree of explicitness and structure: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Interviews with the teachers were held on 1st March 2011. In this study, I used semi-structured interviews because they suited the purpose of this study better. I used specific core predetermined questions to explore in-depth information, probing according to the ways the interviews proceeded. It allowed for elaboration, within limits (Seliger & Shohamy, 1995).

Although the interview has been conceived as a “transaction which inevitably has bias” (L. Cohen & Manion, 1989, p. 245), in this study, I controlled this by allowing the teachers to view their interview transcripts so that they could check whether what I had written accurately reflected their experiences. The advantages of semi-structured interviews for this study are described by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011, p. 102). I designed a set of questions which aligned with the research questions and tried to keep the conversation on track with the questions. I chose semi-structured interviews to align with the qualitative research paradigm. The interviewees were allowed some latitude and freedom to talk about what was of interest to them, hence allowing the conversation to flow more naturally and show the complexities that were unique to the participants being studied. This made room for the conversation to develop in unexpected directions where interviewees gave information or provided knowledge about things which were not planned or thought of in advance. When such knowledge emerges, a researcher using a semi-structured design is likely to allow the conversation to develop, exploring new topics that are relevant to the interviewee. Aligning with the methodological principles of Action Research, interviews are a “meaning-making partnership between interviewers and their respondents...provide an opportunity for researchers to learn about social life through the perspectives, experience and language of those living it” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 105).

As Cohen and Manion (1989) advised, I followed three procedures in conducting the interviews. First, to put the teachers at ease, I engaged in a short casual chat with the teachers. Second, I briefed the teachers on the purpose and procedures of the interview. Third, I asked for their permission to audio-record the interview.

The interviews with the teachers were conducted individually. Each interview lasted 15 - 25 minutes. This technique “provides opportunities for the participants to describe the situation in their own terms. It is a reflective process that enables the interviewee to explore his or her experience in detail and to reveal the many features of that experience that have an effect on the issues investigated” (Stringer, 2007, p. 8). The semi-structured interview in this study was to elicit from teachers their teaching practices with particular emphasis on the LLS they either overtly taught or had observed their students using for English language tasks, and on opportunities that they gave students to use those strategies.

The interview schedule consisted of two parts. The first part was about demographic information of the teachers. The second part began with the following opening questions: Tell me about what makes you an effective language teacher. How do you go about teaching? How do you support learning? Tell me more. Anything else? (See Appendix E),

This was followed by a set of follow-up questions addressing the following themes: remembering effectively; using mental processes; compensating for missing knowledge; organizing and evaluating; managing emotion; learning with others. These themes were derived from Oxford’s (1990, pp.293-300) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). Follow-up questions were contingent on the responses of the teachers to the initial questions.

I audio-recorded the interviews in order to capture a detailed and accurate account of the interactions. I transcribed the recording immediately after each interview. I provided the teachers with a copy of the transcript to check for accuracy.

The regular qualitative interviews in this study were shaped by many factors including the purpose of the research, the participants’ personalities, my personal style as a researcher and the relationship between the participants and me. In order for the interview to work well, I tailored the questions for each interviewee. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005, p. 14) “asking everyone the same questions makes little sense in qualitative interviewing”. The same authors advocate the use of responsive interviewing which means that “interviewing is intended to communicate that qualitative interviewing is dynamic and an iterative process, not a set of tools to be applied mechanically” (Rubin & Rubin 2005, p. 15).

The interviews conducted with the teachers were responsive in nature. Although I had a general focus, the interviews with the teachers were adjusted to match their own situations. I had a list of questions grouped into a few different categories at hand, but I normally followed the flow of the interview, picked up leads from the interviewee, and probed if needed.

4.8.2 CLASSROOM OBSERVATION: MARCH 2011 TO APRIL 2011 (PHASE 1) AND SEPTEMBER 2011 TO NOVEMBER 2011 (PHASE 3)

“As language classrooms are specifically constituted to bring about learning, it is not unreasonable to collect data about what goes on there as a means of adding to our knowledge of language learning and use” (Nunan, 1992, p. 91). Dornyei (2007, p. 179) stated that classroom observation is done through two main perspectives: ‘participant’ and ‘non-participant’. The participant observer is a full member of the group that he or she observes and takes part in all activities. On the other hand the non-participant observer is usually not or minimally involved in the setting. In this study I was a non-participant observer which aligns with my outsider positionality in this research.

Although it is often argued that the presence of the observer can affect and bias the participants’ behaviour (Dornyei, 2007), its use in this study outweighed this disadvantage. For example, observing these classes from an ethnographic perspective enabled me to really understand what was happening in the classrooms (Frank, 1999). It also provided opportunities to understand particular patterns of classroom life which are not always visible because they become so regular, patterned and ordinary. Observations were conducted to gather supporting evidence to the teachers’ interview responses. In addition, I used these observations to gather evidence to support the areas in which this study focused: (a) teachers’ roles in fostering strategic instruction, (b) teaching and learning practices. While observing, I sat at the back of the classes and noted what was happening in the classes, enabling me to get a lot of written notes as unobtrusively as possible (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 23). I observed all three participating teachers to ensure consistency of data recording. I observed the classroom systematically in order to preserve the naturalness of the setting. I did that by recording the classroom talk unobtrusively from the back of the classroom, trying not to interact socially with the teacher and students during the lessons. As I was in each classroom for three or five lessons the teachers and students became accustomed to being observed and audio-recorded.

Each class had five to six periods of English per week. I planned to observe each class for at least one period per week over six weeks to develop an overview of how English was taught and learned in each class across weeks. This procedure was to be followed to allow for continuity and also to reduce the likelihood that students and teachers would only be seen on a non-typical day. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, I was able to observe two classes five times and one class three times in Phase 1. Classroom observation started on 15th March 2011. In Phase 3, I observed the remaining two participating teachers five times each. This started on the 6th September 2011. In both phases, there were times when I had to observe the classes twice in a week in order to complete the observation sessions. After observations were completed, I asked the teachers for a copy of their written lesson or termly plans. I looked at the plans to see if language learning strategies were mentioned in any way.

4.8.3 REFLECTIVE RESEARCHER JOURNAL (FEBRUARY 2011 TO NOVEMBER 2011)

It has been argued that we do not learn from experience but through reflecting on experience (Chiptin, 2006). Reflection helps educators to better understand what they should know and do in developing their knowledge of practice through reconsidering what they learn in practice. AR strongly advocates reflection in every cycle for two main reasons: (1) professional practice is full of complexities and uncertainties and; (2) Action Research has been used significantly in the field of education, i.e. teaching. If Action Research is a form of education, Munn-Giddings and Winter (2001, p. 50) argued that “engaging in Action Research inquiry has a direct similarity with their own professional practice”.

One of the Action Research principles is to keep documenting the research process. The main purpose of keeping a journal is clearly stated by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988, p. 50): “In order to steer the process of learning you are setting in place through Action Research, all members of the Action Research group should keep a diary or journal”. Ideally, the teachers and I would all have kept a reflective journal throughout the study. However, the teachers said they were too busy to do so, and I respected their positions.

The contents of a journal should include a record of research decisions; a record of one’s own thoughts, feelings and impressions, thus reflecting the increased understanding that comes with the action process (Herr & Anderson, 2005).

In this study, my journal contained the following four kinds of reflections as enumerated by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988, pp. 50-51):

- Notes and reflections on changing uses of language and the development of more coherent discourse about the thematic concern I was studying.
- Notes and reflections about changing activities in the research setting, and the emergence of more coherently described and justified educational practices.
- Notes and reflections about changing social relationships among the teachers and I in the setting,
- Notes and reflections about changes in the way the teachers and I participated in the AR process itself.

As the research progressed, I documented in the journal all discussions with the teachers. I also recorded actions taken and reflections on teachers' practice in relation to the research question as the research progressed.

4.8.4 MEETINGS: JULY 2011 TO NOVEMBER 2011

One of the key elements of collaborative AR is the use of dialogue as an "important methodological link and as occupying a principal position in Action Research among activities pursued because of its existential significance for human life" (P. Park, 2006, p. 84). The meetings I had with the participating teachers enabled me to pay attention to the daily lives and subjective realities of the teachers. The meetings provided opportunities where those realities were defined, examined and challenged. The teachers and I participated in a total of nine meetings held approximately weekly in Phase 3 of the AR. These lasted from 45 minutes to one hour each from July 2011 to November 2013. The goals of these meetings varied.

The first three meetings were used to present the themes that emerged from the analysis of the findings of Phase 1; identify an area in the teaching' practices that needed working on; and develop professional development (PD) sessions to address the issues identified. The second three meetings were PD sessions used to address the identified problem. The last three meetings were used to reflect on the implemented actions. See meeting schedule in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3: Meeting schedule

Meetings	Date
Development of PD sessions	7 July 2011
Development of PD sessions	21 th July 2011
Development of PD sessions	28 th July 2011
PD 1	29 th August 2011
PD 2	30 th August 2011
PD 3	1 st September 2011
Reflective 1	25 th September 2011
Reflective 2	28 th September 2011
Reflective 3	22 November 2011

4.8.5 AUDIO-RECORDING AND TRANSCRIPTION

Interviews, classroom observations and meetings were complemented by audio-recording, transcription and field notes.

4.8.6 AUDIO-RECORDING

According to Burns (1999, p. 94) audio-recording is a “technique for capturing in detail naturalistic interactions and verbatim utterances”. In this study it was an invaluable tool to capture classroom talk which I could reflect upon. Audio-recording is less intrusive than video-recording and causes less distraction in the classroom. Although video-recordings can encompass a greater range of both verbal and non verbal behaviour, I chose audio-recording because means for audio- recording were not available. I used a digital audio-recorder to record the interviews and meetings. The interviews and the meetings were done in English.

I also audio-recorded classroom talk during the classroom observations. A digital audio-recorder was placed in the teacher’s pocket and a cassette recorder was placed on a student’s desk in the middle of the classroom in order to record students’ talk during the lessons observed.

4.8.7 TRANSCRIPTION

The audio-recordings were transcribed and copies were made available to the teachers for their verification. Although a time-consuming activity, the advantages of this technique in this study is described by Burns (1999, p. 98):

Transcription allows researchers to scan particular classroom episodes relatively quickly without the need to review the whole recording....it reveals insights into the data as the researcher becomes closely engaged... transcription has the effect of concentrating the mind considerably beyond simply listening or watching and provides a basis for more in-depth analyses, while any length of time spent transcribing also means that the data become very familiar.

In addition to that, teachers and I could always have access to the transcripts when verifying claims made and they could be re-used and re-examined for further analysis when the need arose.

When transcribing the interviews, classroom observations and meetings, a heading was written at the start of each interview, classroom observation and meeting transcript. The heading contained the pseudonym used for each teacher, the date and time of the interview, classroom observation and meeting and the site of the interview. This helped me organize the data and to retrieve specific segments when I wanted them (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

While transcribing the interviews, meetings and classroom talk, I realized that I had to make three distinct decisions:

(1) I reflected whether to transcribe fully or partially. This led me to read about transcription and its trustworthiness as a qualitative technique. Oliver, Serovich, and Mason (2005) argued that transcription modes can be placed on a continuum which has two dominant modes, “naturalism mode” at one end and “denaturalism mode” at the other end. In the naturalism mode every utterance is transcribed in as much detail as possible while in the denaturalism mode idiosyncratic elements of speech such as stutters, pauses, non-verbal, involuntary vocalization are not transcribed. Given that my main concern was with the content of what the participants said, I transcribed towards the ‘denaturalism’ end. However I did make sure that I transcribed every word speakers said and I did include some pauses, gestures, and prosodic features (e.g. talking loudly) where they seemed salient to me. This ensured that potential themes did not get lost in the transcription stage and that the linguistic context was preserved, making it easy during data analysis to check connections between themes and categories.

(2) I also had to decide on transcription conventions. There is no one set of conventions for transcription (D. Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005), so I was the one who decided what to include and exclude during the transcription. In terms of structure, the transcripts were prepared as a dramatic script as follows: I separated the speakers into columns in order to make salient the contrast between the teachers and students and researcher and teachers. The right column for the teacher (for lesson transcript) or researcher (for interviews and meetings) and the left for the student (lesson transcript) or teachers (interviews and meetings). The speaker's turns were noted vertically down each column.

(3) I transcribed the interviews, meetings and classroom talk. Given that I was the interviewer and observer, I opted to do the transcription because it involved interpretation of content, so that I could become more engaged with the data I collected. However, I felt that for issues of validity and reliability, it was important that another person double-check the transcriptions against the recordings. I identified a teacher from a business school who did not know the research participants to do the checking. For ethical issues she signed a confidentiality form (see Appendix C). This increased the accuracy of the transcription. I gave the three teachers their lesson, interview and meeting transcripts for them to verify also.

4.8.8 FIELD NOTES

Notes are descriptions and accounts of events in the research context which are written in a relatively factual and objective style. They generally include reports of non-verbal information, physical settings, group structures and records of conversations and interactions between participants (Burns, 1999, p. 87).

Like transcription, writing or typing field notes is a laborious process. However, its use in this study has multiple benefits, as illustrated by Bogdan and Biklen (2007, p. 128):

...when you do your own notes you get to know your data better. When you are collecting data in the setting, the knowledge that you must write up notes after you leave forces you to concentrate while gathering evidence. Reliving the experience line by line as you write out the notes intensifies concentration further. The note-taking thus encourages the observer to replay the events: seeing and hearing things a second time should improve recall. The process also helps the observer to internalize, to commit to memory, what has been observed. The computer preserves the data, but

the researcher's mind stores the thought process used to recall the data. This is like an extra source of data.

To ethnographically document what was going on in the classrooms, I kept an observation note-book. Spradley (1980) argued that to be ethnographic in one's observation, use needs to be made of a grand tour observation which looks at the different dimensions of social situations. Spradley (1980) describes these as:

- Space: the physical place or places
- Actor: the people involved
- Activity: a set of related acts people do
- Object: the physical things that are present
- Act: single actions that people do
- Event: a set of related activities that people carry out
- Time: the sequencing that takes place over time
- Goal: the things people are trying to accomplish
- Feeling: the emotions felt and expressed.

No two classrooms are the same, therefore my use of ethnographic observation is reflected in Frank's (1999, p. 7) statement:

Ethnography gave me a language I could use to express this principle, that classrooms are particular social settings, mini-cultures in themselves that are not universal. Events are different in classrooms because teachers and students are different, establishing and creating their own rights and obligations, rules, relationships, and norms and expectations.

In line with the AR approach, "typology of variables that results from the study is derived from observation of the patterns that recur, that is, the bits of data (e.g., ... the field notes) are searched systematically for recurring patterns of behaviours" (Green & Wallat, 1983, p. xiv).

According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007, p. 121) it is understood that "a researcher will not always capture exactly, word-for-word what the participants have said". In this case where I could not capture word-for-word what the students or the teacher said, I have used the phrase "...said something like this" in my notes. Where I was really unsure what the participants said, this was noted and then I summarized what I remembered.

The first page of each set of notes contained a heading with information indicating when (date and time) and where the observation took place and the number of this set of notes in the total study. The headings helped me to keep the notes in order and keep a record of the conditions under which the notes were taken hence making retrieval of information easier. This served as quick reminder of the session (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 124).

4.9 DATA ANALYSIS

The range of data collection techniques described above generated rich data. I begin this section by introducing the system I used to organise and access all types of data, followed by the data-analysis procedures.

4.9.1 PRESENTATION OF DATA SOURCES

Data sources are designated by abbreviations that identify participant involved, data source and the date the data were collected:

Teacher A	TA
Teacher B	TB
Teacher C	TC
Researcher	R
Researcher's Journal	RJ
Professional Development Session One	PD1
Reflective Meeting 1	RM1
Meeting 1	M1
Classroom Observation	CO
Field notes	FN

For example:

(CO/TA/28/10/2011) refers to classroom observation in Teacher A's class 28th October 2011

(RM1/TA/28/10/2011) refers to Teacher A/ Reflective Meeting 1, contributed on 28th October 2011

(RJ/22/6/2011) refers to Researchers Journal written on 22nd June 2011

(PD1TA/29/8/2011) refers to Teacher's A contribution in the first PD session held on 29th October 2011

(M1TB/20/6/2011) refers to Teacher's B contribution in the first meeting held on 20th June 2011

(FN/CY/22/6/2011) refers to field notes taken on 22nd June 2011 in classroom Y

(I/TA/1/3/2011) refers to interview with Teacher A on 1st March 2011.

4.9.2 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

According to Burns (1999, p. 153) "data analysis in Action Research involves moving away from the 'action' components of the cycle, where the main focus is on planning and acting, to the 'research' aspects where the focus changes to more systematic observing and reflecting". Data analysis involves working with the data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, and searching for patterns (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 159). Unlike traditional research where data analysis begins when all the data have been collected, data analysis in Action Research is a dynamic process. It inevitably overlaps, interrelates and recurs. It is difficult to separate the data collection from the data analysis. This is because "an essential feature of Action Research is the 'reflexivity' which results from cycling backwards and forwards from data collection to analysis to further data collection and so on as the need arises" (Burns, 1999, p. 154). The following section describes how analysis was conducted in this Action Research project.

4.9.3 CODING, MEMOING AND TRANSCRIBING

Qualitative data from the journal, semi-structured interviews, meetings and classroom observations were analyzed using latent content analysis (Cohen & Manion, 1989) that is, coding for themes, looking for patterns, making interpretations and building theory. First I read and reread the text and transcripts to

acquire a sense of the participants' perspectives. Then I loaded all the data on Nvivo 9 (Nvivo qualitative data analysis software, 2010). Two Nvivo projects were created, one for Phase 1 and one for Phase 3. I created a folder for each classroom under the respective teacher name and imported interview and lesson transcripts for each teacher into the two projects. Lesson transcripts were coded for teacher talk and students' talk separately. Teacher talk includes talk to the class as well as any talk to any group during the group writing tasks. Students' talk included all students' speech within one group during group writing activities as well as students' interaction during whole-class discussion. Transcripts of meetings and PD sessions were put in different folders as they contained data from all teacher participants. I read and re-read the data set from one classroom to identify initial themes in teacher and student talk separately. I then did line by line coding by assigning a code which sometimes was a word or action of the teachers or students such as 'asking questions'. I placed each coded word or line at a node and stored with similar ideas. I assigned each node a set of properties to ensure consistency in my coding during the long analysis process. I used this list of nodes and properties as my codebook which guided my ongoing analysis of data from the other two classrooms. However, I was also sure to create new nodes when something arose that was unique to another classroom. I then looked for patterns in the coding to see if there were consistencies and I sought trends across the data sources in the three classrooms. The categories for teacher talk which resulted from this process included:

1. Curriculum related - any talk about the content being taught. This occurred when the teachers were explaining the topic of the lesson in teacher-led whole-class activities such as exposition, teacher questioning, or elicitation and discussion.
2. Organisational-talk to organise activities and participation patterns, to frame activities, provide general instructions, to move, to manage time, to tell students what is coming next, to manage transitions, etc. Organizational talk occurred mostly during classroom management or instruction activities.
3. Behaviour management - class and student control by teacher.
4. Informal-digressive whole class talk with teacher, e.g., teacher talks about how students spent their weekend, when there's no relevance to the topic taught or calls for time-out and chats with students; it does not include a group of students chatting in the classroom.

When I re-examined the talk of the teachers, I considered different ways that the teachers were mediating and scaffolding students' learning in their ZPD. I derived the following six areas from the data collected during the analysis process:

1. Activating students' background knowledge.
2. Using students' own writing experiences.
3. Use of questions.
4. Use of procedural facilitators.
5. Use of modeling.
6. Use of pair and group work.

These six areas were taken as themes. In table 4.4, I define each of the areas/themes that emerged from the data collected in this study.

Table 4.4: Definitions for each of the areas/themes arising from Teacher talk

Areas/Themes	Definitions
1. Activating students' background knowledge	Teacher talk or the activities which encouraged students to use or build on their own prior knowledge for understanding the lesson content - writing a story
2. Using students' own writing experiences	Teacher talk and the activities which encouraged students to use their own writing experiences for understanding the lesson content - writing a story.
3. Use of questions	Teacher talk which engaged students in thinking about their writing processes and allowing students to participate more actively in their own learning. This also considered teacher talk that elicited the knowledge of the content being taught - story writing
4. Use of procedural facilitators	Teacher talk and activities that encouraged students to make use of procedural facilitators (e.g. plan, structured outlines, charts etc.) that support students' writing.
5. Use of modeling	Teacher talk and activities that model writing strategies in order to make visible the normally invisible cognitive processes related to planning, drafting, and revising text.
6. Use of pair and group work	Teacher talk and activities that encouraged students to collaborate with each other in learning how to write a story.

Categories of students' talk included:

1. Responding to teacher questions – Any talk during teacher-led whole discussion in which students responded to teacher questions. For example, the extent to which students supported their ideas with evidence or explained their thinking as a direct result of teacher questioning.
2. Brainstorming – This includes talk where students generated and reformulated ideas.
3. Sharing/Telling - Any talk where students shared ideas/strategies about how to start a story, writing style and choice of vocabulary. This could be in the form of speech directed towards oneself or to others.
4. Decision-making - Any talk where students consulted with another or others in the process of reaching a decision about their writing. This includes episodes where students read/discussed the given instructions and dealt with issues such as writing conventions and task management.
5. Peer editing/correction - Any talk where students made corrections about content, structure, lexical or grammatical choices.
6. Joking/Laughter – Any use of playful language during the group writing tasks that generated laughter amongst students.
7. Off-task – Talk that had no relevance to the topic or task e.g. teasing peer, arguing with another peer.

Like I did with teacher talk, I re-examined the students' talk to look for evidence where students mediated and scaffolded each other's learning within their ZPD. These five areas arose as themes. In table 4.5, I define each of the areas/themes as they emerged from the data collected in this study.

Table 4.5: Definitions for each of the areas/themes arising from Student talk

Areas/Themes	Definitions
1. Brainstorming	Students' talk that generated ideas for writing a story.
2. Private Speech or Thinking aloud	Students' talk directed towards oneself which served the function of making one's writing strategies and processes visible/audible to others.
3. Using film knowledge	Students' talk that drew on one's knowledge of films to plan, and compose a story.
4. Using the mother tongue	Students' talk where their L1 is used to help them maintain dialogue, gain control over the tasks, make meaning of texts exploring and expanding context and guiding their actions through tasks.
5. Peer-scaffolding	Students talk directed towards an attempt to provide support to their peers in task completion.
6. Monitoring writing process	Students' talk indicating their attempt to make use of metacognitive knowledge to recognise and deploy strategies needed to write a story.
7. Using humour	Students' talk indicating the use of playful language during story construction.

4.10 RIGOR IN ACTION RESEARCH

Action Research is often subject to negative comments such as it's not scientific (Stringer, 2007). Stringer (2007, p. 57) stated that "the basis for rigor in traditional experimental research is founded in commonly established routines for establishing the reliability and validity of the research, but Action Research is based on checks to ensure that the outcomes of research are trustworthy that they do not merely reflect the particular perspectives, biases, or worldview of the researcher and that they are not based solely on superficial or simplistic analyses of the issues investigated". This can be achieved through checks to assure that the researcher has rigorously established the trustworthiness of analyses that emerged from the research process.

In this study, trustworthiness was established through procedures that assess the following attributes of the study as described by Stringer (2007, pp. 57 -59).

4.10.1 CREDIBILITY – THE PLAUSIBILITY AND INTEGRITY OF THE STUDY

Tobin and Begley (2004) stated that credibility is comparable with internal validity. This is an important issue in AR because if participants are not able to trust the integrity of the research process they are not likely to make the personal commitments that are essential for a well-founded inquiry. In the following sections I demonstrate how credibility was achieved in this study.

4.10.2 PROLONGED ENGAGEMENT

This involves extended opportunities given to research participants to explore and express their experiences of the acts, activities, events, and issues related to the problem investigated (Stringer, 2007, p. 58). In this study prolonged engagement with the research participants was established through semi-structured interviews; various sessions of classroom observation, and meetings over a period of 10 months. This prolonged engagement with the teachers and students enabled sufficient exploration of the issue being studied: the use and development of LLS. I also had casual conversations with participants on a regular basis.

4.10.3 PERSISTENT OBSERVATION

Credibility is also achieved in this research through persistent classroom observation in all the research cycles. This aligns with Stringer's (2007, p. 58) view that "the credibility of research is enhanced when participants consciously observe events, activities, and the context over a period of time. Classroom observations in this study took place from: March 2011 to April 2011 (Phase 1) and September 2011 to November 2011 (Phase 3). Through classroom observations, I was able to gain an understanding of what was actually happening in the classroom with regard to LLS use and development.

4.10.4 TRIANGULATION

Use of multiple sources of data enhances the credibility of the research. In this study a range of sources were used, including teacher interviews, meetings and classroom observations, field notes, recordings and journals. This enabled me to clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomena were being perceived. Information derived from these data sources either complemented or challenged the perspectives of the research participants. In this study triangulation techniques were employed to collect pedagogical data from three points of view: the teachers, their students, and an external observer – myself.

4.10.5 MEMBER CHECKING

Once data analysis was completed, this was presented to the teachers in terms that they were familiar with, which enabled them to verify whether the research adequately represented their perspectives and experiences.

4.10.6 REFERENTIAL ADEQUACY

This means that concepts and ideas within the study should clearly be drawn from and reflect the experiences and perspectives of participating teachers. I used terminology and language of the research participants to ensure that it reflected their perspective and was clearly understood by them.

4.10.7 TRANSFERABILITY

The possibility of transferring the outcomes of the study to other contexts is comparable with external validity (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Although AR results are said to be applicable to only the particular people and places that were studied, this does not mean that nothing in the study can be applicable to others. Lothian (2010, p. 68) in her justification of her own Action Research stated that:

Although generalizability may be very limited in Action Research, nevertheless this study offers valid and reliable reports of what occurred inside our unique setting. Educators can extract what is relevant and transferable to their own settings. That the outcomes of an action may be relevant

elsewhere depends on the detailed description of the context, activities and events that are reported as part of the outcomes of the study (Stringer, 2007).

4.10.8 DEPENDABILITY

This refers to research procedures that are clearly defined and open to scrutiny, and it is comparable to reliability (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Dependability can be demonstrated through an audit trail, where others can examine the inquirer's documentation of data, methods, decisions and end product. Reflexivity is central to the audit trail, in which inquirers keep a self-critical account of the research process, including their internal and external dialogue (Tobin & Begley, 2004, p. 392).

In this study dependability was achieved through the reflective meetings with the teachers and my reflective journals where our thoughts and what happened during the research process were documented.

4.10.9 CONFORMABILITY

Conformability involves evidence that procedures described actually took place. This is comparable with objectivity and neutrality (Tobin & Begley, 2004) where the researcher establishes that data and interpretations of findings are not figments of her own imagination. To establish the conformability of this study, use was made of instruments such as tapes, classroom observation notes, journals and transcripts of meetings and teachers' interviews. These are available for reference.

4.10.10 TRIALING DATA COLLECTION PROCESSES

Before the data collection processes were used in the research, I tried them out in a similar context. As Seliger and Shohamy (1995, p. 195) stated "the aim of the try-out (or pilot) is to assess its quality while it can still be revised and improved and before it is used with the actual subjects in the research". For this study, trialling processes served the purpose of obtaining information which was used to revise the data collection procedures, that is, to remove or modify items, to extend or shorten the administration time, or to clarify some of the tasks.

4.10.10.1 TRIALING CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

Classroom observation was trialed in an English Proficiency class at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand. I observed an English class once a week over a period of three months. Ethnographic notes were taken in order to “build a picture of the lifeworld of those being observed and an understanding of the way they ordinarily go about their everyday activities” (Stringer, 2007, p. 75). I made available the notes to the teachers observed in order to ensure that what I had reported fairly reflected the experiences and perspectives of the teachers. The teachers did not point out any irregularities.

4.10.10.2 TRIALING SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

I trialed the semi-structured interview questions with two teachers who were also colleagues of mine studying for a doctoral degree at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. This helped to consolidate the interview guide and the lengths of the interviews. After the trial interviews, I asked the teachers/colleagues for feedback in order to minimize ambiguity and adjust the interview questions.

4.11 SUMMARY

This chapter has detailed the research design, methods and procedures used to conduct this AR project. The recruitment of participants was described as well as the three phases of the study. Ethical issues, rigour and the action group meetings with myself in the dual role of researcher and participant were discussed. In Chapter 5, I present the findings, analysis and discussion of Phase 1 based on data collected through field notes, semi-structured interviews with the participating teachers and classroom observations.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF PHASE 1

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Phase 1 of this study was conducted to answer research question 1:

What is the current state of the use and awareness of LLS amongst students and teachers in three ESL classes at secondary level in the Seychelles?

In this chapter, I have combined the data collected through interviews, classroom observations and field notes in order not only to present the findings but also to deeply examine the meaning of what happened in these three Seychellois ESL classrooms. Responses and observations were compared to the guiding research question across the three classes and common themes were identified and categorised from the three research tools. The following documents those common themes as well as unique practices that reflect the context of a particular class. A cross-case methodology is used to “provide the researcher with means to identify patterns and trends to gain insights into potential differences or similarities between cases” (O’Kane 2004, p.310).

The major themes that emerged from the data were: characteristics of the teachers; teacher questioning, which is discussed under two subheadings: use of questions to identify key points and use of questions to monitor thinking; memorising a procedure; segmenting text; use of the mother tongue and dealing with disciplinary issues. Learning strategies when used or addressed either by the teachers or students, are discussed within these themes. Each of these themes is reported and discussed in turn below.

5.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TEACHERS

The three participating teachers were all in their early twenties and quite new to the teaching profession. They all had a Seychelles Diploma Part Two in Education and this was their only teaching qualification. Upon completion of their teacher training, all three of them had always worked in the participating school and in their current posts until the time of this research. All three participating teachers could be classified

as newly qualified teachers, which suggest that they all had little experience in teaching English as a second language at secondary school level. (See Table 5.1)

Table 5.1: The teacher participants' profiles

Teachers' identification label	Age	Qualifications	Length of service in school at the time of this research	Length of service in post
Teacher A	22	Diploma Part Two in Education	3 months	3 months
Teacher B	25	Diploma Part Two in Education	3 years and 2 months	3 years and 2 months
Teacher C	23	Diploma Part Two in Education	12 months	12 months

The views of the three participating teachers with regard to what made them effective teachers vary considerably. Teacher A perceived that a relaxed, friendly environment characterizes effective teaching:

Ok in order for me to be effective is that I need to get the students to be at ease first. And then I follow the termly plan as devised and I try to make learning fun for them whatever so that even though it might be difficult I am enjoying myself as well they are enjoying what they are learning (I/TA1/3/2011)

This suggests that Teacher A understands that a supportive affective classroom climate was important in maximising the learning of English. She also believed she was effective because she followed the termly plan as devised which denotes that the management of learning was also important to her.

For Teacher B, teacher effectiveness generally means the writing up of an effective lesson plan and the quality of work that she gave her students:

The first one what makes you an effective English teacher, um I think that um, the time that I take to prepare the lesson for the students also um the quality of the work given and teaching about the second part um (I/TB1/3/2011)

She also felt that the way she taught was largely influenced by the type of learners she had. For example, when asked how she helped her students to learn with others, she mentioned that developing social conventions and manners in her students was important before she could help them learn with other students. She explained one aspect of this to me:

Like I have this class, they are a bad class (laughed) I try to but now I'm using a new approach, I'm teaching the living values first, like before when they lined up outside, they used to fight, gossip. Now I can say that they are improving. In each when I come in I teach them respect the person, your friend, and I think it is working because they just use to um um you know they just use bad language with their other friends but now they are able to talk to ask they are cooperating (I/TB/1/3/2011)

Unlike Teachers A and B, Teacher C gave more reasons why he was an effective teacher: The following shows what he shared with me in the interview:

1. *Sharing his knowledge with students and contributing to society.*

Well, first of all, to be an effective teacher, first of all I'm motivated, I like teaching, it is one of my passion, my main passion in fact, urm, I like teaching because it is a job where you are sharing your knowledge to students and you are sharing your piece of what you've learnt. You are contributing towards the society, and for me this is an achievement (CO/TC/3/3/2011)

2. *Valuing knowing and being familiar with students and understanding them.*

And an effective teacher for me is a teacher that listens, first of all listen to the students, even though you do not have to be academic, but listen to their problems and understand them (CO/TC/3/3/2011)

3. *Adapting his teaching to suit his environment.*

...try to adapt to the environment because every classroom is a different environment, so you need to be able to adapt to it, ok (CO/TC/3/3/2011)

4. *Being able to carry out research.*

You need to be able to research urm (CO/TC/3/3/2011)

5. *Doing a lot of planning.*

You need to plan a lot (CO/TC/3/3/2011)

Unlike the other two teachers, Teacher C also recognised that a key aspect of his students' needs was that they develop independence:

Well, first of all for them to clarify for example if they are in doubt, I always tell them to refer to what I've given them because I do not like spoon feeding the students give them every answer. Every time I tell them that I've given you notes you need to do your part 50% so you have to go to your notes and understand it and if you have any problem now maybe you can come to me personally then I can explain to you. Because for me where you have to spoon feed the students every time no (I/TC/3/3/2011)

Interview data indicate that all three teachers were conscious of the different levels and needs of their students. However their main way of dealing with students' needs was to get them to come and see them personally as reflected in the following quotes:

If I see that they are reluctant again to do it then I note it down and I tackle it individually with them (I/TA/1/3/2011)

Um sometimes I tell them if they do not want to talk in the class, I ask them to come and see me during lunch hour or anytime that they feel or I call them individually in class like when I give the class work (I/TB/1/3/2011)

First of all I will talk to the person, but most of the time, I have encountered this situation before but most of the time the student does not come to me, I do not know why. They seem to be reluctant to approach me but if I'm able to observe that, I will talk to the students alone, to see if he or she is having trouble in the class to come and see me. So then maybe I can have private tuition on a particular topic (I/TC/3/3/2011)

In general, the teacher responses indicate that the three teachers had a broad view of what it is to be an effective teacher. The teachers displayed a perception of teacher effectiveness which has the teacher at the center.

Teacher effectiveness comprises teacher skills and actions which contribute to smooth, directed lessons. However, all three teachers said they used student-centered approaches to teaching, exemplified by the following teacher responses:

1. Instruction in pairs or small groups

If I'm tackling reading, I get I choose different types of text. I give each group a text and then they discuss the outcome of the passage they read (I/TA/1/3/2011)

Um um we do um presentation in class like if they are pair up, usually in groups or individually, like they are given a topic to write about just practice to present in class, ... (I/TB/1/3/2011)

Well, I use group work. I use a lot of group work with them. Different group work, not only one type. Different group work which allow them to communicate with each other ok (I/TC/3/3/2011)

2. Students help choose and organise the content to be learnt

Ok and in group work I always allow them to decide what to do. I never put pressure on them and group work it's them who decide how to present their work. I only facilitate, provide materials, and instructions and they need to work (I/TC/3/3/2011)

Nonetheless, this emphasis on student-centered approaches to learning in principle was not realised in the realities of practice revealed in the classroom observation data collected in Phase 1. There was no pair or group work and students were not given the chance to choose what they wanted to do and learn. Most lessons observed in Teacher A's class were set up such that students sat in pairs facing the front of the class. In the two other classes students were seated at individual desks in rows, facing the front of the class. Thus, even sitting arrangements in the three classes militated against a student-centered approach to teaching which all three teachers claimed they used. All three participating classes engaged in whole class activity for the entire class periods. It was the teachers who initiated, selected, presented and assigned study and practice activities and tested to measure mastery of what was taught.

As a common learning strategy, students across all three classes sought help from the teachers with work most of the time, which is a common characteristic of teacher-centered instruction. On very rare occasions teachers would direct the students to take responsibility for their own learning.

For example, Teacher A encouraged her students to seek help from others only once during all five lessons observed. When Teacher C asked students to work on their own, it sounded more like rebuke than support:

I'm not teaching you English until you change your attitude. You will have to work out on the exams topic on your own because I cannot tolerate your attitude (CO/TC/31/3/2011)

While teacher-directed learning is an important way to present new bodies of knowledge and practice, it does not enable students to customize their approach to learning tasks, combine the development of strategies and prepare them for learning throughout their lives.

In addition to this, interview data indicated that two of the participating teachers had a strong sense of using strategies which they said made them effective teachers:

How do I go about teaching? I implement different strategies but I like to use the communicative approach. I get the students to talk and enjoy what they are learning (I/TA/1/3/2011)

So you need to be able to adapt to it, ok. Find new strategies, new methods every time, you are not supposed to use the same strategies, ok, each you research new methods. This why students are motivated, because if you use the same strategies all the time it becomes a problem (I/TC/3/3/2011)

However, when asked what type of learning strategies they used to support students' learning, they revealed limitations in their understanding of learning strategies. They confused the term learning strategy with instructional techniques they used, rather than the strategies they teach students so that the students learn how to learn English (Dowhower 1999). Some of these instructional techniques are exemplified in the following responses of the teachers:

Well, first of all I always start, if I'm starting a new topic, I always start with an ice-breaking activity, just to get to know on which level they are. And of course I do a lot of practice in the class, I give them examples, notes, I explain, I use visual aids, or sometimes I use ICT. For example, projector, use the blackboard the students gain interest in your lesson that they learn (I/TC/3/3/2011)

Like when we speaking outside assessment some of them may tend to talk but try to counsel them talk to them, ask them questions. Try to get them to be comfortable first, and then I think when they feel at ease they start talking (I/TB/1/3/2011)

What do I do? Urm I make jokes, and I become humorous, I kind of make a fool out of myself. For example, role playing with them, participating (I/TA/1/3/2011)

A practice that was frequently mentioned by the teachers was that they encouraged students to self-monitor their learning. Unlike Teacher A who only got her students to plan their work, Teachers B and C said that they supported their students to set goals and targets:

We do like practice in class; if I give them a composition to write um before I mark it I get them to correct it themselves. Find out if there are any mistakes and so in their assessments, after their assessments, I get them to check their friends' work to see where they have done wrong before we actually do the correction in class (I/TB/1/3/2011)

Well, usually well in most classes, I wanted them to keep a file where they have all the assessments. But in my class if I know they are going to have an assessment, for writing for example, or letter writing, I told them to have a special exercise book to write all their notes. Because from now it does not mingle with all the class work. So it will be easier for them to revise and be ready for the assessment. And when it comes to evaluating I always, for example at the end, when I give them their assessments, the results, ok. I told them to evaluate about their weaknesses where they have gone wrong and from that for example, they can set a target for next term (I/TC/3/3/2011)

The ability of students to self-monitor their performance is a step towards becoming independent. However, this can only happen successfully when they are taught how to take responsibility for their own learning. They need to be taught how to self-monitor their academic and social behaviours and one way of doing this is to teach students learning strategies.

5.3 TEACHER QUESTIONING

Classroom observation data showed that teachers typically talked for a considerable part of each lesson and much of that talk involved teacher questioning. This consisted of an initiation by the teacher, which elicited response(s) from the students, followed by teacher feedback. In this study teacher questioning served two main purposes (1) identifying key points and (2) monitoring thinking.

5.3.1 USE OF QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY KEY POINTS

During the interviews, when asked how they supported learning, use of questioning always featured among the instructional techniques that the teachers used:

urm questioning, games and questioning (I/TA/1/3/2011)

Or when um when I ask questions in class the shy ones will tend to, they will never answer any questions but I try to give them the chance to answer but certain time they do answer the questions even if it is wrong they try (I/TB/1/3/2011)

Each time I have a lesson I do a little follow up follow up questions, for example on Tuesday I'm going to quiz them on, so from now on they revise because they know that on Tuesday they're going to be questioned, and they know that they need to study. So so far it is working (I/TC/3/3/2011)

A key finding in this study is that all three teachers taught students to identify important points through the use of questioning. Teacher A typified this instructional style of the teachers. In the following Excerpt, Teacher A had just finished giving notes to students on how to write a notice. She put an example of a notice on the board and asked the students to look at it carefully with particular emphasis on format and content.

Excerpt 5A (CO/TA/17/3/2011)

	Teacher	Students	Observer's comments
1.	What can you tell me about the notice now? Anybody.	. Su: ... good er...	Three students put up their hands
2.	It kind of erm...	It kind of ...	the same girl in the previous turn continues
3.	= It kind of tempt you guys erm to go to the hop. Anything else	Su: An announcement	
4.	An announcement of what?	SS: a hop	
5.	What is a hop to you guys?	SS: dance	
6.		Su: a disco	
7.	It's a dance.	Su: Sort of a prom.	
8.	Not a prom. Yes is it an event an activity? A lost and found or	SS : 'event, event"	
9.	Is it event or activity?	SS: both	students shouting '
10.	Who said it's an event?		Students are quiet.

Teacher A started the discussion by asking “what can you tell me about the notice now? Anybody?” (line 1). Students called out at will without being designated to speak. This was possibly a sign of a positive climate that all three participating teachers fostered. As a learner strategy, students guessed what they thought the notice was about. The teacher either repeated the students’ answers or asked students to elaborate on their answers (lines 4 and 5). She then proceeded with asking display questions and repeating students’ responses.

The type of questions she asked from lines 4-10 did not invite an elaborated response or provide space for students to generate ideas about how a notice is written. For the remainder of the lesson, she focused exclusively on the content of the notice. Students were not asked to give answers about the mental processes they would use to write the notice. These controlled instructional responses may provide opportunities for students to demonstrate competence by providing right answers or for the teacher to check students’ understanding of what is being taught, but according to “Knowledge about cognition does not necessarily lead to improved cognition. Students need to learn how to regulate their cognition through executive control of their resources (e.g., attention, memory, effort, and time)” (p.154).

5.3.2 USE OF QUESTIONS TO MONITOR THINKING

Although rarely done, all three teachers did probe students’ understanding by asking additional questions with the purpose of helping them monitor their thinking. This, however, was more noticeable in Teacher A’s and Teacher C’s classes. The participating teachers asked few questions related to higher order thinking. For example, questions that invite opinions, process questions, and questions that invite articulation of students’ understanding were rarely used by the teachers. Yet, as can be seen in Excerpts 5B and 5C below, it was also observed that Teachers A and C indicated that they were aware of the value of higher order questions that promoted thinking and problem-solving.

In Excerpt 5B, through a whole class discussion, Teacher C drew his students’ attention to how to write a story because he felt that they had “difficulties to write a good story” (CO/TC/31/3/2011)

Excerpt 5B (CO/TC/31/3/2011)

Teacher	Students	Observer's comments
1. First of all you need to brainstorm. O.k. when you brainstorm. What are you brainstorming about?	A student says the story another says ideas	Overlapping of turns here
2. Ideas. O.k. first of all you have the ideas.		
3. Ideas of what?		
4.	Jot your ideas. What you are going to write	
5. What you are going to write about. Why is it important to brainstorm? Before you write.		
6.	Students gave multiple answers	It is difficult to catch up what students say due to overlapping of turns.
7. Some of you you just start writing your story and then in the middle you are stuck you cannot develop further your story.		
8. Alright. You Straight way, you write write write write because you are thinking thinking thinking without stopping. And thinking if you are writing correctly in your paper.		
9. O.k. so first of all brainstorm. O.k. you got your idea you know title is ghost story. After you brainstorm some of you mention a point what do you do?	"	
10.	Students answered altogether "jot down your ideas"	
11. Jot down your ideas (emphasizes)		
12. How are you going to jot down your ideas? How?		
13. I show you		

Guiding his students step by step, Teacher C indicated to his students that the first step in writing a story was to brainstorm ideas (line 1); hence he presented his students with a useful pre-writing strategy. He then moved on to ask his students "what are you brainstorming about?" Students responded with "ideas". Not satisfied with this one word answer, Teacher C posed another question to get them to elaborate on

their answers. Instead of specifically saying what type of 'ideas' they would write students shouted "jot your ideas. What you are going to write about?" (line 4). At this point Teacher C repeated the students' response but instead of clarifying what the students meant by "what you are going to write about?", he continued by asking students to say why brainstorming was important before they start to write (line 5). Students gave different and multiple answers which were unclear. Teacher C went on to tell the students what their problems were, writing without planning, as illustrated in lines 7 and 8. In line 9, Teacher C tried to elicit the strategies that students used while they brainstormed their ideas and students responded with "jot down your ideas". Teacher C validated and emphasised this as an important strategy (line 11). He then rapidly asked his students to state the strategies they used when they jot down ideas (line 12). However, without waiting for the students to share their strategies, Teacher C indicated that he was the possessor of knowledge by saying "I show you" (line 13). Later on he showed them by giving them steps how to write a story. As can be seen in this Excerpt, lines 1, 5, 9 and 12 all suggest that Teacher C asked students questions that helped them to monitor their thinking. The questions were used to activate their prior knowledge of writing story or experience in order to make the writing process and strategies more understandable. Teacher C here was also guiding his students to self-regulate their own writing. "A hallmark of self-directed, reflective learners is their ability to ask themselves questions that help direct their learning" (Chin, Brown, & Bruce, 2002, p. 522). However, he fell short of modeling his brainstorming strategies which could have helped his students to see this invisible cognitive process when writing a story. In this way, his students would have had the opportunity to not only see the product (e.g. story) but the actions and hear the inner dialogue that he used to direct and monitor his writing behaviour (Englert et al., 1991).

In Excerpt 5C below, after reviewing who had done the homework, Teacher A got students to report orally about their visit to Expo 2020 (a national activity organized by the Seychelles government enlightening the Seychellois people, visitors, investors and the world at large on how the present work-in-progress and planned and visionary activities will benefit them in the years to come). The Teacher asked for volunteers to speak. When no students volunteered she designated speakers.

Excerpt 5C (CO/TA/8/4/2011)

Teacher	Student	Observer's comments
1. Guilio I said stand up. Ok so share your experience, when you went there.		Guilio remains seated
2.	Well, I went there by bus. (pause) so I .	students laugh

- entered the expo and it was sooo dark. It was like (makes funny noise) on the way up
3. After I went to see the touch screens stuff like that, looking at the air Seychelles. The air port stuff like that and then I went to the game section
 4. Hmm The technologies then the others were ...I went to the army based where they showed us some guns, uniforms tactics how they train there.
 5. Hmm Then I went to the bathroom class burst out laughing
 6. So you went to check out whether it's Well there was no touch screen there{students laugh} {inaudible}{students talk simultaneously with Guilio making it difficult to pick up what he is saying
 7. Then I get back to the expo and I saw James Michel James Michel is the president of the Seychelles}on the television and some other people
 8. That's all, now how do you feel? What reactions did you have towards the gadgets the things that you saw there? So Cool cool
 9. It was cool? A student says really?
 10. Yah. There was even a video that shows how things will look like in 2020.
 11. o.k. did you have any comments {pause} to share with us about what you saw and whether we will be able to achieve those things?
 12. Any comments? As a Seychellois citizen. You are a Seychellois {towards Guilio. Seems not too sure if Guilio is Seychellois.} No no comments
 13. No comments? Guilio shakes head indicating no
 14. You're sure Shakes head saying no.
 15. o.k. if James Michel comes in and asks you do you have anything to say about the expo you saw. What are you going to say no comments?

I gonna say that it was good it was good. Another student says hm {suggesting not at all}

This Excerpt begins with the teacher focusing the students' attention on Guilio (line 1). Guilio remained seated and the teacher responded to this by giving him direction to stand up. Guilio is invited to share his experiences about his visit to the Expo. Guilio initiated a sequence of talks about what he did when he got to the 'Expo'. As can be seen, he described what he saw there (lines 2-6). One obvious learner strategy that he used was humour which got his peers to laugh with him, hence relieving the pressure and tension during this public speaking. In contrast to other instances (see Excerpt 5A) Teacher A's use of questions (lines 8 and 11) allowed the student to engage in longer and sustained talk about his evaluation of the Expo. In doing so, the teacher helped Guilio to take up the role of speaker. Thus Guilio was able to produce more complete and natural responses. By asking "No comments?" Teacher A also linked different students' ideas. Through the use of exploratory queries, as in lines 1 and 8, she encouraged the student to exercise self-expression and refine his thinking. It is to be noted that this lesson was very lively and students responded with obvious interest. There were demonstrations of enthusiasm and excitement as students seemed anxious to present their reports and how they felt about the expo (FN/CX/8/4/2011). By asking questions that helped students to monitor their thinking, Teacher A, like Teacher C, managed to have discussions on occasion that were less teacher-centered but rather encouraged students to engage in more problem-solving talk which led them to more in-depth understanding of their own learning processes.

Although Teachers A and C asked students questions to help them monitor their thinking, it is evident that students in all three classrooms did not ask questions which serve this metacognitive function. For example, students' questions do not pertain to the lesson content of interest nor are they evaluative in a way that would help them to monitor the status of their understanding. When they did ask questions these served mainly two functions: (1) clarifying information and detail (e.g. 'teacher to copy?', 'teacher when do the exams start?' (CO/TC/31/3/2011), (FN/17/3/2011), (FN/22/3/11) and (2) asking for exemplification and English word/expression e.g. 'Sir ki mannyer ou dir ler lalin in plenn?' (How do you call it when it is full moon?) (CO/TC/31/3/2011) This corroborates the claim of Chin, Brown, and Bruce (2002) that students ask very few questions because the cycle of classroom talk militates against it. When students ask questions, it helps to focus their attention on content, main ideas and checking if content is understood. This suggests that students need to be taught more about how to ask higher cognitive levels of questions which is an essential aspect of problem-solving. Use of more questions that help them to monitor their thinking would have enabled them to test how well they had understood what they were studying. In order to promote metacognitive control of what students learn, the teacher needs to make "visible to students his invisible mental processes so the students have an example of appropriate reasoning they can use as a

basis for activating background knowledge themselves” (Duffy, Roehler, & Herrmann, 1988, p. 764). Teacher modeling and scaffolded reading practice in metacognitive processes are valuable for helping students learn how to read, listen, write and speak. These instructional techniques enable the teacher to explicitly show the learners tangible ways of managing their mental processes for any of the four communication skills. Researchers argue (O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Russo, & Kupper, 1985; Oxford, 1990) that metacognitive strategies are the most essential of the strategies. Without metacognitive strategies, students are not able to monitor their progress and they have no future learning directions. When students develop their metacognitive awareness they are more likely to become self-directed and autonomous.

The discrepancy between the value attributed to higher order questions and their low use in current practice in these classes may be partly explained by the prioritising of teaching content over understanding. For example, as can be seen in section 5.3.3 below, the teachers indicated that achieving pre-specified goals such as doing well in exams may have caused them to ask more factual questions. It is also significant that higher order questions give more space to students; however, the data in this part of this study indicated that teachers dominated talk as a means of covering what they needed to cover in the lesson.

5.3.3 MEMORISING A PROCEDURE

The classroom observation data suggest that all three teachers (although more noticeable in Teacher B's and Teacher C's classrooms) often asked students to memorise a procedure (Duffy, 1993, p. 239). For example, Teachers B and C explicitly gave their students steps how to write a composition and tackle the exam questions. In the following Excerpt, Teacher B engaged in a monologue where she explained to the students how to tackle their English reading exams.

Excerpt 5D (CO/TB/15/4/2011)

Teacher	Student	Observer's comments
1. Now when you get your paper you read your paper your questions		
2. I mean you read your text		
3. If you do not understand anything after your first reading, please read your		

paper again

4. Read your text again
 5. Now there are questions, Trevor and Shane that asks you for two things {she writes "two on the board"}
 6. Make sure you write two or three reasons why Levin? { I think she has spotted that Levin is not listening}
 7. Make sure you have your two or three reasons ok?
 8. If you're asked give a word give what?
 9. Jack you want to go outside?
 10. Give what Jack?
- Jack mutters something. He seems to be uneasy. All others students are looking at him.

As can be seen in the above excerpt, instead of using language to enable her students to gain, understanding, she gave students a set of rules that involved reading and re-reading when they do examinations. She did not mention thought processes. Instead, she said "If you do not understand anything after your first reading, please read your paper again" (line 3). Although Teacher B appeared to guide her students towards how to tackle their examination, in particular through reading of texts before answering questions, her adopted teacher leadership role here placed her students in a passive, less responsible role. She did not give her students time to respond and engage in extended interactions with herself and others. A central characteristic of the classroom practices was that meaning was not negotiated but simply provided by the teacher. The teachers did not give the students opportunities to talk through their own ideas.

Similarly, on the 31st March 2011, Teacher C taught his students how to write a ghost story. He gave his students the following steps that he said would help them in their examination:

Now, step 1 when you get a question in the exam, the assessment you have chosen your question or the story you want to write about the first thing is for you to do alright the first thing you need to be able to do is to think of what are you going to write in your story. Find a piece of rough paper try to think before you write. Do not jump right away with your writing story ok. Think for a minute take one minute. You have one hour and thirty minutes for your assessments and exams. Take at least one minute one and half and jot down your ideas (CO/TC/31/3/2011)

'Giving steps', was one way that Teacher C reported using to help students clarify or verify their understanding of things learnt in English:

Er OK. Well for English ok. I use steps because I know when they have steps they will be able to follow it systematically, but I think I use steps a lot (I/TC/3/3/2011)

Asked to elaborate on what he meant by 'steps', he said:

For example, if I do letter writing, I'll give them the format then I'll give them steps on how to what they supposed to write in the content. I give them steps, examples, from now on it will be easier for them to refer to when they are doing an activity (I/TC/3/3/2011)

Giving "steps", which entails showing the physical aspects of the task, is useful for learning. However, later on during the lesson when Teacher C asked the question "how are you going to jot down your ideas?" (CO/TC/31/3/2011), students remained rather silent (FN/CY/3/3/2011). Teacher C then referred them to their notes "Person pann pas dan kaye" (nobody has gone through the notes) (CO/TC/31/3/2011). Even when students looked at their notes, their responses to the question "how are you going to jot down your ideas?" consisted mainly of saying the different stages in a story : "introduction, development and conclusion".

However, here Teacher C moved a step further than Teacher B. He tried to emphasize reasoning as a means of getting his students to think of the process of writing; but nevertheless failed to show how he reasoned with the "steps" to construct the ghost story. As a result, his students' responses reflected no thoughtful reasoning about what good writers use in planning a story. Instead by routinising the task, Teachers B and C simplified the work for the students but in so doing they also led their students away from the adaptive, flexible reasoning which is essential to effective language learning strategy use (Duffy, 1993). Their students were taught to memorize a procedure and not learn in an adaptive, flexible reasoning process.

Evidence suggests that this instructional technique of memorising a procedure did not guarantee that students would internalize the "steps" and identify important points. For example, this emerged when students in Teacher A's classroom were asked to write a notice on their own. On the 23rd March 2011, Teacher A taught her students to write a cancellation notice. She had asked the students a series of questions to draw their attention to the content and structure of the notice. Her lesson ended with her

asking the students to write a cancellation notice on their own but students indicated that they were still not ready to do so (see Excerpt 5E below).

Excerpt 5E (CO/TA/23/3/2011)

Teacher	student
1. Good. Now err you believe you can write this?	
2.	Students answered "Yes" "No"
3. Who says no? (pause) Why can't you write this?	
4.	Miss because I have the problems writing (next part not clear)
5. You have problems with what?	
6.	Non Miss... No um Miss I don't know how to write the (next part not clear)
7. You don't know how to write what?	
8.	The refunds
9. The refunds?	
10.	Wi Miss. I don't know where to put it when I'm writing the notice.
11. So you want me to give you an example, right?	Students answered "Yes."

This excerpt begins with Teacher A shifting responsibility to the students to write the notice on their own: "Good. Now err you believe you can write this?" (line 1). Students responded with 'no' and 'yes'. The Teacher asked those students who had said 'no' to say why they could not write the notice. Thus in this instance she provided space for students' elaborated responses of their problems. One student responded that she had problems with a certain aspect of the notice which was not very clear (line 4). Then Teacher A asked her to clarify her problems and in line 10 the student indicated that she did not know where to put 'refund'. Instead of going through the process of writing the notice, Teacher A asked the students whether she needed to give them another example and all students agreed. She did not provide space for students' talk about the process of writing a notice. The following Excerpt picks up at this point:

Excerpt 5F (CO/TA/23/3/2011)

Teacher	students	Observer's comments
1. Okay! First things first, we'll do it together. Look at the question and we'll do it together. What is the first thing I need to write?		
2.	The date.	
3. The date. Where?		
4.		Students murmur unintelligibly.
5. This is my page (writes on board) where?		
6.		One student say "On top." Another say "On the top" Students murmur unintelligibly. One students say "On the... on the right!"
7. This? What is the date?		
8.		Students answer "26 th June 2011"
9. (teacher wrote on board) What else do I need to write?		
10.		One student answer "Um... um..." Students murmur. Another student say "Gangster gangster."

This excerpt begins with the teacher signalling to the students that she was about to re-teach notice writing by saying "okay". Then like the other two teachers, she focused her students' attention to the steps involved in notice writing (line 2). She asked them what was the first thing they needed to write and students responded with "the date". She repeated the students' response and asked another display question "where?" Students deliberated over the correct position to write the date. Teacher A moved on with asking the students to say what was the date and students responded with 26th June 2011 as written in the task sheet. Teacher A wrote students' response on the board and then asked students what else she needed to write. This general pattern was constructed over a series of similar interactions until the teacher was satisfied that students had given all the information the notice should contain. Like her two other colleagues, in this Excerpt instead of modeling the process of how to write a notice, Teacher A rather tested students' knowledge through a succession of questions like she did in Excerpt 5A.

Her instruction provoked no new thinking or understanding about notice writing (Englert, 1992). In the remainder of the lesson, the teacher's talk pattern showed greater reliance on Teacher control and telling students generally what to do. Although seeking help from the teacher was a learner strategy that was encouraged in this class, accepting to do another example of a notice for the students also suggests that Teacher A saw the role of the students as listeners rather than active participants in notice writing, as opposed to the interactive roles she said her students had in their learning:

How do I go about teaching? I implement different strategies but I like to use the communicative approach. I get the students to talk and enjoy what they are learning (I/TA/1/3/2011)

5.3.4 SEGMENTING OF TEXT

During classroom instruction, Teacher C used an instructional technique that I did not observe the other teachers using. He used a textbook from Singapore entitled *Ties* 2. The Teacher chose students to read the text aloud. He segmented the text and made a break where the students may be expected to have difficulties. The student stopped reading in this place and the teacher started questioning by eliciting meanings of words/ sentences (see Excerpt 5G below)

Excerpt 5G (CO/TC/11/4/2011)

Teacher	Student	Observer's comments
1. O.k. there was a ss a fire o.k. and what was he doing?		
2.	sleeping	
3. o.k., so the he smelled the smoke and started to wake up.		
4. Continue		Diana continues reading
5.		
6. o.k. what do you understand by he groped		Students gave all sorts of answers
7.	grab	

8. Non not necessarily grab and grope is not the same		
9. Remember he was sleeping the smoke was filling and it was dark		
10. So what do you understand by grope. He groped		teacher uses gestures to elicit meaning of the word grope from students
11.	Anvoy lanmen anvoy lanmen meaning threw his hand at something	
12. He was trying like searching for something on the table like looking touching trying to grab the flash light where it is o.k.?		
13. Because it was dark full of smoke therefore he was trying to find it		
14. o.k. he groped on the table trying to find the flashlight ok?		
15. In a hurry continue		Diana continues reading
16. But nothing happen {repeats these two last words in the passage} o.k. continue kristen		Kristen reads. He gets stuck on a word. The word is adrenalin
17. Adrenalin { teacher tells him the word}adrenalin continue	Kristen reads	most students follow as Kristen reads. A few look away and not engaged in the reading.

Teacher C stopped the reading and asked students what the character was doing (line 1). Students said that he was sleeping which the teacher validated with 'o.k.' and then expanded on the students' answer before asking Diana to continue reading. He once again asked Diana to stop reading in order to elicit the meaning of 'groped' (line 6). At this point students gave all sorts of answers. One student said it meant 'grab' but the teacher rejected his answer. At this juncture, Teacher C modeled two learner strategies in helping his students understand the word. First, he made use of gestures using his hands. When this did not work he began to use contextual clues (line 12). One student used Creole to explain what 'groped' meant. He relied on his L1 as a useful learner strategy to help him solve a lexical problem here. Teacher C now gave the English explanation of this word by using contextual clues in the text (line 13).

However, he only identified the clue words such as 'Because it was dark full of smoke therefore he was trying to find it' but he did not tell them how to find these clues or how to use them. In so doing he omitted a central step in strategy-based instruction – elaborating on how to reason using contextual clues. This aligns with how he said he helped his students dealt with difficult vocabulary in reading comprehension (I/TC/3/3/2011)

For the remainder of the lesson, Teacher C followed this pattern of instruction to help students understand the text. This aligns with what Teacher C said he did to help students deal with difficult words in a passage. When asked to express what he did to help his students grasp the meaning of what they read, he stated that he did whole class reading followed by an evaluation of questions asked:

I told them, for example if you see a question or example why? You have to give a reason. So we try to work on that. I do not leave them alone give them a text book just read and then answer the questions. They won't be able to learn from that they will be making the same mistake. So in the class we try to read as a group, discuss then move on (I/TC/3/3/2011)

He also said:

First of all I use the dictionary, I never tell them the meaning of the word because in the most reading activities, they are asked to find the meaning of the word on their own. And I always tell them that they need to have a dictionary or I get the dictionary from the resource and they use it. Because from now on they need to learn on their own and they are able to remember than me telling them everything. Because spoon feeding them all the answers for me no (I/TC/3/3/2011)

Segmenting of text and stopping at what may be thought to be posing difficulties for learners was useful here to help learners with understanding of a passage. It assisted students in their efforts to understand when they are reading a text for the first time. It also helps teachers and students to collaboratively construct meaning by questioning the students (see line 1). However, as Duffy, Roehler, and Herrmann (1988, p. 763) stated: "teaching comprehension by asking students questions before, during, and after the reading of a selection helps students comprehend that particular selection but does not necessarily result in metacognitive control of the process of comprehending text generally". As evident in this lesson Excerpt, it is the teacher that decided what prior knowledge needs to be activated. He asked students questions that would activate that knowledge. In so doing, the Teacher controlled the process of deciding what prior knowledge the students needed to access.

5.4 USE OF MOTHER TONGUE

All three teachers generally encouraged their students to use English at all times. However, they did use Creole at times. In contrast to Teacher A, who mostly used Creole for social functions (e.g. a student was sick and the Teacher asked 'why did you come to school?' and re-asked him the question in Creole (CO/TA/17/3/2011)), Teachers B and C used Creole to serve a number of purposes. In the sections that follow, I will present and analyse each of these purposes in turn.

5.4.1 HIGHLIGHTING KEY LEARNING POINT

In Excerpt 5H below, Teacher C was conducting a reading comprehension lesson and he got the students to read a text from a textbook. He segmented the text and asked students questions to help their understanding of what they had read. Teacher C used Creole to highlight a key learning point - discouraging the use of direct translation from English to Creole.

Excerpt 5H (CO/TC/11/4/2011)

Teacher	Students	Observer's comments
1. What is suffocating?		He asked students to stop reading.
2. What do you understand by suffocating?		
3.	Komsi ounn sifok li meaning as if you have harassed him	
4.	non	
5. SUFFOCATING{ teacher smiles and stresses the word}		
6. When somebody is suffocating what is happening?{asks loudly}		
7.	Having trouble to breathe	
8. Yes having trouble to breathe pa sifoke.		
9. Mon dir zot koumsa aret tradwir tou keksoz angle an Kreol. I pa parey o.k. tou mo ki zot war an angle zot trawdir an kreol meaning I have told you not to make direct translation from English to Creole. Every word that you find in English you try to translate directly into Creole.		

This excerpt begins with Teacher C asking students to stop reading, and he then drew their attention to the word 'suffocating'. He asked the students to say what they understood by this word (line 1). The students used silence as a learner strategy when they were not sure of the answer. Noticing the students' silence, he rephrased the question (line 2). At this point, a student used his mother tongue as a strategy to compensate for a lack of vocabulary to give the meaning of the word. 'Suffocating' which resembled a Creole word "Sifoke" (line 3). However 'sifoke' meant 'to harass' in English. Teacher C smiled at this humorous interpretation of the word and introduced a learner strategy by placing the word 'suffocating' in a context (line 5). This helped one student to explain the meaning of the word to the satisfaction of the teacher (line 7). Teacher C validated the answer and said that it is not 'sifoke' (line 8). At this point, Teacher C found it necessary to highlight a key learning point: discouraging the use of direct translation from the mother tongue to understand the meaning of English words (line 9). Teacher C used Creole here to discourage students from using Creole by pointing out the deleterious consequences of making direct translation from English to Creole and vice versa.

5.4.2 FOR CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Creole was mostly used as a means of classroom management when teachers were not satisfied with their students' behaviours. For example, Teacher C had been explaining the work and a student was not paying attention. The teacher picked him to answer a question and he could not answer. Teacher C then said:

Depi taler mon pe get zot toulede laba deryer. Ok. Apre legzanmen vinn don mwan gonaz apre.
(I've been looking at the two of you at the back there. Ok. And then you'll give me rubbish to mark
in the exam) (CO/TC/31/4/2011)

Such cases of use of Creole to manage behaviour were commonly observed in two of the teachers' talk. Teachers B and C moved their instructional talk off-task to address behavioural issues throughout their lessons. The teachers viewed students' L1 as an effective way to address behavioural problems in their classes.

5.4.3 TRANSLATING.

It was observed that Teachers B and C used Creole to ensure students' understanding by means of translation as in Excerpt 5I. Teacher B was addressing behavioural issues and getting students ready for the lesson before she started teaching.

Excerpt 5I (CO/TB/28/3/2011)

Teacher	Students	Observer's comments
1. Ok. So Neal can you please sit properly. Can you please take out your class work, your pen, pencil whatever and put your bag away. I don't want to see anyone of you with your bag on your lap.		
2.	One student asks "Miss be kisisa lap?" (Miss what is lap?)	
3.	Another student answers "Be latab ou osi!" (It means table, don't you know that?"	Students started to laugh
4. Lazanm (Creole for lap)		Students laughed and teased the boy who said lap meant table.

Teacher C called Neal and instructed him to get out his basic stationery in preparation for the lesson. She told the students that she did not want to see them with their bags on their laps (line 1). At this point a student used Creole to ask what lap meant (line 2). As learner strategies, this student used her L1 and the teacher to solve her vocabulary problem. Another student responded in Creole and said confidently that it meant table (line 3). All students laughed. Teacher C intervened by giving the Creole word for lap which is 'lazanm' (line 4).

This mirrors what Teacher B said she used when asked how she helps students clarify and verify their understanding of things learnt in English:

Like I said um like I told them that you can use if you do not know that word English, you can say it in Creole and I will tell you that word in English and repeat it in English. Sometimes it works (I/TB/1/3/2011)

Teacher B reported in our interview that she encouraged her students to speak English but was not against their use of their L1 when it facilitated understanding, in particular solving lexical problems. As Oxford (1990, p. 84) stated, Teacher C used her students' own language "as the basis for understanding what they hear or read in the new language". However Oxford cautions that students' LI has to be used with care because while it can support learning, students can also misinterpret the target language material, as exemplified in Excerpt 5E (CO/TC/11/4/2011) above where students wrongly interpreted 'suffocating' to mean 'sifoke' in their L1. Furthermore, translating can also slow down the students because "it forces them to go back and forth constantly between the languages" (Oxford, 1990, p. 85).

Creole was mainly used as a learner strategy by the students in all three classes for the function of seeking help with work not understood as illustrated in these examples:

[Miss sa keştyon ti].... The student was asking about a question in the work (CO/TA/29/3/2011).

[Pa ou dir kote pou fer be kote pou mete sa?] meaning didn't you say that we need to say where it will be held where are we to put this information? (CO/TC/31/4/2011)

[Miss. Ekrir notice Selman pa ekrir notice an ler?]. {Creole} the student asked the teacher whether they had to write the notice without writing the word notice as title of the work. (CO/TB/28/3/2011)

Students in all three classes also used Creole for task-unrelated activities:

"Depi taler mon demann li l pa dir mwan naryen". {With reference to Jean- Yves}. (I have asked him if he was feeling well but he did not say anything). (CO/TA/17/3/2011)

"Zot be asiz ou". (Would you please sit down.)? (CO/TB/17/3/2011)

"Nou pe rod sa miss". (We are looking for the teacher). (CO/TC/31/3/2011)

5.5 DEALING WITH DISCIPLINARY ISSUES

In marked contrast with Teacher A's lessons, Teachers B and C spent a significant portion of their teaching time dealing with disciplinary issues. These were task-unrelated calling out, talking to a peer, and being off-task. Field notes indicate that off-task interactions were largely non-verbal, often physical actions such as playing with personal objects and prodding someone else. Teachers B and C called students out publicly when attending to students' misbehaviour. Excerpt 5J below is illustrative. Teacher B was recapitulating a previous lesson on how to write a letter of ordering goods. Before starting this lesson, she had spent quite a long time on behavioural issues. She had indicated that this was a major problem in her class during our interview (I/TB/1/3/2011). As the lesson continued; instruction was interrupted many times to address behavioural problems.

Excerpt 5J (CO/TB/17/3/2011)

	Teacher	Student	Observer's comments
1.	O.k. now. Do you still remember how to write erm erm a letter of ordering goods? Ok before we start can can you please put your bags away.sit properly on the chair.	.	A few students say yes
2.	Neal, put your bag away. Sit properly on your chair.		Two boys are playing with their bags. A boy put up his hands and then rocked on his chair... Teacher addressed Nelson firmly.
3.	. "put your bag away"	Students talk amongst themselves.	Addressing a boy
4.	Don't you know how to use English? Put it on the floor then. Martin, sit down!	Students talk.	The teacher says raising her voice a little.
5.	"Tim. Hurry up"...		She says that to the boy who was distributing the books
6.	"Shane".		Students talk
7.	Shane, please		
8.	o.k. , Jack, calling to Jack to pay attention.		
9.	O.k. do you still remember to write a letter of ordering goods?		
10.	Yes or no?		
11.			'Yes' students answer altogether

In line 1, we see the teacher beginning the lesson by asking students to say whether they still remember how to write a letter for ordering goods. In this same turn, she interrupted instruction to address a behavioural problem: playing with bags and inappropriate posture. The students apparently heeded not the teacher's directive but kept on playing with their bags. She eventually raised her voice and called out the culprits publicly to show her displeasure and told them where to put their bags (line 4). Having dealt with the 'bag' problem, Teacher B now dealt with students' task-unrelated talk (lines 5 to 8) before making a second attempt to begin the lesson (line 9). When students did not answer she called out to them "yes or no?" at which all students said yes (line 10-11). This pattern of talk continued throughout the lesson. Addressing behavioural problems publicly impacted negatively on teaching and learning. It broke the flow of the lesson which was likely to affect students' concentration span.

5.6 SUMMARY

The analysis of the data collected in Phase 1 suggests that learning was most of the time directed by the teachers although they reported making use of student-centered approaches such as pair and group work and allowing students to decide on topic and how to do the work. The teachers mainly used instructional techniques rather than LLS and these were asking questions for different purposes such as (1) to help students identify key points in texts about content and structure and (2) to test content knowledge. Through these questions, the teachers provided opportunities for students to demonstrate competence by providing right answers or for the teacher to check students' understanding of what is being taught. However, although limited in use, the teachers also made use of questions that encouraged their students to be self-directed or reflective. More use of self-questioning would have enabled the students to test how well they had understood what they were studying hence reducing their dependence on the teacher for knowledge. Although this was a very useful practice, its use compared to that of display questions was minimal across all three classrooms. Students across the three classrooms made use of similar learner strategies such as use of their L1, seeking help from Teacher and translating from their L1 to English and vice versa.

CHAPTER 6: COLLABORATIVE PLANNING FOR PHASE 3

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I reflexively and critically present a narrative of the CAR process (Reflection and Planning, action and observation) in Phase 3, in chronological order that represents the development of this process in Phase 3 of this study. I also discuss the positionality issues of insider-outsider, common in Collaborative Action Research in terms of negotiating roles as a researcher, facilitator, observer and participant.

6.2 REFLECTION AND PLANNING

The reflection and planning stage of Phase 3 began with a reflection on the current practices of the three Seychellois ESL classrooms. As explained in my adapted conceptual model of an Action Research thesis (Perry and Zuber-Skerritt, 1992, p. 204) in Chapter 4, in **Phase 1** of the research process, I individually planned the research project and then proceeded to collect data (Phase 1). I independently observed and evaluated and reflected on the fieldwork (Phase 2). In Phases 1 and 2 my role as an insider was designed to observe and analyse. In Phase 3, as an insider-action-researcher, my approach was deliberately interventionist and I aimed to produce change in the way ESL was taught in three ESL classrooms in the Seychelles. I wanted to move out from my 'comfort zone' and involve the teachers more actively in the research. I wanted not only to understand what teaching English as second language meant to them, but also to support them in improving the conditions that contribute to their day-to-day teaching of the language. Hence, as Reason & Bradbury(2001a) stated, my focus in this CAR was both to obtain theoretical insights and to bring about personal and social change processes.

Negotiating between my various roles and identities was my greatest challenge as it was difficult to develop a balance between being a colleague, collaborator, researcher and facilitator. I am a Seychellois ESL teacher and have grown up and attended school in this community – I am an insider. I identified with the community and the struggles faced by my teacher participants. This made entering the space comfortable . At the same time as the CAR project progressed, there was a part of me that the 'community' could not

connect to. I was a graduate student pursuing a doctorate in Applied Linguistics at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. Entering this site as a member of this university made me an outsider.

Phase 1 allowed me to collect a data set from individual interviews with the participating teachers and classroom observations and then to take the findings to the teachers in Phase 2. The aim of presenting the findings to the teachers was to elicit critical comments on the findings. However, during the process of writing the findings and reporting them to the teachers, I often felt torn between considering the needs and best interests of my teacher participants and reporting findings according to my own interpretations. I often asked myself how do I deal with something my participants would not agree with, especially when I am familiar with their culture.

Based on Phase 1, it appeared that the teachers taught students content knowledge only. For example, English lessons emphasized the development of English language literacy skills. In particular, the teachers were concerned with getting students to understand ideas and facts about a topic being learnt, such as writing a notice. They would also focus on linguistic topics such as grammar and vocabulary knowledge and writing mechanics in general. The teachers appeared to be the main transmitters of knowledge while the students appeared to have very little voice in their learning, for example, choosing topics, purposes and audience. The teachers gave the students very few opportunities to talk among themselves about their work or strategies they used to solve their problems. Teaching consisted of giving instructions and asking students questions that tested their knowledge. There were few occasions where the teachers provided instruction that provoked new thinking and understanding about what was being taught. The findings of this initial inquiry became the foundation for the research team to develop the collaborative research project. I presented the findings to the teachers in an informal and conversational way.

To avoid misrepresenting my participants' views, I constantly engaged in a fine balancing act on a number of levels throughout the research process. For example, I encouraged the teachers to interrupt me and ask questions about issues that were not clear to them. In doing so, I was addressing the power relations that exist in collaborative research by giving the teachers a voice to express their concerns as well. However, my experience in this research is well expressed by Ospina et al. (1996) who pointed out that "just as the ideal of democracy animates political life but is often not fully realized, the democratic aspirations behind action research are much harder to achieve in practice than in theory" (p. 48).

6.2.1 FIRST MEETING IN PHASE 3

A positive factor in my dual role as researcher and participant was that as an insider, I knew and respected the perspectives that the teachers brought to the research project and I understood and used their suggestions as part of the design and implementation of the project. The first step in our planning for the CAR was to select a topic. As usual I opened the session by thanking the teachers for attending it and explained what we would do in this session. To make the research process as participative as possible, I elicited from the teachers what they considered were their problems. The information gathered from this meeting and subsequent ones influenced the design of the intervention. I remained silent and listened to the teachers as they expressed what they felt their problems were:

Students' lack of motivation

Like for example, I've noticed when you correct you do the correction of writing and then you show the students like there is something wrong there now if the student is interested in his or her studies and wants to improve the student will stand there and think about it and say yes miss there's something wrong but if a student comes and say I don't know I just wrote something you asked me to write (TA/M1/7/7/2011)

Students depending too much on the teacher for their learning

This is what the problem actually is that students they depend too much on the teacher. You have to feed them everything so this I think we should try to start doing to start learning on their own. It doesn't have to be like the teachers who have to do everything to look for information, provide explanation. They should have the skills, knowledge to do it on their own ((TC/M1/7/2011).

Students not thinking when writing

In terms of XXX, I don't really know if they have improved because I'm new but I find that they have a big problem when it comes to writing, because first of all they are not serious enough towards what am I writing now? Is it relevant to the topic I've chosen? They are not actually thinking about it they are just doing you know writing writing writing in order to finish in the time given (TA/M1/7/7/2011)

The teachers had divergent views about what their problems entailed, but the key issues of concern they wanted to address revolved around the teaching of writing.

Next we brainstormed a list of things we could do to address the problems. One of the teachers suggested that I train them to teach their students how to ask the right questions, thus placing me in an 'expert' position. The same teacher also suggested that we ask the students how they learn as a means of knowing what to do to help them learn more effectively. Another teacher suggested that they try to change their teaching strategy. Navigating the process of facilitating change, while not imposing my own strongly held beliefs was difficult throughout this research process. My primary goal was to work with the teachers to develop a plan for helping students to become more strategic and self-regulated writers. One of my guiding beliefs was that with mediated and scaffolded support by the teachers, students with different levels of achievement would develop learner writing strategies and thus become successful writers. Although I tried hard to keep myself in check, because I felt so passionately about language learning strategies and wanted things to fall into place quickly and easily, I suggested that one way to deal with these issues was to develop LLS in students. I suggested that we tried to develop a plan to teach students LLS. I briefed them about what LLS are and the benefits of teaching them to students. Nevertheless, in this first meeting, the two teachers showed a sense of belonging to the project. For example, they gave suggestions how to improve the data collection method for the research project as a research team member:

Researcher	Teacher A	Teacher C
Ok so what type of data do you think we need to collect to see that things are changing things are progressing		Since we like thinking aloud teaching them maybe it will be useful to record it a camera
	video	Yah video yah video is better like how well the teacher is doing is he/she doing the right thing? And whether the students themselves are trying ok
		And also we collect evidence like for example if we taught them how to do the first draft they write a story then we can collect the first draft see whether they have understood what we trying to teach them I mean live cam{referring to live recording}

In this example, our social positioning was shared in that we were all concerned with choosing appropriate data collection methods. The teachers were willing and able to articulate and discuss this issue with respect to their practices.

In the second meeting, in the planning stage we tried to jointly design a plan that would guide our practices in dealing with the identified writing problems of the students. Setting a date for the meeting was quite problematic as other school priorities and the teachers' other commitments came up.

6.2.2 SECOND MEETING IN PHASE 3

We had our second meeting on the 21st July 2011 from 2:00 pm to 2:45 pm in the Deputy for Studies' office at the school. The early part of the meeting was not recorded for technical reasons. This part was my welcoming the teachers and thanking them again for attending the meeting. Recording started when I reminded the teachers of the purpose of the meeting. To facilitate the process, I recapitulated the main themes which emerged in our first meeting which we agreed would be our guiding framework to construct our PD plan. These were:

- Language learning strategies
- Learning through interaction
- Writing process
- Learner responsibility.

Given that the teachers were busy, I had taken responsibility to develop and share a template which we used to plan our action for the research project (see Appendix D). The template consisted of the goal, task start and end date, action steps to be taken, tasks, person responsible for the tasks and issues. I reminded the teachers what our goal was and our agreement to enhance writing instruction in the three classes that they were teaching by integrating strategy instruction into a process approach to writing. We had agreed to have three PD sessions in order to address the problems we identified in the first meeting. The process of joint decision making was not straightforward in this meeting and subsequent ones. I invited the teachers to suggest what we could do in our first PD session. As opposed to our first meeting where the teachers passionately voiced their problems, in this meeting I met silent faces and discomfort. It was during this meeting that being an insider action researcher posed some significant disadvantages and challenges. When no suggestions were proposed, I suggested that we had a writing session where each one of us wrote a story and then reflected on our writing processes and strategies used. I explained that this would help us better understand what our students went through when composing stories. The teachers expressed that this change was not suitable for them although previously they agreed that their students

were not making optimal progress in their writing. Teacher A argued that focusing on story writing might go against their termly plan that they strictly followed and the need to teach topics as identified by their language department. Both Teachers B and C expressed their uneasiness about writing a story:

A story! You give me a title a day... Write about it. Ahhhh sa non {chuckles} ” (TB/M2/21/7/2011),
Me too I've lost my ... {chuckles}” (TC/M2/21/7/2011).

Non but we use our own strategies to teach them. like me I use my style the way I write stories to teach them to teach the low ability students erm like for my Two five like XXX say she likes pictures. What I do is that I make them write the sentence even though there are mistakes in it even though ...the correct sentence and then from I try to work with them I try to help them build the sentences more rich in style to add more so that they enhance their creativity from that. So I make them write the way they think. And then from that I try to correct them and like you said they try ...erm give them work from (TB/M2/21/7/2011).

Teacher A said nothing apart from an occasional “I have no idea”.

Teacher B suggested that I gave them a topic to write about in their own time. Teachers A and C argued that they were not very comfortable with composing a story simultaneously.

In the spirit of reflexivity, I realised that the teachers resisted my idea for two main reasons:

(1) They were not clear about roles and tasks that were being proposed to them. Hence, I agree with Ospira et al. (2004. p. 56) who stated:

When a group lacks clarity around authority, it may become associated with an autocratic method of organising that runs counter to democratic principles.

(2) My insider position as a Seychellois ESL teacher and participant made it difficult to negotiate with the teachers around these issues because we knew each other well and at times this familiarity may have allowed them to not accept my suggestions.

What emerged was that some of the PD tasks sounded unrealistic to the teachers and I realised that the tasks needed to be co-constructed if we were to move forward. However, I still found it emotionally trying to see the teachers resisting learning new instructional approaches that could promote positive learning. Nevertheless in the spirit of democracy that underpins action research, I tried to reframe my understanding of resistance by taking it as a means of obtaining rich data for the study and contributing to my greater understanding about group dynamics as well as opportunities to support the teachers in the process of changing their practices. Adopting this attitude, I overcame this barrier, particularly with Teacher B.

Teacher B supported my idea and persuaded the other two teachers to do it. She explained how the process would help us feel how the students feel when they write under assessment conditions. Teacher A contested by saying “We know how students feel we’ve been students once”. Teacher B responded to Teacher A by saying that this would be a different experience.

Teacher A repeatedly said that story writing was not on their termly plan while Teacher C expressed that he was comfortable with writing but his mind was not set on story writing. With Teacher B’s support, I explained how this activity would be done and the benefits of understanding our students’ composing processes. After much deliberation, we agreed that instead of writing a story we would each compose a friendly letter based on our own experience. Following that, we would reflect on three themes: LLS, learning through interaction and learner responsibility, as we did the activity. Teacher B took charge and went on to propose what we should have in the second session:

So maybe before we actually analyse, we as a group we can get like take XXX story and analyze it by myself and then we can do it as a whole group (TB/M2/21/7/2011).

I explained what we would do in the second session. There were objections from the teachers. In fact Teacher C suggested:

Well strengths and weaknesses when we do the analysis we strengths when we go to class teaching... (TC/M2/21/7/2011).

I noticed that Teacher A was not contributing, so I asked her to voice what she felt. She said she had no idea but was happy to do what we decided on.

For our third session, I proposed that we had another 'writing workshop' similar to the first one but this time we would each write a very short fiction story, drawing on what we learnt from the first and second sessions; writing about own experience and text analysis. Again, as a group we would reflect on the three themes as we worked through the writing process. Teacher C expressed how uncomfortable he was with writing under timed conditions and that he believed he wouldn’t gain much from the exercise. Teacher B suggested:

Maybe we can take the first story after we’ve analysed it and write something else I mean we write the story again. But you won’t have to write again. You just take the old one and according about how the others have analysed you just. (TB/M2/21/7/2011)

I explained that this would help us understand our learners' writing processes better. Teacher B expressed her concern about the fact that her students would not be able to go through the writing processes during assessment because it is done under timed condition. I advised that on the contrary it will help them better manage their writing during assessment. I realised that the teachers' resistance to accepting my suggestions was caused by different factors: my own overzealousness to introduce strategy instruction in their classrooms; the teachers' lack of confidence in their ability to make positive change in their students' writing using this approach (e.g. "Miss but what we are doing what we actually doing when they are in class but when they sitting for exams they won't have time to go through this process write edit you know rewrite again" (TB/M2/21/7/2011)). Some of the resistance was also directed not at the research itself but rather at the institutional realities such as following the termly plan (e.g. "XXX for example is story writing is not on the termly plan do you think we will have the time to do it?" (TA/M3/28/7/2011)). I realised that I needed to adapt my approach to professional development to include a much greater emphasis on scaffolding support for the teachers. For example, I explained that learner writing strategies are transferable to all types of writing.

Researcher	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C
You're going to write news papers? Report writing, don't you think your students will need these skills to write a report. It doesn't have to be story writing. I came up with story writing because you suggested that we focus on story writing so I thought you would like to work on story writing.			For S. two?
So have a look at it {the handout} what if we use this process approach to writing whether the students will still have to go through this writing process. non? Yes? What do you think?		I think in my opinion I say yes.	
What about you XXX?	Yes		
So they are very useful skills because language learning strategies you can apply it to any areas you're teaching to any skills, and even to any subjects o.k.			
So do you think we can still go on with writing strategies? teaching our students writing strategies learning strategies that will help them o.k. improve their writing.		mm	

Because if I'm not mistaken when you have your end of term exam there is always a composition to write there is always letter to write or a notice or a report or something like this. yes

So writing is quite is carries a significant percentage of what is being assessed in your exams non? What is the percentage 40%?

So you're happy for us to go ahead with writing? To teach our students to write better by equipping them with learning skills. Learning strategies. yes? yes?

Nods

nods

Nods

Towards the end of the meeting, I was successful in getting the teachers to agree to write a story in our last PD session. A research project integrating strategy instruction in a process approach to writing was chosen. The aim of the project was to make students more responsible and aware of their learning by helping them become more strategic. We believed that as a result of this, students would be more responsible, reflective and strategic learners and as a result increase their achievement in writing. At the end of the meeting, Teacher B announced that she would be withdrawing her participation in the project because she would be going to study for a BA in the English language at the university as of the end of September 2011. However, she chose to participate until we completed the PD sessions. I thanked her for her participation and wished her success in her studies. Teacher A was to take over Teacher B's class but was not comfortable to participate in the research project with that class. I respected her views so Teacher B's class was withdrawn from the project.

During this research process, I learned that, like students, teachers require various levels of support to feel that they can successfully implement a project. I gained great insight into how I could improve my relationships with the teachers and that any changes within their classrooms must be reached through collaboration and support, hence there was a change for the teachers including myself. As the study progressed, the teacher involvement improved and their responses were favourable only because I made conscious negotiations around positionality. As Smith, Bratini, Chambers, Vance Jensen, and Romero (2010, p. 419) stated I now rethink of the CAR as "a process of self-naming, self-defining, and self-creation and re-creation. It is action on the world while reflection continues – in other words, praxis".

Nevertheless, in retrospect, bringing to light my knowledge of how to tackle the problem was a tremendous challenge and giving voice to it somehow caused anxiety for me. Although, I tried to comply as much as possible with collaborative action research principles such as shared decision-making amongst team members, I felt that my role in this part of the research was somehow echoed in Lofman, Pelkonen and Pietila's (1992, p. 337) statement with reference to researchers who participate in collaborative research but who hold "the power because of their knowledge base, membership of the intelligentsia and as managing the research agendas". McKenna & Main (2010, p. 115) pointed out that "initiating a collaborative research partnership that facilitates the identification and prioritization of community views about their own needs and interests is fraught with challenges that many researchers may not be prepared to identify or address".

6.2.3 FIRST PD SESSION IN PHASE 3

The participating teachers and I met for our first PD session on the 29th August 2011 from 12:30 pm to 1:20 pm. The session was held in the Deputy for Studies' office. It was the first week after the resumption of the third school term. We had the session during the school's lunch break. As usual I opened the session by reminding the teachers of its purpose. I gave each of them a copy of our action plan as discussed and agreed on in our previous meeting. I had taken responsibility for typing and printing the action plan and agenda of meetings as I had access to the needed resources to do this. I also gave each teacher a file, and a notebook for their journals. Although the role of insider-outsider can be difficult to balance, during the PD sessions it sometimes provided unique opportunities to collect information. As we reflected on our writing processes and strategies, I was often able to ask questions as an outsider who genuinely did not know certain things. At the same time, I had been around enough that the teachers generally felt comfortable talking candidly both to me and in my presence.

Throughout the research process, I tried to maintain the principles of Collaborative Action Research. I tried as much as possible to make positive change happen by shifting the balance of power from me to the teachers. For example, in the first PD session, as in all our meetings, I made sure that I gave the teachers the opportunity to take decisions and make suggestions as well.

“O.k. So how do you want to start the session? Erm last we said that we will focus on a friendly letter o.k. The processes that students go through when they’re writing a friendly letter. So shall we brainstorm some topics which students can write about? Examples of friendly letters that students can that you normally give your students to write”. (R/PD1/29/8/2011)

The teachers were keen to make suggestions about possible topics we could write about:

“Or about their holidays how they spent their holidays. I mean they can talk to their pen friends, their school, and their life about somebody important to them” (TC/PD1/29/8/2011)

“Maybe maybe like you have been to a new restaurant a new hotel, you might as well Or you can write to describe your country (TB/PD1/29/8/2011)

“Visit abroad, holidays, pen friend, an event, an incident that occurred, family members, new friends, a place visited”(TA/PD1/29/8/2011)

After brainstorming possible friendly letter topics, we each chose our own topic to write about. Bearing in mind that the teachers had to go back to class after the session, we agreed to limit the writing of the letter to 10 minutes. My multiple positionalities in the research project were very important at this stage. I did not see myself as an outsider and an expert but as a participant who wore many hats. By participating in the writing process, I gained a better understanding of the lived experiences and realities of the teachers and students. I monitored for critical moments or events of the study and observed patterns of interactions that may at first seem unimportant and I regularly shared those with the teachers.

In our reflective discussion that followed immediately after composing our letters, we saw that there was repeated hesitation to make a start, back-tracking and re-writing as we saw a need to repair problems. Teacher A repeatedly squashed her paper and re-wrote, accompanied by signs of exasperation and frustration. The following demonstrates the reasons for doing so:

I went through the same things that XXX (referring to Teacher B) was saying. At first I couldn’t decide upon which topic to (TA/PD1/29/8/2011).

This process of backtracking was more concisely expressed by Teacher A said: “And I always go back to the topic. I make sure that I go back to the topic and make sure that what am writing relates to the topic” (TA/PD1/29/8/2011).

What is perhaps interesting is that the teachers immediately found a strategy to solve their problems by adding to their self-report:

but then I related the topic each topic to the things that I have experienced myself and then I chose a visit abroad whereby I wrote about things I saw (TA/PD1/29/8/2011)

I I erm I wrote something I wrote about Praslin I went there for holiday I tried to now think about the things, how it was when we went there, what did we see, what did we do (TB/PD1/29/8/2011).

As we reflected on our writing processes, I observed that when the teachers expressed how they got their ideas down on paper, Teacher A reported that while she was writing she was actually doing two cognitive tasks, : writing and revising, at the same time:

Erm for me erm like erm I have about four paragraphs now what I'm saying in the second paragraph in the development it's not I don't see that it flows with second thing that I'm talking about in the third paragraph so my development is like two paragraph but only one, so I need to re-organise things (TA/PD1/29/8/2011)

The teachers also said that they did not separate the planning and translating thoughts into written language during the time they spent writing the letter. They all reported that their plans “were in their heads”. However, they also agreed that planning has benefits and hence they all had encouraged their students to do it prior to composing.

When I prompted them to say what strategies they used for organising and structuring ideas, they simply reported that “ideas just flowed”. I raised the importance of being aware of audience and naming the strategy and explaining its importance and when it can be used to the students.

Sometimes we use a lot of strategies but we don't tell our students why we are using the strategies and the importance of it. You know it is very important that we tell our students that. For example, note taking it's a very good strategy I'm writing why will I tell my students to take notes of ideas that come to me during the process? Why is it important? When can I use note taking apart from the activity that I'm working on. When is it also relevant to use note taking? Why would I put a note in the margin when I write? (PD1/R/29/8/2011)

I also tried to elicit from them the strategies that they used to write their letter, which could be taught to their students. The following are the teachers' responses:

Non, you don't miss it, you get the idea then you just put it aside and then". Teacher B commented that she told her students to "So that you do not forget? If you think that this sentence is wrong then you can go back and change it or put it where you think it's right. (PD1/TA/29/8/2011)

Because for example for my S 2 students they rushed in their writing as soon as they select a topic they just write like XXX said all their ideas are mixed up and at the end they are so confused they are they are blocked, so I always tell them before they start read it through carefully then find some different ideas related to the topic the background jot it down like she said in sequence.. So it's easier for them. (PD1/TC/29/8/2011)

At this stage, Teachers B and C had started to become critical in their teaching practice and were in a state of mind where they were open to change.

Erm like me I don't usually ask students to plan about letter writing. Friendly letter if like a way of expressing yourself maybe I'll teach them how to organize their paragraphs so maybe I have learnt that I have difficulty to write my letter maybe the students also are facing the same difficulty. Maybe I will teach them note-taking also because I don't really focus on that (TC/PD1/29/8/2011)

Teacher B resolved "to teach them two things, how to write in class and how to plan for the exams". Teacher A was the only one who said that she would not change her practices after this session.

6.2.4 SECOND PD SESSION IN PHASE 3

I met the teachers on the 30th August 2011 at 2:05 pm. This was a time that was supposed to be dedicated to the School Improvement Programme which all teachers have to attend. In that session, we looked at text analysis by analysing students' writing. I introduced the session, its aims and how we would go about it. I explained what I meant by text analysis:

So when we're talking about text analysis we're talking we're also talking about the internal organization of texts, how writers achieve that. ok erm when authors write a text they do it to communicate an idea ok they use a structure that goes with the idea, say for example you write you're giving your students erm a sort of writing to compare and wolves and dogs ok so your the aim the purpose is to compare and contrast the two animals so what types of signal words would or transitional phrases you'll be expecting your students, to use? Definitely of course there could be a mixture but words like unlike, similarly, different from ok these types of signal words will come up in their writing so this type of text-structure will compare and contrast. Right? (R/PD2/30/8/2011)

We looked at samples of students' work which the teachers themselves provided. To get them on board the discussion I asked the teachers a question:

Anybody would like to share why getting our students to understand internal organization of text. Why is it important? (R/PD2/30/8/2011)

Teacher C responded immediately:

Well usually a text is like ... have an introduction, body and conclusion maybe the students from the text read they can get be able to organize their work. They get a little overview like how their work erm where each information should go where they are supposed to put each information so it will help them I think they because I've never done it I've taught that by giving them story to read the story will give them an idea how they're supposed to write a story (TC/PD2/30/8/2011)

I extended and consolidated what he said:

Exactly so in other words you are saying that they are able to identify the relationship between different ideas in in their writing ok right and then if they are able to understand text-structure they will also be able to transfer what they know from one situation to another, for example erm like I've said before other subject areas like geography, history, many students do not understand what they read because erm they don't understand how a text is organized and once you know the text-structure you can easily identify the information you are asked to ok. So we will look at the story and we'll try to analyse it together (R/PD2/30/8/2011)

I then distributed a sample of a low achiever's composition about a descriptive account on Michael Jackson. We pretended that we were using this piece of writing to teach our students about text analysis with specific emphasis on modeling our thoughts and telling the students about the strategies that we use. I invited a teacher to read and Teacher C gladly accepted to do it. Throughout our meeting on that date I initiated questions as guides and points of entry in the discussions whenever necessary in order to give the teachers a voice, as sharing power with me is a principle of Action Research. For example, I began by saying:

Something I Something I noticed right away when we were reading is that the student is going to tell how Michael Jackson is. He's trying to describe Michael Jackson, the history of Michael Jackson closely... (R/PD2/30/8/2011)

Teacher C immediately recognised that the student's piece of writing was a descriptive genre. He then went on to say how he recognised that the writing was descriptive: "He gives details, feedback of how Michael Jackson is". Then the other two teachers stated the details that the students gave about Michael Jackson.

We reasoned together how those clues could make us know a type of writing-genre:

If we are describing we have a lot of adjectives. From this text not too much adjectives, himself he's just stating what the artist did (PD2/TC/30/8/2011)

He's describing the life of the artist like if he was like writing a story we would have seen dialogues like that erm if he was writing an argumentative he would have seen compare and contrast or even

you have seen some conjunctions but here just by looking at it you know that it's descriptive (PD2/TB/30/8/2011)

Ok first the way that he has decided to start the the thing there like he's actually talking to someone he's using I, my by giving his ideas of what he knows about the person he's using if you look carefully. He is using like he had erm he is you know something he is using a kind of approach whereby that person showing us that he is actually describing Michael Jackson in directly yeah because he using he has he is (PD2/TA/30/8/2011)

Using the students' description of Michael Jackson, we tried to reflect on the type of questions that his text gave rise to and whether those were questions that a well-written description would normally answer. We identified also some effective questions that were not in the student's writing. These were: what other people think of Michael Jackson, his physical appearance and personality, the audience for whom the student was writing. I also pointed out the importance of signal words that help the reader locate the answers to the questions. Teachers identified no signal words in that piece of writing and the teachers pointed out that there was a lack of important details and the student's ideas were all mixed up.

The following were the teachers' suggestions of use of instructional techniques to address this problem:

Well I could write a sentence the way he has written on the board then I could tell the student like to include more details maybe they will know that there are not enough so I tell them to add more details (PD2/TA/30/8/2011)

Maybe like XXX said erm you write the sentence on the board then you get them to re write the sentence if was them writing how were they going to write that sentence like for example instead of saying like let's say I like his clip if you were the writer how were you (PD2/TC/30/8/2011)

going to write that sentence may be all of them have different ways of writing it to get them to add more details to get it to be more interesting (PD2/TC/30/8/2011)

I also shared a strategy that I would have used to help that student:

And then what about using highlighters ok it's a strategy as well highlighters you highlight for example when I read something that I find very important let me show you what I do lend me your pen sometimes I do like this or I write important or I try to put that in my own words what I understand by what I have read there in the margin ok so I use this type of strategy (PD/2R/30/8/2011)

The teachers then went on to point out what the student could have done to make his writing more effective by suggesting revision possibilities such as:

Or maybe my I like Michael whatever my clip is bad then maybe he could have said that his brothers and sisters have helped him to make that clip maybe that could have been I don't know (PD2/TB/30/8/2011)

Maybe during the transition where he was being convicted his brother and sisters to help him to raise his reputation up... Also he could have used the sentence in the first part I love his songs. I like his clip maybe he could have mentioned that his brothers and sisters helped him ... but I think it is related to the in way. (PD2/TC/30/8/2011)

Teachers B and C started jokingly blaming each other for not teaching the student proper organisation of text. I intervened at this point to show the importance of teaching students planning and then went on to suggest a few strategies such as graphic organisers and highlighting of related ideas to facilitate that. I stressed the importance of modeling strategies but Teacher B said "I don't know how to model". I responded by saying that you say what you are thinking when you are writing your text.

Teachers B and C deliberated over the rating of that piece of writing. Teacher B thought that there were too many grammatical inaccuracies in the student's work while Teacher C said that they did not impair meaning. Following the same discussion pattern, we also analysed a good piece of writing. The teachers immediately pointed out what made that piece of writing effective. These were rich vocabulary, use of dialogue, coherent, ideas well-organised, and use of similes. However, Teacher B said, "They never use that unless we told them to" (PD2/TB/30/8/2011)

I highlighted the importance of teaching text analysis to students in order to help them become more effective writers.

6.2.5 THIRD PD SESSION IN PHASE 3

Our last PD session took place on the on 1st September 2011 after morning break in the Deputy Pastoral's office. We started the session a brief introduction of what we were about to do. We brainstormed a list of possible story titles from which we each chose a topic to write about. We took 18 minutes to write the story, which was followed by our reflection on how our experiences learnt and gained in sessions one and two had helped us to write that story. I was not only a co-learner with the teachers but also facilitated this session like on other occasions. The teachers were challenged and their capacities to learn through critical reflections on the action we were taking were activated:

Both Teachers A and B said that they went through similar processes:

At first I started straight away then when I found that I was going to be stuck then I did a small plan putting ideas in each paragraph (PD3/TC/1/9/2011)

Ok I started the same as XXX straight away but then I got stuck and then I had to think of topic sentences that I wanted to explore in the composition ph what I was going to write erm and it helped me a lot now I know which paragraph (PD3/TA/1/9/2011)

The teachers realised the importance of developing a plan first that writing is a complex process and that it is almost impossible to teach it in the traditional linear way of plan-translate-revise cycles:

Erm ...that maybe there was something missing but I left blank spaces when I go back because when I was writing I had different ideas in my head and it was a bit difficult to put in writing by leaving blank spaces (PD3/TC/1/9/2011)

When I had my ideas I wrote them down and then I I turned back to first page when I started when I noticed that some sentences were not fit to be where I have put them so I just made brackets and then I turned to the back and then I put a dot where I think the sentence should fit (PD3/TA/1/9/2011)

In the above instances the two teachers also expressed the strategies they used to help them manage their writing: “leaving blank spaces”, “wrote ideas down and made brackets, putting dots”. This Action Research project enabled us to think regarding our students’ writing problem. The teachers were motivated to act with determination, confidence and resourcefulness. Teacher C expressed this explicitly:

If I was modeling it first I will start straight away then I will say I’m stuck right now what I shall do? I’ll try planning, try telling the students what they can do before writing and then when they had different ideas maybe it will be spaces or put asterisk even though they do not have... if they have not explained enough erm paragraph maybe they should leave blank spaces (PD3/TC/1/9/2011)

Teacher C was cognizant of possible causes of his students’ writing problems:

And also and the way when we put a 250 words it limited my creativity because now I have to because I have been there is a number of words maybe this is what affecting the students ... like for S one usually 250 there’s not much to write. I think we need to give them space to write as much as they want (PD3/TC/1/9/2011)

At the end of the session, we planned the classroom observations that were to follow the PD sessions. The teachers gave the dates and times when they would be available for the observations which I took note of. By engaging with the teachers in the process of the implementing our plan, the balance of power shifted and we learnt many things from each other. The teachers were more open with me. Being an insider, gave me the opportunity to hear the concerns of the teachers and work to address them. It helped me to appreciate the importance of the process in terms of what the teachers brought to the research.

6.3 ACTION

The teachers implemented the project in their ESL classrooms and I became the non-participant observer. Chapter 7 reports the findings of Phase 3.

6.4 OBSERVATION

At the observation stage, I observed and took notes about the way the teachers taught learner writing strategies using a process approach to writing. I was particularly interested in the ways they mediated and

scaffolded students' learning in their students' ZPD. I also observed the students' involvement in the learning process, the strategies they used and the opportunities they had to interact with their peers as members of their community. During the observation, the teachers and I were supposed to make personal notes on what occurred during the learning process.

6.5 REFLECTION

Through reflective meetings, the teachers and I met to discuss, evaluate and reflect on what was happening in the classroom as a result of the implementation of the project. I observed and documented the team's reflective discussions. I was an active participant in the discussions, so I gained personal insights into the teachers' experiences. Finally, I analyzed data collected at the observation stage, including my own journal entries. The teachers' reflections on their experiences in this project were also used to inform the analysis of data. The detailed analysis of data is presented in Chapter 7 and discussed in Chapter 8. The teachers and I considered the number of cycles to have in this study. We acknowledged that action research usually requires the process to be conducted in several cycles until satisfactory practical solution to the problem is found (see Figure 4.2 in Chapter 4 which depicts that several cycles could occur at this stage). Due to our circumstances at the time of the research, we decided to conduct only one cycle in the core action research. First, I was a doctoral student working under strict schedule due the availability of funding. The teachers also had to deal with tight schedules, e.g. meeting the termly plan and preparing students for school-based and national exams.

6.6 SUMMARY

This chapter has explained the action research processes (planning, action, observation and reflection) that the teachers and I undertook in our attempt at implementing the writing strategy through a process approach to writing in the ESL classrooms. The chapter began by explaining how Phase 1 data which were derived from interviews with the teachers and classroom observations were used to form the basis of the development and implementation of Phase 3. In addition to the presentation of these themes, this chapter has detailed the social dynamics of how the teachers and I became collaborative research partners in the process of shared decision-making. The chapter has also explained my positions as a field researcher in a

collaborative action research project, exposing my experiences as insider-outsider and processes of interaction with the teacher participants.

The next chapter will present and analyse the findings of Phase 3, which is the action in the CAR process where the teachers and I implemented the research project.

CHAPTER 7: FINDINGS OF PHASE 3

7.1 INTRODUCTION

I developed two case studies by combining the information from the audio-recorded classroom observations, reflective meetings, and my research journal and field notes of classroom observation which I collected in Phase 3 of the study. I have used a similar format to describe each of the cases; however there is variation depending on the depth and breadth of information gathered in each case.

7.2 CASE STUDY ONE – TEACHER A AND CLASS X

In this case study report, I focus attention on how Teacher A mediated and scaffolded learner writing strategies. The following topics guide this report: identifying genre; choosing a writing-genre and why; choosing a topic; planning a story; composing a story and revising a story. I also present the types of learner writing strategies used by the students within each topic.

The daily structure of Teacher A's class encouraged interaction with peers, herself and on a whole-class scale. In a typical day, she would engage students in whole-class discussion followed by requiring students to work in groups while she would walk around observing them and providing support when called upon. Later, she again engaged students in whole-class discussion which she facilitated.

7.2.1 IDENTIFYING GENRE

In her first lesson (6th September 2011) following our third PD session, Teacher A introduced story writing to her class (Class X). She stood in front of the class and began by asking the students a general question "now tell me what you know about story writing? Anybody? What can you tell me about story writing?" (See Excerpt 7A line 1 below). This had the potential to give her information about what her students know about story writing and to enlist their interest (Wood et al., 1976).

Excerpt 7A (CO/TA/6/9/2011)

	Teacher	Student	Observer's comments
1.	The first topic we're going to look at is about story writing ok? Now what do you know about story writing? Anybody. What can you tell me about story writing?		Students are quiet. They look at the teacher.
2.	Yes {teacher chooses a student to speak}	There are different types of story writing	The student talks softly and the Teacher asks her to speak louder
3.	There are different types of story writing yes. Ok name me one type		
4.		Narrative SU	
5.	Narrative good		{She writes what students say on the board}
6.	What else?		
7.	Jean		
8.		formal	
9.	Formal? What kind of formal? We have narrative what kind do we have?	Students mutter among themselves	
10.	Christian?	Christian thinks for a while before he says descriptive	
11.	Descriptive yes good. What else? We looked at this in the first term so you need to yah Guy	The student says something	
12.	Say it louder.	The student does not say anything	
13.	Kate. It starts with an A	.	. Teacher writes 'A' on board. Students do not say anything. They look at the teacher
14.	Ok we will remove this for the moment.		by this she means "story" which she has written on the board. she crosses out story
15.	What type of writing do you remember? We have narrative descriptive what else?		
16.		Formal and informal letters	
17.	Formal and informal letters Mary		she writes this on the board
18.			Mary says something. I could not pick it up
19.	Have you ever seen this word before?		Teacher writes "argumentative on the board." and says
20.		Erm yes	
21.	Haven't we discussed about argumentative writings before?		

At first, the students were quiet and provided no response (line 1). This silence was broken when one student hesitantly volunteered to answer by saying “there are different types of story writing” (line 2). Immediately, other students picked up on that students’ response and went on to give a list of different writing-genres (lines 4 to 8). Teacher A’s feedback to the students’ responses was a “yes”, “good”, or a repeat of the students’ response by way of acknowledging and incorporating it into the flow of the discourse. Hence, the student in line 2 aided the teacher by producing a response that got other students involved in the discussion. Evidently the conversational interaction taking place among students of similar level of achievement was more beneficial than the interaction between the Teacher (the ‘expert’) and the students (Van-Lier, 1996). Teacher A then immediately went on to invite further suggestions from the class (line 9). As can be seen throughout this excerpt, the students’ responses became the focus around which the lesson revolved. Teacher A also wrote the students’ responses on the board. In doing so, she used a material tool to mediate the activity of teaching-writing genre (Kozulin & Presseisen, 1995). Noticing her students’ silence, Teacher A asked “what else?” and wrote ‘A’ on the board). Inviting Kate to give the answer, she wrote and asked Kate to say what it was (line 13). Kate did not respond. The other students became silent again. They looked at the teacher and the board. It is clear that the students had not recognised the purpose of the teacher’s communicative move; therefore mediation by the teacher was not successful (Swain, et al. 2010). Teacher A sensed something was wrong. In dealing with this problem, the teacher continually strove to open up and work within the student’s ZPDs by mediating in ways possible to ensure the students understood the point she was trying to help them understand (Swain et al. 2010). Looking at the board she crossed out story and left ‘writing’ on the board (line 14). After that she went on to ask “What type of writing do you remember? (line 15). We have narrative, descriptive what else?” (line 15). In response to this, a student called out “formal and informal letters”. At that point, although the teacher wrote this response on the board, she went on to write the word ‘argumentative’ and asked students whether they had seen the word before. The students responded simultaneously with ‘yes’ (line 21).

In the above excerpt we see the teacher starting the lesson by activating students’ prior knowledge about what they knew about story writing. In doing so, she was recruiting the students’ interest (Wood et al. 1976). And drawing on her students’ past writing experiences (Schwieter, 2010) as a means of involving them in the task. Although, the students mistook story writing for writing-genre, Teacher A did not tell the students that their responses were not correct. She accepted all the responses which suggests that she recognised students as having key role to play in their learning. She asked students questions and linked students’ responses to one another. Thus, the teacher and the students established a foundation of

knowledge in preparation for learning new topic - story writing. The teacher thus created contexts for learning to write in the ZPD which occurred in part through the scaffolding of social interaction (Flower, Hayes, Schriver, & Stratman, 1986). Walqui (2006, p.163) went on to say that “scaffolding is closely related to the ZPD. In fact, it is only within the ZPD that scaffolding can occur. Working in the ZPD means that the learner is assisted by others to be able to achieve more than he or she would be able to achieve alone”. By the end of the discussion in this excerpt, although not necessarily her goal as indicated in line 1, Teacher A had a list of the basic knowledge students had about different types of writing-genre. In the next section, Teacher A built on students’ prior knowledge of narrative and descriptive writing-genres, two genres that are important in story writing as illustrated in the next excerpt.

7.2.2 CHOOSING A WRITING-GENRE AND WHY

Teacher A drew her students’ attention to the list of writing-genres on the board and asked them to say which one she had told them they would work on. Some students called out narrative, informative and descriptive simultaneously. Teacher A then invited the students to say which writing-genre they would choose to write and why (see Excerpt 7B below).

Excerpt 7B (CO/TA/6/9/2011)

Teacher	Student	Observer's comments
1. Ok so now if you were to choose between a narrative or a descriptive, who will choose a narrative writing type? Raise your hands high ok		Teacher Counts the hands. 15 students raise their hands
2.	Narrative descriptive	
3. Now those of you who said you will write a narrative type of text, now tell me why you would choose that type of text? Yes		
4.	It's easier SI	
5. It's easier. How do you find it easier? What makes it easier for you?		Moves quickly to ask another questions without waiting for other students to provide answers
6.	You are the narrator	
7. You are the narrator. You are giving your ideas. Yes what else?		
8. Who else can tell me something about why you would		

- choose a narrative type of text? Yes
9. Because you are telling the story in your own way
S1
10. Yes in your own way. Anybody else?
11. Students are quiet.
12. Ok so now those who did not raise your hands can I see you? Don't be scared. Those who didn't raise your hands for the narrative. {addressing a student she says "which one did you raise your hand for narrative?} en Dan? {smiles}
13. Ok the people who have raised their hands why do you choose to write a descriptive kind of text?
14. Yes Student says something I cannot pick it up
15. Ok so you find it easier for you to use adjectives describe every little detail that will make your story a little visual yah
16. Ok erm anybody else? Kenny? Which one did you choose? Narrative or descriptive?
17. Descriptive
18. Why?
19. I like giving details
20. You like giving details? Details about what?

Using "O.K" (line 1), Teacher A signalled that she was satisfied with the list of writing-genres that her students had given. She then went on to ask her students to raise their hands as an indication of which writing-genre (between narrative and descriptive) they preferred to write (line 1). However, before her students could state their preferences, she quickly said "who will choose a narrative writing type?" (line 3) Teacher A counted the raised hands and said 15. Teacher A ignored the students' calling out of their preferences (line 3) and moved on quickly to ask those students who had said they liked narrative best to justify their preferences. At this point S1 said "it's easier" (line 4). Again, Teacher A did not wait for other students to give their answers but rather asked the student in line 4 to elaborate on what she meant by "it's easier" (line 5); S1 said "you are the narrator" (line 6). Teacher A repeated S1's response and added that when you are a narrator "you are giving your ideas" hence extending the student's response further (line 7). She then went on to invite other responses at which point S1 added "because you are telling the story in your own way" (line 9). Once again, Teacher A acknowledged her response but kept on inviting others to participate through her use of "anybody else?" Teacher A now called on those students who had not

indicated their preferences. She told them not be scared, hence making her students at ease to participate in classroom discussion. Six students put up their hands, which the teacher interpreted as they preferred descriptive writing-genre (line 12). As she did earlier, she asked those students to justify their preferences. This generated responses such as “easier to use adjectives” and “giving details” as acknowledged in the teacher’s reiteration in line 15. Teacher A pointed out that use of adjectives makes the story more “visual” to the reader.

As can be seen from the above excerpt, the teacher supported the students to demonstrate what they knew about narrative or descriptive genre. She could have provided the differences between the two genres, but she chose to scaffold the talk by asking additional questions which were contingent on the students’ responses. The teacher allowed the students to speak for themselves and encouraged them to be precise and to present a clear answer. As the interaction continued, the teacher mediated learning by involving other students in the interaction (See section 2.4.4 in chapter 2, on the role other human beings in mediating learning).

In the next section, we see Teacher A handing over control temporarily to allow students to choose a topic and write about it (Englert 1992). As we see in Excerpts 7C and 7D, students were active in their conversations with each other.

7.2.3 CHOOSING A TOPIC

Teacher A put her students in groups to select a topic to write about and told them they had two minutes to discuss and choose a topic. Excerpt 7C shows the students in one group brainstorming possible topics that they wanted to write about. At this point, the group members were discussing and deciding on a topic to write about.

Excerpt 7C (CO/TA/6/9/2011)

Students		Observer's comments
1.	S1 Mm mm treasure island	Students in this group are excited. One boy. S2 excitedly gives a list of films that he had watched.
2.	S2 Ah come on treasure island treasure planet aren't they the same thing	
3.	S1 Ale treasure planet erm the walking demon	
4.	S2 Yah I bon (yes it is good this one)	
5.	S3 The monster	
6.	S4 Nightmare	
7.	S2 What?	
8.	S4 Nightmare before Halloween	
9.	S2 Mm The film is great have you seen the cartoon version?	a student says something like this.
10	S2 Treasure planet miss pour ekir lo la? Teacher to write about this?	Student asks the teacher if they are to write about the topic they have selected
11		There were no discussions for about 25 seconds
12	S2 Twenty thousand miles under the sea	
13	S2 Un gete sa (have you watched that?)	

In line 1, S1 shows that he was not comfortable with the title 'treasure island'. S2 the proposer of this title kept on convincing his peers that 'treasure island' is a good topic. Eventually S1 agreed to write about 'treasure island'. S2 however went on to propose other film titles, while his peers remained quiet. He asked his peers whether they had watched those films (e.g. lines 9 and 13). In the above excerpt, we see three important features of collaboration: negotiation, disagreement and considering alternatives (Daiute & Dallton, 1995) After S2 had given a suggestion, 'Treasure planet' (line 3), he wanted confirmation from the other members to find out if they agreed with him. When S1 disagreed with him by proposing a slightly different title 'treasure island', S2 negotiated by providing justification for his choice (line 2). Negotiation also took the form of clarification request (line 7). S4 responded by expanding his previous title in line 8. To show that they were not happy with S2's suggestions, S3 and S4 went on to propose other titles (line 5 and 6). However, there were no major conflicts or disagreements because by remaining rather silent, other group members simply did not contest S2's suggestions.

As can be seen in the above excerpt, S2 contributed his strengths to the group. He acted as an 'expert' in providing a list of possible topics to write about. This provided a greater chance of enhancing the learners' zone of proximal development. The pooling of diverse suggestions for the writing task provided interdependence for the group members to co-construct knowledge and improve their writing choices to a greater extent than what they could achieve alone (Wiggleworth & Storch, 2012).

After the two minutes had elapsed, Teacher A called the discussions to a stop and asked each group to tell the class the topic they had selected to write about. The students did so and the teacher wrote the titles on the board. Then Teacher A re-organised the students into new groups although the students were not happy about this. She then moved on to give the following instructions:

I know you like the groups you were in; I did it on purpose, so now in your groups sit down. I don't want you to write your names on the papers. You're going to choose between yourselves which topic you've taken from the list there ok? And then you're going to write a story. I will give until about 9 so, it is about 25 minutes. You just write a story making sure you have all the elements there that I have written on the board that you told me to write on the board ok? So choose one person in the group to do the writing (CO/TA/6/9/2011).

One group chose 'forbidden love' as a title to write about (see Excerpt 7D below).

Excerpt 7D (CO/TA/6/9/2011)

	Students	Observer's Comments
1. S1	Ki sa vedir forbidden? (What is the meaning of forbidden?)	
2. S2	Ale ekrir forbidden love(go on write forbidden love)	
3. S1	I don't know what forbidden means but you are writing	
4. S3	You have dictionaries	
5. S2	Ale(go ahead) forbidden love	
6. S1	Be mon pa konnen mwan(but I don't know)	
7. S2	Noun fini ganny title en (have chosen a topic, haven't we?)	

8. S1	Be mon pa konnen(but I don't know) {the boy still insists that he does not know what forbidden means}	Nobody seems to care to explain the word to the boy who does

Not know what forbidden means. They go ahead with their Story writing. They want to get the work done |
|-------|--|---|

However one student (S1) did not know what this title meant, so using Creole, the mother tongue, he went on to ask the group to explain it to him (line 1). Here S1 is signalling his need of other-regulation as a strategy to understand what 'forbidden' love means. Instead of engaging with the ZPD, S1 was constructing and gauging the level of help needed by their peer but other students in this group ignored him as indicated in line 2. S1 insisted on an explanation but S3 offered assistance to S1 by directing him to reference material – the dictionary (line 4). Despite S1's insistence on an explanation of the title (lines 6 and 8), the other group members decided to continue writing about this title (lines 5 and 7). The dynamics of writing in groups in relation to the role of learning in collaborative writing indicates that not all group members worked as effectively with others and this impacted on learning outcomes of S1 (Storch 2012). Like in the study of Dobao (2012), this study confirmed that not all peer interaction, in groups offered the same opportunities for scaffolded assistance and co-construction of knowledge.

The group eventually continued composing their story without taking further notice of S1's request for clarification. As illustrated in Excerpt 7E below, they were mainly concerned with creating, discussing and agreeing on contents.

Excerpt 7E (CO/TA/6/9/2011)

	Students	Observer's comments
1.	S3 There was ... a long time ago there was a king that	A direct translation from Creole to English
2.	S2 Write a long time ago there lived a princess go on	another student rephrases the sentence
3.	S3 A long time ago	
4.	S3 And his mother	
5.	S3 Non and his mother	
6.	S2 And her father	
7.	S3 A long time ago	
8.	S2 A long time ago comma, there lived	

9. S2 Write at the top
10. S3 A long time ago there live
comma
11. S2 Lived dictating to the scribe
12. S1 Savedir zot pa le mon fer sa(.This is the same student who does
meaning you don't want me to not know meaning of forbidden
do that)
13. S3 There's a princess
14. S2 With her father ale (go on)
15. S2 With her father
- 16.
17. S3 Dir ti annan en serpan (say
there was a snake...)
18. S2 Hang on
19. S2 Son paran pa ti oule I maye
(her parents did not want him
to marry...)
20. S2 His father {writing what the
others are saying}
21. S2 Father and mother
22. S3 Wi met son papa ek son
manman in mor parey dan sa
bann fairy tale (write that her
father and mother were dead
just like in the fairy tales)
23. S3 Ok prezan mete I tonm
anmoure (ok write that she fell
in love)

In this excerpt, S3's initiation in line 1 contained a mistake which is corrected immediately by S2 in line 2. This implies that S2 provided spontaneous assistance to guide S3's learning of the correct way to structure a sentence. As the excerpt unfolded, S3 repeated the correct phrase 'A long time ago' several times (lines 3, 7, 10). It might be inferred from this that S3 noticed the correct phrase 'A long time ago' as a possible start to introduce an idea thanks to S2's help (line 2) and then repeated it, trying to incorporate it correctly to his writing (line 10). A similar pattern of interaction occurred again with S2 completing S3's turn in line 8, but this time instructing S3 to include a comma before 'there lived'. In line 9, S2 specified to S3 where to write this. Interestingly, S3 repeated 'comma' and 'live' as suggested by S2 again, maybe as a means of helping himself to incorporate it in his writing. S2 noticed the incorrect form of 'live' immediately went on to correct S3 by saying 'lived' (line 11).

Through the use of instructing as a scaffolding strategy, S2 is regulating the task and displaying his knowledge for dealing with grammatical errors. The remarks made by S2 indicated an effort on his part as mediator to influence the performance of his peer (e.g. lines 2, 6, and 21). S2's contesting of character attributes as initially presented by S3 could be an expert support strategy in helping S3 develop ideas further. In the process, S3 may gain awareness of his performance, without which he would not be able to progress with the task. However, from lines 17 to 23, more mutual scaffolding occurred in the initiation of ideas and expression of specific information or words of what to include in the text this group and this was done primarily in the students' L1. For example, when generating more ideas, S3 in line 17 said "Dir ti annan en serpan" (say there was a snake...). At this point S2 said "Hang on" (line 18) and proposed another idea "Son paran pa ti oule l maye" (her parents did not want him to marry...). S3 accepted this idea and generated the next idea in Creole in lines 22 and 23.

In this instance, the L1 of the students acted as a scaffolding mechanism that facilitated the interaction in the group (Lantolf, 2009; Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996). The students' decision to use their L1 throughout a significant part of the task promoted communication and achievement of task goals. The L1 was an instrument of task control. It also made connections between the two languages that might have facilitated expression in the L2. L1 as used here to search for ideas to include in the story is an important semiotic mediation (see section 2.4.2). However, the excerpt also suggests that students' attitude and behaviours were not always facilitative in providing support during the group writing task (Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012). For example, in Excerpts 7D and E, S1 was completely left out by the other group members. Her ZPD was different from that of her other peers. When said that she did not know 'what forbidden love' meant (Excerpt 7D, lines 1 and 3), the only scaffolded help she received was to use her dictionaries (line 4) without further explanation. S1 did not follow her peers' advice. In Excerpt 7E, she was only seen interacting at line 12, voicing a complaint "Savendir zot pa le mon fer sa" (meaning you don't want me to do that) about her peers' neglecting her contributions which the other group members also ignored.

In Excerpt 7F below, we observe how the teacher encouraged students to think about the strategies they used as a group when choosing a topic and the complexity of the writing process.

Excerpt 7F (CO/TA/9/9/2011)

	Teacher	Students	Observer's comments
1.	Anyway so as soon as you were in your groups when I asked you to choose a topic mm remember that time?	Yes SS	
2.	How did you manage to choose a topic? What did you do?		
3.		Discuss SU	
4.	Discuss good		
5.	Now did everybody agree with the topic?	Yes SS	
6.	You're sure?		
7.		Yes SS	
8.	There were no arguments?		
9.		No SS	
10.	Because when I went when I passed erm in Shane's group there seemed to have a little disagreement about the topic. No?		
11.		At first , not much , Not really	
12.			A student is saying something in Creole

In line 1, to recruit the students' interest (Wood et al. 1976) the teacher made reference to the previous learning activity. In the unfolding excerpt, we see an attempt by the teacher to locate new learning within this shared experience. She used both closed and open-ended questions thus leading the students to reflect on what they did when they chose their topics in groups and to invite them to verbalise the strategies they used during that process. She then moved from the leading question to asking a question that addressed students directly (line 2). Thus she made a direct request for the students to get involved in the construction of an explanation of the strategies used to choose a topic. In line 4, the teacher acknowledged the students' contribution by repeating the student's answer and saying 'good'. She then moved on by asking another closed question "now did everybody agree with the topic" (line 5). Inviting her students to talk about the problems they had when selecting their topics in groups, as indicated in lines 5 and 6 the students said there were no problems. The teacher asked a leading question in line 8 as if indicating that she was not convinced that there were no problems. Again she got a simultaneous confirmation 'no' (line 10) from the students.

In line 10, the teacher provided specific help in order to reach the appropriate level of help (Gibbons 2003) required in this case. Explicit direct help is done through the teacher telling the students of her observations in Shane's group. In line 11, a student in Shane's group acknowledged that they had a few problems at first when choosing a topic. In response to the teacher, the student became engaged and she was drawn into saying when they had problems and how big their problems were. As is evident here, the teacher provided support by helping the students understand the importance of their pre-writing decisions. In the process, the student gained awareness that writing was not a neat and clean process (Flower & Hayes 1980; Bereiter & Scardimalia (1987,). Evidence that the students' ZPD was activated and they were able to voice the problems they had as a normal thing that occurs when composing in groups is to be found in their discussion following this excerpt where they spelt out their problems simultaneously and in the mother tongue.

Teacher A's explicit teaching on topic selection and its process through the use of questioning strategy, suggests better preparation for her students to write outside the classroom and school setting where writers rarely find themselves writing to an entirely pre-set prompt. The experiences provided to the students here, that is participating in choosing a topic and generating ideas on those topics later on has potential to help students to shape and develop ideas rather than simply writing down the ideas of others and to use their own strategies during this process.

7.2.4 PLANNING A STORY

In the excerpt that follows, Teacher A conducted a plenary session to elicit students' use of planning strategies they had used during collaborative class composing time.

Excerpt 7G (CO/TA/9/9/2011)

Teacher	Students	Observer's comments
1. Now what can we say about giving ideas?		A student says something but most of them look at the teacher
2. Ok we have a group. We have the topic and then we are giving ideas. What are we doing?		

3. We are
4. What are we doing for the story? A few students mutter
contribute
5. You're what? Contributing yes what are we
doing actually with the story?
6. Saying what's best for the
story
7. What?
- 8.
9. Yah:
10. We are making a plan
11. Louder
12. Participating
13. Pardon participating anybody else?
14. Transforming
- 15.
16. Transforming? With raised intonation
depicting not really correct
17. Developing constructing and
18. Developing constructing yes
19. Making a plan
20. Louder Jim

21. Doing the plan
22. Very good
23. Planning {she writes planning on the board}
because when we have the topic. we have
topic there erm erm (writing on board]

This excerpt began with the teacher signalling a need for clarification and supplying a repeated version of the students' responses only after the students had opportunities to give their responses. At the request of the teacher, the students attempted to describe their planning strategies. The teacher mediated students' learning by providing pointers for the students to reformulate their own wording of their planning strategies (Gibbons, 2003). The teacher's scaffolding was dependent on the responses the students gave. The students' first explanation was brief, hesitant and unclear (line 4). At line 5, the teacher could have recast the student's answer as she did in line 23, but instead she kept on asking: "You're what? Contributing yes what are we doing actually with the story?" The teacher helped the students examine their own writing strategies. In doing so she made use of students' everyday knowledge about writing and literacy, which she transformed into metacognitive knowledge by making that knowledge and experience the object of study. These questions help the students to see the relationship of their strategies to performance (Englert, 1992).

Line 6, the students' answer were still not clear. Line 7, the teacher went on to ask a further question "What?" At this point, one student said "we are making a plan". The teacher called on the interactant to say the answer louder (line 11). However, other students kept on giving other answers (lines 12, 14, 17) which the teacher simply repeated or rejected (line 16).

To help the students say what they did before writing the story, the teacher repeated and accepted students' responses. The teacher then scaffolded learning by summarising the main point of the student's contribution as an answer to the question posed in line 5. In the visual layout of this transcript, it is evident that the teacher's and students' talk were almost equal throughout the excerpt. The teacher handed over to the students the responsibility for clarification which eventually resulted in increasingly clearer information from the students (line 17, 19, 21). The use of 'we' (lines 1, 2, 4, and 5) when the teacher framed her question indicates on a social plane an invitation to participate but on the cognitive plane a challenge to reflect on their cognitive processes during writing (Gibbons, 2003).

In line 23, the teacher attempted to expand on the students' responses by providing more details of what they were doing during the planning of the writing task. Here, we see that on their own, the students could not say what strategy they used before they started writing, so they had reached their limit of what they could do alone (Vygotsky, 1978). Because of the precise and contingent nature of the teacher's scaffolding, the students managed to say that they were "making a plan" for the story. In line 23, the teacher finally reformulated the student's meaning in more concise wording 'planning', hence by not doing this until the 23rd line; she offered increasing opportunities for negotiation of meaning.

Later on in this lesson, Teacher A asked her students to reflect on what strategies they used when planning their stories. The students thought the teacher wanted information about what a well written story looks like, so they gave responses such as 'adjectives', 'paragraphs'. But the teacher's response triggered a different line of thought when she asked "Ok at that point how far had you reached in the story? Remember?" indicating that she was prompting the students to think. The students said "introduction, development" (CO/TA/9/9/2011). She asked another question leading the student to provide the answer. "Now when you have your ideas for the development how do you know which comes first, second, third, fourth, and so on? How do you know?" (CO/TA/9/9/2011) Most students were silent. One student just provided an inconclusive response 'just know' (CO/TA/9/9/2011).

The teacher continued by saying:

Nobody did a diagram? {She draws a web diagram on board} like you have your topic here and then you have your ideas, nobody used that? (CO/TA/9/9/2011)

It is evident in the above excerpt that in relation to asking students to say what strategies they used during writing was at their outer limit of what they could do alone. The nature of the teacher's scaffolding did not really assist students resolve the problem. Given that using questions failed to elicit students' writing, the teacher went on to present strategies: a spider diagram and jotting down ideas. She wrote the strategies on the board and moved on to ask students whether they had used this strategy before. The use of this spider diagram was an attempt to provide a scaffold that would lead to the students' comprehension of what she initially meant by 'strategies' the students used. However, she did not demonstrate how to use the strategy nor did she make any connections between the strategy use and performance, hence she omitted an effective scaffolding strategy: "modeling solutions to task" (Wood et al. 1976). The scaffolding technique used in this excerpt by Teacher A does not necessarily mean that the students' ZPD-related process was being activated (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Given that the teachers' questions were not able to

help the students voice their strategies successfully, hence the support provided by the teacher could not be considered as effective scaffolding (Gibbons, 2003). I wrote this in my journal. “Like Teacher C she did not explicitly teach students the strategies” (RJ/6/9/2011) that she said she used in our PD sessions:

When I had my ideas I wrote them down and then I turned back to first page when I started when I noticed that some sentences were not fit to be where I have put them so I just made brackets and then I turned to the back and then I put a dot where I think the sentence should fit (PD/TA/1/9/11)

I went through the same things that XXX was saying. At first I couldn't decide upon which topic to but then I related the topic each topic to the things that I have experienced myself and then I chose a visit abroad whereby I wrote about things I saw (PD/TA/29/8/2011)

O.k. first of all I had to think about the structure in the format of the letter first whereby I need to introduce what to talk about and then there were ideas that came that I found out that if I am to write erm for example, if I say erm “remember I told you I was visiting there one day” if I write this and then I have another idea I find that's supposed to be in another paragraph I say o.k. put that away think of something else to continue with the (PD/TA/29/8/2011)

In our first reflective meeting (RM1/25/9/2011), she indicated that she wanted to use modeling but was still not comfortable with this idea. She said “I'm still thinking about learning modeling in front of the class. I think I'm going to do it next week”, and she wanted to try it out with a person before doing it in her own class. This suggests that her students' difficulties in describing their reasoning could partly be explained by her lack of use of modeling her own writing processes and strategies.

Teacher A's perceived difficulties to use mental modeling (Duffy, 1993) in the study classroom increased over time. In one of our reflective meetings, she expressed her frustration with many barriers she saw to be preventing her from modeling her reasoning to her students. She found the students' attitude towards her was off-putting:

Because of their attitudes. They are always being sarcastic whenever I tried to give examples of like when I do something I make a fool out of myself in front of them they are always teasing me and you know I don't feel comfortable...NO they were actually disrespecting me... (RM1/TA/22/11/2011)

To overcome this, Teacher A tried to find alternatives such as switching to “the traditional way of teaching”:

Ok. I had 2.1 in the morning and then followed by 2.4. When I got to 2.4, I made a face and got them to sit down quietly. I told them if you talk, you’re going to kneel down for 80 minutes. And then I gave them notes, I explained. Gave them examples, like the traditional way of teaching and it worked because the outcome overall was good. For most of them (RM1/TA/22/11/2011)

She also tried to be “less friendly” (RM1/TA/22/11/2011) with the students and to allow them to work “more independently” (RM1/TA/22/11/2011).

7.2.5 COMPOSING A STORY

Students learned to compose a story in class in groups. During this time Teacher A provided minimal assistance to the students, and only did so when asked. She walked round the class and listened to group discussions. This provided opportunities for students to share their writing strategies with each other, such as (1) planning using brainstorming strategy, (2) thinking aloud, (3) using film knowledge, (4) combining theatrical aspects of films and (5) use of humour. The following excerpts present evidence supportive of these observations.

Using brainstorming strategy

The following excerpt shows two students planning their story.

Excerpt 7H (CO/TA/13/9/2011)

1.	S1	Brainstorm
2.	S1	I've just that out of the sky
3.	S2	I like writing first and the title second
4.	S1	What about a secret ...
5.	S1	So it'll be we agree on that?
6.	S1	My
7.	S1	It should not be obvious the title
8.	S1	You shouldn't read the title and then say the story is about...
9.	S1	Underworld. It has to be something to do with the underworlds
10.	S2	And the underworlds

11.	S2	The discoveries.
12.	S1	Another human discovery
13.	S2	A human discovery
14.	S2	Teenager discovery

In this excerpt both students gave and received feedback, showing the effects of mutual scaffolding (Storch, 2012). Both students were very much in tune with one another and they worked as one. They both shared the way they would usually start a story but as the interaction progressed, a symmetrical relationship between the two students was established. They both showed signs of self and other regulation. For example when S1 suggested that they started writing by brainstorming the topics (line 1), S2 in line 3 did not readily accept S1's suggestions but went to say that she liked to write her story before choosing a title (line 3). In line 5, S1 announced 'So it'll be we agree on that', which indicates that she assumed joint responsibility for choosing how to write the story. When S2 presented her own way of starting how to write a story (line 3) and then agreeing with S1, S2 showed that she had her own strategy about how to start writing a story but nonetheless, she decided to go ahead with S1's strategy 'brainstorm' first (line 1) and "the title should not tell what the story is about" (line 8). As can be seen, writing a story began with the students suggesting possible topics. They brainstormed a list of titles before deciding on the one they would write about. This approach to writing a story resembled the one the teacher used with them at the outset of the lesson where they were placed in groups and brainstormed a list of possible topics to write about (See section 7.2.3).

Thinking aloud

In the following excerpt, the students were on task writing their collaborative story.

Excerpt 7I (CO/TA/6/9/2011)

	Students	
1.	S1	Wait wait
2.	S1	Ok this would not have happened if I didn't miss my bus then what happen?
3.	S2	
4.	S2	
5.	S1	Shut up
6.	SS	Laughter

7. S1 If I miss my bus
8. S1 Well
9. S1 Think! miss my bus
10. S3 Where was she going in the bus?
11. S3 Take the bus where?
12. S1 Home
13. S1 At night that isn't it?
14. S1 Because stuff like that don't happen in the day
15. S3 Heh
16. S1 That would be extremely... to get kidnapped in broad day light
17. S1 Take... home
18. S3 After work?
19. S2 Miss my bus
20. S1 This would not have happened if I didn't miss my bus
21. S1 My bus home after work
22. S1 Now we're going to describe the man who was blab la bla
23. S1 Stop the cab
24. S1 And then my cab driver
25. S1 We gonna talk about the cab driver now
26. S1 How he got her to get her to get in the car?
27. S3 No one around

In line 2, S1 said "Ok this would not have happened, if I didn't miss my bus". Saying "then what happen?" indicates that she was thinking how to continue the story. The fact that she was vocalising her thoughts became more vivid in line 9 when she said "think". When she uttered the word 'think', it reflected the cognitive processing what she was doing. One of her peers helped her to think what to write next (line 12) but she responded with "at night, that isn't it?" (line 13). However, she responded immediately to her own question as seen in lines 14 and 16. This suggests that in line 13 she was not asking a question to her peers but was thinking aloud. In lines 10, 11, and 26, S1 continued to develop the story by vocalising self-addressed questions, leaving her peers to get the uptake of what transpired in her private deliberations.

This study shows that although students in Teacher A's class were engaged in collaborative activities, their language use in these situations was not restricted to the exchange of information. As exemplified in the above excerpt the student used language for the strategic purpose of mediating her own writing activity through thinking aloud (Vyogtsky, 1978). The use of self-addressed questions suggests that she was trying

to solve problems posed by the task. Her thinking aloud as stimulated by the social context can be said to have a self-regulatory function -- using self-addressed questions to guide her own writing behaviour. (McCafferty 1992; 1994) See section 2.6 Private speech/thinking aloud in Chapter 2.

Using film knowledge

In this excerpt, students have chosen a topic to write about and discussing how to start writing it.

Excerpt 7J (CO/TA/13/9/2011)

Students		
1.	S1	Be nou kapab konmans li avek nou finisyon(we start the story with our ending) but we just put it as the beginning
2.	S1	Just like when a film starts. You can show where they bit that guy and then he recount it saying how it happened

In line 2, S1 explicitly suggested that they start their story by emulating how films start. In the same line, S1 further suggested that they start with an exciting opening where “you can show where they beat that guy and then he recounted his story how it happened”. Through this, S1 tried to transfer an effective strategy he had gleaned by watching films in terms of providing a background of the action that was to follow later, which would enable his readers to see the causes of later events. Using Creole, S1 clearly stated his use of this writing strategy in line 1: “Be nou kapab konmans li avek nou finisyon (we start the story with our ending) but we just put it as the beginning”. Here S1 made use of a non-linear narrative as commonly seen in flashback movies which open briefly with the ending and immediately jump back to the very beginning of the story and then proceed linearly from there.

Combining different theatrical aspects of films

S1 also combined different theatrical aspects of films that would create the feeling of suspense for the reader/audience as illustrated below in Excerpt 7K:

Excerpt 7K (CO/TA/13/9/2011)

	Student	Observer's comments
1.	S1 Erm how are we going to start it?	
2.	S1 Like it was matter of seconds or minutes	
3.	S2 What? it was a matter of seconds?	he says this as he writes. He seems puzzled.
4.	S1 Before his last breath	
5.	S3 Ok what are we going to use a narrator? Narrator is better	
6.	S1 Narrator that guy is telling his story	
7.	S1 Write write write	Students arguing over how to write the story
8.	S1 I'm thinking of more ideas	
9.	S2 I'm writing what you have said	
10.	S1 It was	
11.	S2 Like you've told me	
12.	S1 A matter of second	
13.	S2 Non a matter of minutes	
14.	S1 When you say minutes it is not exciting	
15.	S2 seconds	
16.	S1 Second my last breath and respiration	
17.	S1 It was a matter of second before	
18.	S1 His last	
19.	S1 His almost last	
20.	S2 Why do you have to put respiration? It is funny	
21.	...	
22.	S1 It was matter of second when his last breath	
23.	S1 And heart beat	
24.	S2 And heart beat	

- 25. S1 before
- 26. S1 Before he left this world
- 27. S2 This world
- 28. S1 This shows you the first part and now A
 we will go straight into the story when
 they will ask what will happen now?

This excerpt began with S1 asking his peers to suggest how to begin the story but went on to give a first suggestion as seen in line 3. S2, puzzled at this suggestion, asked “what?” and repeated what S1’s suggested. However, instead of responding to S2’s question, S1 gave another possible way to start (line 3). At this point S3 asked whether they would adopt a narrator style of storytelling. S3 also agreed that “narrator” is a better style to use. S1 agreed with S3 and said the character is telling his own story and the “narrator” style fitted that purpose (line 5). In line 7, S1 indicated that he did not want to break his flow of thoughts so he instructed his peers to stop deliberating over how to write the story but to instead write his suggestions. From lines 10 to 28, we see the students experimenting with different theatrical aspects of films to start the story. The students’ use of film and combining theatrical aspects of themes emerged as mediating strategies that facilitated the composing process. In these excerpts, we see films as a social practice which the students in Teacher A’s class enjoyed. Students in this class used films as a positive experience that initiated dialogue in the group. By taking this approach, S1 brought a social practice into his group as a way of working towards a common goal - writing a story.

In this excerpt, each student revealed his or her expertise by suggesting from his or her knowledge what should be in a story, e.g. when S1 said “How are we going to start it?” (line 1)’ and then gave a possible start in line 2. In line 3, S2 showed signs that he was not aware of stylized beginnings let alone using a ‘narrator style’ as suggested by S3 (line 5). This is what Swain et al (2010, p.26) called “conceptual scaffolding” when reporting on Holton & Clarke’s work. By working with S1 and S3, S2 had an opportunity to create and contemplate story beginnings Working with his peers involved him in his ZPD for constructing story beginnings with S1 and S3 serving as his guide (line 9, 11).which according to Swain et al. (2010, p. 26) is heuristic scaffolding.

In line 13, S2 contested S1’s ideas but S1 was quick to explain his choice to use ‘seconds’ rather than ‘minutes’. S1 here helped S2 refine his control over the shape of stories. As can be seen in the above excerpt, S2 obtained control from his peers by questioning S1’s ways of structuring the story (line 20).

It is clear, that although S2 was a novice in producing story beginnings, he too played a significant role in learning how to compose a story by asking his peers questions. He did not depend solely on the structuring role of the 'expert' peers (Swain et al; 2010). S2 accepted S1's story structure because may be this way of writing a story was a new production skill for him. S2 may have needed several experiences constructing stories with S1.

Use of humour: Taking temporary time-out

Students in this class often made use of humour to mediate their writing.

Excerpt 7L (CO/TA/6/9/2011)

	Student	Observer's comments
1. S2	I read a story a girl getting rape	Seems to be going off topic. The boy is being playful. He is trying to speak with an American accent. Pretends that he is working at a radio station.
2. S2	We are still at the radio	
3. S1	Shut up shut up	
4. S2	We're a driver that	
5. S3	Stop it	{a student says sternly}
6. S1	Seriously	
7. S2	After end ... what do you say?	
8. S2	The driver was creeping	{says in a funny voice}
9. S3	I was lying on them	
10. S2	On the ground	
11. S1	Most	
12. S2	A longy grass	{students laugh because the boy says that jokingly}
13. S1	I was lying on	
14. S1	A dump	
15. S3	A dump substance which felt like soil	
16. S1	Yes	
17. S2	Which turned out to be the land fill	{students laugh}
18. S3	She missed the bus and then she started looking for a car	
19. S2	Eh heh en heh	{trying to be funny again}

- 20. S1 Wait wait
- 21. S1 Ok this would not have happened if I
 didn't miss my bus then what
 happen?
- 22. S2
- 23. S2
- 24. S1 Shut up
- 25. SS laughter
- 26. S1 If I miss my bus
- 27. S1 Well
- 28. S1 Think! miss my bus
- 29. S3 Where was she going in the bus?

In this excerpt, S2 tried to create humour by experimenting with the American accent of a DJ who apparently worked at a radio station (lines 1 and 2). S2 managed to get his peers to laugh along with him except for S1 who repeatedly reprimanded his humorous action by lashing out “stop it” “shut up” and “seriously” (lines 3 and 6). S2 set off a laughing sequence as he tried to complete the sentence of S2 by suggesting a funny and non-existent adjective “longy” grass in line 12 and “land fill” (line17). These were instances of laughter because it was an unlikely place for the action to take place (line 12). In line 19, S1 initiated a laughter invitation which was declined by his peers this time. In line 25, S1 made another attempt to joke. This was not well captured in the recording but the fact the other students laughed with him suggests that through his use of humour he managed to get the group to take a temporary time-out from the challenging business of writing the story.

7.2.6 REVISING A STORY

Teacher A required her students to revise each other’s stories in groups. In the following excerpt a more knowledgeable peer used teacher-like scaffolded questions to instruct her peers.

Excerpt 7M (CO/TA/9/9/2011):

	Student		Observer's comments
1.	S1	Tell me what you were talking about in that group and who is that forbidden love and what's that exactly?	Students using self-questioning strategy here
2.	S1	What' happening? {laughs}	
3.	S1	Can be realistic	
4.	SS	laughters	
5.	S1	... What did you discuss?	
6.	S2	The king wanted a servant	
7.	S1	Who was the servant?	
8.	S2	The girl	
9.	S1	Why does he want the girl?	
10.	S1	Connection?	
11.	S2	Yah what's the connection? How does he know the girl?	
12.	S1	We have to know all of that to put on that piece of paper	

In line 1, S1 asked her peers what they were talking about in their group and “who is that forbidden love”. This suggests that she was familiarising herself with her peers’ writing to have an idea what the story was about. When it became apparent that her peers still did not understand what she was asking them, S1 reformulated her question in a simpler way in line 2. In line 3, S1 tried to cue her peer’s response ideas by saying “can be realistic”. However, the only response was laughter -- a moment that helped eased the challenge (line 4). S1 in line 5 continued with another eliciting question. When this was also not answered, she took one of the students’ ideas in line 6 and asked a follow-up question based on that idea (line 7). This time one of her peers answered “the girl” in line 8 and S1 eventually asked more questions to enable her peers to reflect on the connection of ideas in their stories. This led S2 in line 11 to acknowledge the importance of connecting ideas in their story. She did that by saying “yah” and reiterating S1’s question about connection. S1’s questioning strategy provoked new thinking and understandings in S2 which enabled S2 to assume more of the cognitive work as she began to voice her own questions as seen in line 35 when she said “how does he know the girl?” S2 also acknowledged the limitations of their writing and also indicated an important aspect of structuring a story, necessary in her L2 writing development. The same more knowledgeable peer in this excerpt was observed using procedural scaffolding (Holton & Clarke, 2006) in the form of questions such as “Where was she going in the bus?” “Take the bus where?” (CO/TA/6/9/2011) while she was co-authoring a story during class time.

Here, S1 was promoting other-regulation by getting her peers to think about their writing through teacher-like scaffolding questions (McCafferty 1992; 1994). She directed her peers' attention to what was important to notice (The king wanted a servant, who was the servant, why does he want the girl?). Her other peers relied heavily on S1's assistance in order to generate appropriate responses. By probing (a form of scaffolding) her peers further, S1 managed to engage her peers' attention (lines 5 – 12) and one of them is drawn into seeing the importance of further development of ideas. When the student recognised this development of ideas and links between ideas in a story, the student's ZPD is activated and she was now susceptible to advancement through her peer's intervention (See Thompson's 2013; Phase 2 in the learners' ZPD, in section 2.3: Zone of Proximal Development). By instructing her peers, S1 provided a type of scaffolding (Heuristic scaffolding. Holton & Clarke, 2006) by which she exteriorised her expertise in story writing and offered her peers her knowledge of text structure (narrative), hence taking control of the area in which she felt an expert.

In one of our reflective meetings, Teacher A reported that she had observed seeing students mediating each other and in particular Emmy, the more knowledgeable peer in the above excerpt.

Yah like for me like I told you during class, I notice that making them work in groups. It helps them to collaborate a little bit, for example when Emmy was asking questions and the others were looking at her see what types of strategies she uses to write her story. Emmy is one of the best students and I think it is very good example to get the students to socialize (RM/TA/25/9/2011)

I also noted in one of my journal entries students' commitment to the group work as follows:

I have noticed the students in both classes enjoyed the group work. They generated ideas, pooled ideas together, discussed and planned and generated stories collaboratively. (RJ/9/9/2011)

Teacher A never used models from a textbook to teach students about text development. She drew information from her students by engaging them in their writing processes after which she often ended or began her lesson with plenary sessions where students were asked to share their reflections on their writing processes and strategies that they had used. This is one of Lidz's (1991) criteria of successful scaffolding: Share experiences that may stimulate new ideas (See section 2.5). In the excerpt that follows, the teacher conducted a plenary session to elicit from the students the processes that they went through when writing (see Excerpt 7N below).

Excerpt 7N (CO/TA/13/9/2011)

Teacher	Student	Observer's comments
1. Now what is the last step? Yes John		
2.	Final draft	
3. Final draft		
4. Did you manage to finish the final draft?		
5.	No	Students answer simultaneously
6. Why?		
7.	Too many ideas	A student answers
8. Too many ideas		
9.	Did not have enough time	A student answers
10. Did not have enough time		
11. Now Guy remember the time you told me that miss how can we end the story		
12.	Yeah	
13. Remember? No do you want to say anything about what you were telling me?		
14.	I was in the	
15. At first you and Lauria had an argument about what was going on in the story remember and then what happened?		
16.	And then ...	
17. And then what? You agreed and then finally I said stop writing to conclude the story. How did you feel about this?		
18.	Not ready	
19. You weren't ready and did you come up with a conclusion?		
20.	Didn't find one	
21. So it was like an abrupt end any other group had any difficulties?		
22. Ok so after you've learnt this did you reflect on how you write your stories? What things were missing why you were writing your stories without knowing this? Anybody? Nobody?		
23. Did you learn something new from this?	Yes	Students answered in chorus
24. What did you learn new? Lena		
25.	Planning	Lena said planning
26. What else?		
27.	Revise	Another student responds

28. Revise, Clive anything else?

29.

Edit

In line 1, Teacher A asked the students what the last step was in the writing process and nominated John to answer this question. John's answer in line 2 "the final draft" interpreted the teacher's question to mean the chronological activity in the writing process. Teacher A did not make any corrections to this response but instead repeated John's response by acknowledging and incorporating it into the flow of the discourse and then immediately went on to ask another question "Did you manage to finish the final draft?" (line 4). Instead of John responding, the whole class responded in chorus with "No" (line 5). At this point, in response to this one-word answer, the teacher elicited the reasons with the referential question "why?" (line 6), which supported and encouraged the students' voicing of their writing processes. Also by not nominating any speaker, she began to extend her students' voicing of their writing processes by using a new strategy for drawing others into the discussion. Students pointed out what limited their writing: "too many ideas", suggesting they had trouble organising their thoughts into a coherent text, and "did not have enough time". To make this view more explicit, Teacher A reminded her students of the time when in the previous lesson she called the writing to a halt and how the students responded to that (line 11). She particularly brought to Lauria's and her partner's memory the process they went through when writing and asked them to share their experiences to the class (line 13). Instead of voicing the difficulties she and her partner had when writing, Lauria cut short the complicated nature of her writing process and gave a short answer "then we agreed" as indicated in Teacher A's repeat of her response in line 14. However, Teacher A was not satisfied with this answer and by taking the students back to the time when she asked them to conclude the story and by asking "how did you feel about this?" (line 17), she used another teaching technique to make the students more aware of the ways in which their views and comments were important for the discussion. But, Lauria provided another short answer, "not ready". At this point Teacher A asked whether she managed to conclude her writing which she responded with another short answer "did not find one" (line 20). Teacher A rephrased Lauria's response as "it was like an abrupt end" (line 21) and then moved on to invite further comments and participation from other groups. She continued the sequence and guided the students to evaluate their learning by asking whether they had learned from their errors but the students did not respond. She then rephrased her questions into something more specific (line 23) which is a scaffolding strategy: reducing degree of freedom (Wood et al 1976). This made it possible for students to respond as seen in lines 23, 25, 27 and 29.

7.2.7 TEACHER A'S REFLECTION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

In our reflective meetings, Teacher A indicated that her successes in this project fluctuated. Her greatest shining moments were in the lesson following the implementation of our plan. The following quotes show some of her greatest achievements:

1. Students learning from a more able other in social interaction (see sections 2.3 and 2.4.4):

Yah like for me like I told you during class, I notice that making them work in groups. It helps them to collaborate a little bit, for example when Emmy was asking questions and the others were looking at her see what types of strategies she uses to write her story. Emmy is one of the best students and I think it is very good example to get the students to socialize (RM/TA/25/9/2011)

2. Students were thinking:

Ok for me in my class I see that the students after introducing planning to write their stories they are actually thinking and then by thinking they become more creative and their work is more original (RM/TA/25/9/2011).

However, she also reflected (Kemmis & Taggart 1990) on some of her low moments as illustrated in the quotes below:

It's like they are not actually taking what we taught them about the processes and using that. They are not doing it (RM/TA/22/11/2011).

They want you to spoon-feed them (RM/TA/22/11/2011).

Teacher A reported that using modeling in class was not successful. She explained that students made fun of her each time she tried to model her strategies which she found uncomfortable. The action she reported using to make things better was:

Ok. I had 2.1 in the morning and then followed by 2.4. When I got to 2.4, I made a face and got them to sit down quietly. I told them if you talk, you're going to kneel down for 80 minutes. And then I gave them notes, I explained. Gave them examples, like the traditional way of teaching and it worked because the outcome overall was good. For most of them (RM/TA/22/11/2011).

When asked to voice the benefits gained from implementing the plan, Teacher A talked mainly about her professional growth opportunities (See section 3.2.3).

Honestly the project helped me to know myself more. Like when I was still at the NIE when I went to practicum, I wasn't actually teaching as I am now. I was just giving activities, I was not... What am I going to do, what am I going to do, ok. like this project really got me thinking about how to move from one step (RM/TA/22/11/2011).

7.2.8 SUMMARY OF CASE STUDY ONE

One of the most distinctive patterns of instruction in Classroom X was that Teacher A had as one of her purposes that students should write in order to learn the processes in writing and reflect on the strategies that they used to compose their stories. She adopted a workshop approach in which she used small groups to give feedback to drafts-in-progress. The teacher chose to activate students' prior knowledge by using a whole class structure followed by group or pair structures. In groups students used strategies such as brainstorming, thinking aloud, film knowledge, peer scaffolding and humour. Teacher A often asked students at the end of a lesson or the beginning of the next lesson what they had learned in connection with lesson topics on the writing process, which encouraged students to reflect on their learning. She did this in a number of ways. Sometimes she discussed it with the whole class and at other times she let the students talk to each other in groups before they moved into plenary discussion. Learning was mainly supported through questioning.

7.3 CASE STUDY TWO – TEACHER C AND CLASS Y

Teacher C structured class time which encouraged interaction with peers and himself. He also made use of whole-class discussions. On typical day students would be engaged in whole-class discussions led by Teacher C with also opportunities to work in pairs and groups. The teacher followed a sequence of events in each class observed. For example, the teacher would attract students' attention, then introduce a task or set tasks to be performed. While students were on task, the teacher would go around the room observing or providing help if asked. After tasks were completed, the teacher would conduct plenary sessions revolving around what the students had done in groups. Classes usually ended with assignment of tasks to be done as homework, thereby extending the activity structure beyond the classroom.

In this section, I focus on how Teacher C mediated and scaffolded learner writing strategies during his teaching of writing. The following themes guide this presentation: choosing a topic; planning a story, composing a story, and revising a story, I also report on the learner writing strategies that students used within these themes.

7.3.1 CHOOSING A TOPIC

Teacher C began a writing lesson with what Englert (1992, p.162) called scaffolding learning that promotes development within the students' learning zone. First, he made use of the students' everyday knowledge about writing (Englert, 1992) by nominating Sue to say how she felt when she has to write under exam conditions:

All right Sue give us give me your response? How do you feel before you start doing the assessment before the exam before you start writing? (CO/TC/5/9/2011)

Sue responded:

Erm I feel bad because I do not know what to write

Teacher C repeated Sue's response thus acknowledging and incorporating it into the flow of the discourse and immediately went on to invite further suggestions from the class.

This type of interaction between the teacher and the students went on for a while and Teacher C got an array of responses such as:

- “Under pressure”
- “Don’t know what to write”
- “Scared if you make a mistake”
- “Have to think about how to write a good story”
- “Feel anxious”
- “Feel excited”
- “Confused”.

After eliciting from the students’ their feelings when they wrote, Teacher C pointed out to his students that it was important to choose a topic before they started to write. He placed his students into groups and asked them to discuss possible topics that they could write about. Teacher C wrote the list of topics on the board. The students generated a list of titles among which featured many films or students’ favourite TV programmes such as a super hero and wonder pet. Teacher C noticed that and commented:

Ok if you are going to list down all the cartoon on cbeebies {Cbeebies is a BBC learners’ programme.) that’s your problem (CO/TC/5/9/2011).

7.3.2 PLANNING A STORY

Teacher C conducted a whole class-discussion to elicit his students’ prior knowledge of planning. This is what Wood et al. (1976, p.98) referred to as effective scaffolding: “recruiting the tutee’s interest” and what Lidz’s (1991) called drawing on students’ past experiences. See Excerpt 7O (CO/TC/6/9/2011) below.

Excerpt 7O (CO/TC/6/9/2011)

	Teacher	Student	Observer’s comments
1.	Ok now so you have chosen your story all of you let’s pretend you have chosen your story, before you write your story what do you usually do? Give me an honest response. What do you usually do?		A few students talk simultaneously. I could not pick up what they say
2.	Tell me the truth I want to hear the truth. It doesn’t matter yeah		
3.		You write some points	
4.	Usually you write some points ok why?		The student a girl talks softly. I cannot

- hear what she says.
5. Ok the points tell you which points should go in each paragraph yes Teacher repeats students' answer which was not very clear when the student said it.
6. You think twice before you write because you write the wrong sentence the whole story is wrong.
7. So you think twice before you write something think about it before you right ok?
8. What about some of you? Who just write as soon as they get as soon they choose a topic? I know some of you do it a boy puts up his hand indicating that he starts writing as soon as he chooses the topic
9. O.k. Mike what happen can you write a story as soon
10. The student nods his head indicating yes
11. Ok who else do that?
12. As soon as you pick a topic you just write
13. Sir sometimes SU
14. Most of the time SU
15. Most of the time you do that
16. Farah yes
17. If I write I write to make sense
18. Very good yes you write things that make sense because your story needs to be readable for me because I'm the audience to know what you're writing about ok does not write anything that relate to the topic because it is very important that when you choose your topic you WRITE ABOUT THE TOPIC

In response to Teacher C's question in line 1 about what you do before you write your story, a student answered "you write some points" (line 3). Through this question, Teacher C activated students' prior knowledge of their pre-writing process strategies. As was his custom, Teacher C repeated the student's response thus acknowledging and incorporating it into the flow of the discourse, and immediately went on to help the student develop a rationale for 'writing some points' by asking 'why?' as seen in line 4. This question generated answers such as "tell you which points should go in each paragraph" (line 5) and "You

think twice before you write because you write the wrong sentence the whole story is wrong” (line 6). Teacher C acknowledged the students’ answers and legitimated his students’ contributions hence creating an atmosphere where students were part of the problem-solving process. Teacher C then initiated a new but related topic of discussion (line 8). Some students indicated that they did start writing right away after choosing their topic (lines 14 and 15). In line 18, Fara triggered a change in the focus of the discussion by saying she ‘writes to make sense’. Teacher C validated her contribution and identified himself as the main audience of his students.

Teacher C was not only helping his students to understand their own writing needs or problems but was also seeking to understand his students’ writing needs as a starting point for teaching writing or what Lantolf (2009, p. 80) pointed out:

The ZPD is an extremely fruitful concept for understanding and more accurately assessing the full extent of development of an individual or group. It claims that if all we know about individual or group performance is what can be done without assistance, we only know part of the picture. ...In Vygotsky’s thinking to observe unassisted performance is to focus exclusively on the history of development, of equal, if not greater importance, is to focus on the future development.

He eventually introduced ‘planning’ as illustrated in Excerpt 7P below.

Excerpt 7P (CO/TC/5/9/2011)

	Teacher	Student	Observer’s comments
1.	Alright so {Teacher briefly looks at his notes on the teacher’s desk} why is it important to plan your story? Before you write why is it important to plan?		A few students answer simultaneously. I think one students says so that you don’t make mistake
2.	So that you don’t make mistake. Come one give me some response all of you. You’re supposed to know we’ve been doing that since S. one. yes		A student puts up her hand
3.	Yes	.	While the student tries to give her answer, another student starts talking as well making hard to understand
4.	SHHHHH		
5.		For you not to lose where you gonna write	
6.	For you not to get lost for you not to be like some people have writers’ block you don’t know what to write at the end because you haven’t		

- planned you're froze you don't know what exactly what you need to put in this paragraph and this where most of you have difficulty
7. Ok now what when you plan how do you plan usually do you write a whole sentence or you write bullet points to help you?
 8. Divide the story
 9. Or do you divide the story introduction development conclusion? Teacher does not provide enough wait time for students to answer the questions
 10. You write everything together?
 11. No divide SS
 12. You divide who else?
 13. In points SU
 14. You write in points
 15. Brainstorm SU
 16. You brainstorm
 17. And before you write a story what questions that go in your mind? Before you write the story give some response before you write. Ki bann keksoz ki zot mazzinen dan zot lespri? (What are the things that you think of?) Students are quiet
 18. You don't question yourself, like for example what am I going to write right now? Did I choose the right topic? you don't ask yourselves those questions?
 19. Ask a student says something but is not clear
 20. Sorry? You choose one easy to do. Yes Rania You think who's going to be involved
 21. Yes who are the characters in your story yes? What else do you ask yourself? Because last term your story was quite good some of you I have seen some planning in your story
 22. How was how will the character be? SU
 23. Ok what is the role of the character in the story yes
 24. What's going to happen in the story SU
 25. What's going to happen in the story
 26. How will the story end

In the above excerpt, as was his custom, Teacher C initiated a question why planning was important (line 1). In line 2, the teacher tried to help the students to adjust their prior knowledge on the importance of planning. However, the students' understanding about planning were not to make mistake (line 1) and "for you not to lose where you gonna write" (line 5) which the teacher recast as "mental block" in line 6. Teacher C rapidly moved from asking why it is important to plan to asking students how they planned (line 7). These two questions act as guide to help students construct a more complex understanding of planning. As part of their interactive discussion, the students generated a list of things that they did such as "divide the story", "in points"; "brainstorm" (lines 11, 13, and 15). As in all lessons observed, Teacher C used the mother tongue as a teaching technique to make instructions and teaching clearer (see line 17). In line 18, Teacher C introduced a writing strategy – self-questioning: "You don't question yourself, like for example what am I going to write right now? Did I choose the right topic? You don't ask yourselves those questions?" In so doing, Teacher C was asking his students what Englert (1992, p. 162) called "graduated questions". Englert (1992, p.162) referred to these "graduated questions" as a scaffolding technique that promotes development within students' learning zones. These questions help the students to retrieve relevant questions. The questions, he asked his students provided scaffolded support that modeled the inner language for thinking and supported students' conversations (Englert, 1992). When teachers ask this type of questions, Englert (1992) pointed out that students do not learn in a "rigid, lock-step fashion that ignores the knowledge and the needs of the students (p.162).

In line 21, Teacher C linked the present lesson on planning with the stories they wrote last term where some students made good use of planning. This helped the students to generate a list of questions that they could ask themselves when writing a story (lines 22, 24, and 26) while Teacher C repeated their answers as a way of acknowledging their responses. According to Gibbons (2003, p.243) this is successful scaffolding. The students had achieved at a greater level of independent competence as a result of Teacher C's scaffolding technique.

In the above excerpt, Teacher C asked questions to tap into students' prior knowledge about planning (Lidz, 1991). He accepted students' contributions without criticism and built on the information provided by the students. This was important as it encouraged students who might have been reluctant to speak in a whole-class sharing activity like this one to participate. Through this approach, Teacher C created the conditions for students to adjust their previous knowledge and accommodate new information (e.g. questions that skilled writers ask themselves), which could thus increase the level of their awareness of the

importance of planning. He presented questions that skilled writers ask themselves when they plan texts but he did not model the strategies that skilled writers use.

Teacher C reflected on the use of modeling initially as a challenging innovation which later turned into a useful practice:

All I want to say is: I think this project has helped me a lot. I was able to learn a few things I didn't know about my students. Their attitude, their learning ability. Um, from um and then the strategies we've implemented, for example the modeling. I've seen that I was having difficulties at first but when I used the modeling technique it helped them to understand. So maybe I can make use of it often. And I've been using it with my S1.1 students and it is working. Ok so it is working and I'm going to keep on using the modeling technique maybe with my S4 students, ok with my S4 students and see whether it will work. (RM3/TC/22/11/2011)

He also noted the positive changes in his students' work as a result of the focus on writing strategies in his teaching:

Erm after using implementing the strategies that we've suggested in the last meeting I try them in my class when I put them in groups, discussing bring out points erm I see a great change in the way they write their stories. Most of them before they wrote not a good story but it lacks some creativity like XXX said now they are thinking first, they are planning, and they are looking at their errors before submitting their work. I'm very happy with them (RM1/25/9/2011)

Teacher C pointed out that these positive changes were more noticeable in lower achievers.

I think the learning has helped less able students who were having difficulties with when we when I taught them the different rules steps though which they can write their stories introduction, development conclusion. It has helped them in a way to better plan their work and increase (RM2/28/10/2011)

In the second lesson I observed (CO/TC/6/9/2011), as in almost all lessons, Teacher C drew the students' attention to planning and its importance again. When asked "now, before we plan a story I told you last time what we need to do what was that yesterday?" the students generated a list of questions that they would put to themselves before writing.

Teacher C presented more planning strategies to his students in that lesson. These were use of “bullet points” and “spider diagrams”. He drew a “spider diagram” on the board and went on to explain:

So if you write ... ok like I do with my two five. I use a spider diagram like this is topic {teacher draws a circle on the board. He writes topic in the centre of the circle and then draws arrows from it} and they list down their ideas so that when they write their story they will know which comes first for example, the first paragraph will talk about my favourite teacher describe my favourite teacher ... so yesterday they did that they described their favourite teacher then in the second paragraph they are going to write about why they like their teacher ok third paragraph what the teacher has done for them ok so this type of diagram helps them to know which paragraph ... ok so there are different ways to plan their list ideas use bullet points in orderly form ok introduction development conclusion and the spider diagram and also they use their own strategies that you plan to make it easy is that clear? (CO/TC/6/9/2011)

In this way the teacher not only helped the students to write a story but helping them how to do it (Gibbons, 2003). Teacher C eventually handed over control to the students to plan a story collaboratively and to reflect on this process. Teacher C gave these instructions:

Now what you are going to do in your group today as we have done before is the planning process of a story. You are going to take a rough piece of paper and you are going to plan your story you can use the different types I have shown you before the list down the Erica does. Ok the spider diagram or you can use the strategy that Rennia use you have the introduction, development and conclusion ok listen it's only planning. I want to see you're planning how you do it in your group and one member from each group will come in front and present their ideas. Ok? So you have about: 10 minutes on this ok? In groups ok? Choose one topic choose a story then start planning. I want to see how you do it (CO/TC/6/9/2011)

Bruner (1996) explained that scaffolding involves a process of setting up the situation to make the learners' entry easy and successful and then gradually pulling back and handing over the role to the learners as they become skilled enough to manage it.

Excerpt 7Q shows a group of students choosing their topic and planning their story.

Excerpt 7Q (CO/TC/6/9/2011)

	Students	Observer's comments
1.	S1 Pa ou ki pour dir ki I pou swazir. (You are not the one who will tell her what to choose.)	a girl says to a boy in her group
2.	S1 Swazir (choose)	a girl says impatiently to the other group members.
3.		Students talking all at the same time. Not clear
4.	S1 Annou swazir enn(let's choose one)	
5.	S2 Swazir enn lekl ki pli fasil (choose one which one is easier?)	a girl says
6.		Simultaneous talking not clear
7.	S2 Pran ghost story plito(let's choose ghost story)	the same girl in previous turn says
8.	S3 A day I will never forget	{ another girl suggests}
9.	S1 Ale komanse {ok go ahead}	
10.	S3 Ki noun swazir (what did we choose?)	
11.	S3 Erm ghost story	
12.	S2 Apre (what then)	
13.	S1 Ghost story menm (we keep ghost story?)	
14.	S2 I was reading a ghost story	
15.	S1 Ghost	
16.	S1 Pa bezwen ekri nanryen ou (do not write anything)	
17.	S2 Mon mal ekri. (I have written wrongly)	
18.	S2 I heard a knock on the door	{suggesting an idea}
19.	S3 Crashing on the door	{gives another idea}
20.	S2 Apre (and then)	
21.	S1 Sir sir	{calling the teacher for help}
22.	S2 There was no one outside	
23.	S1 Non be la out pe rakont ou zistwar la (no, you are telling the story)	
24.	S2 I wake up ...	

In the absence of the teacher, S1 appropriated the teacher's role by dominantly instructing her other peers what to do (line 1). In line 2, S1 instructed her group members to get on task and choose a topic to write about. When her peers ignored her instructions, she kept on pressing that the group choose a topic (line 3). At this point, S2 suggested that they chose an easier topic (line 5) and went to suggest 'a ghost story'

(line 7). S3 proposed another topic in line 8. S1, still assuming the teacher's role, instructed the group to start writing. S3 clarified what the chosen topic was (line 10). S1 responded with "ghost story" (line 11) suggesting that S3's suggestion in line 8 was not taken. At this point, S2 asked whether there were other suggestions and S3 responded by saying that 'ghost story' is the selected topic. From lines 14 to 24, we see students starting to write the story with S1 still maintaining her teacher's role. For example, in line 16, she forbade S2 to write anything. S2 asked her whether she had written wrongly, but S1 failed to provide assistance to S2. As S2 and S3 tried to plan the story, S1 interrupted the discussion by calling the teacher for help. By contrast to S1, neither S2 nor S3 adopted roles of expert or novice in their constructing of the plan. In line 23, S1 switched from her instructive role to adopt an 'expert' role where she highlighted a discrepancy in her peers' planning "Non be la ou pe rakont ou zistwar la (no, you are telling the story". However, her peers went on with their construction of the plan without taking notice of her pointing out of their problems. As is evident in this excerpt, a key finding in this study indicate that when students were engaged in group writing task, their discussion revolved around a variety of interactive speech acts, such as disagreements, agreements and explanations (Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012). It is also evident in this excerpt that the dynamics in this group in relation to learning in a collaborative setting were not very favourable for certain group members whose contributions were rejected or even ignored. Hence peers were not always an "an available linguistic resource for subsequent individual use" (Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012, p. 369).

This activity culminated in Teacher C conducting a plenary session where students were required to share their 'observation' and the 'difficulties' they encountered when planning. Through the students' responses, it was clear that planning was difficult for them. Some of their responses were:

"Sir we have not finished"

"No ideas"

"Still thinking"

"When we write the story when all of us write the story we never plan"

Teacher C stated during one of our reflective meetings that he felt that group work helped students to write better:

At first I was a bit stuck before I've done the group work and making them to write a story about the deserted island strange island. I was a bit stuck because I didn't know how to get them to change the way they write their story because they've been using the same strategies over and over again, so I was having a bit difficulty to try to change the way they write their story and in the end I find different ways. I showed them more examples for different types of stories how those writers plan how they plan their introduction, development conclusion. How to start their sentence especially the topic sentence they never they don't know what a topic sentence is. I showed them an example and from the topic sentence you have to build your paragraphs (RM1/TC/25/9/2011)

Teacher C himself acknowledged the students had difficulty planning their stories:

So it's difficult now for you to plan a story ok. before you didn't plan a story you just wrote like you have just got a story you just wrote right, now you find it difficult to plan your story how to organize your ideas ok because when I was walking in each group I could observe some of you were still having difficulties from that ok. So now I know your main problem you need to know how to plan effectively is that clear? (CO/TC/6/9/2011)

He attributed their difficulties to the fact that they were not use to planning their work. Teacher C then asked each group to present their plans to the class. He asked the students to comment on each other's plans. He also commented on the plans by pointing out their weaknesses and strengths and suggesting how the plans could be improved. He concluded the lesson by putting this written thinking-prompt on the board which he called 'tips', that is strategies which the students could use to write their story:

Tips

Choose my topic carefully

Take a few seconds and ask yourself those questions:

Why am I writing this story?

To whom am I writing this story? (audience)

Who are the characters and what are their roles?

The thinking process will help you plan effectively.

When planning you can use different methods

e.g.

a) spider diagram

b) listing down (bullet points)

- Describe Miss Kelly's physical appearance
- How she helps me in the classroom
- Why is she my favourite teacher?

Through this thinking-prompt, Teacher C informed his students about strategies that successful writers use to plan their writing. Teacher C also drew the attention of his students to questions that the writer should answer to him or herself in the process of writing the narrative: “Why am I writing this story? (Purpose)”, “To whom am I writing this story?”(Audience) “Who are the characters and what are their roles?” (Topic). Students were required to copy the outline as a resource that they may or may not use. However, this outline demonstrated what to write and some of ‘the planning methods’ to be used during writing process, but not how to use the suggestions.

In addition to using students’ own writing and structured outlines, Teacher C brought to class an example of an effective ghost story which he used to draw his students’ attention to good planning. He distributed copies of the story to the students and asked them to read it silently. He then engaged his students in lengthy probing questioning to elicit from them how they felt when reading the story (see Excerpt 7R below).

Excerpt 7R (CO/TC/8/9/2011)

	Teacher	Student
1.	How did you feel when you were reading the story?	
2.		Amazed
3.		Boring
4.	Stan Why did you say the story is boring?	
5.		It's not lively
6.	What do you mean by it's not lively?	
7.	What about you Shane you say you were amazed, how? In what way?	
8.		exciting
9.	It was exciting what else?	It was interesting
10.	It was interesting yes	
11.		You could see the story in your mind what is happening
12.	Very good this is what I could see I could picture what is happening there ok who else?	

Teacher C began by asking students how they felt when they were reading the story (line 1). He did not nominate a speaker, so students gave all sorts of answers. When Stan said ‘boring’ in line 3, the teacher asked him to say why. Instead of giving reasons for his opinion, Stan responded by explaining what boring

meant (line 5). At this point, the teacher re-structured his question to ask him why he thought the story was boring. However, without waiting for Stan to answer, he moved to nominate Shane to say why he said the story was amazing. Like Stan, Shane also did not give reasons but said that the story was very interesting. The teacher did not stress an explanation of choice but went on to invite other contributions. When a student said it was very interesting, the teacher repeated and validated the student's response (lines 9 and 10). In line 11 a student said he could visualize what was happening in the story. Once again, the teacher validated this answer and rephrased the student's response before inviting other students to participate (line 12). As the lesson continued, the teacher pointed out:

Now look at the opening sentence for the introduction *storming and raining rain drops tickled down my hair as I walked alone in the mid night*. Ok now some of you will start your story it is raining cats and dogs or it was mid night but you can really make your sentence spice up your sentence more ok by describing the environment the area where you are working. Some of you like to stories erm erm you were alone you encounter stranger so this is atypical way for you to write a story a good ghost story (CO/TC/8/9/2011)

As the lesson progressed, he also drew his students' attention to the use of a variety of adjectives in the story and encouraged the students to make use of them (see Excerpt 7S below).

Excerpt 7S (CO/TC/8/9/2011)

	Teacher	Student
13.	Ok what about some of the words adjectives to describe who can give some adjective that you have never used before in your stories?	Students are quiet
14.	New adjectives that you never used before in your stories	
15.		cheesy
16.	Cheesy what else?	Paranoid SS
17.	paranoid	Students give different words
18.	Glance yes	
19.	What else?	
20.		Pouring
21.		Sir paranoid
22.		
23.	Very good. You can use those words. I have given you the paper when you have time even when you are reading a book or anything you encounter a new word when you see when you write a story you can record	

it somewhere and then you use it time and time and over it will be very easy for you to grasp some new vocabulary ok.

The teacher began asking students to identify those new words or adjectives in the text (line 13). Students were quiet for a while so the teacher repeated what he said in line 13. At this point a student said 'cheesy' followed by others who said 'paranoid' (lines 14 and 16). The teacher repeated 'paranoid' while other students gave all sorts of answer which were difficult to hear. The teacher continued with asking 'what else' (line 19). In line 23 he validated students' responses and told them to use the new words. He also gave them a strategy – record the new word 'somewhere'.

In this same lesson, he also pointed out the effective organisation of the text:

Now an example, for example this person organize the story in a way that it flows ok starts with an introduction the introduction is where he is describing where he is where he or she is ok non it's a she where she is describing the street describing the path she's walking to and of course then she moves on to describing the environment herself her feelings so everything is organized in each paragraph ok Each point in each paragraph describe one point ok the first thing the person says erm describing the weather ok *stormy and raining rain drops tickle down my hair* ok describing the weather. Then she moves on describing another part (CO/TC/8/9/2011)

In the above excerpts (7R and 7S), we see Teacher C familiarising his students with a writing-genre-narrative they were expected to write about through exposure and the explanation of effective and ineffective model texts. This familiarisation has a number of benefits for his students such as helping students construct new textual patterns or enrich textual patterns they knew. It can also help students structure their texts and develop effective control over the writing tasks.

Besides writing models, Teacher C put two charts on the board, one containing an example of a plan for a story entitled 'mysterious island' and the other the different stages of writing:

Chart 1: Plan for story entitled Mysterious Island

Chart 2: Stages of the writing process

He told his students that he wanted them to use the plan all the time. He then went on to read the charts and explain each stage. Teacher C pointed out what each stage entailed (stage 1 – collection of ideas; stage 2 - make a plan; stage 3 - revision and re-drafting; he missed out stage 4; stage 5 - write a neat copy). There was very little interaction on the part of the students. When going over the stages, the teacher reminded the students to use strategies such as bullet points or diagrams. He also asked his students whether this story plan brought to mind any films viewed. The students responded in the affirmative and called out films such as King Kong. However, Teacher C discouraged them from making use of film plots when writing their stories and encouraged them to use their imaginations. Teacher C continued by giving ideas how the students could develop the plan in order to compose the story. He gave his students a strategy for monitoring their writing:

Ok this is how you plan your story it is very simple and very organized you will know and in which paragraph and you can go back check your plan and tick I have done this part I have done this part I have done this part now you know your story is complete.

He also pointed out the need to proof-read for accuracy before submitting the work. He left the two charts on the notice board at the back of the classroom for students to copy, use and for future reference, which could be seen as foundational for process writing.

7.3.3 COMPOSING A STORY

The students were required to work in groups to write a story. Unfortunately, I do not have data on the students' composing process as they began composing close to the end of the lesson and the teacher asked them to complete their stories for homework.

7.3.4 REVISING A STORY

Teacher C got students to revise each other's work. As with choosing a topic and planning, students did this activity in groups. This provided them with opportunities to use learning strategies: (1) peer-scaffolding, (2) use of mother tongue and (3) use of humour (see Excerpts 7T, 7U, 7V, 7W and 7X below).

Peer- scaffolding

This excerpt shows collective scaffolding among peers in group work.

Excerpt 7T (CO/TC/5/9/2011)

Students		Observer's comments
1. S1	The the ki mannyer ou dir(how do you say)	
2. S2	I mank en deal(something is missing here)	
3. S2	Read this read all of this	
4. SS	Students laugh	
5. S1	Description description	
6. S3	Ki nou annan apre (what lesson do we have after this?)	
7. S2	Science	
8. S1	If you want to put more words put only one word	
9. S1	Only one word at a time	The student is telling the other student what to write

S2 pointed out an omission in the text that they were analysing (line 2). To enable his peers to understand what he meant, S2 went on to say "read this all of this" (line 3). All group members laughed at the mistake (line 4). S1 contributed to this co-construction by saying what was perhaps needed in the text sample (line 8). S1 went on to suggest how to amend the piece of writing (line 9).

Use of mother tongue

In the following excerpt, the students used the strategy of making use of their mother tongue for a number of functions as they revised their story.

Excerpt 7U: (CO/TC/6/9/2011)

	Students	Observer's comments
1.	S1 Pa bezwen ekri nanryan ou (do not write anything)	S2 offers to be the scribe. S1 tells her not write anything. They talk in Creole.
2.	S2 Mon mal ekri? (I have written wrongly?)	
3.	S3 I heard a knock on the door {suggesting an idea}	
4.	S2 Crashing on the door {gives another idea}	
5.	S3 Apre (and then)	
6.	S1 Sir sir {calling the teacher for help}	
7.	S2 There was no one outside	
8.	S3 Non be la ou pe rakont ou zistwar la (no, you are telling the story)	
9.	S2 I wake up ...	
10.	S3 Wait wait wait	
11.	S2 Its ler ler fre I antre anndan (fresh air rush inside) {asking how to say this English}	
12.	S3 A cold breeze	
13.	S2 Cool breeze coming from the window	
14.	S2 Sir sir {calling the teacher for help}	
15.	S3 Ou seve I drese. Sir ki mannyer I dir { your hair stood on end how to you say that in English}	

Using Creole, S2 offered to be the scribe but was instructed not to do so by S1 (line 1). S2 asked whether what she had written was wrong which was ignored by the group members as they continued to plan their story. Students generated ideas in English, but when they got stuck they switched to Creole as seen in line 5 or sought help from the teacher (line 6), especially when they did not know how to say a word in English.

Use of humour: Suggestion for repair

Students were required to “identify what was wrong with the story” written by one of their peers under exam conditions.

Excerpt 7V (CO/TC/5/9/2011)

	Students	Observer's comments
1.	S1	The the ki mannyer ou dir (how do you say)
2.	S2	I mank en deal (something is missing)
3.	S2	Read this read all of this
4.	SS	Students laugh initiating the need for repairs
5.	S2	Description description
6.	S3	Ki nou annan apre (what lesson do we have after this?)
7.	S1	Science
8.	S2	If you want to put more words put only one word
9.	S2	Only one word at a time (the student is telling the other student what to write)

In line 2, S2 noticed that something was missing in the story. He called his peers to pay attention to it by asking them in line 3 to “read all of this”. In line 4, in response to this humorous noticing, all students laughed together which created a moment of group cohesion. In this excerpt, it is obvious that the students did not laugh at the student but at the mistake; hence use of humour here is a learner strategy that the student used to repair another’s mistake in a less tense and threatening way. Humour could be seen as a strategy that the students used to remain engaged in the activity and entertain themselves in spite of the task. Repair initiated either by the teacher or peers was a common source of laughter in Classroom X.

7.3.5 TEACHER C’S REFLECTION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

Our reflective meetings during the research project provided opportunities for Teacher C to engage in conversations about teaching and learning how to write. Teacher C talked about what was happening in his class meant to him. To him, it felt like a roller-coaster ride with continuous ups and downs. At times the data would indicate that things were going well.

For example, among his key successes, Teacher C reported the following after his lesson following the implementation of our plan:

Erm after using implementing the strategies that we've suggested in the last meeting I try them in my class when I put them in groups, discussing bring out points erm I see a great change in the way they write their stories. Most of them before they wrote not a good story but it lacks some creativity like XXX said now they are thinking first, they are planning, they are looking at their errors before submitting. their work. I'm very happy with them. A change in the way they also behave themselves (RM1/TC/25/9/2011).

He also pointed out that his students were thinking

When I put them in the group to analyze the story written by other students that need improvement I was a bit unsure whether they are going to give me and to respond back. But after they have analyzed the story they a lot of answers and this shows that they are thinking what kind of mistakes are there in the story. This will gain foster more ideas. See how they can build from their mistakes and try to make their story better (RM1/TC/25/9/2011).

However, Teacher C would also indicate that things were not going well as illustrated in the following quote.

Most of the problem is that they use the same like when same like same phrases same vocabulary they don't venture beyond the knowledge they stay within the limit that they have been taught They do well when they are practising I think when it comes to the assessment on the paper erm the number of words I think it was about 300 to 250 to 300 words most of them were complaining and instantly most of them blocked I don't know all the stories were I could say a piece of junk (RM2/TC/28/10/2011).

Nevertheless, Teacher C demonstrated that he wished to improve his practices which is a goal of action research (Kemmis & Taggart 1990). His self-reflective inquiry (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1990) enabled him to report that his students needed more support and he that would provide the following:

Well now for the revision I'm going to stress again I'm going to recap about better planning the stories erm I have to instruct them on ways to write good stories how to use their imaginations their creativeness because they are not using at all erm erm I think it's up to them because from my side I think I've given what I can because they are not putting any effort in what they are doing so maybe I can revise for now I have not planned anything yet (RM2/TC/28/10/2011).

Having weighed all the evidence at the end of the project, I asked the teachers whether they believed their teaching efforts and participation in the project has been worthwhile, Teacher C responded 'yes and 'no'. Yes because:

I think this project has helped me a lot. I was able to learn a few things I didn't know about my students. Their attitude, their learning ability. Um, from um and then the strategies we've implemented, for example the modeling. I've seen that I was having difficulties at first but when I used the modeling technique it helped them to understand. So maybe I can make use of it often. And I've been using it with my S1.1 students and it is working. Ok so it is working and I'm going to keep on using the modeling technique maybe with my S4 students, ok with my S4 students and see whether it will work (RM3/TC/22./11/2011).

Based on the definition of Action Research (See section 3.2.1) Teacher C examined his practices, values, beliefs, actions and how these impact on students' achievement. He took responsibility for his actions:

When you went away from the last visit I sat in the staffroom very quietly XXX [He meant Teacher A noticed I reflected on what I could have done better and I had a 2 five. Afterwards I learnt from the mistakes I made in 2 two. I didn't do the same with with 2 five. I did group work with them and I did an example with them and I sensed I could have done this with 2 two. use this strategy with them maybe it could have been different in way I didn't want to go in 2 five as soon as I left 2 two because I was going to scream at them. In S2 two first of all I rushed them quickly I don't know maybe I was under pressure I was bit tired but I introduced the topic right away and I was asking them questions and I could see that my lessons were a bit boring. I could have spiced it up (RM3/TC/22/11./2011).

However, Teacher C answered 'no' when he considered the realities of what the students were able to do on their own after teaching how to write stories. He admitted being frustrated at having his students go from being able to write 'good' stories to their old ineffective ways of composing. The possible reasons for this backsliding in performance are explained in section 2.3 in Chapter 2. However, Teacher C attributed this change in his students to the students' misbehaviour:

Well for the past two weeks they've been behaving very badly the students they were not listening to whatever I was saying they were more or less talking to each other. I tried different techniques to tackle this problem and also since I gave them a practice a story for them to write and their story was back to level 1. There were no improvement in their writing when it comes to story writing and

from that I knew that they have not been able to grasp. So it must be a problem with their behaviour their attitudes (RM/TC/22/11/2011).

7.3.6 SUMMARY OF CASE STUDY TWO

Teacher C mentioned process terms such as 'revising' and 'editing', however, his teaching focused on pre-writing and planning mainly. He activated students' background knowledge about their writing strategies and emotions as a means of establishing a basis for his teaching. He did this mainly through whole-class discussion and at times through pair or group work. Composing stories was always reserved for the end of the lesson or homework. Apart from using models from textbooks, to teach students about successful writing, Teacher C used students' work to get them to talk about the characteristics of successful and unsuccessful texts. He advised his students to make use of adjectives and effective structure in their own writing. It also gave students the opportunity to offer suggestions to their peers. Teacher C scaffolded students' planning by providing them with thinking-prompts and a story plan. These thinking-prompts contained questions that skilled writers put to themselves when writing. However, although he went through the thinking-prompts with the students, he did not show them how he used those strategies.

In this chapter, I have presented the data and findings from Phase 3 of the CAR project which was undertaken by the teacher participants and I. Using a sociocultural theory framework to analyse the data has provided insights into how the two participating teachers approached the teaching of writing in the classroom; and the writing strategies that students used during collaborative writing tasks in group work situations in class.

The next chapter will provide a discussion of the major cross-case findings of Phase 3.

CHAPTER 8: CROSS-CASE DISCUSSION OF PHASE 3

8.1 INTRODUCTION

I conducted Phase 3 to answer research question 2:

How does teacher awareness of writing strategies contribute to the teaching and learning processes of students and teachers writing classes at the secondary level in the Seychelles?

In this research project, I aimed to give an account of how teacher awareness of writing strategies was used to foster learner writing strategy development in two ESL Seychellois secondary school classrooms. My approach to data analysis was to begin by constructing case study descriptions for each class (X and Y) separately before drawing conclusions across cases. In this chapter, I supplement the case study descriptions in Chapter 7 by interpreting and discussing major cross-case findings to show how strategy-based instruction principles from a sociocultural perspective were used to support the development of learner writing strategies in the two classrooms.

Action Research involves identifying a problem, seeking a possible solution, evaluating it and changing practice in the light of the evaluation. Action Research involves practitioners thinking about and reflecting on their own work. In this chapter, I also present the perspectives of the research participants in this study. This is reported under the theme 'Increased teacher knowledge'.

8.2 WHAT THE TEACHERS DID TO MEDIATE LEARNER WRITING STRATEGIES DEVELOPMENT

The most fundamental concept of sociocultural theory is that "Higher forms of human mental activity are mediated" (Lantolf, 2000, p.80). This suggests that learners would develop learner writing strategies as a result from participation in, and appropriation of, the forms of cultural mediations integrated into social activities. This interaction is facilitated through scaffolded assistance in which language is the main tool of mediation (Vygotsky, 1978). Within the general framework of the concept of mediation, I have used three additional concepts of sociocultural theory closely knit with the concept of mediation: zone of proximal development, scaffolding and private speech, in order to understand the teaching and learning of English

and the use of language learning strategies, in particular learner writing strategies in two ESL classrooms at secondary level in the Seychelles.

Writing is a challenging task and many students struggle with it. For example, as (Troia, 2008) stated “they do not effectively orchestrate, monitor, or adapt the cognitive, linguistic, and physical operations inherent in composing texts for a variety of purposes and audiences” (p.250). This suggests that it is important that students are adequately prepared for approaching complex writing tasks strategically. This section focuses on what the teachers did to mediate learner writing strategies development. I discuss this under the following themes: activating students’ background knowledge; using students’ own writing experiences; use of questions; use of procedural facilitators; use of modeling; and use of pair and group work.

8.2.1 ACTIVATING STUDENTS’ BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

The ZPD is “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p86). This suggests that before an ESL teacher can help a student develop learner writing strategies, he or she needs to know where the learner is functioning in terms of the use of learner writing strategies and how best to assist the learner in mastering more advanced learner writing strategies. This is where scaffolding as a mediational means comes in. In this study, both teachers opened up dialogue with their students to determine what and how they were thinking in order to clear up misconceptions, individualize instruction or provide more targeted instruction. Crucial to successful scaffolding is an understanding of the student’s prior knowledge and abilities. Drawing on learner’s past experiences is among the criteria of successful scaffolding (Schwieter, 2010).

Teacher A not only tapped into the topics students were familiar with, she also spent time activating her students’ background knowledge of the process of topic selection and the strategies they used during that process. The strategies and processes, which students identified during their on the spot topic selection experiences, can help students to become metacognitive. For example, they learn to think about their thinking as they are selecting a topic to write about. Her scaffolding of the students’ account elicitation of the process they went through to select a topic enabled her to notice that her students had difficulties mediating their topic selection. The talk the students produced provided her with the opportunity to observe

their thought processes that showed this difficulty while they chose their topic (See excerpt 7B in section 7.2.2). Lantolf (2000, p. 85) stated that “attending to the talk generated by learners during peer mediation allows us access to some of the specific cognitive processes learners use to learn a language”. Hence, on this basis, teachers are able to help students develop strategies to tackle their writing problems. The teacher may also observe the good strategies that students use to mediate their writing and then share these with less-successful students, as for example, when Teacher A reported in our meeting (RM1/TA/25/9/2011) that she had observed students questioning each other as a writing strategy while composing text. On his side, Teacher C encouraged his students to use “Rennia’s strategy” (CO/TC/6/9/2011) which means a planning strategy that he had observed Rennia, a student in his class using.

Unlike Teacher A, when Teacher C activated students’ prior knowledge in preparing them to write; he did it only through whole class-discussion. The first thing he did was to ask his students to say how they felt when they wrote under examination conditions. Through their responses, the students in Teacher C’s class pointed out that writing was hard for them, in particular planning. This finding aligns with the views of writing researchers who have described effective writing as a demanding cognitive task (De La Paz & Graham, 1997; 2004). Oxford (1990, p. 140) stated that “It is impossible to overstate the importance of the affective factors influencing language learning”. Based on Lidz (1991) extension of Wood et al’s (1976) criteria of successful scaffolding outlined in section 2.5, I would argue that the two teachers activated students’ writing prior knowledge by making use of criteria 3.,4, and 5 to establish students’ current learner writing strategies and writing processes. Teacher C activated students’ prior knowledge (an aspect of their current ZPDs) to determine the extent of instruction necessary in planning (See Excerpt 7P, section 7.3.2). As a result, Teacher C chose planning as his lesson focus, which may have been in an attempt to address students’ management of emotions to regulate and control their writing to some degree.

Like Teacher A, Teacher C also tapped into the topics the students knew. However, unlike Teacher A who did this activity through group work, Teacher C did this as a whole class activity where his students brainstormed a list of topics spontaneously. He wrote these student-generated topics on the board. Like the students in Teacher A’s class, students in Teacher C’s class indicated that their strategies to choose a topic were largely mediated by their knowledge of films watched. Use of brainstorming in both classes served to make visible the wide range of topics that students could choose from, a task that would have been difficult for students working alone. By allowing students to choose their own topic, both teachers provided opportunities for their students to function as authentic writers and to be creative and take

responsibility for what they wrote. This could help students to better develop ideas within the eventual product, for they have a stake in the writing purposes. Like Teacher A, while activating students' prior knowledge, Teacher C's instructional and scaffolding technique was to repeat, accept and write students' responses on the board with minimal evaluation and revision. Both teachers also elaborated occasionally on their students' responses. This suggests that both teachers recognised that students were legitimate participants in their learning process. By drawing on their students' prior knowledge of writing-genres, topics, emotions, processes of topic selection, both teachers established a resource that all students could use as mediating strategies which could assist the students in their writing. Activating students' prior knowledge was a support structure for the new learning that each teacher intended to introduce to their students.

8.2.2 USING STUDENTS' OWN WRITING EXPERIENCES

Souryasack and Lee (2007, p. 80) spelled out one common practice across the two classes:

The development of writing skills involves not only the acquisition of language and its structural rules, but also self-discovery. Writing is a means through which everyday experiences and understandings of self are constructed and expressed. In other words, writing can become a tool for personal growth and social transformation by giving meaning, purpose and value to the writer's experiences.

Teacher A and Teacher C both used students' own writing experiences to support learner writing strategies development. However, the two teachers differed in the way they used students' own writing experiences and their purposes for doing so. For example, Teacher A got her students to compose on the spot in class. Then by drawing on her students' attention to their own writing, she helped them reflect on their writing process, particularly planning (see Excerpt 7G, section 7.2.4) and guided them to verbalise the strategies they used when planning their text.

By contrast, Teacher C either asked his students to think about their writing experiences or showed samples of finished work. In doing so, he helped his students to assess their own writing needs and he also developed his own understanding of his students' needs as a basis for his teaching (e.g. see Excerpt 7P, section 7.3.2). Teacher C conducted classroom discussion often around the specific traits that made such students' writing either successful or unsuccessful. In so doing, Teacher C familiarised his students

with the writing-genre, narrative, that he expected his students to write later. Thus his students became exposed to new vocabulary which they could add to what they already knew and use to enhance their own writing. For example, Teacher C guided the students to identify the adjectives in the effective text which were new to them (see Excerpt 7S, section 7.3.2). He advised them to record these adjectives and to make use of them in their writing.

As we have seen, by using students' own writing experiences to mediate learner writing strategies in their preparation to write and develop text, the two teachers embedded learner writing strategy in the context of the students' real writing experiences, problems and strategic responses (Englert, 1992). Furthermore, students' own work served as important meditational artefacts in the two classes. Gibbons and Hammond (2005, p. 17) emphasised the positive impact of meditational texts or artefacts on students' learning:

Structured or mediated learning became an important point of reference across a unit of work. The use of these instrumental texts or artefacts usually resulted in significant talk occurring *around* them – often the meditational process was physically realised by students grouped around a text or artefact...Through such talk the meditational texts or artefacts provided a basis for new learning.

Students work as used by both teachers provided a support structure for the process of the small group and whole class discussion. For example, Gibbons and Hammond (2005, p. 18) identified in their study that “a short story was the meditational text in that it provided the focal point for analysis of story, character and theme, as well as more abstract critical analysis of the point of view...”. This finding is mirrored in this study, particularly in Teacher C's lesson (CO/TC/8/9/2011) in which he required his students to study the textbook model and discuss and identify in their groups what made the text effective. This became a support structure for the next task of reporting their findings to the class.

8.2.3 USE OF QUESTIONS

Vygotsky (1978) posited that learners should be guided or scaffolded by a more capable person, e. a teacher, who would help them solve a problem or carry out a task that would be beyond what they could do on their own. Scaffolding encompasses dialogues and social interaction that fosters comprehension-monitoring strategies. This view acknowledges questions as a core support that teachers provide to learners until the learners can move through all writing tasks independently.

Ewert (1996) carried out a study in which she investigated the actual discourse of teachers and learners, particularly in face-to-face writing conferences. The findings of the study showed that the negotiation tactics and most of the scaffolding tactics (e.g. clarification request, comprehension/confirmation check and revision clarification) could be found in the teachers' conferences, although the distribution between the two teachers was different. This suggests, like in the current study, that use of questions by teachers played a mediating role in the writing conferences between the teachers and the students. In this study, both teachers often made use of questions to mediate learner writing strategies development. Analysis of lesson observation data was done through categorizing teacher behaviour by pedagogic function according to the type of questions they used. The analysis revealed there were high quality interactions due to teachers' questioning. Both teachers used a variety of questions as exemplified in Table 8.1 below.

Table 8.1 Questions for scaffolding learner writing strategies

Question type	Examples
Requesting clarification	"What do you mean?"
Eliciting	"Why is it important to plan your story?"
Confirmation check	"That kind of living or leaving?"
Recalling	"Do you all recall the topics you were writing your stories about?"
Elaboration	"What else?"
Linking students' answers	Who else can tell me something about why you would choose a narrative type of text?

Most of these questions were addressed to the whole class. Students bid to answer the questions. Most of the time the teachers accepted students' responses without the need for the hands up rule. All students seemed to feel that their responses would be valued and hence were willing to contribute. These questions could be grouped under two categories: closed and open-ended. Closed questions demanded very specific answers. For example, when activating students' background knowledge on writing-genre, Teacher A asked students to say "who would choose to write narrative and descriptive writing-genres?" Students actively responded to this type of question (most of the time in chorus) where students only had

two possible answers to choose from (see Excerpt 7A in section 7.2.1). In terms of Wood et al.'s, (1976) successful criteria of scaffolding this type of questions attempted to recruit the students' interest in the task. The questions served to involve the students in the task before helping them with their writing problems.

The open-ended question type that both teachers used in supporting learner writing strategies development related to higher order thinking. Both teachers asked speculative questions that invited students to express their opinions. For example, when activating students' background knowledge on their writing problems, Teacher C would ask them to explain why they felt the way they said they did before writing. In helping students to reflect on their writing process, Teacher A asked one group of students to say why they argued among themselves when choosing a topic.

Both teachers also asked students process questions which invited students to articulate their understanding. For example, when introducing story writing, Teacher A asked her students to say what they knew about story writing as a start to the class-discussions (see Excerpt 7A in section 7.2.1). When eliciting students' prior knowledge of writing strategies, Teacher C asked students to say what they did before they started writing. Evidence in this study suggests that both teachers use speculative and process questions to develop students' thinking about their writing process, but not necessarily to help students to give a "right" answer. For example, when getting her students to reflect on the strategies they used to plan their stories, instead of probing further to get an answer she was looking for, Teacher A moved on with another question which triggered a different line of response that required students to say how far they were in the writing process (CO/TA/9/9/2011). Use of high-order questions provided a structure whereby the students and the teachers co-constructed knowledge about the writing process and strategies. The use of questions also scaffolded the performance of students, for example, in the following ways:

It helped to activate students' background knowledge when they had difficulty to verbalise their writing strategies (see Excerpt 7O in section 7.3.2).

It helped the students to retrieve relevant information such as why planning is important (see Excerpt 7Pin section 7.3.2).

Effective strategy instruction includes providing temporary and adjustable support needed to scaffold the learners' development of new skills and abilities (Englert, 1991, p. 339). Thus, the planning process was socially constituted because both teachers and students contributed the necessary information to complete the planning activity. In this way students do not learn in what Englert (1992) calls a "rigid, lock-step

fashion that ignores the knowledge and the needs of the students” (p. 162). Both teachers acted as experts who prompted students to develop their ideas about writing and their process knowledge for writing by asking questions. Teacher C also engaged his students in generating questions to guide their comprehension of how to write a story.

8.2.4 USE OF PROCEDURAL FACILITATORS

Sociocultural theory does not view knowledge as existing in the heads of individuals or in the external world. Rather it views meaning as “being negotiated at the intersection of individuals, culture and activity” (Englert et al, 2008, p. 208). Writing as a higher psychological process has its origins in social processes that occur on an inter-psychological plane that is mediated through language signs, symbols, actions and objects. Apart from language, both teachers in this study used symbolic mediators to mediate learner writing strategies. However, they differed in frequency and the symbolic mediators they used. Teacher C made use of three different types of symbolic mediators (thinking-prompts, charts and spider diagrams), particularly procedural facilitators. In supporting students to plan their stories, Teacher C posted thinking-prompts on the front board (see section 7.3.2). He went through them and highlighted the strategies (for example, spider diagram) that good writers use to plan their story. He also drew the attention of his students to questions that the writer should answer to him/herself in the process of writing the narrative. Students were asked to copy these thinking-prompts as a resource to help them in their writing. Besides use of questions, use of procedural facilitators was another way in which students’ learner writing strategies were scaffolded.

The thinking-prompts resemble the thinking sheets used by Englert et al (1991) which were designed to “help students consider an array of strategies related to identifying their audience and purpose, retrieving relevant ideas from background knowledge, and developing a plan that subsumed groups of brainstormed ideas in categories” (p. 345). They also make self-talk and text-structures for writing a story visible to the students (Englert et al, 1991). According to Englert (1992, p. 155) “these prompts provided a structure for thinking and acted like a scaffold that helped students organise and sequence their actions until the cognitive processes were internalised”. Similarly, Englert described “think-sheets” in the CSIW curriculum as a means to activate writing strategies for planning, organising, drafting, editing and revising.

Englert (1992, p. 155) expressed the benefits of using think-sheets that cue strategies through self-questions and self-instructions as follows:

“Provide a window into the cognitive activities of skilled writers”;

“Scaffold students’ thinking by prompting their awareness and use of problem-solving strategies” and

“Model the inner-self -talk of the self-regulating writer”.

By giving examples of questions that skilled writers use when composing, Teacher C acted as the expert who helped students as novices to gradually participate in meaningful communicative activities.

In addition to the thinking-prompts, Teacher C also posted two charts on the blackboard (see section 7.3.2). Chart one was a plan about a story entitled ‘Mysterious Island’ and Chart two was about the ‘stages’ of the writing process. Like he did with the thinking-prompts, he went through each one of them while his students listened to him. Students were again required to copy those two charts.

When eliciting students’ planning strategies, Teacher A ended the sequence of interactions by presenting a “spider diagram” which she drew on the board (see section 7.2.4). She gave a very brief explanation about it. This was the only time when she was observed using a procedural facilitator. As Daiute and Dalton (1996, p. 283) pointed out, “in procedural facilitation, the teacher offers students support in the form of prompts that engage them in formulating, reformulating, and synthesising ideas, as well as in expressing ideas... These examples of cognitive apprenticeship reflect several important features of expert-novice collaboration”.

In their study Gibbons and Hammond (2005) found that teachers supported students in developing understanding of concepts through providing access through a range of semiotic systems such as wall charts, graphs, maps, photographs, diagrams and pictures and mathematical notation. They posited that the use of other semiotics systems, in addition to language, not only supported students’ comprehension of the language, but also in themselves constructed meanings (p. 16). However, in the current study, despite the teachers’ attempts at using procedural facilities to support their students’ development of writing strategies, both teachers reported under use of this strategy among their students (RM3/TC/22/11/2011). I also did not observe students in either class using any of the procedural facilitators during writing time. Lantolf and Aljaafreh (1995) proposed an explanation which might be relevant here, the regression or backsliding that has manifested in the linguistic performance of L2 learners. They argued that learning that arises in zones of proximal development is not a linear process. Similarly, Thompson (2013) pointed out that although some students may master certain skills in one or a series of lessons, they sometimes go

back to their previous levels of performance in other lessons that follow. He suggested that forms of assistance, for example, models or collaboration with more capable peers, may need to be repeated or used in differently in order to transform learning.

8.2.5 USE OF MODELING

Emphasising social discourse and conversation occurs when teachers model their writing strategies as they think aloud (Englert, 1992). This helps students to see the invisible cognitive process of planning, composing, and revising texts. The students not only see the writing products of more expert writers but also have a chance to see the actions and hear the inner dialogue that the expert writer uses to direct and monitor his/her writing behaviour (Englert et al., 1991). In our PD sessions (PD2/R/30/8/2011) and meetings, we put emphasis on making our writing processes visible to students through the use of modeling. However, in our reflective meetings, both teachers reported finding modeling learner writing strategies challenging. Teacher A gave her students tasks without modeling solutions or providing suggestions for strategies. Instead, students were asked to draw on prior knowledge to select and implement their own strategy. Although Teacher C reported using modeling successfully, I did not observe him overtly modeling. When teaching planning, he presented a think-sheet which included questions and strategies that skilled writers put to themselves when writing. However, he did not model strategies that skilled writers use when planning texts. Both teachers presented writing strategies as described in section 8.2.5, but they did not show their students how to use strategies and how they were related to writing performance. Interestingly, however, in both classes, teachers required students to give answers about the mental processes they used when selecting a topic and planning texts (see Excerpt 7A in section 7.2.1 and Excerpt 7P in section 7.3.2). In most cases, students in the two classes could not talk about their reasoning when asked. This aligns with the findings in Duffy's (1993) study. For example, Duffy's post-lesson interviews show that students talked about what happened in the story as opposed to the mental processes they used to monitor their work. Duffy (1993) linked this inability to talk about mental processes to the teachers' failure to model strategies. Hence, as Duffy (1993, p. 240) posited, "in the absence of explicit modeling, strategic reasoning remains a mystery". Although the two teachers saw modeling as a useful innovation, they did not incorporate it in their teaching of writing.

This aligns with Haggarty and Postlethwaite's (2003) views with reference to the teachers who participated in their study:

For a third group, the teachers' perceptions were that new understandings and classroom practice were separate – they had not altered or even confirmed their practice as a result of their new understandings (p. 435).

Hence, like the teachers in Haggarty and Postlethwaite's (2003) study, the two participating teachers in this study did not take the risk to uptake explicit modeling even though it had been successfully used in other studies (Englert et al; 1991, 1992; Graham and Ernesto, 2008; Graham & Perin 2007).

In Englert et al's study (1992), when teachers presented think-sheets, they modeled the questions and strategies that skilled writers used to plan, draft and revise their text. For example, when presenting the brainstorming strategies, they talked about their own strategies for generating ideas: 'I think about ideas in any order', or 'I let my ideas flow from the next ideas' etc. Englert et al (1991, p. 339) stated that "Teachers have the responsibility to model writing strategies as they 'think aloud' to make visible the normally invisible cognitive processes related to planning, drafting, and revising text". Englert et al (1992) and Mason et al (2011) argued that modeling is critical in strategy instruction because without it metacognitive processes which are needed for effective strategy use cannot be established.

Because the teachers did not model their strategies in this study, it does not mean they did not have any strategies. In our PD sessions, the teachers used strategies such as backtracking and thinking about one's experiences (TA/PD1/29/8/2011), but sharing them with their students did not materialise in practice. This aligns with the findings in Duffy's (1993) study whereby teachers had trouble modeling their reasoning process, yet such modeling is a key element of traditional strategy-based instruction.

8.2.6 USE OF PAIR AND GROUP WORK

Research studies indicate that traditionally writing was taught as a solitary activity where the focus was merely on students' production of texts often under time constraint and in silence, but this approach has been challenged by studies which have shown that writing is a process of creating and extending meaning (Flower, 1989; Flower & Hayes, 1981). As a result of such studies, a process approach was adopted to

teach writing through which learners were taught to write by using recursive strategies that successful writers use when composing texts. More importantly, as more writing research studies were conducted by sociocultural theorists (Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Thorne, 2000), it was recognised that the process of writing was not merely a cognitive activity but essentially a social one. Researchers taking a sociocultural perspective argue that when writing, the mind rarely works alone but writing as a learning activity is one where learners co-construct texts as they work together. Drawing on their knowledge and skill, experts can engage their peers in performing at higher levels of performance than they do individually because during collaboration, learners have access to the experts' knowledge, skill and coaching. It is this constellation of expertise that creates the optimum conditions for helping the learners to work in their potential ZPD. Thus, it is possible to suggest that classroom activities in which the students in this study were involved, notably composing and revising text as a joint activity, gave them opportunities for meaningful communication and mediated the construction of linguistic knowledge (Englert et al., 1991; Lantolf, 2009; Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996).

Both teachers put their students into groups or pairs as a means of mediating each other's writing strategies during the writing tasks. However, the types of tasks which the students were required to do varied. In Teacher A's class, students were expected to work in groups or pairs throughout the entire writing process. Contrastingly, Teacher C required his students to plan a story, read and analyse writing models. The group discussions and the formulated plan acted as support structures whereby a reporter from each group was supported in the difficult task of formulating the plan and eventually presenting this plan to the whole class in interaction with his or her teacher/peers.

The different patterns of social support as evidenced in this study proved effective or ineffective for some students, depending on maybe students' sociocultural background and the nature of the goals and tasks they faced. In both classes, there was evidence that collaborative writing tasks resulted in meaningful interaction and shared decision making and responsibility among group members as they either wrote or analysed a text. Such co-constructions involved a variety of cognitive activities such as brainstorming ideas about topic selection, content and organisation of the topic; providing feedback on texts; assisting each other in revising texts.

Peer feedback can be justified and supported by process writing theory and sociocultural theory. As far as process writing theory is concerned, peer feedback response can significantly help learners improve their writing (Villamil and de Guerreo 2000). It provides opportunities for learners to discover negotiate meaning

and practise a wide range of language and writing skills. Peer response not only helps learners to revise their writing, but also gives them a sense of audience and writing become a more purposeful communicative act.

From a sociocultural theory standpoint, peer response is derived from principles which relate social interaction and mediation to individual development. The mediation happens through various forms of scaffolding that is supported by more expert peers or peers with similar level of achievements through interaction. Englert et al. (1991) described such involvement of students in writing as a literacy community. Hence, through collaboration, students engaged in language-mediated cognitive activities that facilitated the co-construction of knowledge of text. The collaborative writing activities also drove the students to reflect on their language use and work together to solve the problems encountered. For example, in Excerpt 7K (See section 7.2.5) students in the group spent time deliberating on how to start the story and what style to use. They pooled their linguistic resources to solve this problem. As they did so, they engaged in language-mediated cognitive activities which facilitated the co-construction of language knowledge and helped them attain a higher level of performance. Gibbons and Hammond (2005) concurred that when teachers move from whole class to group structure they are able to provide different levels of support for different groups of students; hand over responsibility of learning to students and enable groups or individuals, when ready to work increasingly independently.

Use of group work allows for meaningful discourse to occur. It also allows for the students' communicative limitations and abilities (ZPD) to unfold and thus contribute to the group's construction of discourse or benefit from the group's interaction. Group work also provides affective advantages. For example, students heard their voices in achieving communicative goals and saw themselves as valid partners in their group discourse community (e.g. Excerpt 7E in section 7.2.3). This finding aligns with the sociocultural view of learning which sees human cognition occurring through interaction of the individual student with more capable members of their community which allows the interaction to activate the learning within ZPD (Van Lier, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978). The current study supports the idea that where there is mutual engagement, shared responsibility, variety of roles and symmetrical distributions of talk amongst students in groups, students may easily find a chance to learn. Good examples of supportive frameworks can be found in excerpts 7C and 7E in section 7.2.3; 7H and 7K in section 7.2.5 and 7M in section 7.2.6.

However, as pointed out at the beginning of this section, it was also evident in the current study that communicative structures constructed in groups may at times obstruct learning (see excerpts 7D and 7E in section 7.2.3; 7Q in section 7.3.2). In these excerpts a student's participation was ignored or rejected, leading him/her to assume a secondary role in the writing task. In these cases, the students had little opportunity to validate their use of the second language and thus learning. This constituted an excluding framework for his/her interaction, thus an inappropriate climate for his/her learning. The ZPD was very unlikely to be activated in such conditions. However, this finding was not common in most collaborative writing research using a sociocultural approach (Dobao, 2012; Guerrero & Villamil, 2000). This analysis of interactions in some group-work contexts as occurred in this study raises certain important questions to be addressed: How can group-work contexts foster the creation of balanced, complex, and symmetrical interactional systems in the classroom? What can be done to avoid the creation of exclusive frameworks of interaction?

8.3 STUDENTS MEDIATION OF THEIR LEARNER WRITING STRATEGIES

In this section, I discuss moments when the ESL students in this study were observed working in their ZPD. These moments indicate that language, both L1 and L2, was the primary mediational means (Lantolf, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978) which enabled them to co-construct knowledge in the group writing activities. Van Lier (1996b) argued that in some circumstances conversational interaction among language learners of similar level of achievement might be more beneficial than interaction with more capable peers or others. Van Lier (1996b, p. 193) explained that such interactions between learners of similar level of achievements "encourage the creation of different kinds of contingencies and discourse management strategies". I discuss the mediational means through which learners scaffolded their writing strategies under following themes: brainstorming; thinking aloud; using film knowledge; using mother tongue; peer-scaffolding; monitoring writing process and using humour.

8.3.1 BRAINSTORMING

In this study, brainstorming strategy enabled the students to externalise their different voices as they worked out what and how to write a story as can be seen in Excerpt 7H in section 7.2.5 , and Excerpt 7P in

section 7.3.2,. Students in both study classrooms made use of brainstorming as a prewriting organizational strategy. While students in both classes were given the opportunity to brainstorm about topics to write about, students in Teacher A's class were seen to be using this strategy more. This is because, as opposed to students in Teacher C's class, students in Teacher A's class were given class time to compose and revise text collaboratively. For example, in Excerpt 7H in section 7.2.5, we see two students brainstorming about not only the topics but also the procedures through which they wanted to write, hence, brainstorming strategy enabled S1 to help S2 to decide on a topic before writing. In Excerpt 7H; S1 used S2's idea as the basis for generating her next idea. Similarly, Dobao (2012) found in her study that when learners shared and engaged with each other's contributions they were more able to collaboratively solve their problems.

It is evident in this study that brainstorming as used by students in group writing tasks mediated the expansion of topic options which perhaps none of the students could have done on their own. Hence, in terms of Thompson's (2013) four phases ZPD framework, (see section 2.3) the students could have been placed at Phase 1 (Assisted performance).

8.3.2 PRIVATE SPEECH OR THINKING ALOUD

This study shows that, although students in Teacher A's class were engaged in collaborative activities, their language use in these situations was not restricted to the exchange of information. As exemplified in Excerpt 7I, in section 7.2.5, a student used language for the strategic purpose of mediating her own writing through thinking aloud thus placing her at Phase 2 of Thompson's four ZPD phases framework (See section 7.2.5) which is described as:

"Where written performance is assisted by the self through the phenomenon of self-directed speech (Self-Assisted Performance). At this point, performance is not fully developed but control of the cognitive process is starting to move from instructor to learner. This phase is linked to tool usage and social interaction with either peers or between student and teacher" (Thompson, 2013, p. 258)

In Excerpt 7I, S1's use of private speech forms consisted of self-addressed directives, e.g. 'wait', 'think', and affective expressions, e.g. 'then what happened?' (Dicamilla & Anton, 2004). Her thinking aloud as stimulated by the social context can be said to have a self-regulatory function such as using self-addressed

questions to guide her own writing behaviour. This use of self-addressed questions could be internalised by her peers later. Villamil and de Guerrero (1996) reported similar findings in their study of peer review sessions in an ESL writing course. Private speech was used as a mediating strategy that facilitated the revision process. In the current study, as exemplified in Excerpt 7I, private speech was used as a strategy facilitating the composing process. Students in Villamil and de Guerrero's study used private speech for two main purposes: (1) to guide their own behaviour by means of repetitions, self-addressed questions and self-reminders, and (2) to release affective load by saying interjections and self-chastisement comments such 'how dumb of me!'. In the current study S1 used private speech for purpose No.1. This finding lends support to the view "that cognitive development is fundamentally a socially mediated process in which the meditational link between the social and mental worlds is provided, in large part, by language, as it evolves from social speech to private speech, which in turns develops into inner speech (DiCamilla & Anton, 2004, pp. 37-38).

S1's use of private speech acted as a meditational means that scaffolded her own writing processes, thus supporting Swain et al's (2010) view of what constitutes a definition of scaffolding as an "ensemble" where a single individual "who having internalised the appropriate sociocultural, interactive, and communicative processes, is able to self-scaffold" (M. Swain, Knouzi, Lapkin, & L., 2010, p. 26).

I did not observe students in Teacher C's class using thinking aloud as a strategy.

8.3.3 USING FILM KNOWLEDGE

In this study, students' use of film and combining theatrical aspects of films emerged as mediating strategies that facilitated the composing process. In both classes, students made use of their film knowledge to mediate their writing; hence they constructed their own knowledge, which was strongly influenced by what they already knew (e.g. films). However, in Teacher C's class, this was limited to giving topics. In Teacher A's class, students used their film knowledge to list topics, initiate story beginnings and structure ideas and even guide peers in gaining a knowledge of stylized beginnings and 'narrator style' (see Excerpts 7J and 7K in section 7.2.5). In these excerpts, we saw films as a social practice which the students in Teacher A's class enjoyed. By taking this approach, students in this study brought a social practice into their group as a way of working towards a common goal - writing a story. This finding adds to the list of artefacts (e.g. the internet, dictionaries, English literary works, writing textbooks and writing tasks)

that Lei (2008) found that students used to mediate their writing in his study. Use of film knowledge here serves as a pedagogical tool where students' knowledge met the group knowledge.

In their argument for the reconceptualisation of the traditional definition of scaffolding, Swain, Kinnear, and Steinman (2010) included a richer and more holistic view of scaffolding where an individual is also able to reach higher levels of understanding and development through mediational self-scaffolding. As Vygotsky (1978) advocates, learning is socially constructed. Students are recognised as thinkers who have prior knowledge and experience.

8.3.4 USING THE MOTHER TONGUE

Although the role of L1 in learning a second language is a controversial issue, in this study, students in Teacher C's class made use of it to discuss tasks and steer themselves and each other through the tasks (Lantolf, 2000). It was observed that students in Teacher C's class used their mother tongue more than students in Teacher A's class. This finding aligns with the findings of Wang (2003) and Uzawa (1996). In Excerpt 7Q in section 7.3.2, we saw students making use of the L1 to mediate themselves through the task of composing text and revising their peers' writing. As Murphy & Roca de Larios (2010) found in their study, the students in this study used their L1 while composing text for several purposes such as to give directive or clarification request; giving evaluative feedback; and a means of accessing L2 words and ideas. Although the teachers discouraged the use of L1 in L2 learning, it is obvious here the two languages were interwoven in the minds of those L2 learners and the students' L1 was a useful mediating strategy as they navigated themselves through the revising task. Lantolf (2000) pointed out that research studies, which have explored the mediating function of the L1, agreed that it plays an important role in learning a second language (see section 2.2.1.2, p. 45). Villamil and de Guerrero (2000) found that in their study students' L1 was one of the important scaffolding mechanisms that facilitated interactions in peer revisions. The L1 promoted communication and achievement of task goals. Similar positive findings were also found in this study. Students' and teachers' use of Creole (L1) contributed effectively towards task management. Students' use of their L1 when talking about the task was valuable in that it did not inhibit but instead promoted achievement of the goal and stimulated reflection and reconsideration (e.g. see Excerpt 7E in section 7.2.3). Although students should not always be encouraged to use their L1 for all communicative

functions, this study suggests that L1 does play a key role in helping students to mediate one another in group writing tasks.

8.3.5 PEER-SCAFFOLDING

Vygotsky (1978) viewed interaction with peers as an effective way of developing strategies. Students in both classes worked in groups in order to help each other. Peer-scaffolding was found to be an often used strategy during the composing and revising of texts in both classes. Analysis of the data shows a range of ways the students provided scaffolding to each other in revising texts (e.g. providing feedback, affective support, providing reference materials, asking and answering questions). Providing feedback was the type of peer scaffolding most commonly used in the two classes. For example, in Teacher C's class, Excerpt 7V, section 7.3.4, illustrates how students offered suggestions to their peers to resolve discrepancies in mechanical details. In Teacher A's class, Excerpt 7M in section 7.2.6, indicates how a higher-achieving student helped her peers to organise and achieve coherence in their story. The students critically evaluated each other's writing, which is one of the features of successful scaffolding.

Affective support was another form of scaffolding that students used in this study. This was more noticeable in Teacher A's class. For example, in Excerpt 7D, section 7.2.3, noticing that her peers were hesitant to choose and start writing the story, S2 coaxed them by repeatedly saying "go ahead". In doing so, S2 exemplified use of features of effective scaffolding by maintaining her peers' interest in the task and by controlling frustration (Wood et al., 1976). Another example of affective support is seen in Excerpt 7L, section 7.2.5, where S2 made jokes to help relieve tension during a group writing activity. In Excerpt 7D, section 7.2.3, besides affective support, S2 provided one of her peers with reference material in the form of a dictionary. Hence, S2's scaffolding for her peer was also mediated by an artefact: the dictionary.

When engaging in collaborative writing tasks, students in Teacher A's class received support from peers through question and answer sequences (see Excerpt 7M in section 7.2.6, and Excerpt 7K in section 7.2.5). By contrast, students in Teacher C's class mostly directed questions to their teacher, even during group work (see Excerpt 7U, section 7.3.4).

By scaffolding each other during writing tasks, students remained on task and demonstrated that they were reflective about what they did while they wrote, thus they exercised their metacognitive capabilities. In reporting on peer mediation studies, Lantolf (2000, p. 86) concurred that this incorporation of the

modifications worked on during the peer revision session into the final version of the text could lead to “learner development as they moved from other-mediated sessions to self-mediation” during the final writing activity.

However, in this study there were differences among groups such as when group members excluded another group member in the construction of the story (see Excerpts 7D and 7E in section 7.2.3). The differences among pairs arose because the dynamics of working in pairs or groups varies in relation to many other affective factors such as personality type, confidence, experience, and goals (Storch, 2011). While other studies have shown how effectively peers can provide scaffolding, in this study some students did not see scaffolding as part of the task but rather their role was rather to complete the task. In summary, scaffolding requires a planned socialization phase if students are inexperienced with this practice. Teachers consciously have to instruct them about its importance for learning and for interaction and about how to achieve it.

8.3.6 MONITORING WRITING PROCESS

Englert, Raphael, Fear, and Anderson (1996) argued that successful writers understand the processes in writing: planning, drafting, editing and revising text. Skilled writers also make use of their metacognitive knowledge to recognise what strategies are needed to write and to regulate their strategies. Being able to monitor the writing process shows that the writers are sensitive to the needs of their intended audience in deciding what information to include. During text revision, students in Teacher C’s class used writing process terms such as reviewing and planning. However, although students in Teacher C’s class displayed some understanding of the writing process, they generally did not show “the strategies for performing the process or insight into self-regulation dialogue that directs the writing process” (Englert et al., 1992, p. 432). Teacher C noticed this weakness in his students. Through a class-wide discussion, he drew his students’ attention to the importance of monitoring text (see Excerpt 7P, section 7.3.2,) and he rounded off the discussions by putting emphasis on self-addressed questions, which successful writers put to themselves when monitoring their writing. However, in one of our reflective meetings, Teacher C reported that a lower-achieving student in his class was making more use of the strategies he taught them, namely making a plan before writing.

By contrast, in Teacher A's class, students were given opportunities to look critically and analytically at their peers' writing, which placed them in the position of readers. During those times, students monitored their writing process through brainstorming, thinking aloud and generating ideas. They also asked themselves questions as illustrated in Excerpt 7Kin section 7.2.5. Teacher A also reported in one of our reflective meetings (RM1/TA/25/9/2011) that she had observed one high-achieving student scaffolding her peers' writing through questions, which writers use to monitor their writing.

8.3.7 USING HUMOUR

Fundamental to Vygotskian sociocultural theory is the importance of interaction between people for the formation of mental activities (Vygotsky, 1978). One of the key tenets of Vygotskian sociocultural theory is that human activity is mediated by tools and signs, the primary tool being language (Lantolf, 2000). I build on this concept by showing how students' use of humour mediated the interaction between group members in this study. Use of humour as a tool that mediated ESL writing was not a finding among the literature examined in this thesis. However, underlying Vygotsky's theory is a preference for verbal as opposed to non-verbal forms of mediation (Lantolf, 2000). A close examination of all the situations in which the student participants in Teacher A's and Teacher C's classes were engaged in the writing process revealed recurring patterns of use of humour. As an observer in the two study classrooms, I noticed a large number of incidences of laughter among students. Very often use of humour is viewed as a distracter which arises as a result of students not being on task. However, in this study, I argue that use of humour was a means of mediation of the learning process of the students. I classified uses of humour into two main categories: taking temporary time-out and suggestion for repair (See Excerpt 7C in section 7.2.2 and Excerpt 7L in section 7.2.5). In excerpt 7L, for example, S2's responses were not necessarily giving information, but they engaged the group in verbal pleasure. S2's responses, such as 'longy' grass, resemble what Sullivan (2010) described as output that allows a student to try out language. It could be argued that use of humour in this study served as a learner writing strategy that students used to repair another's mistakes (e.g. Excerpt 7C in section 7.2.2) in a less tense and threatening way and a strategy the students used to remain engaged in the activity and entertain themselves in spite of the task. Thus humour, as used by students in this study, positively motivated them toward learning and influenced their affective feelings towards their work.

8.3.8 INCREASED TEACHER KNOWLEDGE

It is widely accepted that when teachers are involved in Action Research, they generate new knowledge of themselves and classroom practice, and that this leads to increased understanding and improvements in students' experiences and performances (McNiff, 1995). Through their participation in this CAR, the teachers created a deeper awareness of themselves. The two teachers believed they were better informed than before engaging in the study, which was empowering (RM3/TA/22/11./2011).

By engaging in this Action Research, the teachers were able to examine their practices, values, beliefs, actions and how these impact on students' achievement. For instance, through his self-examination, Teacher C explained how he took responsibility for his actions when things did not turn out as he wished in class (RM3/TC/22/11./2011). Teacher C also expressed the importance of understanding his students' feelings (RM1/TC/25.9./2011) when they write, which may explain why he supported the use of questioning. Teacher C realised that giving students a word limit when they write can cause 'mental block' and that he felt that his students were still 'weak' to remove the scaffolding. His view aligns with Mason, Harris et al (2011), who argued for the importance of teacher scaffolding and guided practice in the Self-regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) as a means of enabling less-successful writers to become more strategic and independent learners.

Teacher A realised that it was important to take time to teach story writing and to give students enough time to write (RM1/TA/25/9/2011), a reflection that was also shared by Teacher C (RM2/TC/28/10./2011). Teacher A recognised taking time to teach writing was a challenge and her action was to teach writing as a procedural problem with her task being to help students move through the processes of writing successively (RM1/TA/25.9/2011). Teacher A also became conscious of the value of giving the students the opportunity to choose their own topics (RM1/TA/25/9/2011). As can be seen from the teachers' quotes, their actions involved challenging their usual ways of doing things. They were honest in examining their practices and as is evident they took action to improve what was not working.

While the data revealed some successful steps taken by the teachers, it also identified some issues acting against the teachers' capacity to foster the innovation in the writing classrooms. Both teachers acknowledged that they did not make great use of modeling although Teacher C's use of thinking prompts could be a way of making the skilled writer's thought visible.. However, while they fell short of using

modeling with their students, which is an important step in strategy instruction, both teachers activated their students to engage in strategic behaviour by asking questions.

According to Brown et al (1981) this is called blind strategy training. Concluding from their studies, Kistner, Rakoczy et al. (2010) stated that blind strategy training “enhances students’ use of a particular strategy but fails to maintain generalisation of this activity” (p. 159). Both teachers expressed their disappointment with the fact that their students did not make continuous use of strategies they taught (RM3//22/11/2011). In terms of Thompson’s (2013) framework of the four phases in the learner’s ZPD outlined in section 2.3, the students in this study could be placed at Phase 4:

Where a change in context leads to recursion back through the ZPD (recursion through ZPD). This is a situation whereby the cognitive process may have been forgotten for some reason (such as environmental or social change) and the learner goes through elements of previous phases in order to recall the cognitive process (pp. 257- 258).

Thompson (2013) explained that to help students master certain skills, it is important that assistance in the form of models or capable peers may need to be repeated or used in a different order to transform the learning. Lantolf & Aljaafreh,(1995, p. 619) provided empirical support from L2 learning research that Vygotsky’s claim that development and performance in cognitive systems is not a smooth linear process, “but entails forward movement and *regression* or what some L2 researchers refer to as backsliding”. According to Swain et al. (2010) students do not achieve the optimal success because scaffolding is withdrawn prematurely.

Based on the lesson transcripts, it was clear that the teachers were teaching strategies in a rather implicit way and in so doing they assumed that the students would acquire knowledge and skills autonomously (Kistner et al., 2010). However, the students’ learning to write effective stories was situated in the larger classroom experience. It is the culture of the society and in particular the school that in Vygotsky’s view exerts a critical influence on behaviour and thoughts. Teacher A, for example, explained she did not use modeling because of the students’ negative attitude which they developed at a later stage during the implementation of the project (RM3/TA/22/11/2011). This perception of students’ negative attitude influencing the quality of strategic learning that took place during the implementation of the project was also echoed by Teacher C (RM3/TC/22/11/2011). As a result, the teachers tended to take action based on their own assumptions of what constituted good practice. Teacher A reported switching back to the “traditional

way” of teaching (RM3/TA/22/11/2011) and Teacher C reported “setting boundaries” (RM3/TC/22/11/2011) between himself and the students as a means of gaining students’ respect.

As portrayed by the teachers here, it is evident that context is not static or pre-established. Much of what determined the success or lack of success in teaching learner writing strategies depended on the way the teachers and students perceived this practice. For example, while the teachers reported some success with the questioning strategy, the underlying assumption is the new practice ‘modeling’ reconfigured the social structure of the classroom where power relations surrounding authoritarian roles were challenged in that the teachers viewed modeling as causing students to ‘lose respect’ for them. The teachers perceived students’ negative attitude as impacting on their ability to foster strategic learning. To effect an innovative change in the writing classroom may take longer and its success depends largely on a substantial transformation in how the teachers view the students’ attitude in order to carry out their new roles. I agree with Donato and MacCormick (1994, p. 462) that “as in any cultural group, the culture of the classroom plays an important role in fostering strategic learning”.

8.4 CONCLUSION

Writing requires the use of higher cognitive processes. From a sociocultural perspective this is learned in social interactions with more knowledgeable others who model the process and talk about the process. The participating teachers tried to adapt principles of sociocultural theory to help their students develop into strategic writers. Evidence suggests the teachers minimised the practice of being merely transmitters of knowledge. Instead, they altered instruction and mediated learner writing strategies in a number of ways in a dialogic process. Instructional practices included activating students’ background knowledge, using students’ own writing experiences, use of questions; symbolic mediators and use of collaborative work. However, while this was a step forward in making their students strategic, the teachers were yet to emphasise writing as a more holistic strategic activity, which could have been accomplished by modeling their own thinking, self-talk or strategies related to planning, drafting, revising and editing of texts (Englert, 1992). Evidence also suggests that students used a number of strategies to mediate their own writing processes. These included using their film knowledge, humour, mother tongue and thinking aloud. There were also times when a few students drew on teaching techniques such as teacher-like scaffolding

questions to mediate their own and their peers' learning. Instructional practices in this study provided the teachers and students with opportunities to co-construct texts. A key finding in this study is that collaboration gave the students opportunities to interact on different aspects of writing with some success depending on the group dynamics.. What is evident in this study is that both teachers' approaches to supporting learner writing strategy development in their students consisted of attempting to engage their students in (1) helping students recognise their own writing processes and strategies which serve as a basis for making judgments while writing, for example, deciding what to write, choosing a writing strategy, and (2) engaging students in constructing strategies based on an analysis of their own writing performance.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

9.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section presents the study's main theoretical, methodological and pedagogical contributions. The second section looks at the challenges of the study followed by the third section which presents a concluding remark of the study. Finally, the fourth section discusses directions for further research.

9.1.1 PRESENTATION OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS STUDY

The section begins with a discussion of the contributions of the study under three themes: theoretical, methodological and pedagogical contributions. It then goes on to outline the main challenges of this study. The challenges of the study are discussed under the following headings: contextual constraints and maintaining the participation of the teachers.

9.1.2 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The findings of this study provide support for the conceptualisation of the classroom as dynamic in nature and of learners as agents in their own learning. While it has demonstrated that the two participating teachers mediated learner writing strategies through classroom instruction, collaborative tasks, L1 and questions, it has also demonstrated that students had ways of mediating their own writing processes through learner writing strategies: using the teacher; using knowledge of films watched; using peers; thinking aloud; and using the mother tongue. These findings also support Lei's (2008, p. 220) reconceptualisation of the definition of writing strategies as "mediated actions which are consciously taken to facilitate writer's practices in communities". For example, it is evident in this study that teaching practices and classroom setting played a prominent role in providing access to strategies and tools to students through instruction and explanations. Students later appropriated these strategies such as asking teacher-scaffolding questions during the writing activities. Furthermore, the findings of this study also

suggest that students drew on strategies provided by their culture such as their use of film knowledge, humour, and their L1 as they engaged in writing activities. This suggests that learner writing strategies are not uniquely cognitive activities, situated within the individual learner but instead they are contextually situated social and cultural practices.

9.1.3 METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

A major contribution of this study was research design. This study made use of a qualitative design and an Action Research methodology. This has been an essential contribution of the study because so far most studies of LLS have taken a descriptive approach. Furthermore, although there has been an increase in qualitative design to study LLS in context, collaborative Action Research studies have gained only limited attention in the LLS research. This Action Research has moved LLS research a step forward as it studied the complexity of LLS and embraced the notion of knowledge, in particular LLS “as socially constructed and recognizing that all research is embedded within a system of values and promotes some models of human interaction” (Bryon-Miller, et al., 2003, p. 4).

The teachers were not merely implementers of strategy-based instruction as is the case in most LLS experimental research studies (Halai, 2004). Instead, based on data collected on the teachers’ current practices in the first phase of the study, they focused attention on a particular problem – students being too dependent on them - which they knew existed but had not been able to address systematically in their classroom experiences. They chose to make a difference in their practices, in particular writing by integrating learner writing strategies in a process approach to teaching writing. What the participating teachers accomplished in this Action Research is best explained by Stringer (2007, p. 188):

One of the strengths of Action Research is that it accepts the diverse perspectives of different stakeholders – the “theory” each will hold to explain how and why events occur as they do – and finds ways of incorporating them into mutually acceptable ways of understanding events that enable them to work toward a resolution of the problem investigated.

9.1.4 PEDAGOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

In this study several instructional techniques (for example, use of L1, asking questions, using collaborative writing tasks, pair and group work) were identified and discussed in terms of the ways the teachers mediated students' writing processes. A practice that was noted in both classrooms was the teachers taking turns that potentially constructed a zone of proximal development. For example, both teachers frequently asked their students open-ended questions as a starting point for exploring what their students could contribute in terms of learner writing strategies and processes, then extended the interaction by scaffolding strategies the students would later be expected to use. As Van Lier (1996, p. 171) has pointed out, "in order to learn, a person must be active, and the activity must be partly familiar and partly new, so that attention can be focused on useful changes and knowledge can be increased".

In this study, students used a variety of mediating resources in their writing processes. These included social agents (teachers and peers) and psychological tools such as their L1, knowledge of films, use of questions and humour. Teachers could raise more explicitly students' awareness on the importance of these resources as a means of improving the students' writing. For example, although the students had used these tools to facilitate their writing processes, they may not always know of the facilitative functions of those resources or others that they could use to mediate their own writing. As Donato and McCormick argue (1994, p. 459) "individuals are active transformers of their world rather than passive recipients of input (including strategy training)". The findings of this study documented in Chapter 7 show that when teachers, for example, made use of suitable tools such as teacher-like scaffolding questions to teach students writing, the students were able to make effective use of these teacher-like scaffolded questions in their own writing and in helping their peers in their writing processes later on.

Another important pedagogical contribution of this study is that it lends support to establishing communities of writing practice. Writing does not only involve expressing ideas and solving problems and putting words on paper but it is also practice in a social community (Lei, 2009). For example in this study, the two teachers frequently required their students to write in pairs or groups. The teachers provided opportunities for collaborative creation, revision and discussion of texts. This contributed to creating a community where more knowledgeable students helped their less knowledgeable peers to be more effective writers. As the study findings indicate, with the help of their more knowledgeable peers, the less knowledgeable ones were as Lei (2009, p. 245) explained "trying to increase their access to participating roles in expert performance. In their journey from novices to experts, students were trying to learn the rules of community,

socialise with other community members, and play their roles in the community”. This is a practice that is worthwhile promoting in English as a second language classes in the Seychelles. It will help students better understand themselves as writers and the nature of writing and how writing contributes in the social aspects of their academic lives.

9.2 CHALLENGES OF THE STUDY

As with any research, AR has its own challenges, especially when you are in the dual role of researcher and participant. In this study, I identified two main challenges: contextual constraints and maintaining the teachers’ participation. The following discusses each of the challenges in turn.

9.2.1 CONTEXTUAL CONSTRAINTS

Action Research is designed with reflection cycles that direct changes. Through reflection and meetings, the participating teachers and I had formulated a detailed action plan to frame the area in which we wanted to improve our practices. However, timing was an impediment to more effective change in our study. The timing was not optimal (June to December) in which we implemented our action plan. June included public holidays and a half term break. November and December were hectic months when students were preparing for national and international end of year examinations. One of the participating teachers was on the school social committee and had often to attend ad hoc meetings with the school management team. There were also unforeseen interruptions (e.g. Educational visits by students), which made observing the teachers on a regular basis difficult and which also reduced continuity in lesson delivery and reflective meetings. These contextual constraints meant that we could not enter into a second cycle of collaborative Action Research as the first cycle took longer than anticipated.

9.2.2 MAINTAINING THE TEACHERS' PARTICIPATION

As a novice AR researcher, there were moments when I found it hard to maintain the teachers' enthusiasm for the research project over a period of one year. I found that I needed to encourage them regularly to continue participating in the research and remind them of its potential benefits for their practices. For example, the teachers sometimes felt that their participation in the project conflicted with the department's termly plan and school duties; hence they could not fully commit themselves to the research project. There were many last minute cancellations for a variety of reasons. For example, a planned meeting or observational visit would be cancelled because it clashed with a continuous assessment. Schools are busy places, and as a researcher, I had to fit in as best as I could around the other commitments of participating teachers and students.

9.3 CONCLUDING REMARKS OF THE THESIS

Drawing on emergent methodologies that support stakeholder engagement, I conducted a collaborative action research study in which I employed cycles of observation and reflection to inform my actions. My new understanding of literature on key concepts (e.g. mediation, scaffolding, zone of proximal development and private speech) of sociocultural theory and language learning strategies and critical analysis of data collected in Phase 1 of the study were used, iteratively, to support my own actions of engaging with the participating teachers, selecting a problem in the teachers' practices, designing a plan to address the problem and implementing the plan. The use of sociocultural theory conceptual framework supported data collection and analysis resulting in an illustrative example of how researcher-teacher partnerships can support integrated knowledge to improve reflections on teaching practices that foster the development of learner writing strategies in ESL classrooms. The study consisted of two phases of data collection. Each phase had a distinct research question. In Phase 1, I answered:

"What is the current state of the use and awareness of LLS amongst students and teachers in three ESL classes at secondary level in the Seychelles?"

Findings of Phase 1 as presented to the participating teachers suggested that common practices in the three classrooms were:

- Teachers as transmitters of knowledge, teaching students content knowledge only and emphasising development of English language literacy.
- Teacher instructions rarely provoked new thinking and understanding about what was being taught.

The teachers wanted learner autonomy, particularly in writing, hence findings of Phase 1 became the basis for a second phase of data collection. In the light of the findings of Phase 1 and the teachers' wish to improve students' writing performance, the second research question changed from its initial formulation in the research proposal: 'How does strategies-based instruction implemented in the classroom by the teachers contribute to teaching and learning processes amongst (i) more and less successful students (ii) teachers at secondary level in the Seychelles' to a formulation that took account of Phase 1 and the teachers' wishes: 'How does teacher awareness of writing strategies contribute to the teaching and learning processes of students and teachers in writing classes at the secondary level in the Seychelles?'.

The research questions served to fill a research gap in the field of language learning strategies that looks at the role of classroom context in ESL teaching and learning as a means of developing learner writing strategies. Learner writing strategies is seen as a by-product of mediation; hence lending support to the view that learner writing strategies are interdependent with social and individual processes.

I used case study findings to explain how English as a second language with particular focus on learner writing strategies was taught in two classes and how students used learner writing strategies during group writing tasks. The study also shed light on the challenges of collaborative work in a case study. I realised that conducting research, which looks deeply into the lives of others, is challenging and many times I wondered whether I was up to the challenge. However, through this research, I have gained a growing awareness of some of the potential risks inherent in qualitative and collaborative action research. This has shed light on some specific concerns such as the complexity of my insider-outsider positionality which I had to negotiate over the course of the study. Nevertheless, the research process enabled me to connect theory and practice leading to my greater understanding of the complexity of qualitative and collaborative inquiry and what it means to be a qualitative researcher. My own fledgling practice thus served as the foundation for what turned out to be a powerful learning experience. The struggles and challenges at each stage of the study led to my deeper understanding of the nature of qualitative and collaborative research process. I also gained a more complete appreciation of the importance of reflexivity in accomplishing the project, and in my ongoing development as researcher.

9.4 DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Through this study, I have attempted to understand how classroom context supports strategic English language learning. This study explored the instructional practices in three and later two ESL classrooms. The results of the study are limited to the events that were available for recording in these specific classrooms. It would be useful to explore different instructional contexts such as different levels and schools for better understanding of the role classroom practices play in students' development of strategic learning in the Seychelles.

In this study, I analysed potential connections between teaching practices and students' development of LLS based on observational methods. Current strategy research emphasises the role of students' perceptions about their learning (Oxford, 2011). In future studies, observational methods could be supported with students' self-reported perceptions of how classroom practices support their strategic language development. Use of stimulated recall where students either listen to or view excerpts of recorded classroom activity and discussing them would provide deeper insights into student experiences and perceptions of classroom activity.

Phase 3 of this study was a collaborative Action Research with two ESL teachers in which we focused on strategy instruction in a process approach to writing instruction. We aimed to foster dialogue among teachers and students about writing processes and problem-solving strategies. The teachers minimised the practice of being merely transmitters of knowledge. Instead, they altered instruction and mediated learner writing strategies in a number of ways in a dialogic process. These were through classroom instruction, use of collaborative writing tasks, questions and students' L1. It would be useful to further explore if the change in the teachers' teaching practices was sustained and maintained over time, and if so, how this impacts on students' English language performance. If the change was not sustained, it would be useful to explore why not.

To conclude, the use of the sociocultural approach in this study, with a focus on learner writing strategies through the process approach to writing, is a means of reinforcing the teaching and learning of LLS. This study has demonstrated the ongoing relevance of language learning strategy research from a sociocultural perspective. It has strengthened the view that integration of cognitive and sociocultural theories is possible and desirable in educational practices and research in order that students have appropriate learning

opportunities. The study has contributed to the refinement of the Action Research paradigm and the tools and methods used in language learning strategy research, and it has advanced an understanding of how learners, teachers and researchers can come to learn more about LLS through relevant classroom practices.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INFORMATION SHEETS

Information sheet for parents or guardians.

I am enrolled as a PhD student at Victoria University of Wellington. I am carrying out a collaborative Action Research project with the aim of improving English teaching and learning in the Seychelles secondary schools. This project will start in February 2011 and will last for 12 months.

If you agree for your child to participate in this study, your child will participate along with his or her classmates and English teacher. I will be working with your child's English teacher to develop and implement teaching and learning plans to improve English learning in class.

At the beginning and end of the study, I will ask the learners to fill in a questionnaire about English language learning which will not take more than 20 minutes to complete. They will do this during their normal English lesson in my presence and that of their English teacher.

From time to time throughout the year, I will observe your child's English classes in order to understand better how the learners learn English. During this time, I will also audio record the classroom talk and make notes of the environment and the teaching and learning taking place. My supervisors (see below) and I are the only ones who will listen to the recordings and view your child's questionnaires.

Whenever I write about this research your child's name will not be used. I will allocate a number to him or her. The real names of the teachers and school will be changed. This will help to protect everyone's privacy. The participation of your child in this research is entirely voluntary. If your child does not participate, he or she will not do the questionnaires, no notes will be taken about his or her activities in class, and his or her voice will either not be audio recorded, or will be erased from any class recording. If your child does participate he or she is free to withdraw at any time before the end of the research project, and any information about him or her will be deleted from the project materials.

Elements of this research will be published in academic journals and presented at academic and education conferences.

If you agree for your child to participate in this research, please complete and sign the enclosed consent form and return it to me through your child's English teacher. If you have questions or would like to receive further information about the research, please contact me at Jemma.Simeon@vuw.ac.nz or +640 22 0 68 904 02 or my Supervisors below

Dr. Elaine Vine

Senior Lecturer

School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies

Email: elaine.vine@vuw.ac.nz

Phone: 04 463 5608

Fax: 04 463 5604

Address: P.O. Box 600, Wellington 6140, New Zealand

Dr. John Macalister

Senior Lecturer

School of linguistics and Applied Language Studies

Email: john.macalister@vuw.ac.nz

Phone: 044635609

Fax: 044635604

Address: P.O.Box 600, Wellington 6140, New Zealand.

I thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

Jemma Simeon

Information sheet for students

I am enrolled as a PhD student at Victoria University of Wellington. I am carrying out a collaborative Action Research project with the aim of improving English teaching and learning in the Seychelles secondary schools. This project will start in February 2011 and will last for 12 months.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will participate along with your other classmates and your English teacher. I will be working with your teacher to develop and implement teaching and learning plans to improve English learning in class.

At the beginning and end of the study, I will ask you to fill in a questionnaire about English language learning which will not take more than 20 minutes to complete. You will do this during your normal English lesson in my presence and that of your English teacher.

From time to time throughout the year, I will observe your English classes in order to understand better how you learn English. During this time, I will also audio record the classroom talk and make notes of the environment and the teaching and learning taking place. My supervisors (see below) and I are the only ones who will listen to the recordings and view your questionnaires.

Whenever I write about this research your name will not be used. I will allocate a number to you. The real names of the teachers and school will be changed. This will help to protect everyone's privacy. Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. If you do not participate, you will not do the questionnaires, no notes will be taken about your activities in class, and your voice will either not be audio recorded, or will be erased from any class recording. If you do participate you are free to withdraw at any time before the end of the research project, and any information about you will be deleted from the project materials.

Elements of this research will be published in academic journals and presented at academic and education conferences.

If you agree to participate in this research project, please complete and sign the enclosed consent form and return it to me through your English teacher. If you have questions or would like to receive further information about the research, please contact me at Jemma.Simeon@vuw.ac.nz or +640 22 0 68 904 02 or my Supervisors below

Dr. Elaine Vine Senior Lecturer School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies Email: elaine.vine@vuw.ac.nz Phone: 04 463 5608 Fax: 04 463 5604 Address: P.O. Box 600 Wellington 6140 New Zealand	Dr. John Macalister Senior Lecturer School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies Email: john.macalister@vuw.ac.nz Phone: 04 463 5609 Fax: 04 463 5604 Address: P.O. Box 600 Wellington 6140 New Zealand
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I thank you for your cooperation and participation.

Jemma Simeon

Information sheet for teachers.

I am enrolled as a PhD student at Victoria University of Wellington. I am carrying out a collaborative Action Research project with the aim of improving English teaching and learning in the Seychelles secondary schools. This project will start in February 2011 and will last for 12 months.

Reason for research

For several years educators and teachers have speculated about the reasons why some students are more-successful than others in English. This Action Research proposes to enable teachers to join together, through the process of collaborative research, to examine how Seychellois secondary school students learn English as a second language with the aim of helping the students become more-successful learners.

Purposes of the research.

1. To understand through interviews and discussions with teachers, students questionnaires, classroom observation and reflective journals how Seychellois secondary school students currently learn English and how their English teachers help them to do that.
2. To develop an action plan to improve English teaching in Seychelles classrooms based on understanding of current practices.
3. To implement and evaluate the action plan.

The Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee has granted ethics approval for this study. I would like to invite three English teachers at secondary three level and the three classes that they teach to collaboratively participate in an Action Research project. The classes should represent high, medium, and low levels of achievement.

Design and process

This study is a collaborative Action Research project. I want to work with three English language teachers to identify an area of their classroom practice; plan and implement a plan that helps students become more-successful in English. The research has three stages as detailed below:

Phase One

In the third week of term one, I will interview you and this will be about 45 minutes. The purpose of the interviews is to elicit from you what you do to make English teaching effective in your class. The interviews will be audio-recorded in order to capture a detailed and accurate account of the interviews. The tape will be transcribed immediately after the interviews. You will be provided with a copy of the transcription to check for accuracy. With permission, I will also observe your English classes in order to have an understanding of how your students learn English and what you do to facilitate this process. During this time I will also audio-record the classroom talk and make notes of the environment and the teaching and learning taking place. You will be able to listen to recordings and read and edit the observation notes if you wish to.

I will also give your students a questionnaire which is about what they do to help themselves learn English. This will be administered during their normal English lessons and will take about 20 minutes to complete.

We will each keep a reflective journal throughout the study in order to record the research decisions, own thoughts, feelings, impressions as well as reflections of the increased understanding that comes with the action process.

Phase Two

In the second half of term one, I will analyze the data collected in stage one. Analysis of these data will provide the background information necessary for effective action to be taken. You will not be involved in this stage.

Phase Three

This will take place in the second and third term. It will be done in two parts. Firstly, I will meet with you on an agreed date and place and will inform you of the analysis of the data and the results that have been established.

Secondly, we will form the action group. It will comprise of you teachers and me. We will work together to review the information presented in part one and the most problematic area will be selected and an action plan will be developed to address it.

You will implement the action plan we develop. We will evaluate the implementation of our plan with discussions, reflection and decision-making at the next meetings. The meetings will be audiotaped. The tapes will be transcribed by myself. The tapes will be erased four years after the end of the project. The transcripts will be destroyed too. During the implementation of our plan I will also observe your classrooms from time to time. At the end of the study, I will readminister a students' questionnaire.

I know that you are very busy as teachers, so once a week I intend to relieve you of some of your administrative duties such as playground supervision in order that we can have time to come together for our meetings and journal writing. Given that you are co-participants in this research project, I will give you systematic feedback throughout the study.

All information that you will provide will remain confidential between yourselves, myself and my supervisors. Confidentiality will be preserved through the use of pseudonyms. The school, yourself and your students will not be identified in any reports of the study. Confidential

information revealed in the group process will not be discussed outside the meetings. All project materials and recordings will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. The meetings will take place at a time and in a location agreed on by you and I.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time before the end of the collection of data in the first stage and third stage.

Elements of this research will be published in academic journals and presented at academic and education conferences.

If you agree to participate in this research, please complete and sign the enclosed consent form and return it to me in the envelope provided through the office of your school's administration.

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the research, please contact me at Jemma.Simeon@vuw.ac.nz or +640 22 0 68 904 02 or my Supervisors below

Supervisors:

Dr. Elaine Vine Senior Lecturer School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies Email: elaine.vine@vuw.ac.nz Phone: 04 463 5608 Fax: 04 463 5604 Address: P.O. Box 600 Wellington 6140 New Zealand	Dr. John Macalister Senior Lecturer School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies Email: john.macalister@vuw.ac.nz Phone: 04 463 5609 Fax: 04 463 5604 Address: P.O. Box 600 Wellington 6140 New Zealand
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I thank you for your cooperation and participation.

Yours sincerely

Jemma Simeon

Letter for the Ministry of Education and the head teacher

The Principal Secretary
Ministry of Education
Mont Fleuri, Mahe
Seychelles

23 September 2010

Dear Madam

Subject: Permission request to carry out research in a Secondary School.

I am enrolled as a PhD student at Victoria University of Wellington. I would like to carry out a collaborative Action Research project in a secondary school, for preference, Mont Fleuri Secondary School, with the aim of improving English teaching practices.

Reason for research

For several years educators and teachers have speculated about the reasons why some students are more-successful than others in English. This Action Research proposes to enable teachers to join together, through the process of collaborative research, to examine how Seychellois secondary school students learn English as a second language with the aim of helping the students become more-successful learners.

Purposes of the research

1. To understand through interviews and discussions with teachers, students questionnaires, classroom observation and reflective journals how Seychellois secondary school students currently learn English and how their English teachers help them to do that.
2. To develop an action plan to improve English teaching in Seychelles classrooms based on understanding of current practices.
3. To implement and evaluate the action plan.

The Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee has granted ethics approval for this study. With your agreement, and that of the head teacher, teachers, the students' parents or guardians and the students, I wish to collect data from February 2011 till February 2012 in the Secondary School. I would like to invite three English teachers at secondary three level and the three classes that they teach to collaboratively participate in an Action Research project. The classes should represent high, medium, and low levels of achievement.

Design and process

This study is a collaborative Action Research project. I want to work with three English language teachers to identify an area of their classroom practice; plan and implement a plan that helps students become more-successful in English. The research has three stages as detailed below:

Phase one

In the third week of term one, I will interview the teachers and this will be about 45 minutes. The purpose of the interviews is to elicit from the teachers what they do to make English teaching effective in their classes. The interviews will be audio-recorded in order to capture a detailed and accurate account of the interviews. The tape will be transcribed immediately after the interviews. The teachers will be provided with a copy of the transcription to check for accuracy. With permission, I will also observe the teachers' English classes in order to have an understanding of how their students learn English and what they do to facilitate this process. During this time I will also audio-record the classroom talk and make notes of the environment and the teaching and learning taking place. The teachers will be able to listen to recordings and read and edit the observation notes if they wish to.

I will also give the students a questionnaire which is about what they do to help themselves learn English. This will be administered during their normal English lessons and will take about 20 minutes to complete.

We will each keep a reflective journal throughout the study in order to record the research decisions, own thoughts, feelings, impressions as well as reflections of the increased understanding that comes with the action process

Phase Two

In the second half of term one, I will analyse the data. Analysis of these data will provide the background information necessary for effective action to be taken in stage three. The teachers will not be involved in this stage.

Phase Three

This will take place in the second and third term. It will be done in two parts. Firstly, I will meet with the teachers on an agreed date and place and will inform them of the analysis of the data and the results that have been established.

Secondly, we will form the action group. It will comprise of the teachers and me. We will work together to review the information presented in stage one and the most problematic area will be selected and an action plan will be developed to address it.

The teachers will implement the action plan we develop. We will evaluate the implementation of our plan with discussions, reflection and decision-making at the next meetings. The meetings will be audiotaped. The tapes will be transcribed by myself. The tapes will be erased four years after the end of the project. The transcripts will be destroyed too. During the implementation of our plan I will observe the teachers' classrooms from time to time. At the end of the study, I will readminister a students' questionnaire.

All information provided by the participants will remain confidential between the teachers, myself and my supervisors. Confidentiality will be preserved through the use of pseudonyms. The school, the teachers and students will not be identified in any reports of the study. Confidential information revealed in the group process will not be discussed outside the meetings. All project materials and recordings will be kept in a locked filing cabinet.

The research participants will receive letters informing them of the aims of the research; their roles and their consent to participate in it will also be sought. They will be assured that their participation is voluntary and that they may withdraw from the research anytime without giving any reasons before the end of the project.

I know that the teachers are very busy, so once a week, with your permission, I wish to relieve them of some of their administrative duties such as playground supervision in order that we can have time to come together for our meetings and journal writing.

Elements of this research will be published in academic journals and presented at academic and education conferences.

If you agree for me to undertake this research in the school, please confirm your consent in writing. Please indicate also whether you would like to receive feedback on the study when it is completed.

Feedback will be available at the end of 2013.

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the research, please contact me at Jemma.Simeon@vuw.ac.nz or +640 22 0 68 904 02 or my Supervisors below

Dr. Elaine Vine Senior Lecturer School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies Email: elaine.vine@vuw.ac.nz Phone: 04 463 5608 Fax: 04 463 5604 Address: P.O. Box 600 Wellington 6140 New Zealand	Dr. John Macalister Senior Lecturer School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies Email: john.macalister@vuw.ac.nz Phone: 04 463 5609 Fax: 04 463 5604 Address: P.O. Box 600 Wellington 6140 New Zealand
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I thank you for your cooperation and prompt response.

Yours faithfully

Jemma Simeon

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORMS

Jemma Simeon

PhD Student

School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies
PO Box 600

Wellington 6140

New Zealand

Email: Jemma.Simeon@vuw.ac.nz

Consent form for parents

- I have read the information sheet about this research.
- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have received answers to my satisfaction.
- I understand that my child will be asked to fill in a questionnaire about what he or she does to learn English.
- I understand that his or her English class will be observed and that the classroom talk will be audio recorded. Field notes will also be taken during the observation.
- I understand that consent is being asked for the participation of my child in this research which will begin in February 2011 and will last for 12 months.
- I understand that my child's participation in this research is voluntary and that he/she may also withdraw from this study any time within three weeks after data collection begins without stating reasons; and any information about him or her will be deleted from the project materials.
- I understand that if I withdraw my child from this research, any information or materials provided by my child will be destroyed.
- I understand that any information that my child will provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisors, and that the published results will use neither the real name of my child nor the real name of his/her Teacher and school, and that no opinions will be attributed to my child in any way that will identify him or her..
- I understand that the data my child provides will be used only for this research project and that any further use will require my written consent.

Signed: _____

Your name _____

Date: _____

Jemma Simeon

PhD Student

School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies
PO Box 600

Wellington 6140

New Zealand

Email: Jemma.Simeon@vuw.ac.nz

Consent form for students

- I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project.
- I understand that Mrs. Jemma Simeon is doing this research for her university work.
- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have received answers to my satisfaction.
- I understand that the study will begin in February 2011 and will last for 12 months.
- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary and that I may withdraw from this study any time within three weeks after data collection begins without stating reasons; and any information about me will be deleted from the project materials.
- I understand that if I withdraw from this research, any information or materials I provided will be destroyed.
- I understand that any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisors. The published results will use neither my real name nor the real name of my Teacher and school, and that no opinions will be attributed to me in any way that will identify me.
- I understand that the information I have provided will be used only for this research project and any further use will require my written consent.
- I agree to participate in this research.

Signed: _____

Your name _____

Date: _____

Jemma Simeon

PhD Student

School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies
PO Box 600

Wellington 6140

New Zealand

Email: Jemma.Simeon@vuw.ac.nz

Consent form for teachers

- I Consent to be a co-researcher/participant in this study. I am aware that this study is a requirement for a PhD degree in Applied Linguistics being undertaken by Jemma Simeon.
- I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project and my roles in it.
- I understand that this research project will begin in February 2011 and will last for 12 months.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions and they have been answered to my satisfaction.
- I am aware that audio recordings will be made and they will be kept for four years after the end of the study.
- I understand that I will be given the opportunity to comment on the information that I provide and may change any of the information if I wish to.
- I agree not to disclose any confidential information revealed and discussed during the meetings.
- I understand that all project materials and recordings will be kept in a locked filing cabinet.
- I understand that any information I provide in the course of the project will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisors (Dr. Elaine Vine and Dr. John Macalister of Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand) and that any publications about the project will use neither my real name nor the real names of the students and the school, and that no opinions will be attributed to me in any way that will identify me.
- I understand that the data I provide will not be used for any other purpose or released to others without my written permission.
- I understand that I am not obliged to take part in the research. Also I understand that I may withdraw from this study any time within three weeks after data collection begins without stating reasons; and any information about I would have provided will be deleted from the project materials.
- I understand that if I withdraw from the research project, any data I have provided will be destroyed.

Signed: _____

APPENDIX C: TRANSCRIPTION VERIFIER'S FORM

Name: Nadine Louys
Email address: nadine1268@gmail.com
Date: 9/5/2011

APPENDIX C: Transcription verifier's confidentiality form

I, Nadine Louys, the transcription verifier, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to all recordings and transcriptions received from Jemma Christina Simeon related to her doctoral study Learning strategies: An exploration of practices in the secondary schools in the Seychelles. Furthermore I agree:

To keep the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the verifying of the recordings and transcriptions confidential.

Not to make copies of any recordings or the transcriptions of the interview or lessons, unless specifically requested to do so by Jemma Christina Simeon

To store all recordings and transcriptions in a safe place.

To return all recordings and transcriptions to Jemma Christina Simeon

To delete all files containing recordings and transcriptions from my computer hard drive and any back up devices.

Transcription verifier's name Nadine Louys
Transcription verifier's signature Nadine Louys
Date 9/5/2011

APPENDIX D: ACTION PLAN

Goals (why) (what are we trying to achieve?)				
a. To enhance writing instruction in three secondary school classrooms (high, middle and low achieving)				
Task start date: 7th July 2011		Task end date: 28th July 2011		
Objectives (what) (action steps to be taken)	Tasks (How) Define a sequence of tasks & activities for each objective. List them step-by-step.	By who?	Resources	Issues
1. To develop an action plan that helps improve story writing instruction.	1. Organize after-school Professional development (PD) sessions for participating teachers and researcher. 2. Formulate a plan for the PD sessions. 3. Obtain relevant materials.	Teachers & researcher Researcher	Digital audio recorder	
Goals (why) (what are we trying to achieve?)				
b. To enhance writing instruction in three secondary school classrooms (high, middle and low achieving)				
Task start date: 29th August 2011		Task end date: 1st September		
Objectives (what) (action steps to be taken)	Tasks (How) Define a sequence of tasks & activities for each objective. List them step-by-step.	By who?	Resources	Issues
2. To carry out PD sessions which focuses on the writing process which teachers will use to help students develop the essential knowledge and strategies necessary to learn to write successfully	1. <u>Session one</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work through the steps of writing process. write a friendly letter based on something from own experience Reflect on the themes language learning strategies, learning through interaction, and learner responsibility 2. <u>Session two</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Model text analysis by responding to one or more texts that had been written by secondary two students. Reflect on the themes language learning strategies, learning through interaction, and learner responsibility 3. <u>Session three</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draw together what learnt from first and second sessions as a basis for planning, teaching principles, strategies and activities for implementation in class. Reflect on the themes language learning strategies, learning through interaction, and learner responsibility 	Teachers & researcher	Handouts, samples of students' texts.	

Goals (why) (what are we trying to achieve?)				
c. To enhance writing instruction in three secondary school classrooms (high, middle and low achieving)				
Task start date: 5th September 2011			Task end date: 9th December 2011	
Objectives (what) (action steps to be taken)	Tasks (How) Define a sequence of tasks & activities for each objective. List them step-by-step.	By who?		Resources
4. To monitor and evaluate the implementation of the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observe each class for 1-2 periods per week over 6 weeks. This will ensure that the plan is implemented. Keep research journal to record research decisions, one's own thoughts, and feelings impressions as well as documenting the increased understanding that comes with the action process. Conduct group meetings for reflective discussions about the implementation of the plan 	Researcher		Digital-audio recorder, note pad, journals, A4for questionnaire printing.
		Researcher & Teachers		
		Researcher & Teachers		
		Researcher & Teachers		

NB: Start and end dates are provisional and subject to change depending on the availability of the participation of the teachers.

APPENDIX E: TEACHER INTERVIEW

Interview with teacher A

R stands for researcher and TA for teacher A

Date of interview: 1st March 2011

Time: 10:25 am to 10:38 am

PART ONE

R: XXX, welcome to the interview. I'm very happy that you have accepted to participate in this project. The project is what you do to make learning effective. Before we proceed I will just brief on how the interview will go. It is divided into two parts. The first part is about your personal background followed by open-ended questions.

R: XXX, I only have your name. What is your surname?

TA: XXX

R: How old are you?

TA: 22

R: How long have you worked in this school?

TA: Are you talking about practicum or start working?

R: Urm well it doesn't hurt if you want to say that you have done your practicum in this school ...

TA: Ok I have done my practicum for 2 months and I have started working on the 24th of January this year. So I'm still new.

R: So you are a newly qualified teacher. So have taught English in this school from the 24th January to date.

R: What is your teaching qualification: diploma in secondary education?

PART TWO

R: Tell me about what makes you an effective language teacher. How do you go about teaching? How do you support learning?

TA: Ok in order for me to be effective is that I need to get the students to be at ease first. And then I follow the termly plan as devised and I try to make learning fun for them whatever so that even though it might be difficult I am enjoying myself as well they are enjoying what they are learning.

How do I support learning? I get to take the students individually if I see that they have any difficulty or anything that's bothering them or affecting their learning abilities. So I get to talk to them.

R: That's about it for this question, so how do you go about teaching?

TA: How do I go about teaching? I implement different strategies but I like to use the communicative approach. I get the students to talk and enjoy what they are learning.

R: So you have mentioned the word strategy, so I'll be asking you a series of questions about the types of strategies that you use to manage the following things that I'm going to ask you.

Can you tell me what you do to help your students when they are having difficulties learning what you teach them?

TA: OK first of all I ask them if they understood what I taught. And then if I see that they are reluctant to answer me then I get them to come to the front and question them and ask them to ask the others questions. If I see that they are reluctant again to do it then I note it down and I tackle it individually with them.

R: OK, so when you call them in front of the class, it is something that the other students can hear.

TA: Yes

R: Alright, so anything else that you do to help them manage their emotions um for example if they are afraid to learn. For example, there are some students who are really afraid. For example when you do um oral presentation, or maybe you that that student is afraid of the other students the presence of the other students. They are intimidated by others you know, so how do you cope with that? How do you help that particular student?

TA: OK, when I first came here this year for example, the first thing that I did was to get the student feel at ease. This means I use ice breaking activities

R: Sorry to interrupt you. To make them feel at ease what did you do?

TA: What do I do? Urm I make jokes, and I become humorous, I kind of make a fool out of myself. For example, role playing with them, participating

R: So now can you tell me how you help learners learn with others? What strategies do you use to help them learn with others?

TA: Ok, group work, for example, cooperative learning I implement that in my teaching and I get and I get them to work on a project or for example, if I'm tackling reading, I get I choose different types of text. I give each group a text and then they discuss the outcome of the passage they read.

R: Can you tell me what you do help your learners remember effectively? What strategies do you use to help them remember effectively, suppose you have taught them something on grammar, rules, any little tricks that you use to help your to do that?

TA: Urm I have not tried it but like for example with S1, I give them homework and then I get them to revise. And then when they come, I don't ask them have you revised or anything like that. I just call them and ask them questions and they go and search in their exercise books but most o them from what I've reached now, they are able to read, remember, I do not have to lower classes

R: Can you tell me what you do to help your students clarify or verify their understanding of things learnt in English? Any little trick that you teach them

TA: Ok like I said I like to use a lot of games, activities, I like to get them to TALK a lot during the classes. And I see that this strategy is effective because they might be thinking about something and might be afraid to do it but when I ask they respond to what I've asked them

R: So you use games mainly and other things that you do

TA: um questioning, games and questioning

R: Can you tell what you do to help your students to compensate for information that they have missed in your lesson:

TA: OK, I ask them to come to me, individually, for example, If I have taught a concept that is very difficult um to assimilate, um I get them to come to me individually and explain and give examples, and then when I go to class again, when I have the whole class with me we review what we've learnt, then I give them exercises for practice.

R: What about for example when a particular student or students do not understand a word as used in the passage how do you help them?

TA: If that is the case, then I get them to take their dictionaries. I advise them to take their dictionaries to school,

R: And suppose they do not have any dictionaries with them, how do they survive. How do help them to cope?

TA: Ok to be honest I do not go to class with my dictionary, so (both researcher and teacher laughed) I've not really encountered such a problem. But if it is to happen I will ask of the students to go and get the dictionary in the staffroom because I...I'm not only the teacher there am also learning with them, so it's like we are learning.

R: Ok, alright, so you do not use you do not teach them contextual clues in the passage that will them to get the meaning of the words?

TA: Urm there maybe cases where they might not use those clues. Even if they use them they might not still not understand. And so I have to explain.

R: So you explain ok. Right our last question. Can you tell me what you do to help your students organize what they learn in your class? You know you give them a lot of stuff, how do the students organize their learning how do you help them to do that?

TA: Ok if there are a lot of things to tackle, I actually divide them into groups of threes or pairs and then I give each pair and then we discuss as a class so that we are learning together

R: Do you teach them how to plan their work?

TA: When it comes to project yes. And when it comes to revising yes also.

R: Do you advise to go and talk to other people as well?

TA: Yes I do. Because it is very important and I'm new and there are more experienced teachers

R: Now in terms of evaluating can you tell me what you do to help your students to evaluate their learning? Most of the time it is the teachers who do that ok assessments and so forth. What about the students, do you give them do you teach them how to evaluate their own learning?

TA: I have not tried that. The only thing that I've tried I was like we did a test we did a role playing we make sure that each group um has illustrated the main issue from the test. And the others the students they are actually watching the role play and trying to understand whether the students have understood from what they read.

R: So basically you are telling me that if you are doing a role-play then you have another group which is watching and that other group will give feedback on how the students have performed?

TA: Yes.

R: Um Ok what about at individual level,

TA: Individual level. No I have not

R: So anything else you would like to say

TA: Um non.

R: non?

End of Interview

Interview with Teacher B

R stands for researcher and TB for teacher B.

Date of interview: 1st March 2011

Time: 11:38 am to 11:57am

PART ONE

R: well XXX once again I thank you for accepting to participate in the research project, particularly for your participating in this interview. Um the interview will be divided into two parts. Basically part one will be about your background, just to learn a little bit more about you. This will be followed by some opening questions.

Name: XXX

Age: 25

R: How long have you worked in this school?

TB: 3 yrs and 2 mths

R: How long have you taught English at secondary level?

TB: Same as above

R: What is your teaching qualification? Diploma in secondary education part two

PART TWO

R: Tell me what makes you an effective language teacher? How do you go about teaching? How do you support learning?

TB: The first one what makes you an effective English teacher, um I think that um, the time that I take to prepare the lesson for the students also um the quality o the work given and teaching about the second part um

It depends on the topic and also the class. For example, if I feel the class can work in pairs um like for example, like um low ability if I'm doing a new topic maybe that will help them to understand the topic better and support learning {laughed a little} paused a while and then said " how do I support learning?

Well I give students feedback and sometime also I re-teach if I see that if they have not understood the topic. I re-teach and also based on their work, and also based on their work um I give them extra work. For example in a class we did something I I notice that they need more practice I will give them more work to do as home work but in the class itself.

R: Now you know that some students might be worried, might be afraid, ok, might be shy, all these are emotions that students experience now you as a teacher how do you help your students when they are having difficulties learning what you teach them?

TB: Um sometimes I tell them if they do not want to talk in the class, I ask them to come and see me during lunch hour or anytime that they feel or I call them individually in class like when I give the class work. Or when um when I ask questions in class the shy ones will tend to , they will never answer any questions but I try to give them the chance to answer but certain time they do answer the questions even if it is wrong they try.

R: ok any little tricks that you teach them to overcome their shyness, fears, anxiety, any little tricks that you teach them?

TB: Um not really {laughs} um sometime I talk to them frankly in class um but you'll see that some of them will react like if I say come to me, they will come to me but the others will still say no.

R: Alright, for example if a student is afraid to speak in front of the class, like when you do oral presentation, to you teach them some techniques that will overcome that fear?

TB: Um um we do um presentation in class like if they are pair up, usually in groups or individually, like they are given a topic to write about just practice to present in class, um this when that um they the shy one will when they come in front they will be shy before but with time they tend to speak um.

R: So you do not give them any support to overcome the shyness

TB: I do, I do, I do, give them the support. Like when we speaking outside assessment some of them may tend to talk but try to counsel them talk to them, ask them questions. Try to get them to be comfortable first, and then I think when they feel at ease they start talking.

R: Ok, alright, so can you tell what you to help your learners learn with others?

TB: Outside?

R: Inside the class as well as outside the class

TB: Like I have this class, they are a bad class {laughs} I try to but now I'm using a new approach, I'm teaching the living values first, like before when they lined up outside, the used to fight, gossip. Now I can say that they are improving. In each when I come in I teach them respect the person, your friend, and I think it is working because they just use to um um you know they just use bad language with their other friends but now they are able to talk to ask they are cooperating,

R: So you are incorporate teaching values in your English lessons?

TB: Yes

R: Will you encourage your students to practice using English with other students outside the class or listen to BBC news and so forth you know?

TB: Yes. Like some classes they try to use it while others they tell you that they are Seychellois, we should speak Creole, but inside the class I try to get them to use English as far as possible.

R: Ok alright: Can you tell me what you do help your students to remember effectively? For example, you have taught a grammatical item and the students have not really understood it how would you try to help, what little tricks would you teach the students to remember for example the rules or any other things that you teach them?

TB: Um, sssss well (does not come to my mind) {said that in Creole} and smiled} and I said "relax"

R: Um let me give one typical example, for example, you might use flash cards to help them remember some English words, do you use these type of things.? Or do you act out English words when it comes to vocabulary, it is not always easy for the students as second language learners to remember the meaning of certain words, so how do you help your learners to remember the meaning of a particular word?

TB: Ok, I did with one class, like or example for vocabulary, I gave them a special book, it is more like an exercise book, like if there's a word that they don't know, like if they are reading a text or book and they see a word that they don't know, get them to find the meaning, and then they write a sentence with that word.

R: For example, also do you use sound and word connection?

TB: Not really

R: Um ok, can you tell me what you do to help your students clarify or verify their understanding of things learnt in English?

TB: Um ss like when like after the class, when take five minutes, we have some games play some games based on a topic, or I get them to answer questions. I ask them questions they answer; basically... sometimes we do dictation.

R: Do you encourage your students to speak English with English speakers?

TB: Yes, well, like in the high ability, they will do it but lower they will try when they don't know they just say we don't know so they start using Creole again.

R: So when they start using Creole again what do you do to get them to re-start using English?

TB: Like I said um like I told them that you can use if you do not know that word English, you can say it in Creole and I will tell you that word in English and repeat it in English. Sometimes it works.

R: Ok can you tell what you to help your students compensate for information that they have missed:

TB: Um sometimes, um well like I don't understand the question.

R: Say for example, you have taught a lesson , you have introduce a new topic, and some students for one reason or another they have missed, ok, so what do you do to help them get that information?

TB: Um some of them talk to their friends or they come and see me for notes and for explanation they come and see me.

R: So apart from seeing you, or using their friend's books are there any other little things that you tell them that they can do to help themselves, supposed you are not available and their friends are not available any little things that they can do on their own instead of coming to you or their friends.

TB: Like I say um they do research on their own about a new topic even before we start a new topic. They do research on their own.

R: Ok let me give you a typical example, supposed you um you're teaching a reading lesson and there are some difficult words in the passage, which are unfamiliar to the students, what do you to help the students know the meaning of those words?

TB: Before I give them the passage, I do vocabulary exercises; there can be match the meaning with the word. Or find the meaning of this word or different kind of... before they can see the... to see the...ok

R: What if they are at home and and you are not there available to do the matching, do you teach them how to go about finding a difficult word in the passage by using contextual clues?

TB: Um Yes but like you mean I give them a passage and find the meaning... sometimes their understanding of that word is different from how it is used. But often in class, I tell them to do this but

R: Do you encourage them to use dictionaries/

TB: Yes, sometimes we use it.

R: Ok, do you teach them how to guess the meaning of words as use in the passage.

TB: Yes

R: Right, our two last questions organizing and evaluating learning. Can you tell me what you do to help your students organize what they learn in your class? Ok most of the time it is typical for teachers to do the organization, what about the students, do you help them to organize their studies and how do you do that?

TB: In what way?

R: Ok, let me give you an example, can help your student to plan schedule ok, to plan a schedule so that they have enough time to study English. This is basically planning or if they while you are not available for example, you can advise your students to seek help from able students or talk to other people it can be at school or outside school, ok things like that.

TB: Like if I'm not available, they can use their friends or other English teacher if they are available, but I have never tried like give them a schedule,

R: Do you help them to set clear goals or improving their English? Setting targets?

TB: Yes

R: Ok these are all to do with organizing? Now what about evaluating their learning, how do you help your students to evaluate their own learning?

TB: Um {laughs a little} um

R: Ok this is the end of the interview.

End of interview

Interview with teacher C

R stands for researcher and TC for teacher C

Date of interview: 3rd March 2011

Time: 8:10 am to 8:25 am

PART ONE

R: Good morning XXX, First of all I'd like to thank you to participate in this interview. The interview is divided into two parts, part one and two. Part one is about your background information and part two, just to get to know you a little bit more. Part two is a series of opening questions and whereby you will be telling me what makes you an effective language teacher and so forth.

How old are you, XXX?

TC: 21

R: how long have you worked in this school?

TC: I year

R: How long have you taught English at secondary level?

TC: I year

R: What is your teaching qualification?

TC: Diploma 2 in Education.

PART TWO

R: OK XXX, I'm going to ask you a series of opening questions, I'll let you have the questions as we go along. Tell me about what makes you an effective language teacher. How do you go about teaching? How do you support learning?

TC: Well, first of all, to be an effective teacher, first of all I'm motivated, I like teaching, it is one of my passion, my main passion in fact, um, I like teaching because it is a job where you are sharing your knowledge to students and you are sharing your piece of what you've learnt. You are contributing towards the society, and for me this is an achievement.

And an effective teacher for me is a teacher that listens, first of all listen to the students, even though you do not have to be academic, but listen to their problems and understand them, and also you need to plan a lot, ok. You need to be able to research um, try to adapt to the environment because every classroom is a different environment, so you need to be able to adapt to it, ok. Find new strategies, new methods every time, you are not supposed to use the same strategies, ok, each you research new methods. This why students are motivated, because if you use the same strategies all the time it becomes a problem.

R: Thank you XXX, you have mentioned the word strategies, so I'm going to ask you a series of questions ok. that will indicate what are the strategies that you use, in the following areas:

What do you do to help your students when they are having difficulties learning what you teach them? What strategies do you use?

TC: Well, first of all I always start, if I'm starting a new topic, I always start with an ice-breaking activity, just to get to know on which level they are. And of course I do a lot of practice in the class, I give them examples, notes, I explain, I use visual aids, or sometimes I use ICT. For example, projector, use the blackboard the students gain interest in your lesson that they learn.

R: Alright. Supposed a student is anxious, worried, and afraid, about doing a particular activity or a particular lesson what techniques or little tricks that you teach them to help the students to overcome these emotions.

TC: Well, first of all, I will know because from the way they work, their end results if there is a problem. First of all I will talk to the person, but most of the time, I have encountered this situation before but most of the time the student does not come to me, I do not know why. They seem to be reluctant to approach me but if I'm able to observe that, I will talk to the students alone, to see if he or she is having trouble in the class to come and see me. So then maybe I can have private tuition on a particular topic.

R: Alright, so What do you do to help your learners learn with others?

TC: Well, I use group work. I use a lot of group work with them. Different group work, not only one type. Different group work which allow them to communicate with each other ok. because in the class, I never allow them to sit two boys or two girls it is only one boy or one girl because I know that sometimes I know that girls learn better. So maybe they can work together. Ok and in group work I always allow them to decide what to do. I never put pressure on them and group work it's them who decide how to present their work. I only facilitate, provide materials, and instructions and they need to work.

R: Ok. Alright, supposed your students are having to difficulties remember something you have taught them. How do you help to remember effectively? Any little things that you teach them to help them to remember effectively?

TC: Each time I have a lesson I do a little follow up follow up questions, for example on Tuesday I'm going to quiz them on, so from now on they revise because they know that on Tuesday they're going to be questioned, and they know that they need to study. So so far it is working. They do remember and

R: So you use quizzes all the time?

TC: Yah

R: All the time?

TC: Yah

R: Can you tell me what you do to help your students clarify or verify their understanding of things learnt in English?

TC: Well, first of all for them to clarify for example if they are in doubt, I always tell them to refer to what I've given them because I do not like spoon feeding the students give them every answer. Every time I tell them that I've given you notes you need to do your part 50% so you have to go to your notes and understand it and if you have any problem now maybe you can come to me personally then I can explain to you. Because for me where you have to spoon feed the students every time no.

R: Any little techniques that you give them, for example, when we were at school to learn the nine planets how do you call that where you give a letter for each word, the first letter of each word, so we knew that each letter was actually was representing or standing for the name of the planet.

TC: Er OK. Well for English ok. I use steps because I know when they have steps they will be able to follow it systematically, but I think I use steps a lot.

R: What do you mean by steps?

TC: For example, if I do letter writing, I'll give them the format then I'll give them steps on how to what they supposed to write in the content. I give them steps, examples, from now on it will be easier for them to refer to when they are doing an activity.

R: OK. Can you tell me what you do to help your students to compensate for information that they have missed in your lesson?

TC: Well for students who are maybe absent, do not come to school, I always refer them to other students to get their notes. Because it is not fair for me to go over something I have already explained. So I always tell them to copy their notes or come to me I'll explain and I'm not going to re-teach and maybe when I'm doing a revision them maybe they can understand.

R: Suppose you are doing a reading lesson, and let's take whereby students are having difficulties with understanding certain words as used in the passage. What do you do there to help them?

TC: First of all I use the dictionary, I never tell them the meaning of the word because in the most reading activities, they are asked to find the meaning of the word on their own. And I always tell them that they need to have a dictionary or I get the dictionary from the resource and they use it. Because from now on they need to learn on their own and they are able to remember than me telling them everything. Because spoon feeding them all the answers for me no

R: In class for example, they can actually use a dictionary, how do you prepare them for example, in exams when they are not allowed to use dictionaries? So any techniques that you give them to deal with vocabulary?

TC: Well not really. I have not focused on that. Because we are reluctant of giving them vocabulary, my actual class S2² because in fact most the S2¹ to the S2² are they have difficulty in reading. We are trying to introduce reading programme, we are teaching them but for now I'm not focusing on finding meaning in the text because the main problem with them is grasping the meaning when they read.

R: So what do you do to help them grasp the meaning when they read?

TC: Usually in the Class, when we do reading activities when we do, for example where we are particularly focusing on reading, we read together in the class, um we evaluate the questions, I told them, for example if you see a question or example Why? You have to give a reason. So we try to work on that. I do not leave them alone give them a text book juts read and then answer the questions. They won't be able to learn from that they will be making the same mistake. So in the class we try to read as a group, discuss then move on.

R: So you do not teach them how to guess the meaning of words as used in context? Or word-sound association.

TC: For now no.

R: Not even using gestures to help them understand the meaning of words. For example, little children at school when the teacher wants to teach them "running" the teacher actually runs.

TC: Yes that one I use with them and usually they laugh. But

R: But it helps.

R: So you use it.

TC: I use it with my low ability classes.

TC: I always use it gestures because I know they like it especially when they do role play. I like showing them.

R: Ok now we come to the last two questions. Organizing and evaluating. Can you tell me what you do to help your students organize what they learn in your class?

TC: Well, usually well in most classes, I wanted them to keep a file where they have all the assessments. But in my class if I know they are going to have an assessment, for writing for example, or letter writing, I told them to have a special exercise book to write all their notes. Because from now it does not mingle with all the class work. So it will be easier for them to revise and be ready for the assessment. And when it comes to evaluating I always, for example at the end, when I give them their assessments, the results, ok. I told them to evaluate about their weaknesses where they have gone wrong and from that for example, they can set a target for next term

R: So when you tell them to evaluate, what actually telling them to do because "evaluating" is a big word for them

TC: A big word for them

R: Yes

R: Even or us it's a big word. What do you do to help them evaluate their work?

TC: Well, first of all I use key areas whereby I see their weaknesses because in my classes I can see that each student has different area where they are weak. So from now on me I just write their weaknesses in my book and then I talk to them individually and tell them where they have gone wrong or they might notice themselves. And from there they can see from where they have gone wrong. Go back to their exercise books and at times I after the assessment I do a revision o.k whereby they need to write again and later see if they are able to remember. I always give them practice I never

R: So do you do peer correction

TC: No most of the time.

End of Interview

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