

# **STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN THE TEACHING OF SECOND LANGUAGE ENGLISH IN LARGE GRADE 8 CLASSES**

by

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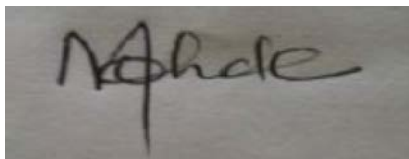
**JANUARY 2020**

## DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation "Strategies to strengthen the teaching of second- language English in large Grade 8 classes" hereby submitted for a Master' Degree in Education at the University of the Free State is own independent work which had not been submitted by me at any university.

I also declare that no work of other scholars has been used without proper citation and that all the sources used have been shown and acknowledged completely.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M.A. Mohale', on a light-colored background.

M.A. Mohale

31 January 2020

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving and caring family who has been a source of my strength through thick and thin. My caring husband, Sekautu Majake, who was always encouraging and supporting me during sleepless nights. My adorable children, Potsane, Rethabile and Lebohang, who stood by me and always gave me the assurance that I can make it. This would have not been achieved without you.

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My mother and father who used to tell me that I will run this race ... I thank God for having parents like you.

All the research participants: without your genuine support this work would not have been a success.

All my friends and colleagues: your support has been noticed.

# ETHICS STATEMENT

UFS-HSD2018/0860



Faculty of Education

22-Nov-2018

Dear **Mrs Mapotsane Mohale**

Ethics Clearance: **Strategies to strengthen the teaching of second-language English in large Grade 8 classes.**

Principal Investigator: **Mrs Mapotsane Mohale**

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## APPLICATION APPROVED

With reference to your application for ethical clearance with the Faculty of Education, I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the Ethics Board of the faculty that you have been granted ethical clearance for your research.

Your ethical clearance number, to be used in all correspondence is: **UFS-HSD2018/0860**

This ethical clearance number is valid for research conducted for one year from issuance. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension.

We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure we are kept up to date with your progress and any ethical implications that may arise.

Thank you for submitting this proposal for ethical clearance and we wish you every success with your research.

Yours faithfully

Prof. MM Mokhele Makgalwa  
Chairperson: Ethics Committee

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## TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Herewith I, **Cornelia Geldenhuys (ID 521114 0083 088)** declare that I am a qualified, accredited language practitioner and that I have edited the following dissertation:

### STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN THE TEACHING OF SECOND LANGUAGE ENGLISH IN LARGE GRADE 8 CLASSES

By

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All changes were indicated by track changes and comments **for the author to verify, clarify aspects that are unclear and finalise.**



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## **ABSTRACT**

This research is motivated by a need to strengthen strategies in teaching of second language English in large grade 8 classes. The majority of schools in Lesotho have high learner enrolment since 2001 as a result of Free Primary Education. This study expands on strengthening and formulating strategies as a vehicle to the challenges encountered by teachers due to teaching English in large classes. It is guided by the Critical Emancipation Research (CER) theory and Participation Action Research as a research methodology. This qualitative research generated data from one high school in the district of Thaba-tseka in Lesotho of a student teacher ratio of 1:70 through the meeting and discussions. The Focus group discussion and Free-attitude interviews were used to gain more evidence and the generated data were analyzed by the use of Critical Discourse Analysis. The findings accruing from the data were used for recommendations pertaining to the best strategies to be used by English teachers in large classes such as peer teaching, effective communication, provision of feedback and collaborative teaching. It is recommended that the government of Lesotho should provide schools with more buildings and increase the number of teachers to achieve learner-teacher ratio. Also create a warm atmosphere, user friendly schools with both teachers and parents having a feeling of ownership to enable the learners to develop skills in English.

**Keywords:** Large class, Second language English

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

BED – Bachelor of Education

CDA – Critical Discourse Analysis

CER – Critical Emancipation Research

DES – Diploma in English Secondary

ESL – English Second Language

FGD - Focus Group Discussion

LMS – Learning Management Systems

NCDC – National Curriculum Development Centre

PAR – Participatory Action Research

PSLE – Primary School Leaving Examination



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# **CHAPTER 1:**

## **ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of the proposed study is to strengthen the strategies that teachers use to overcome the challenges of teaching English as a second language in large classes. The context of the study is one of the high schools that experience problems with large classes in the Thaba-Tseka district of Lesotho. In different contexts and cultures, people may have different perspectives of and tolerance for class sizes. However, in this study, a large class is classified as one in which the number of learners is greater than what the teacher would prefer to manage and larger than what the available resources can support (Otienoh, 2010:60; Qiang & Ning, 2011:1). A large class is not just an issue of numbers, but also an issue of the challenges faced when delivering quality education and equal learning opportunities for all learners (Maringe & Sing, 2014:765). Teaching strategies are fundamental processes and models involved or used in the process of delivering content to learners, managing communication and guiding learners to acquire a deep understanding of the content taught (Hornsby & Osman, 2014). To strengthen teaching strategies is a process of growing and changing the teaching process in order to attain more positive learning results. Within the context of this study, the strengthening of teaching approaches is regarded as a process of improving the quality of education and the learning process, resulting in improved academic performance of the learners involved (Exeter, Ameratunga, Ratimba & Morton, 2010:763).

Learners from African countries face the challenge of adapting to the English language due to a society that fails to embrace diversity. Learners learning English as a second language also find it challenging to adapt to the contextual background and cultural meaning of English words. Teachers may also find it very hard to motivate learners and to instil the importance of the language (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005:6; Marais, 2016). Being a foreign language to the majority of learners in developing African countries, teaching second-language English requires selfless dedication from both the learners and the teachers. Achieving this can be a huge challenge in large classes. This



research, therefore, intends to strengthen the teaching of English within the context of this study.

Due to noisy and restive classmates in large classes, learners fail to pay proper attention to the teacher and to participate to the optimal level of intensity, which leads to negative academic achievements (Marais, 2016:2; Mgeni, 2013:117). In Canada, a major problem with large classes is that learners are distracted by the general lack of civility in large classes, which leads to activities such as conversations on the side, coming late for class and the inappropriate use of electronic devices (Kerr, 2011:3). High numbers of learners limit the number of assessments teachers can hand out, due to excessive marking loads and managing plagiarism (Flynn, 2008:68; Otienoh, 2010:63; Woollacott, Booth & Cameron, 2014:750). According to Mtika (2010), large class sizes in Malawian schools force teachers to limit their interaction with learners and opportunities of managing healthy relationships with learners. This lack of learner-teacher interaction leads to learners taking a more passive role in learning and being less willing to participate in class activities and to take learning responsibilities on their own (Jungic, Kent & Menz, 2006:3; Kerr, 2011:3). Large classes are prone to noise, pushing and fighting among learners, to such an extent that a teacher loses valuable lesson time trying to take control of the learners (Marais, 2016).

One of the strategies that have been deployed in response to the abovementioned challenges is the use of flipped classes. A flipped class is defined as one in which the activities that traditionally occur inside a classroom now take place outside a classroom, and vice versa (Jensen, Howars & Jensen, 2015:1; Soundarajan, Joshi & Rammath, 2014:1). Flipped classes encourage learners to learn on their own; they increase learner motivation, as learners can gauge their progress and they have more time to ask questions about what they have learned on their own. The adoption of learning management systems can also be very helpful in the teaching of English language in large classes. The most-used learning management systems include Blackboard, Moodle, WebCT and Canvas, to mention a few (Back, Behringer, Haberstroh, Ehlers & Sostmann, 2016:269; Lochner, Conrad & Graham, 2015:64). Teachers can use learning management systems to organise their teaching material better and can get to know their learners from the internet space (Back *et al.*, 2016:271).

The other teaching method that can be used in large classrooms is the blended learning instructional strategy (BLIS). BLIS provides the opportunity for learners to be engaged with the learning content being presented, the means for learners to submit questions to the teacher, and to answer questions asked by the teacher (Francis, Davis & Humiston, 2014:213). From a South African perspective, research work by Vayrynen (2003) on schools in Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape revealed that developing inclusive cultures revolving around collaboration and cooperation can be the best way to teach English language in large classes. He reveals that teachers need to explore learners' culture and social practices in order to be able to handle diversity and encourage collaboration amongst learners. However, Jansen (2001) states that grouping learners might not be the best solution for all South African teachers. He argues that a collaborative environment may not work for some learners; therefore, teachers need to work towards finding solutions that work for each situation.

The teaching approaches discussed so far may pose some threats when implemented; in some cases both learners and teachers can find learning management systems not easy to use, as they may require certain levels of computer and technology literacy (Walker, Linder, Murphrey & Dooley, 2016:44). The use of technology and flipped teaching can be seen as time consuming, and technical challenges can arise that neither the teachers nor the learners may manage to fix right away (Sanga, 2016:18). Blended learning can also present challenges in classes, as some learners may feel comfortable using the technology, while others can already be familiar with these technologies. This may lead to the former being neglected and left out of discussions (Francis, 2012:151; Kerr, 2011:2). In rural parts of most sub-Saharan countries, a lack of electricity, a shortage of information and communication technology (ICT) skills, and poor telecommunications infrastructure hamper the smooth use of technology in schools (Dzansi & Amendzo, 2014; Nkula & Krauss, 2014).

The success of these intervention strategies can be determined by improved learner engagement in class activities and better grades. For example, in a study conducted by Walker *et al.* (2016:44) on schools in North America, respondents revealed that learning management systems were very useful in classroom management, as they provided updated grades to learners, and timely reports on classroom performance to teachers. In a study by Machika, Bruin and Albertyn (2014:378) on South African learners' experience

of flipped classes, the majority of the correspondents claimed to be motivated to learn more on their own when content covered in classes is also extended further by the use of videos and audio. On the other hand, Song and Kapur (2017:300) explored the impact of flipped classes by conducting an experiment on two groups of learners – the one group was provided access to course material in the form of short videos, while the other had no access to the external videos. The results of this study show that learners with access to additional material had a better understanding of the content, and they took much interest in their learning. A study by Jensen *et al.* (2015:3) also reveals that there was a significant improvement in academic performance of learners when flipped teaching mechanics were implemented. It is anticipated that for the purposes of the context of this study, some of the above interventions can be adopted in an attempt to strengthen the teaching of second-language English to large Grade 8 classes.

## **1.2 RESEARCH INTEREST OR PROBLEM**

The empirical research indicates that the challenges of teaching large classes are a global phenomenon. With a vastly growing population, the education sector has experienced nothing but teaching of large classes. Therefore, this study is motivated by the need to come up with strategies to strengthen the teaching of English as a second language in large Grade 8 classes.

## **1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In order to contribute towards the strengthening of teaching techniques used to teach second-language English in large classes, the study uses the critical emancipatory research (CER) theory. The CER theory is participant driven and helps researchers to promote self-actualisation in participants by fully consulting with them on important matters of the study (Mahlomaholo, 2009:226). This theory also increases the potential of those who live in conditions that are not conducive to their development and it helps researchers take note of their assumptions and their importance to the research at hand (Behar-Horenstein & Feng, 2015:50; Watson & Watson, 2011:53).

This study envisages that CER will help to address the problem of teacher-centred rote learning, which is a norm for teachers of second-language English in large classes (Kim & Pollard, 2017). The adoption of CER also improves the problem of unhealthy teacher-learner relations, caused by large classes, by creating an environment that makes it easy

for them to work as partners to solve their problems in learning English as a second language (Sarroub & Quadros, 2015). It is not easy for learners to engage in collaborative learning in overcrowded classes; CER deals with this problem by providing an environment that encourages equality, social justice and collective action (Kim & Pollard, 2017).

The relevance of this theory is that it contributes towards guiding the study to understand and respond to the complexities currently faced by both teachers and learners in large classes, as well as help to promote social justice by considering the views of both learners and teachers with regard to the problem of large classes (Boog, 2003). Most importantly, CER leads the research to understand the problem at hand from the perspective of both the teachers and the learners, which is key to designing efficient ways to strengthen English language teaching methods in large classes.

#### **1.4 PRIMARY QUESTION**

The main research question in this study is: How can the teaching of second-language English in large classrooms be strengthened?

Following from this main research question are the following subsidiary research questions:

- What are the challenges encountered by English teachers in large Grade 8 classes?
- What are the solutions towards problems encountered when teaching English language as the second language?
- What are the threats associated teaching English as a second language as a second language in large Grade 8 classes?
- Which are the success indicators of success in teaching English second language in large Grade 8 classes?
- Which are the strategies that can best assist teachers to teach large Grade 8 classes effectively?

## **1.5 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

The proposed study aims at strengthening the techniques that teachers can deploy when teaching English as a second language in large Grade 8 classes.

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- To discuss the challenges around the teaching of English as a second language within the context of large Grade 8 classes.
- To outline the solutions to the challenges encountered when teaching second-language English with specific reference to large Grade 8 classes.
- To strengthen strategies of teaching second-language English in large classes.
- To identify the threats associated with teaching second-language English in large classes.
- To highlight evidence of success indicators in teaching second-language English in large classes.

## **1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **1.6.1 Participatory action research (PAR)**

Inspired by the critical emancipatory research (CER) theory, the study makes use of participatory action research (PAR) as a practical intervention to improve the quality of teaching and learning second-language English in large classes. PAR is oriented around analysing and gathering data based on real people and their views (MacDonald, 2012:35). It is driven by a researcher's involvement in a study, trying to improve the lives of a community or a certain organisation. Just like CER, PAR has its roots in social development, collaborating and developing social and professional relationships (Zuber-Skerritt, 2015:15). PAR tries to present the people being studied as co-researchers themselves in a study.

PAR is the methodology of choice, because it helps to facilitate participatory engagement of all the parties involved in the study, and enforce a good partnership between stakeholders (Mackay, 2016:1). The action research cycle of planning, implementation, and reflection is used as part of the methodology (Bryman, 2008:254). This was done through an initial strategic planning session that took place to develop a plan in line with

the objectives of the study. Teachers will be requested to implement the suggested pedagogical approaches reflectively. Thereafter, the effectiveness of the approaches is evaluated through reflection sessions. Next, further planning of meetings takes place where ideas and perspectives of strengthening the teaching of L2 in large classes are generated. It was envisaged that these different perspectives will contribute towards findings that address the problem of teaching English as a second language in large classes (MacDonald, 2012:40). The input from all the co-researchers involved in the study is used to design effective strategies for strengthening the teaching of English as a second language. All core-researchers' responses were given in mother tongue as per their request but were interpreted in English.

### **1.6.2 Data collection**

The proposed study comprise of a team made up of high school teachers and learners based in the Thaba-Tseka district of Lesotho. The team members are selected from a school with a known case of overcrowded classes. They discuss the challenges they face when teaching and learning English in overcrowded classes. The team further provides more insight on how they are affected by their learning environments. Data was generated through meetings, informal discussions and observations. The team was fully involved in all the stages of action research, which includes cycles of reflection, planning, and action. This set-up makes the observations more rational, reasonable and coherent. Such an environment establishes a platform where all the stakeholders voice their opinions with relative ease and without fear. The data from these discussions was clearly labelled and well documented, and the accompanying audio and video was also recorded for analysis at a later stage of the gathered data.

### **1.6.3 Selection of participants**

The co-researchers of this study are Grade 8 learners and teachers at one high school with a learner ratio of 1:40 in the district of Thaba-Tseka in Lesotho. This school has a history of overcrowded classes. All co-researchers are purposively selected in relation to the extent to which they were able to contribute towards the generation of the data pertaining to this study. Since the study is based on the CER theory, the team consisting of both teachers and learners provides a perfect basis to form a collaborative environment where people bring forward their views.

## **1.7 DATA ANALYSIS**

The generated data from the co-researchers was interpreted and recorded in order for the data analysis process to take place. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) was applied. CDA is concerned with studying and analysing written or spoken text and social cultures to reveal connections and relationships that may not be easily visible. Critical analysis also aims at producing explanations of areas of social life, identifying the causes of social wrongs and producing knowledge that helps correcting those wrongs (Van Dijk, 1993:251).

Applying this method to the study, all the text material and voice and video recordings gathered from the meeting with co-researchers were analysed, and the strategies for dealing with large classes formulated based on the underlying details of these materials. This technique helps to obtain insight into the problem of large classrooms and to understand its consequences from the perspectives of both the learners and the teachers. This understanding helps the study achieve its objectives and provide a meaningful contribution towards providing quality education (Fairclough, 1995:42).

## **1.8 VALUE OF RESEARCH**

The study intended to benefit the education system of Lesotho by strengthening the teaching methods teachers use when teaching second-language English language to large Grade 8 classes. It was envisaged that this would contribute towards active engagement with positive implications for learner participation in learning English as a second language.

## **1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Before engaging with the co-researchers, the researcher first obtained written permission from the Ministry of Education of Lesotho and obtained letters of consent from the parents of the learners involved in the study. The identities of the participants would remain confidential, as far as possible. Permission was also obtained from the Department of Education of the University of the Free State before carrying out the study. The nature and aims of the study were clearly described to the co-researchers and they were free to discontinue participation of the study at any time they wished to do so. The findings of the study would be made available to the public; however, the anonymity of the co-researchers would be maintained.

## **1.10 LAYOUT OF CHAPTERS**

The following is an outline of the chapters of the proposed study:

Chapter 1: This chapter presented the background research on the problem and stated the aims of the study.

Chapter 2: This chapter presents a detailed literature review on the problem and definitions of key concepts.

Chapter 3: This chapter reveals the research design and methods and will outline the ethical considerations of the study.

Chapter 4: This chapter outlines the data generated and provide an analysis and interpretation of the data generated.

Chapter 5: This final chapter provides the conclusions, recommendations and a general summary of the findings.



## **CHAPTER 2:**

# **THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study aims to strengthen the techniques that teachers can use in the teaching of English as second language (ESL) to large Grade 8 classes. The theoretical framework adopted is the Critical Emancipation Research (CER). In order to map and position this study, this chapter justifies why Critical Emancipation Research is the theory of choice and how it is to be used. The definitions, objectives as well as historical backgrounds of CER are presented.

Moreover, the principles of CER are discussed to enlighten the appropriateness of choosing CER as theoretical framework. They include open democracy, equal opportunities, empowerment and improved society. Critical Emancipation Research is declared fit to close the gaps that have been caused by a lack of humanity and the injustices of the past. The objectives include improving the underprivileged, to respect the rights and dignity of others, as well as treating people as equals, promote social justice, freedom, peace and hope. The epistemological, ontological and axiological stances of CER are presented, as well as the role of the researcher in relation to CER and the relationships of the researcher and the participants.

On the other hand, this chapter deals with the following, the review of related literature focusing mainly on the challenges of teaching second language English in a large classroom, the possible solutions to the presented challenges as well as possible threats presented by the solutions. This chapter further discusses how local and international scholars dealt with the same issues and investigate the best strategies to improve teaching of second language English in large classrooms.

## **2.2 CRITICAL EMANCIPATION RESEARCH AS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

CER advocates closeness between the researchers and co-researcher and stipulates that the research participants are not treated like sample objects; rather, they are respected, valued, and recognised as fellow humans by the researcher (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011:37). With CER, people are empowered, and everyone involved in the research can display their knowledge critically and creatively (Nkoane, 2013:394). CER looks for the social change, focuses on the freedom and ensures that power is distributed equally (Elizondo, Zaval, Alvarado, Suazo, 2013:424). McGehee (2012:85) also agrees that CER seeks ways to correct social imbalances, gives hope and empowers the marginalised.

According to Watson and Watson (2011:66), CER seeks to bring about changes which benefit those oppressed by power. It empowers individuals and considers social systems wherein inequality of power exists in relation to opportunities and control. CER has the impetus to minimise conflict and segregation and ensures effective communication (Dube & Hlalele, 2018:77). Swartz and Nyamnjoh (2018:3) advocate that CER aims to change current social and material relations. It acknowledges that need for change, because all human relationships involve an imbalance of power to some extent. The overarching goal of CER is to expose these power imbalances relations from a personal and social context.

### **2.2.1 Historical background of CER**

Critical Emancipation Research theory has its structural roots in several traditions such as the Marxist review of socioeconomic conditions and class structure, Haberman's idea of emancipatory knowledge and Freire's transformation and emancipatory pedagogy (Nkoane, 2013:99). This theory has got different aspects and distinct historical phases that span over different generations, from the start of the institute for social research in the years 1929–1930 which saw the arrival of the Frankfurt school of philosophers on the inaugural lecture by Horkheimer to the present (Mapotse, 2014:216).

The roots of CER lie in the critical theories and are mostly associated with the teachings of Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator (Johnson & Morris, 1999:79). Critical theory was initiated as a response to the failure of emancipatory movements. This defeat called for

a critical examination of all the existing concepts of this intellectual and political tradition and exploitative conditions. According to Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2011:97), CER gives hope to people, creates change to people, and frees individuals, communities and societies from oppression. Therefore, teachers who teach English as a second language in large classes benefit from this study, as they felt less oppressed by being given strategies to employ. Importantly so, McGehee (2012:88) believes that, since its inception the critical theory has grown to include such varied sub-set as post-colonialism, feminism, deconstructionism, cultural materialism, post-modernism and queer.

### **2.2.2 Justification for choice of CER**

CER as a theoretical framework is considered appropriate and relevant for this study as it is concerned with making difference in people's lives. Therefore, the researcher attempted to find strategies that could help teachers to best assist their learners in large classrooms, also to improve their skills in learning English as a second language. Lincoln *et al.* (2011:102) concur that CER creates changes to the benefit of those oppressed by poverty. According to Mahlomaholo (2012:12), CER enhances the realisation of all human potential and its goal is man's emancipation from slavery and working to happiness of all individuals. People who work together should all feel free from any form of oppression and most fully enjoy participation with other people regardless of status, race or gender. CER is a non-dominative, cooperative, participatory and democratic Campanella (2009:248-249). This shows that applying CER as a framework for strengthening strategies to help teachers of English as a second language in large classrooms motivated participants to air their views without intimidation. Therefore, the objectives of the study could be achieved as well.

### **2.2.3 Objectives of CER**

In this section, the objectives of CER are presented. The discussed objectives include humanisation, which makes it easy for the researcher and participants to work together and treat one another with the respect and dignity, as well as social emancipation, which encourages love and emancipation from any form of oppression amongst all those involved in the research. CER is also aimed at bringing about social justice and making sure that sharing of equal opportunities between the researcher and participants is put

into practice (Swartz & Nyamnjoh, 2018:3). Importantly, it is also aimed at empowering people, which helps to create peace and happiness while working with participants.

#### **2.2.3.1 *Humanisation***

According to Nouri and Sajjadi (2014:79), humanisation occurs if the following takes place: love, faith, trust, hope, dialogue. They further argue that it enables learners and teachers to build a highly conscious understanding of their relationship with their environment. It also enables learners and teachers to become subjects who are consciously aware of their living conditions as human beings. It was therefore important to use CER as a lens because I hold a view that participants should understand reality so that they are able to grow and become better citizens of their society who will interpret problems and analyse reality (Abrahams, 2005:7).

In addition, Nkoane (2012:100) mentions that people have placed labels to the material world in an attempt to make sense out of their environment. Therefore, this research, which is based on CER, assisted both the researcher and participants to view teaching and learning of English as a second language based on how they viewed reality. Mapotse (2015:216) argues that critical theory engages real-world challenges. In the context of this study, it engages the strengthening of new strategies that are applied by teachers to help learners acquire English as a second language in large classrooms. All participants are treated as unique humans in this study, which persuaded them to respond positively.

#### **2.2.3.2 *Social emancipation***

CER aims at emancipating people and society at large. Biesta (2010:43) points that emancipation is the central approach to solving some contemporary challenges in educational research. The researcher is concerned that the teachers of large classes are marginalised and therefore should be emancipated from the school setting and practices. According to Myer and Wodak (2011:27), the principle of emancipation states that the researcher should take a position that tackles issues related to the human conditions and practices in the domain under investigation. The use of CER benefits this study, because challenges that teachers face when teaching large classrooms are investigated.

Emancipation enables people to reach their full potential to a greater degree, by addressing the problems they face (Stahl, Tremblay & LeRouge, 2011:2). The choice of CER benefited my study, as both the researcher and participants worked harmoniously overcoming all sorts of conflict. Noel (2016:28) further maintains that factors such as domination, oppression and power imbalance are central to critical theory. CER helped to embrace contributions of all members of the research, whether a teacher, learner or parent. In this way, disadvantaged persons can become more aware of their own abilities and resources and persons with more expertise become more effective (Noel, 2016:27).

### **2.2.3.3 Empowerment**

According to Noel (2016:94), CER aims to empower the underprivileged persons. Therefore, the use of the CER in this study helped the researcher to shift power to all members of the team. It allowed me to share with the participants equally, not as a boss but as a leader in our meetings and discussions. Nouri and Sajjadi (2013:79) maintain that it is an empowering process that enables citizens to select and transform their world. Against such a background, CER was the theory of choice. In addition, Watson and Watson (2011:66) believe that critical researchers can be best understood within the context of empowerment, they are always looking to empower transform society and their policies and processes in order to address issues of oppression and social injustice. Guided by CER I believe that in order for learners to be active, a teacher should be able to include them in his teaching and allow them to share their views. Nkoane (2012:102) points out that in CER, the interactions of a researcher and the participants are relaxed since the researcher and the participants become one by getting rid of power relations. For example, in a classroom, both the teacher and learner should participate.

### **2.2.3.4 Social justice and equality**

According to Nkoane (2013:4), there are two elements central to CER, namely a concern for human happiness and freedom attained via transformation and social justice. Therefore, CER enabled me to create changes whereby the participants were able to air their views without any fear or prejudice, whereas they were voiceless in the past. Teaching English as a second language requires not only of teachers and learners to be involved but parental engagement is also needed, as parents are the first educators of

their children. Therefore, it was necessary to involve them in this study in a fair and just manner. Noel (2016:3) maintains that CER is concerned with how injustice and oppression shape up people's life experiences.

CER was, therefore, the theory of choice to lead my study because, in my opinion, people should be treated with dignity and equality. Importantly so, this objective helped the participants to work harmoniously with one another without any discrimination because individuals are treated with dignity regardless of his or her class race or location. Mahlomaholo (2009:266) states that CER interprets the agenda for equality in all its forms, advocating for peace, freedom, hope and social justice. The teaching of large classes is considered by many teachers as unjust and oppressing. CER is important, because it provides a much-needed pedagogical change in the word of injustice society (Nkoane, 2010:112-113). Ryan (2007:260) stipulates that free people shape their lives in accordance with laws they set out for themselves and they should be in a position to determine the condition of their own existence in relation their own rationally acquired self-understanding.

#### **2.2.4 The principles of CER**

This section discusses the principles of CER. The discussed principles include democracy, active participation, critical consciousness and social justice. All these principles assisted me in treating the participants equally and with dignity. They helped me to realise that power is not vested in me alone but should be shared equally among the participants. The participants are also helped by the principle of participation when they realise that their full and active participation is necessary throughout all the research.

##### **2.2.4.1 Democracy**

CER, on the other hand, focuses on establishing a fair and a democratic society. Nuri (2016:78) states that education is political and therefore teachers and learners should strive to become intellectuals or cultured workers capable affecting transformation addressing injustices, inequalities and myths of an often oppressing world. In this research, I found CER an appropriate lens because as a researcher I created a democratic world where all the participants share their skills and knowledge without fear;

everyone's opinion is open for discussion. Participants learned to listen to one another effectively.

CER maps my study, because in a democracy, people are collectively respected (Killen, 2010:157). Grade 8 learners who learn English as a second language have long been oppressed, because they were not paid full attention to whether they learned effectively or not. Therefore, the suggested strategies could help teachers and learners collectively. Using CER as a lens that positions my study, I helped people to realise that learning English could help them to have good communication skills whereby they can communicate freely without any cultural background bias. Learners might be able to come up with suitable solutions for the challenges encountered by the teaching and learning of English in large classrooms without fear. They are also stakeholders, as democracy promotes expertise and active involvement in the society. Furthermore, all members of the school community need to think freely and critically about how to strengthen strategies that could help teachers to teach English as a second language. For example, the participants must feel free to discuss the issue with other stakeholders such as the principal.

#### **2.2.4.2 Active participation**

According to Brodie *et al.* (2009:6), participation does not happen in a vacuum; rather, it is influenced by a range of societal and contextual factors such as willingness and love for others. Choosing CER as a lens suited my study because as a researcher, I fully engaged in activities that assisted the participants to take part willingly. As a result, our knowledge would increase as we learned from one another. Participation allows to work together as a group, express their ideas and make decisions as a unit. It also allows learners to act democratically and allow freedom of expression, respect for minorities and opinions, and tolerate diversity (Killen, 2010:155). Against this background, I helped the participants to realise their ideas were valuable; therefore, increased their self-esteem as they could realise they could rely on themselves. In essence, that could also promote their sense of responsibility and help them to explore. Learners could be able to use information to find solutions towards the challenges of teaching English as a second language for themselves.

Killen (2010:154) posits that if one wants learners to participate in learning one has to tell them what is expected of them as well as telling them the goals of teaching and learning.

CER draws the attention for active participation. Therefore, participants were informed of the rationale for their participation. We discussed together what is expected of them as well as the aim of the study. All would free to participate, to ask questions and give solutions that teachers face as they teach English to large classes. Both the researcher and the participants participated towards problem solving to enhance effective and quality learning by teachers in future.

#### **2.2.4.3 Critical consciousness**

The participants were encouraged to value the study as their own so that they could be able to solve problems they encounter critically and be involved in activities that help them attain their own freedom. For instance, they were involved in activities that enabled them to be taught English as a second language instead of complaining that it was not their mother tongue. They were able to critique all the stakeholders of education that teachers should be able to assist in maintaining teaching large classes. Killen (2010:104) maintains that critical consciousness enhances creative thinking, helps people to determine problems, and apply strategic thinking to attain a clear understanding of the world as a set of related entities and resolve their problems. When people have critical consciousness in mind, they are able to address their own problems with a clear understanding of why it occurred.

Critical consciousness helped stakeholders in education to solve problems brought about by teaching English in large Grade 8 classes. They were able to interpret the strategies applied by teachers. Johansson and Hildhult (2014:98) emphasise that critical conscious promotes listening to others and changing people's minds, rather than actions. Also, it focuses on reflective activity in order to develop, validate and articulate knowledge knowledge. With the use of CER, both the researcher and participants listened to one another during the discussion with the aim of helping and making one another to fully understand and take part. Myers and Klein (2011:23) urge that critique builds upon insight and relates to the conditions of power.



### **2.2.5 Epistemological Stance of CER**

According to Browaeys (2004:2), epistemology is concerned with the thought processes, intelligence, knowledge, perception, consciousness, imagination, and the sensations. Likewise, MacNulty (2013:530) views epistemology as the study of the nature and grounds of knowledge with regard to its methods, scope and justification of a set of beliefs and opinions – the theory of knowledge.

As far as CER is concerned, knowledge is subjective. Therefore, there is a need to involve many people in the study in order to get different opinions, emotions and feelings were regarded important. More importantly, the learners' sense of responsibility was to be promoted, which helped them to learn others' strengths and limitations. CER aims at emancipating stakeholders, liberating people and shaping their lives in accordance with laws they prescribe for themselves (Ryan, 2007:260). Subsequently, I believe that as this study is guided by CER, the participants must come up with strategies to help teachers of English as a second language to large Grade 8 classes.

### **2.2.6 Ontological stance of CER**

On the other hand, ontology is the study of beings; that is, the nature of existence and what constitutes reality (Gray, 2013:19). According to Guba and Lincoln (1994:110), the ontological position of the critical paradigm is historical realism. This means that reality is shaped by social issues, political conditions, culture, economic status, ethnicity and gender influences. With this in mind, I noted that the stakeholders need to hold the view that education is not static and therefore teachers must become agents of change, as education is influenced by many factors. Mapotse (2015:2010) argues that education broadens learners' views of reality and in the emancipatory approach the goal of teaching and learning is to affect change in the way both learners and their teachers perceive their world. Based on this argument, I believe that CER is relevant to my study, because it involves the stakeholders' participation in order to bring about change to understanding reality.

Teaching and learning of English as a second language in large classes can best be improved or changed through continuous communication among the stakeholders or when they view reality positively. Nkoane (2012:100) maintains that language and how

we communicate are tools that shape our perceptions of the environment around us and how others view us as individuals. CER calls for dialogue to take place between equals (Brooke, 2002:50).

### **2.2.7 Axiological Stance of CER**

The word *axiology* originates from two Greek roots, *axios* and *logos* – *axios* means worth or value, and *logos* means ‘logic’ or ‘theory’. It represents an attempt to bring together and critically investigate a wide range of already existing and overlapping issues which are related to the essence of doing good, applying the right conduct, value and obligation (Biedenbach & Jacobsson, 2016:140). All researchers add different values to a study, but qualitative researchers make their values known in a study (Creswell, 2013:1). This study is guided by CER, which requires that the researcher assumes a value stance that potentially takes issues with some of the human conditions or practices in the domain under investigation (Myers & Klein, 2011:27). The approach of CER benefits my study, as I worked with the participants to find out and understand their values with regard to the teaching of English in large classes.

Axiology enables teachers to value and educate learners by developing their rational, critical thinking, their emotions, and to activate their imagination, to strengthen their will and train the learners’ characters (Chaturvedi, 2014:20). English language teachers benefited from this study as they were able to teach learners effectively when they clearly knew what they valued as important. According to Watson and Watson (2011:70), emancipation values are more important when social systems with lack of equality of in relation to opportunities are put into consideration.

Chaturvedi (2014:19) posits that due to deterioration and deviation from a value system, axiological competence in human beings, especially teachers, is needed, because a teacher is an organiser of ideas and themes. In this study, the learners’ ideas were taken in great consideration and respected, as they are the ones affected by the learning process in large classes. Also, Dube and Hlalele (2018:79) maintain that one-on-one discussions with learners should be handled with respect and justice, instead of than negativity and prejudice. Teachers who value their learners could help them to become

citizens who understood democracy. In the light of this, CER brings about social transformation and empowers those who are oppressed.

It is believed that knowledge that is produced can change existing oppressive structures and remove oppression through empowerment (Watson & Watson 2011:68). As the researcher, I worked harmoniously with the participants to come up with suitable solutions for teaching and learning in large classes, as CER concentrates on the identification and removal of manifested injustices (Heusinger, 2013:1). Dube and Hlalele (2018:79) allude that once learners experience that they are well treated with respect as people with opinions and rights in the school, their aggression will be reduced and mutual understanding about educational issues will be elevated. This is made possible only when the teachers and learners' values are known and respected.

### **2.2.8 The role and relationship of the researcher and participants**

In CER, the researcher is willing to work with all the participants without any prejudices. The researcher is concerned with human beings' happiness and freedom, since it encourages equality among stakeholders (Mahlomaholo & Nkoane, 2002:5). Therefore, in this study, the researcher and the participants worked hand in hand as partners. The researcher did not appear as the know-all individual; rather, the general data were reached collaboratively. The researcher was not superior to the participants, but she worked as a team with them to come up with solutions, and to respond to the problems by teaching in large classrooms. Nkoane (2013:4) confirms that there are two elements central to CER, namely concerns for human happiness and freedom attained through transformative and social justice. Therefore, the researcher worked happily with the participants for the betterment of strengthening strategies for teachers in order to teach second language in large classes, consequently improving teaching and learning.

When learners' performance is good, the whole community rejoices. This conforms to CER, which entails that through transformation of social justice the voiceless now have a platform to air their views about matters that affect them, in other words, parents were involved in the education of their children. According to Behar-Horenstein and Feng (2015:50), engaging family and community in studies of learner education can lead to building capacity and learner agency. Mutual relationships between teachers and parents

are more beneficial to learners' behaviour than any party trying to deal with it alone (Swat & Phash, 2005:92). Furthermore, I tried hard to create an environment which connotes mutual trust and care.

## **2.3 DEFINITIONS OF OPERATIONAL CONCEPTS**

The previous section presented an overview of the theoretical framework for the study. This section defines the operational concepts of the study. The explained concepts are large classes, second language, strengthening and strategies.

### **2.3.1 Large classes**

There is no accepted single definition of a large class; in different backgrounds and cultures, people have different perspectives of what qualifies as a large class. However, empirical studies in this area define class size in terms of the teacher-learner ratio. According to Qiang and Ning (2011:11), a large class is classified as one in which the number of learners is greater than what the teacher would prefer to manage and larger than what the available resources can support.

A large class is defined by Hornsby *et al.* (2013:8) as an environment where the quality of learners' learning experience is impacted negatively by the large number of learners in the class. On the one hand, Westphalen (2013:3) posits that large class is one in which a teacher cannot make individual eye contact with each and every learner in the room for a standard 50 minutes period.

For example, in the United States of America and the United Kingdom, a class of about 25 to 30 pupils is regarded as a large class while it is a norm to have about 50 learners in a classroom on most developing African countries. To underpin this difference in perspectives, a study conducted by (Hornsby & Osman, 2014:13) on schools in the Ciskei in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa reveals that teachers perceive classrooms with 50 to 100 learners as large.

From the above discussion, it is clear that there is no single definition of a large classroom, for the purpose of this study we will adopt Kerr (2001) revelation that a teacher-to-learner

ratio of 1:43 is the norm in schools in African countries, also endorsed by Xu, who defined a large class as one with an average of 50 to 60 learners or more.

### **2.3.2 English as a Second Language**

Maduabuchi and Emechebe (2016:20) defines English as a second language as a term which refers to use and study of the English language by non-native speakers. Second language learning is the process by which learners learn a second language in addition to their first language. When learning English as a second language, new knowledge and language forms are presented to the learners in the form of language rules and grammar (Davies, 2002:1). English is a global language; learning it improves the individuals' status and opportunities in education, technology, global trades and business. It is a channel of communication (Derakhan & Shirmohammdi, 2015:103). English is generally acknowledged as a global language which is highly preferred over several other languages around the globe. It is such a veritable tool for learning, business and interactional purposes.

## **2.4 CHALLENGES OF TEACHING SECOND LANGUAGE ENGLISH IN LARGE GRADE 8 CLASSES**

This section presents the challenges of teaching the second language English in large Grade 8 classes. The challenges to be discussed include learner-teacher interaction, curriculum (English) limited assessment, lack of supportive engagement, curriculum and lack of parental engagement. These challenges have influenced the quality of language learning as well as learning outcomes in foreign language learning (Hadi & Arante, 2015:1).

### **2.4.1 Learner-Teacher Interaction**

According to Ekembe (2014:239), interaction involves learners engaging in a communicative act with the aim of understanding what is presented to them in order to come up with a positive contribution. However, in large classes it is not easy for a teacher

to interact with all learners at the same time. Harfit (2013:338) stipulates that in large classes, teaching is more teacher-centred while learners are provided with everything, which means they are relatively passive.

In a study conducted by Harfit (2013:338), one teacher concludes with honesty that he does not know his learners well; all he does is to teach them, and they work without any close relationship. He adds that in a large class, he sometimes does not know the learners' names, which makes a large class virtually impossible. In the same manner, Kerr (2011:10) postulates some disadvantages of large classes are that there are limited opportunities for the teacher to get to know learners better, and learners cannot form relationships with their peers. As a result of this, learners are more inclined to just take a passive role in learning, not taking ownership and responsibility for their own learning and more likely to be distracted.

Similarly, Sanga (2016:9) asserts that a large class brings challenges to both teachers and learners in the process of teaching and learning. For example, it is not easy for teachers to make direct eye contact with learners sitting at the back of the classroom. Also, it is not easy for learners to get the individual attention and it is impossible to come up with creative teaching and learning sessions. It is also not easy for teachers to get learners' participation as well as ensuring their attention when the class is large (Mgeni, 2013:116). Bahanshal (2013:49) observed that teaching of English in a large class creates an environment where teachers just spoon feeding information to learners and presenting the material through a lesson based format.

### **2.4.2 Curriculum (English)**

According to Nuri (2015), curriculum indicates the skills and knowledge learners are expected to attain in English and the content which instructors need to address. In English, this involves stating the experience learners should have with respect to language use, usage of grammar and literacy text. However, it becomes problematic for both learners and teachers to achieve this when classes are large. Nuri (2015) further indicates that there are other situations where one will have access to contextual information, a core responsibility and a choice for deciding what learners need to be taught and how to approach the teaching process.

Curriculum is defined by Wiles, Bondi and Sowell (2002:31) as a planned and guided learning process with clear goals, generated through the systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experience under the direct control of the school. It is not only concerned with what learners do in the learning situation, but also with what they learn from the mistakes they make, which means it is mainly concerned with the end results. Curriculum is an aggregate of courses of study offered at a school, college or university. It connects the academic and practical creation of knowledge about the curriculum itself (Hewitt, 2006:4).

A curriculum comprises of an overview of how to teach the topic in hand, stating the required outcomes, the main learning activities and assessments which will be taken out, and the available teaching resources. The integrated English curriculum in Lesotho poses a major challenge to both learners and teachers since there is too much content to cover within a very limited time. The seating arrangement as expected by the integrated curriculum is not possible in large classes because there is not enough space for the teacher to interact with the learners.

According to Schussler (2009:116), teachers can be more successful by providing flexibility through a curriculum that is learner driven rather than curriculum driven. She further maintains that curriculum flexibility means being aware and noting o ways in which students react to the material being taught and being responsive to the learners' requirements. The integrated curriculum poses a huge challenge to teachers and learners, because there are no teaching resources and or materials to be used along with the curriculum. This makes it hard to undertake effective teaching and learning. Also,

parents do not buy books for their children; as a result, teachers do not achieve the objective of dealing with a certain learning concept within a given time.

### **2.4.3 Limited assessment**

According to Kerr (2011:14), high learner numbers in classes limits the number of assessments handed out to them. Specific issues identified include an excessive marking load, providing timely informative feedback, maintaining high quality and consistency assessing higher order thinking from the learners. This is also observed by Wolacatt, Booth, and Cameroon (2014:750), who stipulate that large classes limit the number of assessment teachers can give to learners. This brings about challenges such as difficulties in handing out relevant assessments, handling plagiarism and maintaining high marking quality.

O'Connor and Geiger (2007:260) also argue that a large number of learners in English as a second language class increases the workload in some teaching areas such as marking and preparing the learning content, often leaving teachers feeling overwhelmed and frustrated. Similarly, teachers with large classes will not be able to mark and set proper tests, resulting in piles of unmarked exercise books, which will hamper learners' immediate feedback (Mupa, Chabaya & Chiome, 2011:45).

Moreover, there are also challenges in assigning speaking, reading, writing and communicative tasks (Sanga, 2016:19). According to Ekembe (2014:239), the value of feedback plays an important role as it provides insight on the accuracy and success of the material presented to the learners. He further maintains that initially learners will show lack of key linguistic context; therefore, feedback can create an opportunity to discover shortcomings between their utterances and target language norms. In the light of this, Harfitt (2012:240) posits that in large classes, learners struggle with oral English because they are nervous about speaking, which makes assessment difficult. Large classes lead to poor learner performance in academic tests (Cho, Glewwe & Whitler, 2012:79).

Furthermore, O'Connor and Geiger (2009:259) maintain that learners who study in English as a second language often do not do well academically, as a result of being deprived the opportunity of learning in their mother tongue language. Therefore, educators need to know the differences between general learning challenges and



language related academic challenges in order for learners to be successful. Again, Sanyangula (2016:8) opines that difficulties in providing meaningful feedback to learners in large classes is one of many diverse effects on learning in large classes, particularly in English classes. In a large English class, speaking and listening skills are not well tested, which leads to poor quality of the learners' oral and aural skills (Fareh, 2010:3603).

#### **2.4.4 Lack of supportive engagement**

Engaging learners in a classroom is not easy; failure to do it results in disorderly classroom. A study conducted in China discovered that a number of difficulties which are encountered by English teachers such as disciplining learners, and providing equal opportunities for all learners to participate in class (Hadi & Arande, 2015:2). Discipline should be regarded as a learning process and not as punishment. It should be used as a means for continuously shaping up the minds of the learners with a view of attaining quality learning and teaching experience (Oosthuizen, 2010:57).

According to Chen and Cheng (2010:42), handling the ill-disciplined learners is the most challenging factor in teaching and learning. Learners present challenging behaviour because they come to the classroom from a variety of backgrounds, some supportive of school, others not (Nuri, 2014). Importantly so, Sanga (2016:20) postulates that a large class offers nothing but creating the difficulty of cheating learners, restriction of the teacher's movement around the class and the adequate participation in the lesson by learners sitting at the back. However, teachers must make sure that they offer supportive engagement and set up guidelines which are designed to support the concept of consequences for inappropriate conduct instead of punishment (Dunbar, 2004:3).

Bahanshal (2013:50) observes that if a learner misbehaves and starts distracting the whole class, the teacher has to step up and attend problems and reclaim control of the class. Such behaviour could potentially block the learning of other students; hence teachers need to react quickly. Supportive engagement requires teachers to take actions and establish techniques which will create a learning environment which sustains active engagement in academic and emotional learning (Egeberg, McConney & Price, 2016:6). Teachers burdened with paperwork, misbehavior issues and everyday classroom

management will not get enough time to dedicate to cover crucial school skills such as phonics instruction or sentences construction (Albon, Iqbal, & Pearson, 2017:215).

#### **2.4.5 Lack of parental engagement**

According to Ntekane (2018:1), parental engagement refers to a situation where parents are consistently and directly taking part in the education of their children. They avail themselves and are involved by the school and teachers in the learning activities of their children. They fulfil their duties as parents by ensuring that the learner is provided with the necessary help in the process of learning. With this in mind, lack of parental engagement poses a great challenge.

Parents, family and community reinforcement correlates with higher academic performance and school improvement. Whenever schools and parents work together to support learning, learners tend to excel academically, attend school regularly, remain in school longer until they enrol in higher-level institutions (Van Roekel 2008:1). Parental involvement in education for learners begins at home, parents need to provide safe and healthy environments, which are appropriate for learning (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017:140).

In this study, the participants comprised parents who acknowledge the conditions conducive to developing strategies for strengthening the studying of English as a second language in large Grade 8 classrooms. This is supported by Đurišić & Bunijevac (2017:140), who state that parenting involves all activities that parents undertake in order to raise happy and healthy children who have the potential of becoming excellent learners. Parents may seek information about the progress of their children from the school principal or teachers. Parents gain more confidence in their role as guardians and take more ownership with decision making, as well as having more effective and productive communication with other parents at school (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017:140). Teachers will know learners better when they communicate with their parents. They will have a deeper understanding of the family background of their learners.

According to Khan (1996:59), a number of studies show that parental engagement in education has several positive effects on learner achievement and discipline. In contrast lack of parental engagement has a negative effect on achievement and discipline. Parents who are involved in the education of their children monitor the progress of their children,

help with homework and encourage their children to read and write in English. Gordon (2015:18) alludes that language is a natural phenomenon learned in a home environment at very early childhood stages. Cotton and Wikelund (1989:6) posit that parental engagement is effective in encouraging achievement as well as productive gains at all levels. When parents actively get involved in school related activities such as school meetings, they will learn more about the teachers who take over from where they have left. Learners whose parents are regularly involved are always active and ready to learn, they become more punctual and take ownership of their own learning (Ntekane, 2018:2).

## **2.5 POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING IN A LARGE GRADE 8 CLASS**

In this section, possible solutions to the challenges discussed in the previous section are presented. These solutions are centred around learner-teacher interaction, the English curriculum, supportive engagement, and parental engagement.

### **2.5.1 Possible solutions towards la ack of learner-teacher interaction**

In order to respond to the lack of learner-teacher interaction, more learner-centred approaches like the following proved useful in large classes.

#### **2.5.1.1 *Blended learning***

Brooke (2017:1) defines blended learning as an teaching methodology that takes advantage of technology to offer a more personalised approach to learning. It gives learners the control the time, place, and pace at which they are willing to learn. According to Bryan and Volchenkova (2016), blended learning is a variety of strategies which enable learners to learn part of the material using online resources, with a total control over the time, place, path, or pace of their learning.

However, Loschert *et al.* (2018:1) make the point clear by indicating that blended learning is very different from a simple technology-rich instruction setup where teachers make use of devices to support traditional teaching with learners just using their devices to complete

the same work at the same time, and from the same place. It also involves more than simply arranging some online instructional content, something that will require more preparation and skill from the side of the English teacher.

One advantage of blended learning, as Volchenkova (2018:26) states, is that it has the potential to accommodate different learning styles. This would help Grade 8 learners with several techniques of learning English. When considering the fact that some learners are shy, Volchenkova (2018:26) emphasises that another advantage of online discussions is that it allows the shy members of a group to be more willing to participate in the discussions.

As Lalima and Dangwal (2017:135) indicate, blended learning provides a variety of experiences to the learners, makes them active, more disciplined and more focused on the learning process due to an increase in engagement and being in charge of their learning. This strategy in turn motivates Grade 8 learners who study second language English to improve their performance. Blended learning provides learners with more up to date and quality education by using dynamic resources, and thus, learning becomes more purposeful (Lalima & Dangwal, 2017:134).

#### **2.5.1.2 *Flipped classroom***

According to Ozdamli and Asiksoy (2016:99), a flipped classroom approach can simply be expressed as “what is done at school is done at home, homework done at home is completed in class”. In a flipped class, a direct instruction, which may be in the form of a lecture is delivered via videos that teachers create and that video is equivalent to homework in a traditional class where learners are sent home to use what they have learned to complete the assignment without any extra help; hence, they often struggle with some tasks and cannot complete the assigned work.

Ozdamli and Asiksoy (2016:99) argue that during the lesson learners achieve supporting activities such as finding answers to the question together as a group, problem solving, discussion and making inferences. This helps in ensuring that the learning responsibilities do not lie on the teacher alone, but students too are accountable for their own learning (Bergmann & Sams, 2014:24). A flipped class promotes social interaction by increased

group activities, peer interaction and personal contact time with the teacher. It highlights learner-centred learning (Bryan and Volchenkova (2016).

The term *flipped classroom* was coined by Sams and Bergmann (2012:2). They argue that learners prefer their teachers to provide them with a question and answers more than the traditional teacher presentation and a review of content. Jensen, Howard, and Jensen (2015) points out that studies show that learners attending flipped classes were more satisfied with the learning environment and enjoyed learning at their own pace. Learners demonstrate higher exam grades compared to learners learning by means of traditional methods. In flipped classes, classroom time is reserved for meaningful collaborative projects, activities like problem solving, and group discussions (Luo *et al.*, 2018:821).

Flipped classrooms lead to an efficient use of classroom time with more active learner participation (Blair, Mahara & Primus, 2015:1470). They also present an opportunity for more learner-teacher interaction, with learners playing a more active role in their learning. These active roles can lead to learners becoming more motivated to see through their learning progress without much supervision from their teachers and parents. Flipped classrooms cater for diversity amongst the learners and allow them to learn the content at their own pace (Du, Fu & Wang, 2014:17).

### **2.5.1.3 Group or pair work**

Group work and participation play an important role, since they maximise learner participation. They promote cooperative learning activities that help learners in large classes to be fully engaged in the teaching and learning process. In these groups learners will have opportunities to work and solve problems together – a process called collaboration (Nguyen, 2015:78). According to Le (2002:9), collaboration helps learners to work together, with more advanced learners helping weaker learners as their contribution to the lesson. In this regard, everybody has a chance to talk, which gives the teacher a chance to know and interact better with the learners. Dividing the class into smaller groups and involving them in tasks relevant to their needs encourages a competitive setting with no disturbance in class (Bahanshal, 2013:56).

## **2.5.2 Possible solutions for problems with the English curriculum**

In order to come up with a solution towards problems embedded in the curriculum, the following has been cited as the best possible solution.

### **2.5.2.1 Curriculum decentralisation**

According to Brewster and Bowen (2004:50), decentralisation is an extent to which activities have been passed down to the individual school as opposed to centralization which refers to a scenario whereby the administrative authority for education lies not only in the local community but in a single central body. The decentralization of the curriculum means that the stakeholders, teachers, be trained and oriented before implementation of the integrated curriculum. The term *integrated* refers to the holistic view and treatment of issues related to intelligence, maturity, personal and economic development of the nations, as opposed to the compartmentalised subject-based form of teaching (Raselimo & Mahao, 2015:6). Lack of training in the implementation of the Lesotho integrated curriculum has resulted in a negative effect on the effectiveness of teachers in classes (Khokanyan'a, 2015:5).

The curriculum document defines the level of learner-centred approach expected, as the focus in pedagogy has shifted more on teaching and learning where students are expected to take a more responsible approach to their learning processes and thus should be able to identify and solve problems by themselves and critique their own solutions (Ministry of Education and Training [MOET], 2009:22).

### **2.5.3 Possible solutions towards limited assessment**

In order to respond to the challenge of assessment several attempts were made.

#### **2.5.3.1 *Continuous assessment***

In Lesotho the curriculum and assessment policy has implemented continuous assessment, which contributes to the final assessment of learners in all learning areas. According to Raselimo and Mahao (2015:9), the implementation of continuous assessment in Lesotho is likely to foster change in the quality of the teaching and learning process through the adoption of instructional processes that meet the requirements of individual students and increase parental engagement. Continuous assessment presents an opportunity for teachers to assess and give feedback to learners.

Teaching a foreign language, especially English, is the way of learning by means of which we gain skills and elements like vocabulary. Teachers have a great responsibility to use various strategies for teaching vocabulary (Mengistie, 2019:24). In California, for assessment to carry high instructional value, the content that is assessed should be in alignment with the main learning objectives of the curriculum. The assessment task should represent the type of skills and knowledge the learners are expected to obtain; teachers should be in a position to interpret the results and make a connection between the learners' world, assessment results and their teaching methods. Learners, their parents and the community should clearly perceive the level of performance learners are expected to reach (Ball, 2005:41).

Singer-Freeman and Bustone (2016:18) posit that teachers should encourage effort; when returning the assessment feedback, teachers should describe the efforts of learners for them to improve on their performance. The notion of "good performance" shows that a teacher is aware of the learners' progress. Learners appreciate it when a teacher communicates openly with the whole class. It encourages learner participation, dialogue and better performance (Brooke, 2017).

#### **2.5.3.2 *Team teaching and peer feedback***

Team teaching provides an enabling environment for teachers and learners to assess their progress (Hattie, & Timperly, 2007:100). Teachers of large English classes can apply

the team teaching method, by inviting their colleagues to assist them in grading students and providing prompt feedback much easily. This serves as motivation for the learners and mparents. Teachers, on the other hand, will benefit because they will be able to work with individual learners and see how they progress, since their learning abilities differ. Correcting many papers means that specific feedback is likely to be limited (Ahea, 2016:40). Teachers work collaboratively can ease marking.

Hatties and Timperly (2012:25) advocate that teachers must engage learners in peer feedback, getting them to mark or comment on one another might reduce the marking burden for teachers. On the other hand, it must encourage learners to take greater responsibility for their own learning. They further argue that learners could share work and use the assessment criteria to provide feedback on each other. The work of a teacher in this regard would be to visit different groups and give suggestions and comments.

#### **2.5.4 Possible Solution towards lack of Supportive Engagement**

Possible solutions have been suggested by many institutions and schools in response to the challenges brought about by poor classroom discipline and management due to insufficient supportive engagement.

##### **2.5.4.1 *Teacher support***

Providing a socially supportive and caring school environment enables learners to develop a more positive attitude towards their school work and activities. They can attain a sense of belonging at school because they can freely express their views and count on teachers for support with any problem they face (Holcombe & Wang, 2010:4). According to Egeberg and McConney (2016:4), there are varying factors which influence the behaviour of learners, ranging from internal states and beliefs about the self, to external factors such as the teachers' instructional capacity, peers and family aspects. Disruptions may be an attempt to communicate to the teacher that a learner does not understand the directions, or that the assignment presents problems for them, for which the teacher may be required to step in and provide assistance (Dunbar, 2004:6). Therefore, teachers must advocate positive relationships with learners and encompass the idea that as teachers they must "earn respect rather than deserve it". Teachers must place learners at the centre of learning, focusing on all aspects of the child; their social, emotional and academic requirements (Egeberg, McConney & Price, 2016:8).



When learners are aware that the teachers treat them with respect and dignity, they become better participants in a class free of bad behaviour. A teacher has to prepare the classroom with a clear structure and set of expectations and communicate those to the learners (Hanover research, 2010:7). Chuku, Demewoz, Negash and Shamim (2007:27) postulate that, at the start of the course, the teacher should establish with the class a set of rules of participation that emphasise respect for other learners and value making mistakes as part of the learning process. When teachers create a positive learning environment, all learners will feel they are part of teaching and learning and will increase their involvement in classroom activities.

According to Carbone and Steven (2011:38), another solution towards classroom discipline could be for a teacher to make the class so interesting and challenging that learners want to be there and pay attention. To do this, a teacher can use a number of devices to spice up the class; use visuals, stories, personal references, guest speakers, active learning and even music that relate to the class material. Furthermore, Kumar (2011:276) maintains that deviation from normal behaviour in a class can often be treated with a little bit of tact, rather than being a strict disciplinarian.

Goldstein (2017:485) maintains that language lessons can also be viewed as social events which are based on real social relationships with real social interaction. He further observes that diversity and complexity are the core elements of teaching and learning a second language. With this in mind, good relationships between learners and teachers will assist them to understand that all are different and must be treated as equals. In this way, learners' good behaviour will be the result. In Saudi Arabia, teachers are encouraged to consider the course objectives, the characteristics of their learners and their teaching methods. According to Bahanshal (2013:52), it is not the size of the class that affects the learning process, but the teachers' quality and teaching methods that mostly counts.

#### **2.5.4.2 Parental and community support**

Wang and Eccles (2012:877) argue that when parents, peers and teachers show support to learners, they can achieve positive academic outcomes and avoid negative psychological outcomes. Increased teacher social support also leads to an increase to learners liking school and improves learner achievement outcomes. On the other hand,

Garcia-Reid (2007:169) posit the view that learners perceive their family and friends as their main source of social support. Also, positive peer groups are also an important factor in the lives of learners.

Brewster and Bowen (2004:50) define parental support as the degree to which parents get involved in the academic activities of their children. Parental support has received a lot of attention in studies on school engagement and academic achievement. Therefore, a supportive parent-child relationship characterised by parent-child communication, parental concern and connectedness has been linked to a reduction in students' misbehaviour and an increase in pro-social cognition (Garcia-Reid 2007:168).

## **2.5.5 Possible solutions towards lack of parental engagement**

### **2.5.5.1 *Active parental engagement***

Active parental engagement is cited as one of the solutions towards lack of parental engagement in the education of their children. According to Van Roekel (2008:1), there is a clear correlation between parental, family and community involvement in education activities and better academic excellence and school improvement. When parents are part of their children's education, learners attend lessons more on regular basis because they tend to be more respectful towards parents than their teachers. Parents need a certain level of knowledge concerning the aims of the education system in which their child is involved to understand and assist the child's progress properly (Ball, 2005:42). In this regard, it is the responsibility of the school administrators to equip parents with the desired knowledge and information for them to be familiar with school matters so that they get actively involved.

According to Sibanda (2015), parents like to be engaged in their children's schooling when they perceive that their engagement is welcomed and desired. Parents who visit the school often to talk to teachers about the daily attendance of their children will understand better how the school operates. It is the right of the parent to know how the school operates; they must know the records of their children. Cotton and Wikelund (1989:56-65) show that educators often state the critical role of a stable and supportive home environment in driving learners' academic success and it appears that the earlier this influence is developed, the greater the chances of the learner being more successful. Khan (1996:60) categorises parental engagement in five types: 1) Parents acting as

recipients and supporters; 2) Parents playing the roles of educators and learners; 3) Parents being involved as non-instructional volunteers; 4) Parents as instructional volunteers; and 5) Parents as key decision makers.

All these reasons emphasise the importance of parents playing an active part in their children's education activities and maintaining good and strong relationships with schools (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017:139). Parental engagement is defined as the dynamic process that brings both parents and educators to work together to the benefit of the learners (Lemmer, Meier & Van Wyk, 2012:103). It assists both the teachers and the parents to work hand in hand in relation to the growth and development of the child and the school in general. Parents who support their children homework and those who read and encourage their children to speak English, even at home, increase good performance of their children, as opposed to those parents who do not motivate their children at all.

## **2.6 THREATS TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIES IN TEACHING OF ENGLISH LAUNGUAGE IN LARGE GRADE 8 CLASSROOMS**

### **2.6.1 Threats to lack of learner-teacher interaction**

#### **2.6.1.1 *Threats to flipped classes: lack of teacher preparedness***

The obstacles that block the use of the flipped classroom method are expressed as learners' lack of equipment such as smartphones, tablets or computers and lack of internet connection access (Ozdamli and Asiksoy 2016:104). Whereas the biggest disadvantage from the teachers' side is not preparing or broadcasting lecture videos but preparing within class activities and integrating them to flipped classroom approach. They add that this strategy increases the duty of teachers instead of making life easier for them. Similarly, Blair *et al.* (2015:3) agree that teachers have no significant time to prepare videos and if the video quality is poor, learners may not understand the video content nor be prepared for it.

#### **2.6.1.2 *Threats of blended learning: lack of technology***

Blended learning has been fiercely criticised because of its largely non-directional nature and inefficiency (Volchenkova, 2018:37). Brooke (2017:6) advocates that if a blended learning approach is set up to help each learner improve their academic performance, the technology tools used must record learners' progress. However, unfortunately learners' progression paths are not handled separately from session to session and teachers cannot monitor learner progress individually. This would require teachers who are technology savvy to manipulate the applications used for assessment and monitoring. Brooke (2017:7) adds that this kind of detailed insight into each learner's strengths and weaknesses provides a wealth of information and is of tremendous benefit to the learner. Teachers still face the task of analysing and making sense out of the data with the appropriate instruction or intervention strategies for each learner, which makes the teacher's role significantly more complex, especially in large English classes. This is why schools must enhance their effectiveness and competency when they make use of technology solutions.

Blair *et al.* (2015:3) also maintain that lack of access of technology may be challenging to economically disadvantaged learners. According to Kerr (2011:9), teachers' lack of knowledge on how to operate technology solutions can make them more reluctant to make use of them in teaching. Therefore, teachers may need to undergo training on new technology or software, curriculum development, and the development of appropriate assessment tools.

### **2.6.2 Threats towards curriculum: centralisation**

In Lesotho, the major stakeholders, teachers, were not trained or oriented about the curriculum. Lack of training has resulted in misconceptions about the curriculum that is meant for automatic promotion, which in many cases is a negative effect of teachers in class. Apart from this there are scarce teaching materials to accompany the new curriculum (Khokaanyana'phiri, 2013:4). As a result, the new curriculum is a threat to the educational future the learners and the country at large.

The curriculum and assessment policy framework adopts a new pedagogy, which requires of learners to take more responsibility for their own learning (MOET, 2009:22). This poses a threat to learners, because they are used to traditional methods of teaching where a teacher used to be the only one who knows, and the learners had to listen. The new curriculum fosters interaction between teachers and learners so that learners grow spiritually, personally and socially. The fear is that learners will take time to unleash their potentials, because they are used to teacher-dominated teaching methods, whereas in the new curriculum teachers are expected to act as facilitators of standard learning rather than knowledge transmitters (Raselimo & Mahao, 2015:7).

Teaching of English requires expertise from teachers, because English as a subject is taught to help learners in the areas of speaking, reading, writing and presenting. With the new curriculum, teachers are threatened with a wider scope or syllabus contends that they must not finish within a limited time. Moreover, the learner-teacher ratio in Lesotho may have a negative impact on teaching and learning because it leaves room for teachers use the teacher-centred method of teaching; hence, posing a threat to the education of Basotho children (Mengistie, 2019:39).

### **2.6.3 Threats towards limited assessment**

#### **2.6.3.1 *Lack of continuous assessment***

Lack of continuous assessment may pose a threat to both learners and teachers, because a teacher can take for granted that the learners are progressing while they are not, and by the time they realise this it would be too late. Kumar (2011:42) posits that teachers rely more on multiple-choice tests because they want to finish marking and give feedback immediately. Although multiple-choice questions are easier to mark, the problem is that they cover only recall questions. The child has to develop all levels of questions.

#### **2.6.3.2 *Peer learning and team teaching***

Peer learning where learners are marked by other learners poses a threat to both learners and teachers, because some learners do not want to be assessed by their fellow learners. They can inform their parents about the situation who, in turn, may question the administration of the school. On the other hand, the teacher can assume that the learners have done a good job while they have not, resulting in the decline of their children's performance. When the assessment tasks are issued out in small increments without any feedback to learners, it may be hard to see the difference between assessment and effective teaching (Nguyen, 2015:75).

Assessment has two functions: to tell whether or not the learning has been successful and to convey to learners what teachers want them to learn (Gordon, 2015:16). It has been suggested that team teaching can ease marking for English teachers; however, this technique can pose a threat to learners and teachers, as those teachers who help in marking make it impossible to detect when cheating has taken place (Kumar, 2011:42).

### **2.6.4 Threats towards supportive engagement: large class**

Teaching large classes of English as a second language poses threats to both learners and teachers. Language acquisition requires ample time and healthy discipline from learners. A study conducted by Finnet *et al.* (2003, in Bahanshal, 2013:52) shows that small classes encounter less misbehaviour than large classes, as learners in small classes get a chance to interact socially with their teachers, which gives them less capacity to misbehave or fool around. But their counterparts in large classes get involved in activities that lead them to misbehave because they are many and cannot be seen.

Participating in English activities such as debate, drama, and poetry is hampered in a large class, which is characterised by busy learners who do not pay proper attention to their teachers. According to Singer-Freeman and Bastone (2015:22), research has demonstrated that participation can improve opportunities for learners to develop integrative writing skills, improve grades and personalise material.

According to Schussler (2009:120), teachers must have perseverance; they must have the ability and willingness to teach in the best way. This quality is threatened by the negative behaviour of some learners. A teacher can deviate from what s/he intended to do with his/her learners that day, due to how some learners act in class, therefore reducing the quality of teaching and learning. Large classes make it easier for learners to challenge the teacher's authority, which they do in subtle and sometimes obvious ways because of the anonymity it affords (Seshu & Tafida, 2015:77).

Empowering learners as a solution towards discipline also poses a challenge because when learners become aware that a teacher is trying hard to empower them by focusing on the English teaching, some learners may be bored and as a result would not enjoy the lesson. Some teachers opt to ignore learners who are involved in classroom ill-discipline. Ignorance is not a perfect solution to stop or decrease bad behaviour from students, however it can be applied in a low-problematic situation (Awang, Ahmad, Wahab, & Mamat, 2013:38).

When learners misbehave, they irritate their teachers so much that some teachers may give up. In a study conducted by Kumar (2013:38), learners were viewed as awful, loud, disrespectful and totally uninterested and made a teacher want to line them up and beat them with a firehose. This kind of behaviour is bad, because it can make the teachers act stupidly by beating up their learners, resulting in job loss or even injuring the learners. English teachers find it hard to take control of a class with a large number of learners with various levels of and different personalities (Bahanshal, 2013:49). In trying to control the class by involving learners in action they can be threatened by a new approach to learning, particularly one that requires of them to do more work than simply listening to the teacher (Kerr, 2011). The stress, boredom and fatigue in trying to control a large class, may lead to many teachers even resigning (Marrais, 2016).

### **2.6.5 Threats to parental engagement: lack of literacy**

O'Connor and Geiger (2009:260) opine that parents cannot assist with their children's schoolwork as they themselves do not have a sufficient understanding of English. They lack literacy or are unable to read or write English. Parental engagement also affects the quality of teaching and learning. Most of the learners in secondary schools come from home environments where they are not exposed to English. Their only contact with the language remains within the school system. It is difficult for them to achieve the desired proficiency, also considering that the quality of teaching has been compromised (McNulty, 2014:535). Browaeys (2004:22) confirms that the impact of the environment on English language learning, by indicating that a child who grows up where English language is the language of communication will have an advantage over others who only get to hear and speak English at school.

The quality of English learned by learners depends largely on the competence of teachers and their capacity to motivate their learners to reach their desired goals. Parents have also been accused of having less time to supervise and help their children achieve their academic goals. This is not always possible for the majority of them who are not educated and are therefore not in a position to help their children. The culture of television and computer games, cell phones and social networking have taken over the role of parenting to the detriment of learner academic achievement. Alexander (2014:224) further express the view that students do not get enough supportive input in their additional language at home. Parents should bear the burden of responsibility for their children's education; this could benefit learners and reduce their frustration as they learn English as a second language (Geiger & O'Connor, 2009:263). Learners of English as a second language always find it hard to learn and use a foreign language because they have already mastered communication and some level of competency in their own native language (Carbone & Steven, 2010).

Poor English language results in West African countries can be attributed to the fact that students tend to attempt to transfer the form and meaning of their native languages and culture when speaking English (Silver & Ephraim, 2012:62). Parents have to try and provide their children with relevant textbooks on English language. They should look at their children's classwork and homework to scrutinise what children do at school; they should also encourage them to visit the public libraries.



Some teachers may involve parents even in small matters that they could handle themselves. Although it is beneficial for parents to get involved in school matters, most of them do not have time due to their tight schedules. Most parents are willing to play a more active role, but school administrators are reluctant to encourage parents to become active partners in education (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989:6). Khan (1996:58) states that schools have been blamed for being closed institutions and lack of community involvement in making decisions around school policies and programs. Poverty and unemployment play a vital role in hindering the involvement of parents in the education of their children (Schussler, 2009:115). When parents have to attend school meetings they fail to do so because they lack money for transport. On the other hand, they are reluctant to attend to other school activities. They cannot buy even the cheapest material items for their children; hence their children perform badly at school. Parental engagement is ideally determined by the economic background of the family (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017:140). Sometimes parents do not attend school functions because they lack interest. Due to their educational background they cannot assist their children with homework due to lack of appropriate knowledge and skills.

## **2.7 STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING OF SECOND LANGUAGE ENGLISH IN LARGE CLASSES**

According to Seshu and Tafida (2015:78), English language remains the language of instruction as well as a compulsory subject for all learners. Appropriate organisational and teaching strategies that can have a positive impact on the learning experience need to be designed and embraced by those who teach, because the phenomenon of large classes is not likely to go away any time soon. Many factors influence teaching that are related to teacher-learner environment and the lesson.

### **2.7.1 Peer teaching**

Peer learning is defined as the process where learners learn from one another in both formal and informal ways (Cohen, Boud, & Sampson, 2001:11-16). It is different from peer tutoring whereby more senior learners teach or help junior learners with their tasks. Instead, it is among learners at a similar level of education, with no responsibility towards

one another. It is a very powerful technique of sharing knowledge and encouraging collaboration amongst learners and enforcing learner participation.

Ali and Anwer (2015:62) are of the view that successful peer teaching requires clear planning and outlining of the objectives and activities to be done by learners. Teachers have to carry the responsibility of monitoring the whole process and its outcomes. They also have to spend time preparing material and guidelines outlining how the learners have to carry out their tasks, how they should form their groups, and how to resolve any conflict that might arise. Kharusi (2016:116) stipulates that peer teaching activities may include one-on-one discussion in which each learner shares what he/she has learned and explain it to other learners. However, in the case of large classes, peer learning is best implemented with small groups working together on an assignment or small project, followed by a presentation to their peers, ending with a brief question-and-answer session.

These micro-learning sessions can help to improve learners' autonomous learning skills, building confidence and self-esteem and improving team dynamics amongst learners (Goodlad and Hirst, 1989:5). Rubin and Herbert (1998, as quoted by Bruce, 2012:3) highlight some benefits of peer teaching as resulting in increased social and intellectual awareness, improved empathy towards other learners and personal and social growth. Peer teaching also promotes critical enquiry and better articulation of knowledge as well as managing one's own studies.

According to research conducted by Falchikov (2001:15), learners who are engaged in peer learning have higher test marks in comparison to those who study on their own. Further research in this field also reveals that teenage learners learn more effectively from their own peers, compared to traditional teacher-learner learning (O'Donnell & King, 2014:50). Peer teaching also has the power to transform learner behaviour and attitudes, especially learners who hold a high social status amongst their peers.

### **2.7.2 Effective communication**

Effective communication is vital for teaching and learning. In the communicative approach, interpersonal relationships are the core elements for promoting learning behaviour, as pupils feel happy to communicate with teachers (Awang *et al.*, 2014:35). In order to have effective communication, teachers need to have the ability to adapt to

various situations that confront them in class. They are capable of handling any kind of situation in order to enhance the best outcome. In order to achieve teaching effectiveness, it is important to adopt a number of practical measures. The first is to establish acceptable group behaviour, such as how to speak in a large group, how to take turns and how to work together, how to enter the class, how to pass material to the teacher at the front, how to assist in handing out papers and other materials, and how to keep the class tidy (Seshu & Tafida, 2016:75).

A competent teacher will get to know the learners by collecting information from personal portfolios, making an effort to learn a few names, or simply ask learners to introduce themselves when answering questions. The classroom atmosphere must be one of warmth, trust, cooperation, mutual support and respect (Xu, 2007, as cited by Seshu & Tafida, 2016:75). To become effective as an English language teacher, one must understand as much as possible about how the process of English works and what it feels like (Fareh, 2010:3602). The teacher should communicate expectations explicitly to learners; they should know what to expect in class and how the teacher perceives his or her role (Fareh, 2010:3604).

Good rapport will be established if a teacher creates an unthreatening learning environment by communicating well, obtaining and giving regular feedback, makes provision for an opportunity for discussion or for any kind of oral input that differs from written work.

### **2.7.3 Collaborative learning**

When two professionals are engaged in a collaborative teaching effort, one can facilitate a particular learner response or mediate learning, as needed, while the other can concentrate on context (O'Connor & Geiger, 2009:264). Motivation and attitude could also be considered an important point in ESL learning. An individual who is motivated is goal directed, expands effort, is more persistent, more attentive, has desires (wants), exhibits positive affect, is positively aroused, has expectations, has got high self-confidence and has reasons or motives (Hashim, Yunus, & Hashim 2018:210-211). If teachers, particularly English language teachers, could bear the aforementioned qualities in mind, effective teaching and learning could be enhanced.

Le, Janssen and Wubbles (2018:103-122) are of the contention that collaborative learning is the set of teaching and learning strategies promoting learner collaboration in small groups in order to optimise their own and one another's learning. In order to achieve this purpose, a teacher has to organise different types of collaborative activities in the classroom. Collaborative teaching can also be defined as cooperative learning, which also involves placing putting learners together in small groups. When learners are grouped together in an English class, they will be in a position to share ideas and help even the shyest learners to excel in English competency.

Collaboration is viewed as a key element to effective co-teaching. Activities, such as planning lessons, delivering instructions and maintaining discipline in the classroom are accompanied by valuing the work that two can do together, rather than alone. Collaboration flourishes in an atmosphere of mutual trust, goals, parity, shared decision and outcomes (Soundarajan, Joshim, & Rammath 2014:). Collaboration includes two teachers collaborating in delivering instructions to a group of learners with diverse learning needs. The teachers share instructional responsibilities, and these include working together in delivering instruction, designing learner assessment and classroom management (Chitiyo, 2017:56).

Team teaching is the collaboration between general and special education teachers who are responsible for educating all learners assigned to a classroom. They support one another in dealing with learners with behavioural issues and academic challenges. Seshu and Tafida (2016:74) maintain that classes that employ informal or formal collaborative groups to answer in-class assessment or discuss material covered in class are more likely to foster motivation. Language learning is enhanced when attention is paid to effective teaching and learning strategies, especially those that endeavour to increase learners' linguistic self-confidence and improve their self-efficacy (Seshu & Tafida, 2016:76). Collaborative teaching is important in the teaching of English in large classes because it enables slow learners to unleash their full potential. Having other teachers read and assess your work helps with the credibility and reliability of such tests. Teachers should have their colleagues assisting them in teaching, tests, administration and marking as a team.

Slow learners are learners who have been left behind or learners with special needs, whose learning expectations are not compliant with their capabilities or the level of

achievement equal to their IQ. A slow-learning child is a child who struggles to learn because of a shortage of psychosocial and cognitive abilities (Goldstein, 2017:489). Group work is a useful classroom strategy, especially for the peer interaction it provides. It helps the teacher to ensure that all learners engage in class tasks assigned. The group could discuss the answer(s) and then present them to the class (Seshu & Tafida, 2016:75). Pair work is a very useful and efficient way of working in language teaching, because it is simple to organise and easy to explain.

#### **2.7.4 Technology**

Alsulami (2016:2) contends that computers and some advanced technological tools can be used to help to make education fun and also to create a positive learning environment. These tools provide learners with new experiences and learning opportunities to help them make positive decisions and to think critically. When learners are interested in learning, particularly of English as their second language, it becomes easy for a teacher to help learners develop skills that will help them learn in a large class. It is important for English language teachers to recognise how effective and efficient it is to integrate computer technology into their curriculum which will help learners to acquire a foreign or second language easily and to enhance their own learning performance as well (Mapotse, 2014).

With the introduction of technological tools, language learning is gradually becoming easy for learners. They can now use their computers or smart phones to access their lessons from anywhere, without having to be in class with the teachers (Alsulami, 2015:3). In accordance with Nomass (2013:111), advancements in technology have enabled the creation of mobile applications which learners can have easy access to, using mobile phones, tablets and personal computers. It helps learners to gain confidence in reading and writing through the use of touch-screen programmes (Alsulami 2015:4). Mishra (2016:3) discovered that computer-based communication is a helpful tool for language learning. Computer-assisted discussions enable more participation than face-to-face discussions (Ozdamli & Askisov, 2016:100).

The idea of using technology tools to teach English as a second language is also covered by Mishra (2016:4) who explains that by use of multimedia students can be presented with authentic material on attractive and user friendly interfaces, with aesthetically pleasing vivid pictures and pleasant sound (Cope & Ward, 2002:70). In the same way,

technology can be used to create an enjoyable atmosphere for young language learners and increase their language awareness when used correctly. It also helps young learners to gain language skills outside the classroom when they actively interact with the material (Ilter, 2015:312). Furthermore, according to Hanover research, (2010:15) there is a number of new technologies that allow learners to engage with material in electronic forums, which include social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook that have been designed for education. In addition, the use of visual media helps improve learners' vocabulary and their writing skills (Ozdamli & Askisov, 2016:100).

### **2.7.5 Provision of Feedback**

Feedback is considered as an important approach in facilitating the development of students to become independent individuals who can monitor and evaluate their own learning progress (Ahea, 2016:38). Timely feedback is a valuable tool which indicates whether everything is headed in the right direction or whether change is required. Appropriate feedback contributes positively towards the development of the learners' capacity and confidence at all stages of their learning (Hardavella, Aamli-Gagnat, Saad, Rousalova & Sreter, 2017:327). When teachers give timely feedback in large English classes, learners will be in a better position to keep track of their learning.

Brookhart (2008:2) argues that good feedback should be part of a classroom assessment. Teachers should strive to build an environment in which learners react positively to constructive criticism and understand that learning cannot occur without constant practice. In the light of this, teachers should try to provide feedback to learners in time in order for learners to rectify their mistakes. Feedback gives learners the information they need so that they can understand where they are in their learning process and what to do next.

Teaching English as a second language, particularly in large classes requires of learners to be motivated. In this regard, feedback is a key mechanism for motivating learners, acting as an aid towards learning (Kyne, 2010:378). Seshu and Tafida (2015:75), present the view that good rapport will be established if the teacher creates an unthreatening learning environment by communicating well, obtaining and giving regular feedback. This view is supported by Ahea, (2016:40). Soliciting learners' feedback not only gives learners

an opportunity to comment, but also gives the teacher an opportunity to value learners' input and suggestions (Jungice, Kent & Menz, 2006:2).

A timely feedback practice does not only provide useful information to learners in order to improve their learning, but also offers critical information to teachers, which enhances and improves the learning experience for the learners (Ahea., 2016:39). When giving feedback in a large English class the teacher must be aware of non-verbal cues such as facial expressions. These may convey their own message, which could be in contrast to what one wants to achieve (Saad *et al.* 2017:331). Timely feedback is mostly helpful if it addresses faulty interpretations, and not a total lack of understanding by learners (Hatties & Timperly, 2007:82). Importantly, when students are taught English as a second language, teachers should bear in mind that such learners have little knowledge, since second-language mastering is enhanced by knowledge of the mother tongue.

## **2.8 BEST PRACTICES**

### **2.8.1 High-premium place of language**

English serves as a second language and an official language in many African countries. According to Nomass (2013), the quality of English and learning in Nigeria from the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards was remarkably characterised by adequate competence on the part of the teachers and learners alike. The reason is that the high premium placed on the language, because of its utility value as well as the opportunities it provides as a window to the world and white-collar jobs. In large classes, writing is used to promote critical thinking, an approach which successfully engages all learners and help them to develop the necessary skills to learn, to as the right questions, think as a collective and learn to learn (Boughey & McKenna, 2015:1).

In China, large English classes are considered an opportunity in that more learners actually means more ideas and more possibilities and the more the learners, the livelier, more unified and motivated the class (Seshu & Tafida, 2016:74). Within the context of South African schools, the planning of teaching and learning in a large class setting creates opportunities to develop the required English skills (Machika, Bruin, & Albertyn , 2014:375). In addition, while oral language proficiency is the focus of initial instruction in the English language, literacy skills also build on oral proficiency. Knowledge of grammar is important as it helps to enhance reading, comprehension, and writing abilities (Udu

2017:68). According to Akintude and Danlami (2012:58), English has become a second language in Nigeria and serves as a language of communication, which helps with the unification of a nation. Also, the level of English proficiency of learners in large classes as well as the high quality of their written and spoken English reflects a positive deposition to the teaching and learning of English (Alexander, 2014:221).

### **2.8.2 Learner-teacher interaction**

Learner-teacher interaction is considered the most important technique that enhances teaching and learning in large classes. According to Wang (2011:75), interaction between learners and teacher plays a significant role in classroom activities, because through such interaction, learners increase their language store and attain opportunities to understand and use the language that was once incomprehensible. Teaching large classes in Chinese schools has proved to offer teachers many good opportunities like knowing how to improve their interpersonal skills, learning how to use different kinds of teaching strategies, as well as teaching activities to suit learners' different learning styles (Nguyen, 2015:78).

Furthermore, in order to respond to challenges of teaching English as a second language in China, teachers employ a variety of games to attract learners' attention and even take learners outdoors to learn English (Hadi & Arante, 2015:6). According to Bahansal (2013:50), teachers have attempted to improve their level of teaching by employing multiple techniques such as team teaching, groupwork, reducing the workload and utilising whole-class discussion. Large classes offer the opportunity to explore a more visible level of diversity among learners in terms of gender, race and class, than in small classes (Jawitz, 2013:141).

### **2.8.3 Remedial lessons**

According to Chikwature & Oyedele (2016), remedial lessons help learners who lag behind to develop and grow their critical skills. Nigerian teachers have resorted to remedial teaching some aspects of English language in large classes, i.e. the sound of English, grammar, reading and writing. They also attend workshops to improve language



areas where learners perform badly (Udu, 2017:69). On the other hand, teachers in South Africa encourage learners to engage actively in interactive lessons and use their skills to respond actively to conditions that affect them (Pillay, 2017:3).

In addition, O'Connor and Geiger (2009:261) advocate that educators in South Africa have reported that to give extra attention to learners who do not keep up benefits those learners. Remedial lessons help learners, especially of English, to gauge language aspects they did not understand during a normal class. As a form of remediation, parents should help their children with their schoolwork at home, which was reported to contribute to good progress of English as a second language for learners in large classes. In support of remedial lessons, Seshu and Tafida (2016:73) realised that a variety of teaching methods is what contributes to the best efficiency of learning, rather than focusing to a large number of learners in a class. In Nigeria, remedial classes are utilised, because teachers understand that, apart from a large class, learners have a varying degree of background knowledge, concepts of learning, motivation, interests, ability and prejudice (Chitiyo, 2017:55).

#### **2.8.4 Learning management systems**

Internationally and within South Africa, Learning Management Systems (LMS) have become nearly as pervasive as a core component in learning (Moodley 2015:156-160). A study conducted in South Africa shows that blended learning carried out through online classes enable learners to better handle “shy” personalities, as their interest is increased and they therefore engage in interactive constructed learning. Importantly so, Akintude and Danlami (2015:46) posit that the use of ICT enhances English language competence, allowing learners to learn more autonomously, and improving their self-esteem and confidence.

### **2.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter presented critical emancipation research as a theoretical framework which indicates that learners are supposed to be treated with respect and dignity in order to live harmoniously with their teachers. The chapter initially presented the historical background

of CER, the justification for CER, the objectives and principles of CER, and the ontological, epistemological and axiological aspects of CER. The chapter also discussed the role of the researcher and his/her relationship with the participants. The concepts of the operational terms were discussed.

Furthermore, this chapter presented the review of the related literature where the challenges, the solution, and threats towards possible solutions were outlined. Moreover, the literature review entailed strategies to be used to improve the teaching of English as a second language, together with best other teachers have practices these strategies.

## **CHAPTER 3:**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study aims at developing strategies to strengthen the teaching of second language English (SLE) in large Grade 8 classes. In order to attain this aim, this chapter outlines the research approach and the study design in carrying out this qualitative research. Coughlan *et al.* (2009:309) mention that qualitative research is deals with nature, understanding and the elaboration of phenomena. Qualitative data are inspected for in-depth meanings and processes. This chapter further details all the instrumentation used when generating data for the study. PAR is used as the study approach, which leads to the easy adoption of Critical Emancipation Research (CER). The chapter discusses PAR as a research approach, as well as its historical origins, its principles and objectives. The ontological and epistemological assumptions of PAR are also presented as basis why it is chosen as the study method. The selection process of participants is also outlined in detail. The ethical considerations are presented as well as data analysis through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

#### **3.2 PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH**

According to McDonald (2012:35), PAR is a subcategory of action research, which is the systematic collection and examination of data that is aimed at taking action and impacting change by bringing up practical knowledge. It is a systematic inquiry, with the cooperation of those who the issues being studied affects them, with main purpose of educating and taking action, and making a difference. PAR produces evidence for ongoing processes of change, and it also promotes learning amongst people involved in the change. PAR promotes positive change by producing objective data as well as building knowledge that those involved can use to strengthen themselves (McDonald, 2012:35). It allows all participants to be active when solving their problems.

PAR is considered democratic and liberating, because the features of the participants' feelings and views are revealed without any control and manipulation (Kralik & Koch, 2006:13). Participants take an active role in making decisions throughout the whole research, with the aim of imparting social change. PAR highly advocates the need for people involved to take part in the design and stages of any research study that directly affecting them.

PAR breaks down the distinction of the barriers between the researcher and the participants; the research is not only seen as a knowledge-creating process but as an education and mobilisation for immediate actions (Gaventa, 1988:19). The knowledge gathered by the participants is for the participants the benefit of themselves, and this is the path this study intends to follow.

### **3.3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF PAR**

PAR's origins go back to the work of Kurt Lewin (1944), who is viewed by most literature as the father and founder of action research (McDonald, 2012:3). His argument is that people will become more encouraged to perform their work if they are included in the decision-making process. He advocated a form of action research that studied a social system while striving to effect changes at the same time. This form of action research solves the problem of segregation and discrimination and helps people to solve their problems while studying the impact of their changes (MacDonald, 2012:37).

Kemmis and Mc Taggart (2007:273) posit that PAR is rooted in the liberation theology and neo-Marxist approaches to the development of Latin America communities, but also originates quite liberally in human rights activism in Asia. Moreover, Zuber-Skerrit *et al.* (2013:114) argue that PAR was originally developed for engagement of communities in countries that are developing by pioneers such Paulo Freire. The roots of PAR can also be traced back to the work of Paulo Freire, whose research was concerned with encouraging the less fortunate and emphasised the importance of critical consciousness to bring about social change. Critical consciousness needs an individual to be familiar with social, economic and political development in order to take action that will change the coercive elements and realities of society (McDonald, 2012:38).

According to Koch and Kralik (2006:12), PAR came out in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Paulo Freire (1970), one of the world's leading educationalists, in his classic text *pedagogy of the oppressed*, carried out research with participants placing capabilities to disenfranchised individuals so that they could change their lives themselves. PAR has also been defined and researched in numerous ways by researchers from across different fields of study such as sociology, psychology, anthropology and community-based research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007:273). It has been utilised heavily in as an approach of social investigation of problems involving participation of those coerced by the social norms in a problem posing and solving set-up in feminist research (Bergold & Thomas, 2012:521).

### **3.4 JUSTIFICATION FOR CHOICE OF PAR**

This study follows the PAR, mainly because it allows participants to become active in the study, instead of them just being treated as subjects of the study. This will help them to become main stakeholders, enable them to take ownership of the study and become actively involved in changing their own social realities; hence, bringing about a conducive learning environment in the teaching of SLE in large Grade 8 classes. PAR plays a very important role in educational transformation, especially in the development of strengthening teaching and learning towards large classes. PAR helps to improve teaching by helping teachers in the process of developing a non-discriminating attitude amid complicated human situations by unifying inquiry into matters that need attention and immediate change (Bergold, 2016:1).

The study considers PAR to be a powerful research approach because it causes community involvement empowerment and brings about social change (Mahlomaholo, 2009:225). PAR is regarded to challenge the barriers society may place between the researcher and the participants, as well as the assumptions that the responsibility of initiating change rests only on the shoulder of certain role players, but instead it invites everyone affected by the changes to get involved. (Koch & Kralik, 2006:16). PAR involves a high degree of cooperation between the researchers, participants and all stakeholders involved with cycles of constant feedback from the research findings (McMeeking *et al.*, 2018:1159). PAR enables full expression of people's potential, acknowledges their worth

and makes it easy for all the stakeholders to participate freely in the research and air their views without any prejudice. It helps participants that their voices are heard and respected in relation to strategies to strengthen teaching and learning in large classes (Tshelane, 2013:416).

With PAR, control and ownership of the research process and findings do not depend on the stipulation amongst all participants. Thus, the researcher acts as a facilitator to bring clear communication for all to foster good relationships and trust among all involved in the study. With PAR it is easy to have clear communication, foster relationships and trust amongst all involved in the study (Nelson, Ochocka, Griffin & Lord, 1998:886). The issues of large classes call upon all who are involved in a study to come up with solutions to reduce challenges encountered.

With PAR, people become more knowledgeable about their lives and their communities, and they are in a better position to make informed decisions about their problems by bridging the gap between knowledge and action (McMeeking *et al.*, 2018:1159). PAR brings together the actions and reflection, and this will allow the conclusions from this study to be used to solve the problems of teaching and learning second language in large classrooms.

### **3.5 OBJECTIVES OF PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH**

#### **3.5.1 Transformative and empowering**

PAR is a method of research that focuses on motivating a marginalised community (Yeates & Amaya, 2014:3). Through PAR, stakeholders are empowered with curriculum-based qualities and skills with regard to effective teaching of English as a second language in large classes. Teachers should be very well informed on how to manage large classes and be able to mentor and support to other teachers in order to enhance effective learning (Koch & Kralik, 2006:16). Furthermore, Tshelane (2013:416) maintains that PAR ensures that everyday knowledge is used to shape the lives of ordinary people. This is another reason why it is relevant for this study that aims at strengthening daily techniques that teachers use for effective teaching and learning of English in large classrooms.

Power as well as empowerment are core elements of PAR and help both the researcher and participants to avoid the use of words like “us” or “them” (Pain, 2004:656). This ensures that both researcher and participants have equal opportunities in shared knowledge. Parents and members of the community should equally be in a position to assist the effective teaching and learning of their children (Carr & Kemmis, 1986:211).

According to Bornerjee and Tedmanson (2014:2), in PAR, power and inequalities among the researcher and the participants can be resolved and neutralised. This means that PAR fights against oppression and exclusion. It also engages participants so that their voices can be respected and heard (Tselane, 2013:416). Therefore, both the researcher and participants become partners and work together to bring about strategies to help teachers to better teach English in large Grade 8 classes. In PAR, participants take ownership and control over knowledge that is generated about them; also, their contribution is very important, because they are the experts of the study (Lynch, 1999:55). This study hoped that, through PAR meetings, all participants will be engaged in continuous communicative action and this discourse for rational and just decisions and actions that will be regarded as legitimate by those involved and affected (Kemmis & Mc Taggart 2007:317).

### **3.5.2 Equality and teamwork**

According to Kearnney, Wood and Zuber-Skerritt (2013:115), PAR includes the participants in all or most phases and processes of the research as equal partners. In PAR all group commitment brings about changes in social practices (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007:287). In this study the collectiveness was considered very important because both the researcher and participants work together towards a common goal of bringing about strategies to be used by teachers in large classrooms. In PAR the stakeholders are the owners of the research, because they are involved in all processes and work towards coming up with a solution that will transform their lives for the better (McTaggart, 1997:26).

This study further takes into consideration how better learners contribute towards helping their teachers to strengthen their teaching strategies. As such, learners’ views and freedom of speech should be treated with respect and dignity (Bergold & Thomas. 2016:421). In this study, both the researcher and the core researcher were able to reach out and impact each other as human beings (Mahlomaholo, 2013:319). Burgess

(2006:73) posits that PAR fosters an interactive process of social investigation and action, in which participants strengthen their relations and shared knowledge in research. Hence, they engage collectively towards strengthening teachers' strategies to teach large Grade 8 English classes.

### **3.5.3 Problem based**

According to Rogé (2018:1047) knowledge between scholars and the people most directly affected by the problems is democratically constructed by PAR, as to ensure that they themselves can be in a position to resolve the problems they face more effectively. This is the best method, because in this study, the participants know the problems they are faced with, and are also the ones who come up with suitable solutions. That is why in this study all stakeholders come up with appropriate strategies that teachers can apply when teaching large English language classes. More so, PAR focuses on groups, brainstorming, mind mapping, group activities and individual exercises (Eruera, 2010:12). Importantly so, I found it suitable as the researcher and the participants are involved in activities that bring about the solution towards teaching of large classrooms.

The elements of PAR advocate that all stakeholders who are affected by the issue being studied should be actively involved; there should be periodic communication of findings and group discussions among participants and among researchers and participants (Hertz-Larrowitz, Zelniker & Azaiza, 2010:271). Therefore, involvement and sharing of knowledge form a crucial part throughout the research.

### **3.5.4 Inclusion**

According to Chartier, Cohen, Cusack, Mignone and Lutfiyya (2018:1545), PAR is an approach that is systematic, that also assists participants in communicating their research needs and initiate strategies to address them. The approach is relevant for this study, which aims at strengthening teachers' strategies in order to teach large Grade 8 classes. The task is shouldered to all participants, namely the teachers, parents and learners. PAR is conducted directly with the immediately affected individuals and it is aimed at constructing their knowledge and ability in the process of understanding and empowerment (Bergold & Thomas, 2016:422). All participants are regarded equally important in this study. Regardless of their misfortunes, they are free to articulate their opinions with courage and without any fear. Jones, Ho, Kun, Shakpeh, Milson and



Loewenson (2018:1653) posits that PAR enables those negatively impacted by health situations to research themselves, to develop and apply their own knowledge of the local content. This further shows that those who the problem affects directly can analyse it better. PAR is defined by Bergold and Thomas (2016:42) as the enlightenment and awakening of ordinary people.

### **3.6 PRINCIPLES OF PAR**

PAR has multiple dimensions; each dimension gives shape to the general experience. It is learning process that continuously focuses on co-learning, involvement and organisational change. The following subsections discuss in detail the principles of PAR.

#### **3.6.1 Collaboration**

According to Walter (2009:2), the requirement for equal and open collaboration between the researcher and the participants or the community is central to PAR. PAR empowers people and leads to them increasing control over their lives (Baum, MacDougall & Smith (2006:852). PAR involves collaboration between all the participants involved in the research. This collaboration takes place across all the stages of the research, from the problem formulation to the application and assessment of the generated results. Participants act as a collective to investigate and act on what they have learned. The researcher and the co-researcher decide on major questions and concerns through dialogue. This collaboration brings about structural changes instead of personal adaptation to passive environments. In this study the researcher and participants collaboratively tried to come up with solutions towards the envisaged problem. PAR, as a democratic model, leads the team to develop, own and use knowledge through cooperation efforts at every level, involving discussion, pooling skills and working together to reach the intended action (Morales, 2016:161). PAR further assumes a concept of a unitary and homogenous community, thus masking marginal knowledge that is distributed by age, ethnicity or gender (Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2008:12). Informed by PAR, both the researcher and the participants were treated equally, and their views equally acknowledged. PAR is a research approach involving collaboration between communities and organisations (schools) with a legitimate personal interest in solving a problem that affects them directly (Greenwood, 2011:2).

### **3.6.2 Supportive relationships**

According to Shortall (2011:2), one of the most vital aspects of education research is the type of relationship that is seen among the researcher and participants. PAR fosters togetherness amongst all involved in the study; this can also be extended beyond the scope of the research reaching to the day-to-day dealings. The researcher is tasked with the responsibility of fostering these working relationships amongst all those involved in the research process (McMeecking, Trot & Weinberg, 2018:1157). The participants also play their roles by working towards the development of egalitarian and authentic relationships and trust. Support environments enable a dynamic research situation, which encourages sharing diverse knowledge and expertise and bringing the necessary change to the lives of those involved (Akello & Timmerman, 2017:740).

Clear and effective communication channels are very important for achieving supportive relationships, which also help to carry out a research with reflexive and equal engagement (Greenwood, 2011:2). PAR encourages participants in the study to care for one another in a sense of community, person and place, while they strengthen their commitment towards finding solutions and acting positively towards change (Tillmann & Salas, 2018:694). By encouraging this sense of togetherness amongst the participants, PAR enables the participants to improve their communication, social organisation and interactions. In this study the researcher and the participants improved relations through effective communication in trying to strengthen strategies of teaching English in large classes.

PAR helps individuals to release themselves from the oppression enforced by the social media through which they interact on a normal basis. It is a process that is meant to do away with irrational and unjust ways of interpreting the world, ways of working and ways people relate to one another (Tillmann & Salas, 2018:694). The researcher and the participants will share an understanding to make the research process a success. In this research study all the participants were expected to come up with the best solutions for the challenges of teaching English in large Grade 8 classes. It also proposes that incorporating ideas of everyone involved in the research process helps their own social development and awareness about the world around them (Rogé, 2018:1047).

### **3.6.3 Continuous learning**

PAR is very responsive to the needs of those involved and thorough discussions of innovative solutions. PAR focuses on understanding how participants perceive their realities and how these perspectives can be integrated into social change. Greenwood (2011:2) stipulates that these require full commitment and a willingness to learn as the research process continues. It involves applying critical intelligence to develop well-informed and committed actions. PAR is inductive in comparison to traditional research methodologies that tend to be very deductive by placing much emphasis on hypothesis, generation and testing. According to Kemmis and McTaggart (2007:270), PAR involves learning about real material, particularly practices of particular people in particular places. This study concurs with the idea that the researcher and participants should interact and share new ideas that will shed light on the challenges brought about by teaching English in large classroom. With PAR people can develop skills, knowledge and experience that will help them in their future endeavours.

### **3.6.4 Social process**

PAR reduces the gap between knowledge and action by introducing a social level change, gathering useful knowledge and solving real-world problems faced by society. PAR acknowledges that no individual can exist without socialisation, as much as socialisation is not possible without individuals. Kemmis and McTaggart (2007:277) state that research that benefits from PAR needs to be directed towards studying, reframing and constructing social practices. It is a systematic inquiry that seeks to improve the social issues that affect the lives of people (Hine, 2013:1). Moreover, PAR liberates research from normal prescriptive research methods and aims to decentralise traditional research.

It is also viewed as an alternative method to traditional social scientific research, the perspective of social inquiry from a linear cause-and-effect is moved to a participatory framework that considers the context of people's lives (McDonald, 2012:36). PAR is a social process of collaborative learning that realizes groups of people. PAR enables researchers and participants to learn how to become citizens of freedom and democracy who can start and transcend the oppression and marginalisation of distorted theories (Mahlomaholo, 2013:320).

### **3.7 EPISTEMOLOGY OF PAR**

Epistemology is the study of the nature of knowledge, which helps to understand social and cultural differences on how to obtain better methods of learning and teaching. According to Rogé (2018:1047), PAR is the epistemology that accommodates the reflexive capabilities of human beings with the research process. PAR makes the assumption that knowledge evolves and is owned by all the participants, and it must be shared with the community (Tshelane, 2013:406). PAR also assumes that participants are active collaborators in the process of knowledge generation, which is one of the reasons why it is a perfect approach to conducting this study. All participants together contribute to the development of all the research process, from beginning to the end. PAR collaboration aids the development of new skills and capacity that develop the social and growth potential of everyone involved. PAR afforded the stakeholders of this study the ability to share knowledge that helped to strengthen the teaching of SLE in large classes.

PAR does away with the centralisation of power in a research study. In this study, participants have shown the desire to share knowledge production and give every participant a chance to raise their voices. Whitehead and McNiff (2006) also add to this by stating that researchers need to become partners and insiders, who examine their own practices, such as a teacher examining their teaching methods and how to improve them or learners examining how to improve their learning environments. A successful PAR research approach depends heavily on the quality of participation of each co-researcher and the distribution of power and strong healthy relationships.

### **3.8 ONTOLOGYCAL STANCE OF PAR**

According to Guarino, Oberle and Staab (2009:1), ontology refers to the branch of philosophy that deals with the nature and structure of reality. It is used to designate the theory of being, it is the view of reality. Ontological assumptions are mainly concerned with what is believed. In a research process, participants seek to understand the existence of a reality of a world they live in (Creswell, 2007:20). Therefore the use individuals from the periphery should be given equal opportunities to play an active role in developing knowledge, research and design and not just be put in a more passive place where they receive in the form of help or aid, knowledge that they have not participated in creating (Noel, 2016:4).

PAR as a research approach in conducting this study is appropriate, because it sees all human beings as dynamic agents of change of the world that they live in and avoids the objective perspective of the researcher. PAR advocates that there should be no artificial barrier that keeps any person from achieving what she/he can achieve through ability and hard work. In this study I treated the participants as unique and respected individuals who have knowledge that can help to come up with solutions that professional teachers can use in teaching large Grade 8 classes. I understand that people become committed in activities that they have developed.

PAR develops the knowledge of both the researcher and the co-researcher at the same place. PAR is an ontological approach suggesting that human beings are dynamic agents capable of self-reference and self-change (Rogé 2018:1047). Ontology deals with how people are supported to work together to drive their own problems (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007:282). Both the researcher and the co-researcher learn from each other through collaboration and as a result come forwards with strategies that teachers can use to teach English as second language in large classes. Mahlomaholo (2013:320) posits that PAR is openly non positivist, regarding participants as dynamic human beings who are knowledgeable, capable of sophisticated forms of interpretations and having experiences. The researcher and the participants worked together towards the realisation of how to strengthen teaching in large classes.

### **3.9 AXIOLOGICAL STANCE OF PAR**

According to Chaturvedi (2014:20), “axiology is taken from the Greek word *axios* (worth or value) and *logos* (study or theory) and its meaning is the theory of values. It is the science of human values which enables us to identify the internal valuing systems that influence our perceptions, decisions and actions to clearly understand why we do what we do”. In this study underpinned by PAR I respected and understood the importance of the participants. In our relationships we discussed through dialogue among one another as friends who trust and respect one another as equals that have uniquely different talents and viewpoints (Zuber-Skerritt, 2015:9). In PAR the commitment of the community of interest enables the research project to access community understanding, knowledge and collective meaning (Walter, 2009:6). The researcher collaboratively worked with the community members as participants to investigate the issues of English teaching in large

classes. I tried to understand their viewpoints as they tried to find out why classes are big and how that affects the teaching and learning of their children.

The axiological approach includes viewing of the educational activities based on the established relationships of tradition and innovation (Kiryakova, Olkhovaya, Melekesov & Presnov, 2015:24). PAR advocates that people are responsible for their own communities. Therefore, this study aimed to encourage the stakeholders of education to quit the traditional way of doing things and implement the most innovative and improved ones. For example, teachers were encouraged to use teacher-learner centred approaches rather than a traditional approach where teachers are at the centre of knowledge. PAR researchers have an emancipatory goal in improving human welfare and utilize methods of reflection and action (Ozanne & Saatcioglu 2008). Axiology addresses questions related to what is valued and considered desirable or good for humans and society (Biedenbach & Jacobsson 2016). With this in mind the aim of PAR is to motivate people at a deeper level using the process of developing and utilizing their own knowledge (Walter, 2009:1). In this study, with the help of PAR, which puts together thinking, feeling and doing, applying knowledge to action to produce new wisdom, the researcher and participants worked together and came up with solutions towards the teaching of English language in large classes.

### **3.10 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE RESEARCHER AND PARTICIPANTS**

Tshelane (2013:416) states that PAR engages all the participants so that their opinions can be heard and validated. It was a method of choice because it allowed me as a researcher to work harmoniously and closely with participants, enabling all stakeholders to air their views with regard to the challenges that they are facing and to come up with the solutions to resolve them (MacDonald, 2012:34). I believed that, since they were able to generate data that enabled them to implement its findings (Reason & Marshall, 2001:319).

The researcher and the participants worked collaboratively in each phase of the research process and shared their knowledge and experiences as equals. According to Weinberg, Trott & Sample McMeeking (2018:1157), through cooperation and problem solving, PAR seeks to encourage participants and bring up change. Chartier (2018:1549) maintains that PAR promotes individual empowerment and system transformation as well as

increase organisational barriers. As such, the researchers worked together with the participants and viewed them as human beings, not treating them like objects (Nkoane, 2012:9). The visits that I made where I met the principal of the school, the teachers, and learners and as well as parents made it easier for all participants to feel free and collaborate towards coming up with the solutions to that they all encounter regarding teaching of English language in large classroom.

### **3.11 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS**

The study includes the school principal, two teachers, four parents and seven learners, all from one school at which the study was conducted. The education inspector in the district where the study took place is also included in the study. The choice of all participants from one school was to contextualise problems that teachers face when teaching English as a second language in large classes. Also, the choice of all the participants is due to the fact that working together we can bring about changes, particularly because we are affected by the same situation. I believe that the research will be of benefit to the whole community as such help to strengthen the strategies that teachers of large classes can use for effective teaching and learning. Akello and Timmerman (2017:740) maintain that PAR seeks to bringing about change, actively involving all people in a community to work together towards this transformation. On the other hand, Hlalele (2013:565) stipulates that concerned people collaborate to create their vision of how they wish to learn and live together in the present and future. I therefore decided that the principal, teachers, parents, learners and the education inspector would be better participants.

The school principal is the overseer of a school with whom all responsibilities rest. He is the person most challenged by the school's functionality. Again, as an English teacher, including him in this study was very important, because like other teachers, he is also affected by all the challenges of teaching large English classes in Grade 8. In addition, the selection of the principal was assurance for other participants that their contributions would be taken into consideration and be implemented. The staff of a school is inclined to accepts programmes of change more readily if the school principal actively supports them implementing the changes (Van der Westhuizen, 1991:448). According to the *Education Act* (2010:179), the principal ensures that meaningful teaching and learning takes place at his/her school; therefore I knew that including him in this study was

advantageous because he is capacitated to encourage those to implement the plans to collaborate and experiment with the changes. In this position the principal has to be informed of the latest approaches and methods that other researchers have developed towards strengthening teachers' strategies in order to deal with large English classes. The principal was also selected for his support throughout the whole research project because we used the school premises for meetings.

Importantly, teachers were sampled in this research as they are the immediate supervisors of the learners. Teachers interact with learners on a daily basis; as such they make better stakeholders, as they are the ones who are affected either negatively or positively by the academic performance of the learners. Teachers are responsible for classroom management; therefore, they are the ones who witness when teaching and learning are effective or not. Their involvement in this study is about their vast knowledge of problems that they encounter in teaching.

The choice of the learners was made because they are mostly affected when the teaching and learning are not effective. Bergold (2016:422) posits that PAR gets conducted directly with the immediately affected individuals, and it is aimed at reconstructing their knowledge and ability in the process of understanding and empowerment. Learners are the marginalised group of people whose views are seldom sought and whose voices are rarely heard. With this in mind, their inclusion in this study with PAR was pivotal to the methodology. PAR values an emancipatory system, which attempts to gain and respect learners and their culture. It contradicts the notion of Nouri and Sjjadi (2014:80), who argue that "A teacher teaches, and learners know nothing. A teacher thinks learners are thought about."

Furthermore, learners experience challenges that brought about by teaching large classes. Van der Westhuizen (1999:353) argues that it is of special importance to provide opportunities for each learner to participate in a wide spectrum of people activities. Including learners in this research gives them an opportunity to discover their potential as they share their experiences with those of their teacher. They are empowered with the necessary skills that helps them to realise that they are important stakeholders in education.



## **3.12 CREDENTIALS OF PARTICIPANTS**

### **3.12.1 The coordinators of the study**

In this study, the researcher was regarded as coordinator of the study in pursuit of a study towards a master's degree.

### **3.12.2 The principal**

**Mr Molise (Pseudonym)** has become the principal at this school in January 2017. Before that he has worked at the same school as the first HOD since 2010. He holds a Bachelor's degree in education (BEd), which he obtained in 2005. He has 13 years' teaching experience.

### **3.12.3 Education Inspector**

**Mr Martin (Pseudonym)** is an education inspector who holds a BEd Honours degree obtained at the University of the Free State. He has 15 years' teaching experience and has been in the office of the inspectorate for three years.

### **3.12.4 The teachers**

**Mrs Lereko (Pseudonym)** has a Bachelor's in Education (BEd) degree, which she acquired at the University of Lesotho in 2012, majoring in English and Sesotho. She started working at this school in 2012. She has six years' teaching experience at this school. She currently teaches the two languages (Sesotho and English) from Grades 8–10 and Forms D–E.

**Mrs Ithabeleng (Pseudonym)** holds a Diploma certificate in Education majoring in English and History. She became a teacher at this school in 2010 and has taught both English and History at all levels – Grades 8–10, Forms D–E.

### **3.12.5 Learners**

**Bony (Pseudonym)** is a 14-year-old girl at the school which the study is conducted school in the district of Thaba-Tseka. She is a Grade 8 learner in 2019. **Lipuo**

**(Pseudonym)** is also a 14-year-old learner in Grade 9. **Palesa (Pseudonym)** is a sixteen-year-old girl in Grade 9. **Thabo (Pseudonym)** is a Grade 10 learner. **Tumelo (Pseudonym)** is a 13-year-old boy in Grade 8 in 2019. **Kany** is a 15-year-old girl in Grade 9. **Thabiso (Pseudonym)** is boy of 15 years and is in Grade 9 too.

All the learners were purposely selected based on their experience and knowledge of being once a Grade 8 learner in this school which is known by having large Grade 8 classes.

### **3.12.6 Parents**

**Mrs Kenny (Pseudonym)** is currently a teacher at a prominent school in the same district. She is the parent of the school at which the study is conducted. **Mr Mosola (Pseudonym)** is a parent of this school. He has been working at the maintenance site of the school for six years. **Mrs Rethabile (Pseudonym)** is also a primary teacher and a parent of the school. She has brought several children to this school. **Mr Mosuoe (Pseudonym)** is a businessperson who has brought children to the school at which the research is taking place.

## **3.13 SWOT ANALYSIS**

The research team performed the SWOT analysis as a guide to the activities of the team. The SWOT analysis was beneficial to the team of participants, as it revealed their platform with regard to the challenges or problems that might be noticed during the research process. The analysis was necessary, as it could help the participants to come up with suitable adjustments as demanded by the research during any process.

### **3.13.1 Strengths**

A research team showed a variety of strengths. The different stakeholders worked together as a team. No one was considered inferior or superior. PAR enables researchers and participants to be able to be free and become citizens of a democracy, constructing knowledge together as equals (Mahlomaholo, 2013:320). The members all respected one

another's the ideas. Tshelane (2013:416) believes, the goal of PAR is to ensure that regular everyday knowledge is used to transform the lives of ordinary people. PAR values the local knowledge of marginalised groups as a basis for voluntary actions, which can make lives of people better.

The team comprised the principal of the school, education inspector, the teachers, the parents and learners, who together brought rich and healthy experiences from different angles. The school principal displayed qualities that left other participants perplexed. He was humble and treated all members of the team with respect and dignity. He opened his heart by always accommodating us in a large clean science lab. As a result, all participants felt welcome and were fully dedicated to the discussion in response to the main question, "How can the teaching of second language English in large Grade 8 classrooms be strengthened?" The principal, who is also an English teacher, provided valuable information regarding the main question of the study. The principal offered his time, although time was actually not on his side because of the activities of the teachers' strike that took place during the data collection. I was surprised he never made any excuse that he was busy preparing for the strike with his teachers. The participation with his teachers displayed remarkable tolerance and determination. They never complained about any waste of time because other teachers were working hard to cover the time wasted while on strike.

Teachers were in a better position as the stakeholders who interact with learners on a daily basis. As a result, they know better what to do to strengthen the teaching of English second language in large Grade 8 classes. PAR offers means to dispute power disparities; therefore, teachers worked together with learners in order to correct the saying that they knew everything, while the learners had empty minds. Teachers know the problems they face in teaching, so they had constructive knowledge to share towards the solution of their problems.

The participation of learners as the most disadvantaged people in every community was valuable. They were very happy when they realised that they were considered as important members of the team to whom even the school principal listened. They enjoyed the meeting to such an extent that their teachers were surprised.

According to Cavanaugh, Giesen and Mc Donald (2012:206), the involvement of parents has been widely researched, increased parents' skills and information (social capital),

preparing them to be able to assist their children with school-related activities. Parents were also happy and articulated that it was also their wish to contribute to school matters. They felt a sense of ownership as community members and were empowered by the views of other participants. They were actively involved and motivated learners to realise that even their parents can come up with positive factors for effective teaching and learning. PAR advocates that members of the society must work together towards a common goal. Therefore, parents felt the same, as they were involved in all stages of the research.

### **3.13.2 Weaknesses**

The study was conducted during the teachers' strike. Therefore, the time was very limited. Apart from that, teachers had other commitments, especially because the study was conducted at the beginning of the year when they were involved in classroom administrative issues such as attending staff meetings and workshops for Grade 8 classes. Consequently, it was not easy to meet the participants at the stipulated time. Not only the teachers had others matters to attend to, but the parents were also very busy with other commitments. It took a long time for most participants to feel free to participate in the research, which was a weakness, because it took me a long time to explain the approach, which they also indicated that they had never been exposed to. Even the principal of the school declared that he was used to other methodologies such as the qualitative method where random sampling would be done through interviews, which they believed was not time consuming.

Moreover, parents mentioned that they expected the researcher and participants to provide them with adequate information, not that they were expected to be part of the discussions. It took time for the parents to open up. It was very difficult to implement the PAR as a research approach where learners, parents and teachers shared the same opportunities. The research project was not funded; therefore, the participants had to cover their travelling expenses because they came from different places, some of which are very far from the school.

Some meetings took place during teachers' strike, which made it very difficult to organise the members of the team. The researcher had to contact all the members, including the learners who otherwise could be found at school. That was a weakness, because most of them could not be found over the phone; therefore, the researcher had to travel from

one place to another in order to collect them. Learners were extremely bored when they travelled to school only for the project meetings.

### **3.13.3 Opportunities**

Both the school principal and teachers were satisfied as per the contributions made in the research, because they were empowered by the collaborative involvement of other members of the team. PAR considers participants as a powerful force working for change in their communities and schools (Radina, Aronso, Schwartz, Albright-Willis, Norval & Ross, 2018:126). They were happy that they had brought about the social change through active engagement during all research processes. Teaching of SLE was a challenge but after the research, teachers felt very supported and strengthened. The principal considered the challenge of teaching SLE, because he was left with implementation strategies of strengthening the teaching. The school at which the research was conducted is known for its good performance, although it has large classes in the whole district. Therefore, the principal looks forward to the continuous success of the school. As per PAR, the research team built sound relationships that will help them to strengthen the teaching of English in large Grade 8 classes.

Parents who come from marginalised backgrounds were shown love and treated with respect. As a result, the knowledge they gained made them aware of the best opportunities for the education of their children. They stated that their involvement in the study would result in a positive impact on the education of their children. Parents' participation elevated support mechanisms in relation to teaching and learning. The involvement of the education inspector in this study was extremely pivotal as the evaluator towards the effective teaching and learning in the district; therefore, his contributions would not only benefit the school at which the study was conducted, but also the whole community. PAR advocates that when members enter into partnerships, they work together towards a common goal as equals. Learners were able to realise that, as the marginalised group, it called for democracy, which they witnessed when they shared ideas with their superiors, having equal opportunities according to PAR. Parents felt motivated when they discovered that their shared knowledge and experiences would benefit the school and the entire community.

### **3.13.4 Threats**

It was a threat to learners to sit around the table and have discussions together with the adults. It took them time to get involved in such discussions, because they thought it would be as if they argued with adults. In some cultures, it shows respect for a child to look adults in the eye during conversations, but with us it is regarded a taboo. As a result, it was something peculiar for children to have collaborate discussions with the adults where they were expected to take part. Although the participants were assured about the anonymity of their involvement in the study, they were still worried that something might happen to them for having participated. Likewise, parents never thought of PAR as a method that would compel them to come up with informed and valuable information for the whole group. They believed that the school principal and teachers always had to lead in education matters and considered them competent. They thought they would sit down and become active listeners; however, they were active members of the team, sharing the solutions towards the strengthening of teaching second language English in large classrooms. It was also a threat to participants when they anticipated that the semi-structured interviews they were involved in would be recorded for future use. Children doubted to talk about the challenges they encountered during English language classes in the presence of the principal. The principal was also anxious that the problems of his school were being discussed and exposed to the community.

## **3.14 THE SPIRAL SET UP OF PAR**

Data were generated by the use of the spirals of PAR. The spirals are very important as they overlap and initial plans quickly become obsolete in the light of learning from experiences (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007:276-277). Details how data were generated observe spirals are indicated below.

### **3.14.1 Initial planning**

The initial phase of the study involved a visit to a school where the researcher has decided to undertake the research. Before the visit to the school, I went to the District Education

Officer to request permission to conduct a study at a school in the district. According to McDonald (2012:45), good relations are based on trust and respect. That is why I deemed it best to obtain permission from District Education Manager before talking to the school principal of the research site. I explained my research topic and the aim of conducting the research at that specific school. Once the permission had been granted to me, I telephonically made an appointment with the school principal who also afforded me the opportunity to visit his school to discuss and explain my research topic and why I was conducting the research. I further introduced myself and made a detailed explanation of PAR as the research method I intended to use in conducting my study.

The school principal was happy to hear about the research topic and that I have chosen his school as a research site because his school is very large with scarce resources and teachers. However, he was anxious about the method I intended to use. He told me that he was not familiar with the PAR approach. I explained to him that PAR engages both the researcher and participants in a study as equals. It seeks to shape the lives of people through interactions and collaboration with the aim of improving situations that affect them (McTaggart, 1997:26). I explained to him that with PAR, the researcher does not assume to know everything; rather, she jointly works with the community to solve problems. With PAR, the participants are not the subject of the research but are active contributors to research who participate all phases of the research processes (McDonald, 2012:39). Although he was hesitant, he eventually accepted my offer but suggested that I should leave him with some notes to read on PAR and come after a week. He called me upon the agreed time and told me that he had studied the approach I envisaged to use and expressed his positive feelings about it that he wanted to participate willingly. The participants comprised a principal, three teachers, one education inspector, learners and six parents according to the consent letters, however, the principal told me that he could afford to help me with only two teachers who had experience of teaching English in Grade 8.

Furthermore, he promised to find the suitable parents and that he would ask teachers to select children from Grade 8. He convened the meeting with teachers who previously taught Grade 8 and currently teaching Grade 8. Once again, I introduced the topic of the study research and the aim of conducting such study. PAR was also explained in detail to the teachers. When they heard about the approach, they were doubtful that the method

of that nature would work. They urged that parents would never reach consensus with both the principal and teachers. They also claimed that PAR seemed to be time consuming, but I tried to alleviate their fear by telling them that PAR deals with the problem at hand; therefore, it would be easy to come up with a solution towards prominent problem. They believed that with PAR teaching of English in large classes could be strengthened. The teachers selected the learner as participants of the research study and issued the consent forms to their parents to sign. The introductory session about the research study was followed and learners were told that the research to be used catered for the minors to air their voices so that they could be heard and respected. With the help of the principal, the parents were also asked to participate. They were informed about the aim and objectives of the research study as well as the anticipated method to be followed.

### **3.14.2 Putting the team together**

The participants who consented to participate in the study were invited for a meeting and were informed about the steps that the meetings and all the procedures followed during meeting sessions would take. The consent forms that were issued to all participants were returned signed and with their names and phone numbers. The emphasis was once again that participation was voluntary, and all could withdraw from the study any time. The meeting time was determined to be on Wednesdays at 15:20, since, every Wednesday at 15:20, the whole school has no classes until 16:30. All learners and teachers would be free at an agreed time, therefore parents too promised to be available at that time. The team was also reminded that the discussion would be recorded for future use, but generated data would be handled with great confidentiality and anonymity would be observed.

The principal provided a classroom for the team to use for the meetings during the research process. The meeting started at 15:20 where the principal, I, eight learners, four parents and two teachers were available. The participants introduced themselves and I told them the aim and objectives of the study. They were also told that they had to feel free to articulate their views in front of everyone because they were equally important. As Tshelane (2013:416) alludes, PAR engages participants so that their voices can be heard and respected. Learners were made aware that their contributions towards this study might influence the school and the whole country.



The principal was requested to chair the meeting of that day. He also started by explaining to the team that the aim of the study was to provide strategies to strengthen the teaching of English in large Grade 8 classes. He further explained the research method PAR as a method that empowers and brings people together, as stated by McMeecking, Trott and Weinberg (2018:1157). PAR strives to empower participants and effect change, engage people mostly affected by the research to transform their own communities, school or other learners. The use of PAR as a method assisted the participants in seeing that they could bring about change to their school when they implemented their strategies for effective teaching and learning of English in Grade 8 where learners had been admitted in large numbers since 2017. In that year, the new curriculum was established which advocates that learners must transit from Grade 7 to Grade 8. The principal asked me to further elaborate on the method. Although I was satisfied with his explanation, I told the participants that PAR as a research method has its objectives and principles. I also indicated the ontology and the epistemological stance of PAR, as well as the power relations and the relationship between the researcher and the participants. They were encouraged to be totally free and learn from one another. Learners were made aware that in PAR both the researcher and participants are equal, therefore, they had to feel free to discuss and express their feelings in front of their teachers and parents. It is believed that as participants and the researcher collaborate to convey the voices of those oppressed and exposed to power imbalances, empowerment results (Chartier *et al.*, 2018:1551). In that session, the participants agreed to meet again the following Wednesday at 15:20, a convenient time for all of them. All participants agreed that at the next meeting, the formulation of the team rules to guide us would be finalised.

### **3.14.3 Development of team rules**

All the research team members were present at the meeting. Initially, we agreed that all participants would be assigned different tasks and roles in different meetings. All the members of the team were expected to contribute towards the strategies that would strengthen the teaching of English language in large Grade 8 classes. The co-researchers' involvement was regarded to ensure ownership of the project and it was emphasised that my role as a researcher was to guide them through the stages, because in the research processes, each person participated as knowledge subject expressing

ideas in a dialogical way. Participants in this study were constructing knowledge together with the researchers as equals (Mahlomaholo, 2013:321).

The members of the team also agreed that there an attendance register had to be kept, and that if one missed a meeting, a valid reason had to be provided via a phone call or WhatsApp to the researcher or the school principal. It was stated that all members had to exercise respect towards one another, and members' contributions had to be valued equally. It was then agreed that the roles as chairperson and the secretary of the team had to rotate so that all the members could engage in such roles. An agreement was reached that the data generated from that study would be kept strictly confidential, and the names of participants and the research site would remain anonymous. The participants reached consensus that all had to take notes during the meeting discussions for future reference. They agreed that the use of cell phones was strictly prohibited during the meeting to avoid the interruption during sessions. The researcher played the facilitator role throughout the discussion, while the secretary noted all important facts raised by the participants. Furthermore, the team agreed to use their mother tongue language for all the discussions, which would be transcribed and translated into English. All the members of the team were assured that their participation would be based on clarity in all parts of the research projects.

#### **3.14.4 The participants' activities**

The participants met again at the next meeting as planned with the purpose of coming with strategies that the teachers could use to strengthen the teaching of English in large Grade 8 classes. All participants were allowed to air their views about the topic. Moreover, the team members agreed to brainstorm the challenges brought by teaching English to large Grade 8 classes. According to Chartier *et al.* (2018:1549) PAR cycles were necessary to identify opportunities for actions and build participants' confidence and that taking it through would help to get a better understanding of where we were going and what we needed to accomplish. When we all understood the tasks well, we finally brainstormed the challenges faced by teaching English in large classes. The work of all participants was written down by Bony and all the participants participated with the intention that they fully understood what was expected of each one of them.

### **3.14.5 Strategic planning.**

Strategic planning is an activity important for stating future directions which are vital for the development of a coherent basis for decision making, necessary for developing priorities and helpful for improving organizational performance (Albon, Iqbal & Pearson 2016:207). The participants then drew up a strategic plan that would operationalize the team's activities in response to the five objectives of the study. The participants agreed to be involved and collaboratively engaged towards the strategic plan that assisted in strategies to strengthen the teaching of English language in large Grade 8 classes.

### **3.14.6 Identifying mechanisms relevant to improving the situation**

In our meetings, the participants shed light on the strategies for strengthening the teaching of English language in large Grade 8 classes due to the challenges that are faced by teachers of such classes. The participants agreed that there had to be a formulation of strategy towards an encountered challenge and thereafter an application of strategy could be assessed in order to get a clear and true picture that would help both learners and teachers.

The participants formulated a plan on how to go about the strategies. The envisaged challenges, according to the learners, were that their teachers failed to mark and give them feedback in time. They indicated that they could not improve their English grammatical mistakes because their teachers do not mark them; only few learners were marked. Teachers, on the other hand, indicated that when learners were many in class, they helped fast learners, while slow learners suffered. The team came up with some strategies towards the mentioned challenges, such as peer teaching or grouping learners. Learners suggested that if a teacher could only facilitate in class and teach them those skills that would help them to teach one another, that would bring about better results. Also, the suggestion was that learners be divided into smaller groups so that a teacher would have fewer papers to mark. Learners were also encouraged to full participation while taught in a large class. Their participation would instil a sense of ownership that, even though they are many in a class, they still felt part of that teaching and learning. It was also suggested that learners had to sit in circles so that there would not be anyone

who would hide behind others and never participated. Another strategy that the team agreed upon its usage was that of parental involvement in the education of their children. When parents take part in this, such as checking on the work of their children daily, learners give assurance that they could also engage collaboratively in teaching and learning. The co-teachers suggested that the given strategies would be assessed continuously to see if they worked or not.

### **3.14.7 Setting priorities**

Prioritisation is a process which involves an individual or a group strategically deciding and ranking a number of items in order of their perceived or measured importance or significance, with the purpose of scheduling and implementing the requirements of each item (Firesmith, 2004:36). It was vital to all participants to have an understanding of large classes in order to adopt some strategies to strengthen the teaching of English language in large Grade 8 classes. According to Tillmann and Salas (2018:699), PAR is anchored by values such as dialogue by exchanging different operations that bring about common understanding, acknowledgement of individuals, groups or community differences, creating spaces for further conversations. The research team will then collaboratively be involved in exchanging ideas about the notion of a large class.

Another priority was identifying the challenges towards the teaching of English language in large Grade 8 classes, which was followed by brainstorming the solution to the aforementioned challenges. The fourth priority was the implementation of the suggested possible solutions by the team members. The reflection towards the implemented strategy was the fifth priority that the members of the team agreed on.

Finally, the participants alluded that, based on the experience they gained through their involvement and dedication, if teachers could apply peer teaching and improve seating arrangements in class, better results would be achieved. They also observed that involving parents in the education of their children could strengthen the teaching of English. Importantly so, they discovered that regular feedback and learner-teacher interaction could help to attain better results.

### **3.14.8 Implementation of acknowledged strategies**

At this stage, all the participants were of the idea that the identified strategies be accessed through application. The involvement of the teachers and that of the learners was necessary because they are the immediate stakeholders of the teaching and learning process. The parents were too beneficial, because they were directly involved to solve the issue of many learners who were admitted to the same school but did not have an extra class in 2018. Parents had to contribute money and build a shack (*mokuku*) and bought chairs for their children so that they could be accommodated in Grade 8. This is in line with PAR, which suggests that all the involved members of the community must come up with suitable solutions for the problems that affect them. The involvement of the participants helped other parents to see that it is necessary for all parents to take initiative in the learning of their children. Parents saw the importance of checking on the work of their children. Teachers agreed that it was a good sign, because learners' participation was increased, as all wanted their teachers to realise that their parents had checked their schoolwork. Thus, motivated both learners and teachers therefore proved to be a useful strategy. All the participants came up with strategies that would strengthen the teaching and take part in all the suggested activities. Some of the strategies like the use of flipped class, blended learning and learning management systems such as blackboards were considered but would work fully in the near future. The participants were enabled to re-plan activities that would be discussed at the next meetings.

### **3.14.9 Reflection stage**

Reflection is a vital component of PAR cycles and allows researchers to plan what changes can be made and implement these changes, and reflect once again (Vaccarino, Comrie, Murray & Sligo, 2007:3). During this stage of the research process, the participants shared and consolidated the activities of the last meeting through dialogue by exchanging different perceptions that bring about a common understanding (Tillmann & Salas, 2018:692). The review of the activities from the previous meetings and discussions based on the implementation stage was done at the reflection stage.

At this stage, the contributions made by the participants from the research process were reflected on. Such a reflection afforded participants the ability to realise activities that

respond to the themes in the research process. According to HO, Jones, Kun, Loewenson, Milson, and Shakpeh (2018:1653), PAR takes action and assesses progress in the actions and the effects, and reviews the changes to build shared knowledge. The spirals of PAR occur at this stage.

### **3.15 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

In order to comply with the ethical considerations, I requested clearance and permission from the University of Free State's ethical committee. According to Hlalele and Tsotetsi (2015:148), ethical considerations are generally considered to deal with beliefs regarding what is morally good or bad, right or wrong, proper or improper. I informed the participants about the ethical considerations and their rights concerning the research study during meetings. Permission was also sought from the Ministry of Education and Training in Lesotho in order to access the research site. I also requested permission from the principal of the school where the research was carried out. The principal of the school afforded me time with teachers, learners and parents as participants.

All involved participants were requested to sign the consent forms for voluntary participation. The consent forms stipulated the purpose and the nature of the study and all procedures and steps to be followed during and after the study. The participants were informed that their participation was free and voluntary, and that they could withdraw participating from the study at any time without fear that something would happen to their children. They were also assured of confidentiality with regard to the generated data. The names of the participants and the selected school would be disguised to ensure anonymity. They were informed that they would be treated with care and respect throughout the research project (Hlalele & Tsotetsi, 2015:148).

### **3.16 DATA GENERATION PROCEDURES**

The study suggested strategies to strengthen the teaching of English second language in large Grade 8 classes. There are a variety of methods for data collection, but this study intended to use Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Focus Group Discussions involve collecting individuals from similar backgrounds or experiences to talk about a specific

topic of interest. It encourages discussions with other participants. In focus group discussions, the participants are free to talk with other group members about their perception, attitudes or ideas (Mishra, 2016:1).

According to Escalada and Heong (2014:1), FGD is a quick assessment and semi-structural data collection method in which a selected set of participants come together to discuss issues and concerns based on the list of main important factors drawn up by the researchers and provides an adequate way to learn from the target audience. Such discussions on the strategies to strengthen the teaching of English second language in large Grade 8 classes help participants to fully share their ideas and views amongst themselves.

This study uses probing questions in the form of focus group discussions to get informative responses from the participants. The study also used the one-on-one meeting to discuss the crucial matters with the school principal and the parents. Focus Group Discussions (FGD) provide insights into how people think and provides a deeper understanding of the topic being discussed (Nagle & Williams, 2013:2). Focus group discussions (FGD) afford participants with an understanding of the topic where they are collaboratively involved in the strategy to strengthen the teaching of English second language in large Grade 8 classes. All the participants shared their experiences of teaching and learning English in large Grade 8 classes, as well as providing and generating data by providing solutions regarding to coming up with strategies to strengthen the teaching of English in large Grade 8 classes.

In focus group discussions, the researcher has to be flexible and free of bias and prejudices but have proficiency in the language in which discussions are conducted (Mishra, 2016:7). This view is in line with approach under discussions, PAR, which advocates that research has to accommodate the opinions of the participants without any interest and treat them equally. PAR rejects the systematic production of unequal power relations between the researchers and the participants (Hlalele & Tsotetsi, 2015:149).

Furthermore, in this study, the data were generated through meetings with various participants. In the fulfilment with the objective of the study the participants were engaged in full, but voluntary participation. The participants were timeously encouraged to air their views freely without any fear that they might be laughed at or discouraged. During the meetings, two members of the team were tasked to note the important points on the

flipchart that would later be discussed in the meeting in order to respond to the topic under the discussion. The observed themes in the meeting were also used to respond to the objectives of the study.

In focus group discussions the goal is to obtain as much useful information as possible. Therefore, the researcher stimulates the group discussion and probe for clarification and greater detail where every answer is considered useful (Mishra, 2016:8). As such, the social interaction within the group yielded free and more complex responses because people often expressed what they might not do in other settings or, if interviewed individually, gaining the required knowledge. Collaboratively, we discussed the themes and made clear rules that one person at a time should talk, no use of phones was and all had to maintain confidentiality (Nagle & Williams, 2013:2).

### **3.17 DATA GENERATION INSTRUMENT**

Since the study is informed by PAR as an approach, both the researcher and the participants worked together towards a common goal of developing strategies to strengthen the teaching of English in large classes. I used the Free Attitude Interview (FAI) technique. According to Hlalele and Tsotetsi (2015:150), in FAI, people talk like they would when engaging in a normal conversation and the nature of the normal discussion encourages the free and open engagement of participants. Since the study is underpinned by PAR, we were all involved in free and open discussions. The use of focus group discussions also motivated the participants to share their perceptions, points of view, experiences, wishes and concerns without pressuring them on how teachers can strengthen teaching of English second language in large classes.

Furthermore, as the means to adhere to the ethical guidelines, I requested permission from all the participants to record and audio tape our discussions for future analysis. According to Vieira, Lopes and Soares (2014:0753), learning is more effective when provided in real time accordingly to each learner needs and this sense video lecture is supported. Videos can be used as a teaching aid on particular linguistic structures such as presenting a conversation; it can also be the sole material on which the course is based, for example, when asking learners to record themselves and prepare further



activities on the videos and provide appropriate feedback on these videos (Bal-Gezegin, 2014:450).

### **3.18 DATA ANALYSIS**

This study analysed data by using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). According to Fairclough (2004:3), CDA is concerned with the ways in which language influences political speeches, reinforces ideologies, and continues or defines the tradition of inequality in society throughout the world, it is a cross-disciplinary method, which comprises the analysis of text and talk in all disciplines of the humanities and the social sciences (Hlalele & Tsotetsi, 2015:151).

#### **3.18.1 Origin of CDA**

According to Rahimi and Riasati (2011:108), many scholars have been attracted by CDA since the 1980s considerably with the works of the British sociolinguist Norman Fairclough. CDA as a model, is categorised by a number of principles. For instance, all approaches are problem-oriented and interdisciplinary. CDA is characterised by the common interest in the mystifying ideologies and power through the systematic investigation of semiotic data of written, spoken or visual (Rahimi & Riasati, 2011:108)

CDA is a cross-disciplinary model which involves the analysis of the text and talk in all disciplines of the humanities and social sciences (Hlalele & Tsotetsi, 2015:151). CDA assists in allowing the voices of the marginalised to be heard. The aim of CDA is to investigate critically social inequalities as it is constituted, legitimised, constituted and expressed through language use (Rahimi & Riasati, 2013:108).

According to Wodak and Myer (2008), CDA emerged in the early 1990s supported by Van Leeuwen, Van Reeuwen, Fairlough, Wodak and Van Dijk. In order to come up with the strategies to strengthen the teaching of second language English in large Grade 8 class, CDA plays a vital role in its use of language. CDA is not produced in a context-free vacuum, but in discourse contexts that are built up with the ideologies of social systems and institutions. Thus, language plays an important role in expressing changes and reproducing ideologies (Rahimi & Riasati, 2013:111). In this study, CDA was used to

inform both the researcher and the participants how the five objectives helped to find the strategies to strengthen the teaching of English language in large classes. CDA helps in that it allows people to emancipate themselves from forms of domination through self-reflection. The participants in this study, through the use of PAR, collaboratively suggested ways that would help both teachers and learners to learn in a conducive environment.

### **3.18.2 Levels of CDA**

#### **3.18.2.1 *Textual analysis***

This level of CDA focuses on the actual text itself. It pays more attention to the formal and the semantic features of the written language of the text. It assists with the fact that people understand and represent the communicative situation not only text and talk (Van Dijk, 1993:358). The level of data analysis helps the participants to understand the meaning of both the spoken and written words in a research study. It involves the presentation of facts and beliefs. Textual analysis is mainly concerned with the text, not social or contextual elements. During the focus group discussions participants were able to understand the text and the talk through the use of CDA, because all were involved in the discussions; in other words, they owned the study.

According to Fairclough (2004:16), textual description should be seen as an open process that can be enhanced through dialogue across disciplines and theories not as before and independent from social analysis and critique. During the analysis of data the linguistic nature of CDA assisted all the participants to understand the meaning of words and interpreted the use of language evitable. Fairclough (2004:14) further maintains that textual analysis is selective. The five objectives of the study were selected among many that the researcher would like to formulate. CDA takes into account that text has social, political and moral consequences. CDA assisted in that when text was unpacked for reading both verbal and visual textual signs were also taken into account as the team discussed together. People view text as the true reflection of realities and facts (Rahimi & Risiati, 2011:111).

### **3.18.2.2 *Discursive practice analysis***

This level of analysis is concerned with how people act within a particular discipline of language. It affords people with rules and norms of socially acceptable behaviour used to produce, receive and interpret message. Van Dijk (2003:375) states that this level focuses on the function of the structures and strategies of text or talk itself. Discursive practices include the spoken and unspoken conventions that govern how people learn to speak and think. In this study, all the verbal and non-verbal phenomena were discussed. The generated data from the focus groups contributed towards strategies to strengthen the teaching of second-language English in large Grade 8 classes.

Through healthy communication and participation all team members were able to contextualise the knowledge they got from one another during the analysis of data. CDA at this level assists people to learn about their identity, who they are and how they relate with the community. This study is underpinned by PAR, which is in line with CDA encourages people to be active members of the community who take part and come up with solutions towards the problems that involve them as community members. Through communication participants were able to provide insights on how teachers can improve the teaching of second-language English in large Grade 8 classes. CDA at this level affords the teachers and learners to find the hidden meaning in different aspects of English language through the analysis of data. According to Sheyholislami (2008:3), discourse is not a complex communicative and social practice event that also includes a social context, featuring participants and not simply an isolated textual or dialogic structure.

### **3.18.2.3 *Sociological analysis***

This level of analysis is shaped by the interpretations based on societal ideologies. It is dependent on how terminology is used in a particular context. Van Dijk (1993:357) posits that “CDA is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context”. In this regard, an informative discourse entails that participants are biased free when they develop strategies to strengthen the teaching of second-language English in the society in which they live. Sociological analysis is

aimed at discovering the length to which discourse is influenced by and impacts social structures and the nature of the social activity of which it forms part (Ruiz, 2009:3). According to Meyer and Wadkok (2008:2), it is a social practice to use language that is both determined by social structure and contributes to stabilising and changing the structure. They are of the view that concepts, opinions, attitude from a daily life are sustained of communication. The participants in this study stipulated the challenges that both teachers and learners encounter every day due to large classes at their school. Through communication and interaction, they suggested strategies to strengthen the teaching of second-language English in large classes. Language operates within the social dimension reflects and constructs ideology (Rahimi & Riasati, 2013:111).

The data analysis at this level was communicated and interpreted through the meeting and discussion of all participants. CDA at this level has interest in and is motivated by pressing social issues, changing the situation of those who suffer more from dominance and equality. The analysis of data in this study afforded both teachers and learners to come up with strategies that will strengthen the teaching of second language English.

### **3.19 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

This chapter presented the design structure of the study. PAR as a methodological approach was presented. The historical background of PAR and its relevance towards the study were also presented and discussed. Furthermore, the objectives, principles, ontology, epistemology and the relationship of the researcher and the participants were presented. Also, the chapter presented how the participants were selected, their credentials, and the SWOT analysis guiding the activities of the participants, the spiral up of PAR and how data are analysed.

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study aims to strengthen strategies in the teaching of second language English in large Grade 8 classes. The chapter presents and analyses the generated data in relation to the objectives of the study. The objectives of this study relate to challenges around the teaching of English as a second language in the context of large Grade 8 classes, outline the solutions to the challenges and conditions conducive to strengthening strategies of teaching second-language English in large classes. The possible threats for strategies to strengthen the teaching of second-language English in large Grade 8 classes and the evidence of success as per best practices will also be examined.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used to present the meaning of generated data on how to develop strategies to strengthen the teaching of second language in large Grade 8 classes. The meaning of the generated data, in accordance with Van Dijk (1993:357), helped in understanding the influence of the study's objective towards development of the effective strategies to strengthen teaching in large classes. The meaning of generated data is observed at three levels of CDA – the textual level; the discursive level, which affords the participants with rules and norms of how to interpret the message. The socio-structural level of CDA assisted the participants to come up with the best strategies to strengthen the teaching of English as second language.

#### **4.2 CHALLENGES TO TEACHING OF SECOND LANGUAGE ENGLISH IN LARGE GRADE 8 CLASSES**

Strategies refer to the mechanisms that all stakeholders can apply in order to strengthen the teaching of English language in large classes. Such strategies play a pivotal role as solutions to the challenges that stakeholders face teaching English second language in large Grade 8 classes.

#### 4.2.1 Learner-teacher interactions

According to Perez (2018: online), learner-teacher interactions are grouped into three domains, namely emotional support, which focuses on positive relationships; support between teacher-learner and learner-learner; and the level of which the teacher provides to learners. Another domain is classroom organisation, which looks at how the learning time is maximised through time and learner behaviour management. The last is instrumental support, which includes the way the teacher promotes cognitive and linguistic gain, and the delivery of effective feedback. Although learner-teacher interaction plays a vital role in teaching and learning, teachers find it hard and depressing to interact with learners when they teach large classes, particularly when they teach English, which compels learners to participate in activities such as debates, drama and poetry. Teachers are the custodians of the curriculum in schools. They are the stakeholders who cite that, due to poor learner-teacher interaction, it is impossible to concentrate on all learners and therefore, not enough reinforcement happens (Bahanshal, 2013:49).

Large classes reduce learners' active participation, depth and breadth of thinking, and reduce the quality and frequency on instructor interaction with learners (Asgalan, 2016:362). Learners were active participants in this study and confirmed that lack of learner-teacher interaction poses many challenges that hinder their education due to large classes. When learners interact with their teachers on a daily basis, they like school. During one meeting, teachers, parents and learners as participants of this study articulated that among a variety of challenges that are brought about by teaching large classes, learner-teacher interaction is the core challenge.

**Mrs Lereko** indicated,

*Ka lebaka la tsebelisano empe lipakeng tsa baithuti le matichere ka sehlopheng sa baithuti ba bangata, baithuti babang ba ipata ka mora ba bang ebe ha ba arabe ka sehlopheng.*

[Due to poor learner-teacher interaction in a large class most learners hide behind others and never participate in class.]

**Mrs Ithabeleng** added,

*Ka sehlopheng sa ban aba bangata ho thata ho tsoaea baithuti kaofela. Ka lebaka leo baithuti ba bangata ba ipata kamora babang ebe se ke lebisa tlhokomelo hob*

*a arabang. Ke utloa bohloko ha ke hlokomela hoore ban aba bangata haba sebetse hantle.*

[In a large class it is difficult to mark all your learners within a single or double period. Many learners hide behind others; as a result, one pays attention only to those who participate. In most cases I become angry when I notice that more than half of my class does not perform well.]

**Mrs Kenny** responded,

*Ha bana ba le bangata tichere o shebana ba bohlale feela ebe ba bang ba salla.*

[The teacher focuses on brilliant learners; the slow learners remain behind.]

**Bony** indicated,

*Ha re le bangata ka sehlopheng tichere ha e hlokomele bana kaofela. Ka hona ba bang baa bapala.*

[Due to the large number of learners in a class our teacher does not notice all of us, therefore some learners play in class.]

**Likopo** corroborated her view,

*Bana ba bang ha ba nke karolo, ba bang baa boreha.*

[Some learners do not take part at all during the lesson, they get bored.]

**Tumelo** added,

*Bana ba bang ba bapala ka sehlopheng tichere entse le teng kaha re bangata haholo joale ha a re bone.*

[Some learners play in class in the presence of the teacher who does not notice because we are many.]

**Lipuo** commended,

*Re bangata ka sehlopheng joale mocheso o mongata, rea khathala, rea robala, ha re arabe tichere.*

[We are many in a class; it gets hot; as a result, we get tired and sleep; some of us do not participate at all.]

**Thabiso** postulates,

*Ha re fuoe mosebetsi oa sehlopha ba bang ha ba nke karolo ho hang hobane tichere ha e khone ho tsamaea sehlopheng se seng le se seng ka nako.*

[When we are given group work some learners do not take part in the group discussion because a teacher cannot be with all groups in due time.]

**Thabo** observed,

*Baithuti ha ba mamele ho hang ka sehlopheng, ba etsa lerata.*

[Learners make a noise in the class; they do not listen to the teacher at all.]

The contributors above clearly indicate that learner-teacher interaction is a vital aspect of teaching and learning. Teachers play an important role in the teaching-learning process. The teacher is one of the main sources of success in the teaching and learning context (Farch, 2010:360). The statement by Mrs Lereko, *“Due to poor learner-teacher interaction in a large class most learners hide behind others and never participate in class,”* connotes that large classes are a threat to quality teaching and learning. The statement further entails that, due to poor learner-teacher interaction, most learners do not participate in class.

The response from Mrs Ithabeleng, *“It is difficult to mark all your learners within a single or double period,”* shows that teaching English in large classes poses a challenge when the teachers and learners do not interact, because the aim of teaching English is to improve the learners’ communicative skills for meaningful interaction. It encourages learners’ participation and meaningful dialogue (Fiona & Rawie 2017:1-14). Her statement, *“I become angry when I notice that more than half of my class does not perform,”* alludes to the fact that teachers not only teach learners, but they also act as parents and care for their learners. In support of Mrs Ithabeleng’s view, Doung and Nyuyen (2015:17) articulate that many teachers have the preconception that, when faced with teaching in large classes, they may be tempted to give in, thinking that there is absolutely no chance of getting so many learners to effectively learn.

These contributions ring a bell that learner-teacher interaction is a serious challenge with regard to teaching English to large Grade 8 classes. The assertion by Bony that, *“Due to large numbers of learners in a class our teacher does not notice all of us, therefore some play,”* is indicative that lack of learner-teacher interaction in teaching and learning is a challenge. Learners who play during the lesson will neither develop any skill nor attain



objectives and the content attributed per that lesson or period. Learners must acquire knowledge and skills at school, but the implication is that those who play during the lesson, will not succeed. The citation by Likopo, "*Some learners do not participate in class,*" corroborates the response given by Mrs Lereko that some learners hide behind others and do not participate in the lesson. This kind of behaviour displayed by learners poses a challenge that calls for strategies to strengthen the teaching of second language English to large classes. Similarly, the response of Tumelo, "*Some learners play in the presence of the teacher, who does not notice because we are many,*" confirms the need for new strategies that will help teachers to deal with large classes.

The assertion by Lipuo, "*We are many in a class as a result, we get tired and sleep,*" is an indication that large numbers of learners in class prevent learner-teacher interaction. As a result, learners will perform poorly. English as a second language improves the communicative competence of learners and provides them with the confidence to communicate effectively with clarity, relevance and accuracy through speaking and writing using standard language. Language acquisition requires the focus, attention and application of both teachers and learners, which are achievable where contact between teachers and learners is adequate (Shehu & Tafida, 2016:72).

Furthermore, the statement by Thabiso, "*When we are given groupwork, some learners do not take part in the group discussion because the teacher does not interact with all groups in due time,*" is understood to denote that lack of learner-teacher interaction in a large class poses a challenge and keeps learners from acquiring quality education, which is their right. On the other hand, the citation by Thabo, "*Learners make noise in class and do not listen to the teacher at all,*" is supported by Bahanshal (2013:50), who states that the noise level of some learners is also considered problematic, as it will cause disturbances and prevent their classmates from learning. In a large class there is a tendency to lose control of the classroom, as most of the learners may get carried away and pay little or no attention to what the teacher is saying (Maduabuchi & Emechebe, 2016:21).

The statement by Mrs Kenny, "*When children are many the teacher focuses only on brilliant learners while slow learners remain behind,*" indicates that interaction between a teacher and a learner is important. When the teacher focuses on brilliant learners only, slow learners are left behind, which leads to poor English proficiency. When teachers

focus on all learners in the same way, this allows even slow learners to learn English effectively. Treats learners equally is in line with the principles of CER, which dictate that fairness should be used at all times.

#### **4.2.2 Curriculum (English)**

According to Hanover Research (2010:5), a curriculum decides what content to cover, sets broad goals well in advance, makes sure to make estimates on how long it will take to cover the material and describes how the syllabus is organised. Curriculum is described as the knowledge and skill that learners are expected to learn, which includes the learning objectives they are expected to meet. A curriculum is designed to ensure that learners get adequate learning and experiences that benefit their academic development (see section 2.4.4). According to the policy envisages on integrated curriculum organised into learning areas that highlight the challenges and contexts in which learners are expected to function and to which all school subjects are expected to contribute. Although a curriculum serves a good purpose in teaching and learning, the following assertions were made during one of our meetings about curriculums at the schools:

**Mrs Lereko** denoted,

*Lenane thuto le lecha la sekhooba bakeng sa ma Grade 8 le na le litaba tse ngata.  
Kahoo hare le qete ho ruta bana.*

[The new integrated English curriculum in Lesotho for Grade 8 has a broader content than the old curriculum. As a result, we do not finish the syllabus.]

**Mrs Ithabeleng** added,

*'Muso o theile lenane thuto le lecha ntle ho li sebelisoa tse lekaneng. Re tjametsoe ke baithuti ba satsebeng ho bale le ho ngola.*

[The government has developed the curriculum with no resources and facilities. We are faced with learners who do not know how to read and write.]

**Mr Molise** also added,

*Ka lebaka la thuto ea mathomo e sa le felloang, re tlamehile ho amohela baithuti ba bangata ba tlang Grade 8 ho tsoa Grade 7. Ha re sa amohela ka mangolo a*

*application. Re le matichere ha rea kenyelletso ha ho thehoa lenane thuto le lecha.*

[Due to free primary education in Lesotho, we are obligated to admit many learners because that transit from Grade 7 to Grade 8. We no longer admit through the application process on first come first serve basis. We were not involved in the development of the curriculum as teachers.]

**Mr Martin** mentioned,

*Matichere h a tsebe ka botlalo linthla tsa lenane thuto le lecha. Ha hona li hlahisoa le likifuto tsa ho rua. Matichere ha a koetlisesoa ho ruta ba sebelisa lenane thuto lena le lecha.*

[The aspects of a new curriculum are beyond teachers' knowledge and skills. There are no facilities, resources or teaching aids. They were not trained on the curriculum at teaching colleges nor universities.]

**Mrs Kenny** added,

*Ka lenane thuto lena le lecha ban aba rona ha bas a ts'oaoa ka tsoepo e kholo ha ba nepile kappa kete ha ba fositse. Rele batsopali rea ferekana.*

[With the new curriculum our children are no longer marked with a big tick when they are correct or an X when they are not correct. The new curriculum confuses us as parents.]

**Mr Mosuoe** indicated,

*Liphetoho tsa lenaneo le lecha la thuto li etsa hore re seke ra tseba hantle se etsahalang, bana ba rutoa lintho tse thata.*

[We no longer know what is happening in the education of our children due to the changes in the curriculum. Our children are taught difficult subjects.]

**Tumelo** added also,

*Ka lenane thuto le lecha matichere a re fa mosebetsi o mongata, ka nako tse ling ha ba qete mosebetsi oo ba neng ba rerile ho o qeta.*

[With the new curriculum, teachers give us a lot of work; sometimes they do not finish what they have planned to finish.]

**Kany** observed,

*Lenane thuto le hloka mokhoa oa ho lula re shebane empa re ntse re lula ka mokhoa oa khale hobane re bangata ka sehlopheng.*

[The new curriculum encourages an improved seating arrangement, but we still use the old seating arrangement because we are many, with a few classes.]

The assertion made by Mrs Lereko that *“the new curriculum has a broader content than the old one. As a result, we do not finish the syllabus,”* is understood in this context to mean that the content in a Grade 8 syllabus covers many learning concepts, to the extent that it is not possible for teachers to finish teaching all of them in due time. It is also a challenge to the curriculum developers to reduce some concepts to enable teachers to finish all the learning concepts within the stipulated time. It is clear that the learning concepts are not given enough time. In addition, the response from Mrs Lthabeleng that *“... we are faced with learners who do not know how to read and write,”* entails that the new curriculum has been developed by the government, but the resources and facilities are not catered for. At a social level of discourse analysis, it is clear that teachers of Lesotho are facing a predicament of learners who do not know how to read and write due to scarce resources.

The same idea was revealed by Mr Martin’s citation when he said, *“Some aspects of the curriculum are beyond the teachers’ knowledge and skill, teachers were not trained on the curriculum at teaching colleges and universities.”* The idea was supported by Khokanyan’aphiri (2013:4), who stipulated that lack of meaning has resulted in misconceptions about the curriculum, which meant automatic promotion. Also, the new curriculum has an appalling shortage of key teaching materials, such as the syllabi, at many schools. The lack of teaching resources results in negative effect on the effectiveness of teaching in classes and the smooth implementation of the curriculum. According to Kerr (2011:9), availability and access to appropriate teaching were problems; the lack of alternative approaches and lack of confidence in the implementation of the curriculum need some professional development or skills. The above assertions also indicate that there is a need for the government to provide schools with enough resources such as teachers, teaching aids and the infrastructure that aim at fostering classroom participation and independent learning (Khokanyan’a Phiri 2013:1).

Furthermore, the response by Mrs Kenny, *“With the new curriculum our children are no longer marked with a big tick when they are correct or an X when they are not correct,”*

shows that parents are taking care of the schoolwork of their children. It also proves that the government should have involved the parents fully when developing the curriculum in order for them to understand the changes that affect their children. PAR is a systematic enquiry that seeks to improve the social issues of people (Hine 2013:1). In the same manner, the response from Mr Mosuoë has the same connotation as that of Mrs Kenny. Mr Mosuoë denoted, *"We no longer know what is happening in the education of our children due to the changes in the curriculum. Our children are taught difficult subjects."* This is understood to mean that they care for the education of their children as parents and are aware of the changes in the curriculum. His response further detailed that the contents of the curriculum are beyond their level of understanding, because he believed that their children are taught difficult subjects.

The assertion from Tumelo, *"with the new curriculum our teachers give us a lot of work,"* is an indication that the new curriculum has a lot of context; therefore, teachers should improve their teaching methods to motivate their learners and engage them fully in daily teaching and learning. Teachers must try by all means to elevate their learners for fear of the new curriculum. Kany's response, *"the new curriculum encourages the improved seating arrangement,"* is in line with Dunbar (2004:3), when he mentions that a good classroom seating arrangement is the cheapest form of effective classroom management. However, in Kany's response, the challenge is that although the curriculum encourages a good seating arrangement, they still use the traditional seating plan because of the number of learners in the class.

#### **4.2.3 Limited assessment**

Teaching large classes can present real challenges in the management, the making and the standardisation of assessment practices. In a large class, it is difficult to grade many assignments. Assessment used in large classes often encourages brief and shallow processing of material (Hanover Research, 2010:2). Coping with a written language is a challenge in large classes. After giving a test a teacher has to take papers home to mark, while there are also piles of work from other classes (Le, 2002:9). During our meeting with the co-researcher, we discussed the challenges of teaching English in a large class with regard to assessment:

**Mrs Lereko** put forward,

*Ho tsoaea ho boima, hare ba khutlisetse mosebetsi ka nako. Bongata ba baituti ba rona ha ba tsebe ho ngola. Re qeta nako e ntse re leka ho utloa na ba leka horeng.*

[Marking is very tough; we do not give feedback in due time. Most of our learners do not know how to write so one spends a long time to get the meaning of every word in a sentence.]

**Mrs Ithabeleng** added,

*Hare sa khona ho qeta ho ts'oea ha kele ka sehlopheng. Ka letsatsi le hlahlamang ke etsa ho hong. Ho ts'oea ke bothata.*

[If I don't manage to mark all my learners while in class, the following day I do something else. We teach both internal and external classes, marking is disaster.]

**Mr Molise** noted that:

*Matichere ha a fane ka mosebetsi ba ts'aba hore ha ban a qeta ho ts'oea. Ba fan aka lihlahlobo tse bobebe tse sa kenyelletseng lintho tsohle tseo ba li rutileng.*

[Teachers do not give classwork daily for fear that they will take time to finish marking. They give shallow tests that do not cover all levels of assessment.]

Mrs Lereko's response, "*Marking is very tough, we do not give feedback in due time*," is understood to mean that due to large classes, teachers face a challenge of assessment. It is obvious that teachers do not provide feedback to learners accordingly. As a result, there is a decline in quality education. English teachers have to assess learners every time in order to check if they have acquired the necessary language skills. From his response, it is difficult for learners to progress if their feedback is delayed. Her further response, "*Most of our learners do not know how to write*," is understood to denote that teachers need more time for marking as they try to understand every word in a sentence, as it is clear that learners do not know how to write. This is a serious problem for teachers who have to interact with individual learners.

Similarly, the assertion by Mrs Ithabeleng, "*If I don't manage to mark all my learners while in class, the following day I do something else*," is indicative that large number of learners is a problem. It shows that if the number of learners were reduced, all learners would be

marked all at the same time and get feedback in due time. This shows that teaching and learning would be effective. The response also shows the seriousness of this challenge when a teacher indicated that if she cannot finish marking while in class the following day, she does something else. Furthermore, citation by Mr Molise, “*Teachers do not give class work daily for fear that they will take time to finish marking.*” proves even further that large classes pose a challenge to teachers because it is difficult for them to process marking. Continued feedback has the potential to help learners to learn to monitor their academic progress more closely (Singer-Freeman & Bastone, 2016:18).

In another meeting with participants the following assertions were made by learners.

**Bony** indicated,

*Matichere a rona a re fa mosebetsi o monyane, lipotsonyane tse peli feela ba tsebe ho ts’oaha ka pele.*

[Teachers give us limited work of about two questions that will afford them to mark quickly.]

**Kany** added,

*Re khutlisetsoa mesebetsi oa rona ka mor’a nako e telele.*

[We get our feedback after a long time.]

**Thabo** stipulated,

*Nako ea metsostso e 40 kapa e 80 e nyane e feela tichere a so re ts’oae kaofela.*

[A 40-minute lesson or even a double period is not enough for our teacher to mark us all.]

**Mrs Kenny** asserted,

*Re rata sekolo sena empa lihlopha li bana ba bangata, matichere le li sebelisoa lia fokola. Bana ba rona ba ruteloa ka mukhukung. Ba tla sebetsa hantle joang? Matichere a sitoa.*

[We like this school, but the classes are overcrowded; there are not enough teachers and material. Our children are taught in a shack. How can they perform well? Teachers cannot manage.]

**Mr Martin** (Education Officer) added,

*Ho hlahloba baithuti ke bothata ha sehlopha se le seholo. Tichere e lieha ho khutlisa maqephe. Baithuti ba makala ba lebetse hore ba ile ke ba ngola.*

[Assessment is a problem in large class. In the first place, what do you assess as a teacher when you did not have time for individual learners? In a large a class, the teacher delays to give feedback to learners. Learners are surprised by the feedback because they do not even remember what they wrote.]

The response from Bony that *"We are given a limited work of about two questions that will afford the teachers to mark quickly,"* has the connotation that, due to a large number of learners in a class, teachers have decided to give learners work that will allow them to mark, even though it does not cover what they did. On the other hand, a citation by Kany that *"We are given feedback after a long time,"* indicates clearly that adequate assessment is a problem in a large class. Singer-Freeman and Bastone (2016:16) postulate that frequent assessment accompanied by rapid feedback helps learners, especially those who are educationally underprepared to develop better work habits.

Furthermore, the reference by Thabo that, *"A 40-minute lesson or even a double period is not enough,"* shows that the challenge is serious, because one would think that a double lesson would help teachers to finish their work. This is a serious matter that needs to be solved with immediate effect. One of the parents also indicated, *"We like this school, but classes are overcrowded, there are not enough teachers and material."* Her statement stresses that the overcrowded classes, insufficient teachers and teaching materials are the major reason why teachers are obligated to give superficial tests that will enable them to mark and prepare for other classes. This statement also shows that as parents they are aware of what is taking place at their children's school and they would like to see changes in their school. Assessment should be carefully planned with a realistic understanding of the administrative difficulties such as insufficient resources (Hanover Research, 2010:3).

Similarly, the response by Mr Martin alludes that at this school assessment is a great challenge, because although teachers give tests to learners, they actually do not have enough time to have contact with each of them, to know what kind of assessment is suitable to them. The response further indicates that when feedback is delayed, learners forget completely what they have written. The implication is that learners are surprised when they get their feedback, because they do not even remember the day, they wrote



the test. The understanding is also that they have forgotten the content of the test. In support of Mr Martin's response, Antiwi and Esia-Donkor (2015:67) postulate that it is difficult for teachers to spot learners' problems, give feedback, identify specific needs and gear teaching to meet their set individual targets and evaluate progress.

#### **4.2.4 Lack of supportive engagement**

According to the Hanover Research (2010:6), large classes promote classroom management difficulties with the result of indiscipline such as excessive noise and children not performing exercises. Large classes decrease the amount of time that can be used on thinking and learning (Duong & Nguyen, 2015:67). In a large class, teachers devote their time to controlling and monitoring the classroom, which is noisy all the time with learners who are busy playing with others. Teachers are trained to facilitate teaching and learning, but in a large class, they act as nurses and police. Large classes make it difficult for teachers and learners to interact warmly, peacefully and friendly. The teacher enforces rules on learners all the times. Experienced English teachers in general find it onerous to manage a class with a large number of learners with various levels of proficiency and different personalities (Bahanshal, 2013:49). In the light of this, it is a general challenge to teach effectively in a large class.

In one of our meetings the participants discussed on how the classroom discipline and management challenges effective teaching and learning of the English in large Grade 8 classes.

**Mrs Lereko** affirmed,

*Baithuti ha ba it'osare hantle. Ba etsa lerata, hake botsa na ke mnag ha ba arabe.*

[Learners do not behave well in my class. Most of the times they make noise and when I ask them who did that they do not answer.]

**Mrs Ithabeleng** added,

*Ho loala sehlopha ho boima, ka linako tse ling ha ke ea sehlopheng kea koata.  
Ha ke ba tseba ka mabitso, hare tsamaee lipakeng tsa li tafole.*

[Managing a large class is a disaster; sometimes when I have to go to class, I become bitter. We don't know them by their names as we don't move between desks.]

**Mr Molise** reported,

*Boitsoaro bva bana bo bobo. Matichere a geta nako ea ho rut aba ntse ba khalemela bana.*

[Learner behaviour is not good at all; teachers spend time allocated for teaching to manage the class.]

**Mr Martin** observed,

*Ho laola sehloha ho thst ha sehlopa se le seholo, ho na le litsitiso tse ngata.*

[Classroom discipline is not easy in a large class; there are all sorts of disruptions and disorders.]

**Palesa** commented,

*Bana ba bang ba akhela li pampiri ebe ba ipata, ka tlasa litafole tichere e ntse le teng.*

[Some learners throw papers and hide under the desk in the presence of the teacher.]

**Thabo** added,

*Ka sehlopheng saka re qhoebeshana kamehla. Tichere ha e re hlokomele hobane re bangata.*

[In my class we push each other every day. The teacher does not notice because we are many.]

**Lipuo** commented,

*Re bua Sesotho kamoo re ratang tichere entse le teng. Ha a re botsa na ke mang a ntsa bua Sesotho re makala kaofela. Bana ba bang ba thabela ho bapala ka tichere.*

[We speak Sesotho freely in class in the presence of our teacher. When asked who spoke in Sesotho we all act surprised. Some learners enjoy making fun of the teacher.]

**Likopo** commented,

*Ka letsatsi le leng bana ba bang ba ile ba rola lieta ka sehlopheng li ne li nkha, joale ho chesa haholo ka mokhukhung oo re kenanlang ka ho oona. Ngoanemong o ile a fufuleloa a ba a akheha ke mocheso le monko o nole ka mono.*

[One day some learners put their shoes off in class. Their feet smelt terrible. It was very hot in our class that is a shack. One of the learners fainted due to the heat and smell that was in the class.]

The response of Mrs Lereko that “*learners do not behave well in my class*,” is indicative that learners’ behaviour is a challenge in teaching and learning. It is also a sign that they will not perform well if they misbehave. She further mentioned that “*most times they make noise and when I ask them who did that they do not answer*”. On the social level of the discourse analysis, in this context, it is not right for learners not to speak when they are asked to. In a textual level this is understood to mean that when learners are many in a class, they can easily make a fool out of the teacher as stipulated in her response. Mrs Lthabeleng’s assertion that “*managing a large class is a disaster*,” provides a clear picture of how strenuous it is to teach a large class. The challenges of a large class make one want to stop teaching. Her response further indicates that she does not know all learners by name. This citation is contrary to what some literature alludes, namely that an effective teacher knows all learners by name. They know their needs, their learning styles, their strengths and areas they need improvement on as learners (Egeberg, MacConny & Price, 2016:6). The indication in the above citation is that teachers who teach large classes are no longer effective, because they are not able to unleash their full potential.

In addition, the response from Mr Molise, the school principal, that “*teachers spend time allocated for teaching to manage the class*,” is understood to mean that in large classes, time is wasted because when teachers are supposed to teach, they rectify learners’ behaviour. The principal’s response is supported by Duong and Nguyen (2015:17), who articulate that having a large class prevents teachers from doing what they want to do to help learners make progress in developing language proficiency (see section 2.5.4.1).

The citation by the education inspector Mr Martin that “*classroom discipline is not easy in a large class there are disruptions and disorders*,” is an indication that teaching second-language English in large classes is a problem, because learners must be fully engaged in activities that will help them to acquire English as a second language. Bahanshal

(2013:52) concurs with Mr Martin's response that, in a large class, learners seek to focus on antisocial attitudes such as disruption and misbehaviour. From this assertion it is clear that, due to large classes, effective learning and teaching are a problem.

The learners' responses also indicate the challenge of discipline. Palesa's response, "*some learners throw papers and hide under the desk in the presence of the teacher,*" clearly indicates that teachers face a teaching challenge in large classes. This implies that teachers will not know the learners who are the source of ill-discipline, because of the number of learners, which also prevents teachers from walking between desks. Furthermore, Thabo added, "*In our class we push one another every day.*" This data are understood to mean that learners lack good relationships amongst themselves. It indicates that large classes are a barrier to good communication amongst learners themselves and with their teachers. Teachers should work towards creating a positive learning environment and therefore be able to identify and enact a classroom condition that may make it more likely that desirable will behaviour occur in the classroom (Egeberg *et al.*, 2016:5).

The reference by Lipuo that "*We speak Sesotho freely in class in the presence of the teacher,*" is understood to mean that at this school, learners are encouraged to speak English, which is a second language and a means of communication. However, learners speak in their mother tongue – Sesotho – because they assume that the teachers cannot hear them due to their large numbers in class. This also shows a great step made by teachers that learners should speak in English as the second language. Furthermore, the scenario put forth by Likopo that, "*One day some learners put off their shoes in class ...*" clarifies more how awkwardly some learners behave in class. It also shows a need for developing strategies to strengthen the teaching and learning of second-language English.

#### **4.2.5 Lack of parental engagement**

Parents as stakeholders play a pivotal role in the educational success of their children. However, the parents of today are often preoccupied with the distractions and problems of their everyday life. They are burdened by financial constraints, working hours that are not flexible and language barriers, some parents are not able to attend school activities

or take part in their children's schooling regularly (Durišić & Bunijevoc, 2017:140). According to Ntekane (2018:1), parents can be involved in the learning process of their children by becoming school board members, becoming aware of their children's academic well-being, showing dedication in their learning through availing themselves during parents' meetings in order to gain a better insight of the academic progress of their children (see section 2.5.5.1).

During our discussions with the participants, issues on lack of parental involvement were cited as challenges towards teaching and learning in a large class.

**Mrs Lereko** put forward,

*Batsoali ha ba thusi bana ba bona ka mosebetsi oa sekolo.*

[Parents do not help their children with homework.]

**Mrs Ithabeleng** observed,

*Batsoali ha ba khalemele bana ba bona ba lebelletse hore ebe rona ba ba khalemang.*

[Parents do not discipline their children. They expect us to teach and discipline.]

**Mr Molise** denoted,

*Batsoali ba bang ha ba ee likopanong tsa batsoali, haba patale sekolo ka nako hape ha ba ikamahanye linthong tsa sekolo.*

[Some parents do not attend parent meetings; they do not pay school fees on due time nor get involved in some school activities.]

**Mr Martin** added,

*Batsoali ha ba sebetse le sekolo liatla li tsoarane. Ba tla sekolong feela haba tletleba.*

[Parents do not work hand in hand with the school. They always come to our office to complain about school and teachers.]

**Mr Sello** commended,

*Hake rate ho bitsoa sekolong. Litichere li hiretsoe ho ruta bana ba rona baa pataloa.*

[I hate being called to school. Teachers are employed to educate our children, they get paid.]

**Mrs Kenny** added,

*Matichere a re bitsetsa sekolong ha feela hona le ho phoso hoo bana ba se entseng.*

[Teachers call us to school only when our children have done wrong.]

**Likopo** postulated,

*Batsoali ba rona ha ba re thuse ka mosebetsi oa sekolo.*

[Our parents do not help us with our schoolwork.]

**Senate** contended,

*Batsoali ba rona ba hana ho ea sekolong ha ba bitsoa.*

[When our parents are called to school they do not go.]

At the discursive level of CDA, Mrs Lereko's citation is interpreted as meaning that if parents helped their children with schoolwork, that would improve performance and motivation. Another transformation of this rich data is understood to mean that homework given to learners can be a component of strategies used by teachers to teach large classes effectively. The analysis of the response of Mrs Ithabeleng that "*parents do not discipline their children*," at the textual level of CDA is understood to mean that teachers are aware that parents do not discipline their children. This means that parents expect teachers to teach and discipline their children at the same time.

The response by the overseer in the school Mr Molise that "*some parents do not attend parent meetings; they do not pay school fees on due time nor get involved in some school activities*," is a clear indication of lack of parental involvement towards education of their children. The education inspector, Mr Martin, in his statement, "*Parents do not work hand in hand with the school*," further indicated that although parents are stakeholders of education, they do not collaborate with the school; instead, they report the principal and teachers to the senior education officers, which makes the relationship decline. Van Rockel (2008:1) argues that parents, family and community involvement in education correlates with higher academic performance and school improvement.

To add more, Mr Sello, a parent's, complaint, "*I hate being called to school*", is understood to mean that some parents do not like being involved in school matters at all; whether their children have misbehaved or not, they do not like being involved. Parents must be familiar with the progress of their children at school. This is impossible if they do not want to be called to school. Involvement encompasses a simple interest in their child's academic progress, helping the child (especially with homework), or getting involved in school activities (Williams, Williams & Ullman, 2002:15). The citation by Mrs Kenny, "*Teachers call us to school only when our children have done wrong*," indicates that both parents and teachers must improve relationships regarding parental involvement. Her citation is supported by Van Rockel (2008:2), who posits that some parents complain that they rarely hear from the school unless there is a problem with their children's performance or behaviour.

The assertions from learners also show that parental involvement is a challenge for teaching and learning. Likopo's response that "*our parents do not help us with schoolwork*," connotes that some parents see school matters as responsibilities of learners and teachers alone. It could also mean that due to a lack of educational background, some parents cannot afford to help their children with schoolwork. On the other hand, Senate's citation, "*When our parents are called to school they do not go*," is similar to the school principal's comment. It is a clear indication of the seriousness of the notion "lack of parental involvement" in schools. It is understood to mean that if parents do not attend when called to school, their children will continue with all sorts of misconduct at school.

### **4.3 POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING IN A LARGE GRADE 8 CLASS**

#### **4.3.1 Group work or pair work, flipped classroom and blended learning as solutions towards learner-teacher interaction**

During one of our meetings, the following discussions took place with regard to the solutions of stakeholder interaction as a challenge for effective teaching and learning (see section 2.5.1).

**Mrs Lereko** alluded,

*Ke boha hore ha matichere a ka sebetsa moo ho le bana ba sekolo baka natefelo a ke ho ithuta.*

[I am of the view that if teachers can engage all learners in classroom activities all could take part and enjoy learning.]

**Mrs Ithabeleng,**

*Puisano e ntle le thlompho eka lumella likamano tse ntle.*

[Good communication and mutual respect can allow learner-teacher interaction.]

**Mr Molise (The principal) suggested,**

*Ke nahana hore matichere a ka etsa li hlotsoana tse nyane ho ruta bana hore ba be le likamano tse ntle.*

[I think teachers can make small groups or pair their learners in order to reach them and have good relationships.]

**Mrs Kenny (one of the parents) emphasized,**

*Ka sehlopheng tichere a ka arola bana ka lihlots'oana.*

[In a large class a teacher can divide learners into groups.].

The above extractions indicate that learner participation in learning is important. The response by Mrs Lereko, "*If teachers can engage all learners in classroom activities all could take part and enjoy learning,*" is understood to mean that teachers should try everything possible to involve learners, even though they are many, as CER draws an attention for active participation (see section 2.2.4.2). It shows she believes that when learners are bound to something, their involvement is promoted. Her assertion is supported by Le (2002:9), who posits that one method of improving learners' outcomes in large classes is to give exercises in which learners interact with one another. The citation by Mrs Ithabeleng, "*Good communication and mutual respect can allow learner-teacher interaction,*" shows that even if a class is large, as long as the teachers establish healthy communication skills with the learners, the large class can feel like a small class. Her response might also mean that when both learners and teachers respect one another interaction can be achieved.



Furthermore, the corroboration by the principal of the school that “*teachers can make small groups or pair their learners in order to reach them,*” shows that he is aware of other teaching methods or strategies to be employed by teachers of large classes. When learners are grouped into smaller groups the teacher can even ask two or three groups to work outside the class, depending on the weather, so that she can go through all groups. The principal believes that groups will benefit; even the shyest learners who never speak in class, will have the opportunities to air their views. The response by one of the parents that “*in a large class teachers can divide learners into groups,*” shows that although she is a parent, her common sense tells her that when learners are divided into smaller groups a teacher is in a better position to interact with all learners. Bastone and Singer-Freeman (2016:16) agree with the principal and the parent that a small discussion section can be another route towards implementing active learning experiences and improving in-class engagement. In a group discussion, even the leaning skills of those learners who cannot speak will improve.

#### **4.3.2 Curriculum decentralisation as a solution to curriculum**

When the curriculum is implemented all stakeholders should be well informed for its effectiveness (see section 2.5.3.1). In our discussions with the participants, members held the opinion that the curriculum should be decentralised to all stakeholders before its implementation.

**Mrs Lereko** believed,

*Ha eba ba thehi ba lenane thuti ba ka kenya matichere le baithuti le batsoali ha le theha bohle ba ka rua molemo.*

[If curriculum developers can involve all educational stakeholders before its implementation all could benefit.]

**Mrs Ithabeleng** postulated,

*Matichere a hlophise mosebetsi ka tsela eo baithuti ba e utloisisang.*

[Teachers should design the class work and activities that will be understood by all learners.]

**Mr Molise** reinforced that

*Lenane thuto le lokela ho ba ka tsela e khotsofatsang lothloko tsa sechaba.*

[The curriculum should be designed in such a way to respond to satisfy the national needs. It should be decentralised.]

The reference of Mrs Lereko that “*the curriculum should involve all stakeholders of education,*” is understood to mean that when the curriculum is designed, all people who are responsible should be involved. Principals, teachers and community members should be represented so that they can adapt to the new changes without any complaint. The citation further means they will also contribute towards new developments. PAR advocates that when people are involved in decision making, they are motivated and have a sense of belonging or ownership.

Mrs Ithabeleng’s observation that “*teachers should design the class work and activities that will be understood by all learners,*” shows that she might be aware that learners’ learning capabilities differ; therefore, all should be catered for. Curriculums should contextually be more relevant by linking the content with real-life problems where school life should be integrated with community life and the everyday experiences of learners (Mahao & Raselimo 2015:6).

In the same manner, the assertion by the school principal that “*The curriculum should be designed in such a way to respond to satisfy the national needs,*” collaborates with that of Mrs Lereko that it should cater for learners, despite their abilities. This is understood to mean that the curriculum should help learners to be competent future assets of their country that can showcase their abilities in all aspects of life – socially, personally, economically, morally and spiritually. According to Raselimo and Mahao (2015:2), responding to global patterns of education change has been one of the major reasons for the development of new education policies in many countries worldwide.

#### **4.3.3 Continuous Assessment and team teaching as a solution towards limited assessment**

Implementation of continuous assessment in Lesotho is likely to lead to improved quality of the teaching and learning experience through adaptation of instructional process to meet the needs of individual learners and increase parental engagement (Mahao & Raselimo, 2015:9; see section 2.5.3.1). Also, team teaching enables teachers and learners to assess the teaching and learning process (Anoefa *et al.* 2016:22-43).

**Mrs Lereko** believed that

*Conitinous assessment e ka re thusa re le li tichere kaha re tla bonts'a mosebetsi oa bana ho tloha qalong ea selemo.*

[Continuous assessment will help us as teachers, as we will have all records of the learners' performances throughout the entire year.]

**Mr Molise** suggested,

*Ke nahana team teaching e ka re thusa ho hlahloba baithuti hantle ka ha re tla fumana mosebetsi oa bona ka botebo, hobane re tla be re thusana.*

[I think team teaching will help us to fully assess our learners in depth.]

**Mrs Ithabeleng** added,

*Ho arolelelana mosebetsi re le mathichere ho bohlokoa hobane re fanana malebela. Basebesi moho le nna ba ka nthusa moo ke senang bokhoni teng.*

[Team teaching helps us as teachers because we share ideas, and my colleagues can help me where I lack in skills.]

The response by Mrs Lereko that continuous assessment helps teachers to maintain full records of learners' performance throughout the year is an indication that there is a need for a continuous assessment, as it displays the progress of the learners throughout the academic year on a textual level. Mrs Lereko's comment shows that continuous assessment is important, because even if a learner under performs in some tests, they reflect back on their previously good performances. Her response is also in line with CER, which also advocates empowerment. The assertion by Mr Molise is understood to mean that teachers need one another in order to facilitate learning and teaching. The statement by Mrs Ithabeleng corroborates with that of Mr Lereko that teachers need one another for empowerment and for improving their skills of teaching and improve the learning the learning experience.

#### **4.3.4 Empowerment of teachers, parents, and community as a solution toward lack of supportive engagement**

According to Bantu-Gometz (2015:344), empowerment refers to the managerial style where personnel in a position of authority at institutions share their influence in decision making with their down liners. Pedagogically speaking, empowerment is regarded as a strategy to strengthen the teaching of second-language English in large Grade 8 classes. It is the process of opening up something that has absolutely unlimited potential (Fan, Agu, Fan & Tsau, 2016:9-8). When learners are empowered, it is believed that empowerment automatically discourages them from violence-related activities (see Section 2.5.4). In one of our discussions with participants,

**Tumelo** suggested,

*Ha re entse liphoso ka sehlopheng rea shapuo, re fuoa kotlo, ha ho mohla re joetsoang phoso ka mantsoe a monate.*

[When we have done wrong in our class, we are given corporal punishment, our teachers never advise us warmly.]

**Bony** also suggested that

*Ke khothalletsa matichere hore a re khalemele hantle a ke a re rorise a re khothatse eseng bohale ka mehla.*

[I suggest that teachers discipline us politely. They should motivate us, encourage us. They should not always yell and ridicule us.]

**Palesa** added,

*Ha ne re entse boitsoaro bo bobe litichere li bitsa batsoali. Re kopa re bue taba le bona e fele.*

[When we have done something wrong our teachers call our parents immediately. We request our teachers to solve matters with us as learners.]

**Mr Molise** was of the view that

*Teachers must be nice to learners, even when they show them their mistakes.*

[They must respect learners as much as they want to be respected].

The assertion of Bony that teachers should discipline them politely is an indication that teachers discipline learners in a way that does not care for their emotions. Bony is aware that to be disciplined is good; however, it should be done politely so that it bears good fruits like hard work. She further insisted that teachers must motivate and inspire learners. These words are understood to mean that when learners are motivated and inspired, their learning in a large class improves.

Furthermore, the citation by Palesa that when they have done something wrong at school their teachers call their parents right away is understood to mean that as learners they would like to talk and discuss their options with teachers, excluding their parents. This is a clear indication that learners want to be independent and acquire skills like conflict resolution and self-confidence to boost their self-esteem. This further reveal that teachers must no longer take their learners for granted. It is not necessary to have children forced or goaded into desirable behaviour; instead, they need to be gently guided and provided with space and empowerment for personal exploration, free from adult fear and coercion (Egeberg *et al.*, 2016:3).

In addition, the assertion by Mr Molise, the overseer of the school, corroborates Bony's view that teachers must be nice to learners when they show them their mistakes. He might have realised as the head of the school that in most cases teachers do not speak well to the learners. He further articulated that they had to respect learners as they wanted to be respected, meaning that the principal has observed that teachers do not respect learners, which also might have resulted in the misconduct of learners, promoting poor learner-teacher relations.

#### **4.3.5 Active parental engagement as a solution towards lack of parental engagement**

The involvement of parents in the education of their children has been approved by the current research as one of the strategies to improve teaching and learning. Parental involvement is a situation where parents are actively and directly engaged in their children's education. They involve themselves and also by the school and teachers in the process of learning of their children and they perform their duties as parents in making sure that their children are assisted in the process of learning (Ntekane, 2018:1).

The team of participants thought it was pivotal for parents to be active members in the education of their children.

**Mrs Lereko** asserted that

*Batsoali ba lokela ho sebetsa mmoho le matichere molemong oa bana ba bona.*

[My suggestion is that parents should be encouraged to work hand in hand with teachers for the benefit of their children.]

**Mrs Ithabeleng** added,

*Batsoali ba lokela ho kenella linthong tsa sekolo, li club, le li association.*

[I suggest that parents must be fully involved in school activities, form clubs and associations with teachers.]

**Mr Molise** (the principal) suggested,

*Batsoali ba lokela ho khothalletsoa ho ea likopanong tsa batsoali le ho hlokomela boitsoaro ba batsoali ba bona.*

[Parents must be encouraged to participate in parents' meetings and make follow up on children's behaviour and performance.]

The suggestion of Mrs Lereko that parents should work hand-in-hand with teachers is an indication that she is aware that parents do not work cooperatively with teachers in the education of their children. The words, "*for the benefit of children*," indicate that the teacher is aware that learners are positively affected by the presence of their parents. Teachers say things through experience; perhaps Mrs Lereko might have experienced that when parents are cooperative towards the school, their children benefit.

The suggestion by Mrs Ithabeleng that "*Parents must be fully involved in school activities, form clubs and associations with teachers*," is understood to support the citation by Mrs Lereko that teachers must work together with parents. She might have seen that when they formed clubs and associations they became more involved, as they felt that they were part of the school. The citation also reveals that when parents have a sense of belonging towards the school, their children are positively motivated and perform better. She might have seen that, due to the active involvement of the parents, the children are left with no choice but to do the same.

The suggestion of the principal that “*parents must be encouraged to attend parent meetings,*” is understood to mean that he knows that when parents attend meetings they become familiar with the schools’ administrative issues and become better informed members of the school community. He further suggested that parents should follow up on the performance of their children. The principal might have seen that learners performed better when their parents were actively involved in school activities. He also might have noticed that when parents were concerned about the behaviour of their children, they promoted their morals, attitudes, better behaviour and social adjustment. It also helped them to grow up to be productive and responsible members of the society (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017:13).

#### **4.4 THREATS TO OVERCOME**

Teaching of large Grade 8 classes in some Lesotho’s districts is on the increase. Research further indicates that the establishment of free primary education is the major contributing factor towards the scourge of large classes in Grade 8 classes. According to the MOET (2006:3), secondary education is not free; yet primary education is free at the 1 477 schools, while secondary schools are 256.

##### **4.4.1 Threats towards curriculum**

The following inferences from participants cropped up during one of our interactions:

**Mrs Lereko** postulated,

*Ke rata curriculum e ncha, e ntle haholo. Bothata ke hore naha e ne se ready.*

[The new integrated curriculum in Lesotho is very good, I think I like it, my problem with it is that the country was not yet ready.]

**Mrs Ithabeleng** another teacher suggested:

*Lenane thuto le lecha le bua haholo ka baithuti ho buoa ha nyane ka matichere.*

[The integrated curriculum focuses a lot on learners less is said about teachers.]

**Mr Molise** (the principal) asserted that

*Batsamaisi ba curriculum haba re rupele re le baokameli.*

[The national curriculum development centre in Lesotho does not engage us in training us as principals and the managers of the school.]

**Mr Sello** (a parent) stated,

*'Muso o fositse bana ba rona ha ba fetela pele fela.*

[I think the government is wrong about the integrated curriculum; our children are automatically promoted to the next class.]

The response by Mrs Lereko that she likes the curriculum is an indication that the authorities have done their level best to design a curriculum (see section 2.4.4). The words, "*but the country was not ready*," are understood to mean that, although the curriculum was well designed with good objectives, the country was not ready for the implementation of the curriculum. For example, schools were not built to cater for all primary school-leaving education learners (PSLE) to Grade 8. In this case, the new curriculum poses a threat towards the strengthening of strategies for teaching and learning large classes.

Mrs Ithabeleng's citation, "*Integrated curriculum focuses a lot on learners, less is said about teachers*," is an indication that the NCDC in Lesotho has thought deeply about the children of Basotho when the curriculum was developed. The words, "*less is said about teachers*", mean that she might have realised a lot of limitations of the curriculum towards the teachers, for example teachers were not fully trained about it, they had to deal with one concept for a long time, using teaching methods that take time, and could also not finish the syllabus. CER declares that people should be emancipated from practices that keep them hostage (see section 2.2.1)

The response by Mr Sello that "*the government has done wrong*," is an indication that, although parents are stakeholders of education, they were not consulted in the implementation of the curriculum. It further means that although parents are to deal with it they are not satisfied. "*The words our children are automatically promoted*," are understood to mean that parents are not trained well about the new curriculum; they preferred the old curriculum where their children were promoted to the next classes in positions.



#### 4.4.2 Threats towards group or pair work

According to Bahanshal (2013:36), dividing a class into small groups makes it easier and less demanding to monitor. To Sandi secondary schools it is possible to teach and improve English in large classes by creating an interactive teaching/learning process where the interaction between teachers and learners and among classmates in the form of pairs and group work is great (Bahanshal 2013:56). Research, on the other hand, shows that group discussions in teaching and learning have some limitations.

The following themes emerged from the participants during one of our interactions:

**Likopo** suggested,

*Ha re arotsoe ka lihlopha bana ba bohlale ba bua kapele.*

[When we are divided into groups brilliant learners talk fast and leave others behind.]

**Senate** indicated,

*Hare arotsoe ka bobeli kapa lihlopha ana ba bang haba bue ho hang.*

[Some learners do not participate at all in the group discussions.]

**Mrs Lereko** (one of the teachers) was of the view that

*Discussion ea lihlopha e bohlokoa empa e hloka ho saloa morao khafetsa ke tichere.*

[Group discussion is important, but it needs a continuous of inspection of a teacher.]

The citation by Likopo, “*brilliant learners talk fast and leave others behind*,” is understood to mean that some fast learners participate in group discussions, but they do not care if all group members follow or not. PAR dictates that all should be given an equal opportunity to participate. Her response further indicates that group discussion is the worst method of teaching, where learners are on their own, not caring for other learners. The citation by Likopo that some learners do not participate at all in group discussions is understood to mean that when learners are divided into smaller groups, some take it as an opportunity not to be involved at all. She might also have observed that learners play

and disrespect those who have been assigned to lead the discussions by their teachers. Sometimes a group leader can be a learner who is not liked by other members and therefore could not participate.

The response by Mrs Lereko that, “*group discussion is important but they needs a continuous inspection by a teacher,*” indicates that to group learners is beneficial, because with the large number teacher find it hard to organise activities that are creative and that work, pay attention or make contact with every individual, especially those who hide by sitting at the back. The words, “*they need continuous inspection by a teacher,*” indicates that Mrs Lereko might have seen that when a teacher was not around, group members might tend to do other things such as playing instead of doing the work.

#### **4.4.3 Threats towards empowerment**

Empowerment is regarded by Agu *et al.* (2016:11) as the broadening of choice, the expansion of opinions and alternatives that will shape lives and determine people’s destinies. When both teachers and learners are empowered, they can interact and share peacefully in the activities of the school in order to strengthen the teaching strategies that teachers already have. Non-empowerment for both teachers and learners who are faced with teaching and learning was considered a threat by the participants.

**Mr Molise** (the principal of the school) suggested,

*Ke nahana hore baithuti ba bang ba tlohela sekolo hobane ba utloa bas a amoheloa ke matichere a bona.*

[I think some learners drop out of school because they feel rejected by their teachers.]

**Mrs Lereko** stated,

*Litho tsa board li lokela ho khothalletsa batsoali ho re ba hlokomele bana ba bona.*

[I think our school boards members should encourage other parents to care for their children.]

**Lipuo** (Grade 8 learner) confirmed,

*Re kopa muso o re hahele li-class room tse eketsehilenge le hore re tsoe ka mokhukhung (shed).*

[We humbly request the government to build us extra classrooms so that we can vacate the “shed” as our classroom.]

The assertion by Mr Molise that some learners become dropouts because they are rejected by their teachers affirms that due to teachers' neglect of learners there is a high drop-out rate at this school. The response further indicates that due to many teachers in the classrooms, it is not possible for teachers to inspire their learners that they continue with their education. It also affirms that this is a serious matter which needs special attention by the stakeholders. It emphasises that those who are responsible should employ teachers to close the gap towards non-empowerment in teaching and learning. The citation by Mrs Lereko that our school board should encourage other parents to care for their children is understood to mean that the school board is considered the most important component of the school that can empower both the school and other community members. Mrs Lereko might have noticed that when parents are involved in the education of their children they (learners) remain at school, and consequently become future teachers. Lipuo's request that the government build extra classes is understood to mean that at this school the environment is not conducive to teaching and learning; even learners are aware that they are not taught effectively in a large class. They are aware that some aspects of English as a second language will not be addressed when they are many in a class.

#### **4.4.4 Threats towards the parental engagement**

Parental engagement refers to the development of active collaborations between householders and institutions towards the ideal of successful learner academic achievement (Hill & Taylor, 2004:161). According to Cotton and Wikelund (1989:3), parents can be supportive of their children's learning by consistently attending their school activities and responding to school obligations. The research shows that the more parents are involved in their children's learning process, the more effective the learning

The above paragraph agrees with the responses echoed by some of the participants during one of our meetings.

**Mrs Lereko** (a teacher) commented,

*Batsoali ba bang ha ba ee li phuthehong tsa batsoali.*

[Most parents do not come for the parent's meetings, and this does not help us.]

**Mr Molise** (the school principal) affirmed,

*Matichere a mang ha a sebelise liqeto tse fihletsoeng nakong ea kopano ea batsoali.*

[Some teachers do not implement decision reached during parents' meetings.]

**Kany** (a Grade 9 learner) suggested,

*Batsoali ba rona ha bana chelete ea ho re patalla lithoko tsa rona tsa sekolo.*

[Our parents do not have money to pay for our school needs.]

**Thabo** (also a learner) posited,

*Batsoali ba rona ha ba ruteha, ha ba utloisise melao ea sekolo.*

[Our parents lack adequate knowledge they do not understand schools' matters.]

The comment by Mrs Lereko that, "*most parents do not come for the meetings,*" is understood to mean that the interaction between teachers and teachers is not up to standard because some parents still do not attend school meetings where crucial things are discussed that affect both the school and parents. The words, "*this does not help us,*" point out that from the teachers' perspective it would be a challenge if parents do not show an active involvement in activities of the school.

Mr Molise's assertion that "*some teachers do not implement the discussions reached during parents meeting, and then we are in trouble,*" is understood to mean that if the discussions taken are not implemented, the parents will not be able to engage in future meetings. This is regarded as threat to strengthening strategies to be used by teachers in large English classes. The statement by Kany that "*our parents do not have money to pay for our needs,*" might be analysed contextually that parents do not have money to pay their school fees and other needs. Furthermore, it might be understood to mean that, due to poverty, lack of jobs, and single parents, parents are not actively involved, resulting in threats towards parent's involvement. Thabo's response, "*Our parents do not have adequate knowledge,*" affirms that most parents do not take part in school matters, not

only because they are not interested, but mainly because they must take part in school activities.

## **4.5 STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING SECOND-LANGUAGE ENGLISH IN LARGE CLASSES**

### **4.5.1 Peer teaching**

Peer teaching in this context is understood to mean that learners learn from one another with the purpose of sharing and encouraging one another in the process of teaching and learning. Research shows that learners learn better from their peers, but with strict monitoring by their teachers. A chaotic situation should not distract the teacher, but the teacher should carefully plan to manage the class as well as create challenging activities, use appropriate materials and valid methodologies, that may result in a great impact on the learning of English as a second language in large classes. Bahanshal (2013:56) highlights that it should be emphasised that teachers have to be flexible and adventurous by using different teaching strategies to detect problems created by large classes, identify learners' needs, and gear teaching towards overcoming problems. Peer teaching was regarded as one of the teaching strategies during our meetings.

**Mrs Ithabeleng** indicated,

*Hare nahana ka seo re tlo se ruta ha rea lokela ho lebala bokhoni ba baithuti.*

[When we think of teaching methods to be used in our daily teaching, we should not forget learners' abilities or potentials.]

**Mr Molise** added,

*Ke hlokometse hore baithuti ba itsepa ha ba arolelana mosebetsi.*

[I have noticed that learners gain confidence when they share in teaching and learning.]

**Likopo** established,

*Litechere tsa rona ha li re lumelle ho ntsa maikutlo a rona.*

[Our teachers do not allow us to share our ideas.]

**Mrs Rethabile** added,

*Rona khale koa ha re sa kena sekolo matichere a rona a ne a re thusa ho rutana.*

[When we were at school back then our teachers used to help us teacher one another.]

The assertion by Mrs Ithabeleng is understood to mean that as teachers, when they prepare methods to use in class, they should always bear in mind that involving learners in teaching English is the best way, because learners learn better when they practise. She should have realised that, in most cases, teachers move to the next theme, even when some learners have not understood the previous work, but when learners are given a chance to teach one another they move at their own pace. Most learners remember the content more easily when they share ideas, instead of listening to the explanations of the teacher. The response by Mr Tau that learners gain confidence when they share in teaching and learning further indicates that when learners experience teaching, they understand the context easily. Mr Molise has the perception that learners become more enthusiastic to learn when they practise the lesson through peer teaching.

The statement by Likopo, “*our teachers do not allow us to share our ideas,*” at textual level is indicative that learners have opinions that would benefit both learners and teachers, should they be asked to share. It is also understood to mean that learners know the best methods of teaching suitable for them that their teachers use to learn English as a second language in a large class. Most learners prefer direct conversation rather than just writing and reading. The learners might have observed that learners pay attention when their counterparts come forward in the class for presentations; they are curious of what they will say. Therefore, they stimulate their motivation towards learning.

The response of Mrs Rethabile, one of the parents, “*when we were at school, the teachers used to help us teach one another,*” is understood to mean that peer teaching has been used by some teachers and proven to be one of the best teaching methods. It shows that parents still remember its importance to date. It suggests therefore that English teachers could use peer teaching so that learners can do things themselves and become easier for them to understand and remember.

#### 4.5.2 Collaborative teaching

See section 2.7.3.

**Mrs Lereko** established,

*Ho lamella baithuti ba sebetse mmoho ho na le melemo e mengata.*

[Allowing our learners to work together has many benefits.]

**Mrs Ithabeleng** pointed out,

*Joalo ka matichere a sekhooba re lokela ho khothalletsa baithuti ho sebetsa mmoho.*

[As English teachers we must encourage our learners to work together.]

**Mr Molise** added,

*Ke khothalletsa baithuti bohle bo bua sekhooba nakong ea sekolo.*

[I suggest that all learners must speak English during school hours.]

**Lipou** asserted,

*Baithuti bohle ba rata ho sebetsa ka lihlopha.*

[All learners like to work in groups.]

The comment by Mrs Lereko that, “*allowing our learners to work together has many benefits*,” is understood to mean that when learners are allowed to work together it results in a number of important things. She must have realised that most, if not all, learners have opportunity to participate, for example they have the chance to debate in English and take part in dramatic plays. Furthermore, the response by Mrs Ithabeleng that English teachers should allow their learners to work together is understood to mean that when learners work together as a team they yield better results, for example, as developing a high level of thinking, recognition and elaborating. On the other hand, lack of collaboration is viewed by Mrs Ithabeleng as resulting in low-quality coordination when they participate in problem-solving activities. They could result in low morale where they reject the ideas and views of other learners, become noisy in the group discussion or play and distract the whole idea of collaboration. Mrs Ithabeleng encourages teachers to adapt to collaborative teaching, because it strengthens the teaching of English.

The citation by Mr Molise, the principal of the school, that “*I suggest that learners must speak English during school hours,*” is understood to mean that when learners collaboratively speak English, they acquire the skills of English as a second language the best. Also, he must have seen that when learners do not speak English together, that can delay their mastering of the language. Lastly, the response by Lipuo that all learners like to work in groups entails that teachers must always create the opportunity for learners to work with one another in groups, perhaps they will understand better as they enjoy sharing and helping other learners.

#### **4.5.3 Use of technology**

According to Kerr (2011:17), communication using technology is used as a strategy to meet learners where they already are; giving rise to in class use of texting, social media platforms and email to provide for interaction between learners and teachers and learners themselves. Research shows that the use of blended learning and flipped classes encourage learner-centred teacher. The following themes emerged during our interactions with the participants.

**Likopo** justified,

*Rona re ka thabela ha matichere a rona a ka sebelisa mokhoa oa mararang ho re ruta.*

[We would like our teachers to sort for the use of technology when teaching us.]

**Palesa** pointed out,

*Re sebelisa lifono tsa rona bakeng sa 'mino le lipapali, e kaba ho thahasellisang ho li sebelisa bakeng sa ho ithuta.*

[We use our phones for music and games, it would be very interesting to use them in class for learning.]

**Mrs Ithabeleng** (a teacher) added.

*Batsoali ba lokela ho rekela bana liseselisoa tsa technology.*

[Parents should buy technological devices for their children.]

**Kany** mentioned,

*Matichere a re nkela liphone ha re ile ka tsona sekolong.*



[Our teachers confiscate our phones when we take them to school.]

The response by Likopo that “*we would like our teachers to sort for the use of technology when teaching us,*” is understood to mean that if teachers could use technology learners would learn better, because learners learn better when they live what they are being taught. Learners prefer it when the teachers leave traditional methods where teachers would only teach, and the learners listen. The citation by Palesa that they use their phones for music entails that they already use their phones for reasons that are not important; therefore, they suggest that teachers must make use of learners’ cell phones to facilitate teaching and learning. Mrs Lthabeleng’s response, “*parents should buy technological devices for their children,*” is understood to mean that parents must buy smart phones for their children for them to use in school. They must also buy data to help teachers and learners to teach effectively in large classes. This response also shows a need for strengthening strategies in teaching large classes. The response by Kany that teachers take away their phones is indicative that teachers have not resorted to the use of technology as a strategy. A learner is understood to appeal to the teacher that they should use their cell phones.

#### **4.5.4 Provision of feedback**

**Lipuo** commented,

*Ha matichere a khutlisa mosebetsi ka pele rea thaba.*

[When teachers give us feedback in time, we get happy.]

**Thabo** observed,

*Ke rata ho bapisa mosetsi oa ka le oa bana ba bang ebe kea khothala.*

[I like comparing my schoolwork with that of other learners. It motivates me.]

**Mrs Lereko** postulated,

*Ha ke khutlisa maqephe ka kepele ke thabela ho ruta.*

[When I return the feedback in time that makes me enjoy teaching.]

**Mr Sello** (a parent) added,

*Re le batsoali rea khothala ha bana ba re bolella hore ba tsoauoe sekolong.*

[As parents we get happy when our children tell us that they are marked and given feedback at school.]

The assertion by Lipuo that “*when our teachers give us feedback in time, we get happy,*” signals that immediate feedback to learners is very important. When learners are happy, they learn wholeheartedly, enjoy learning, like school, become motivated and their morale towards school increases. On the other hand, the citation by Thabo “*I like to compare my schoolwork with that of others; it motivates me,*” further indicates the importance of feedback. Thabo shows that feedback encourages competition among learners. Just like Lipuo has indicated, Thabo was happy when he got feedback so that he can compare himself to others.

The citation by the teacher that “*when I return feedback on time, I enjoy teaching,*” at a social level is understood to mean that the quick provision of feedback is stress free for teachers; it makes them enjoy and like teaching. It helps them to prepare for the next lesson with enthusiasm, which will lead to using proper methods and teaching resources, making teaching and learning enjoyable. The response of one of the parents, Mr Sello, is understood to mean that quick feedback does not only motivate learners and teachers, but even parents are motivated when their children tell them about their progress in school. He mentioned that they became motivated and endeavoured to fulfil their different responsibilities towards the education of their children. This shows that it is a good strategy that teachers can employ in order to facilitate effective teaching and learning.

#### **4.5.5 Effective communication as a strategy**

**Bony** was of the view that,

*Ha matichere a rona ba bua le rona hantle le rona rea Thaba.*

[When our teachers communicate with us nicely, we become happy.]

**Tumelo** alluded,

*Ka letsatsi leleng tichere e ile ea ntlotlolla ka pela sehlopha, ke ile ka kula tsatsi le no lohle.*

[One day the teacher humiliated me in front of the whole class, I was sick the whole day.]

**Mr Molise** added,

*Puisano ke ntho ea bohlokoa.*

[Communication is key for effective education.]

The assertion by Bony that “*when our teachers communicate with us nicely, we get happy*,” is an indication that learners are aware of the good communication between them and their teachers. It also shows that as learners they become happy when teachers communicate with them. It shows that teachers regard them as important people. Clear communication from teachers affords learner with acceptable behaviour. They can communicate clear rules and regulations. Moreover, the scenario given by Tumelo is understood to mean that poor communication between learners and teachers can traumatise a learner. The fact that he became sick the whole day shows that the teacher ruined his day and of course he did not enjoy the class as he was being taught. On the other hand, good communication makes learners feel loved and taken care of; as a result, they work harder. The response by Mr Molise that “*communication is key to effective teaching*,” is indicative that when teachers and learners communicate well it contributes to effective teaching and learning. As the overseer of the school and through his experience as the senior teacher, he might have noticed for a long time that when teachers and learners communicate easily, their input in learning develops. It is easy for learners to abide by the teacher’s classroom rules, even the entire school’s rules and regulations.

## **4.6 EVIDENCE ON THE FUNCTIONALITY ON HOW TO STRENGTHEN STRATEGIES**

### **4.6.1 Learner-teacher interaction**

The orderly learning environment enables learners to engage in meaningful activities that support their learning; this is met when teachers and learners interact with one another (Egeberg *et al.*, 2016:3) (see section 2.5.1C). During one of our meetings with the

participants, the following themes emerged on how to engage learner teacher interactions:

**Mrs Lereko** postulated,

*Baithuti ba lokela ho rutoa ho re ba be le likamano tse ntle le matichere.*

[Learners must be taught the importance of good relations between them and teachers.]

**Mr Molise** emphasised that,

*Ha rea lokela ho halala ba ithuti ba rona ba tseba lintho tse ka re thusang.*

[We should never underestimate our learners; they know things that could contribute to effective teaching and learning.]

Mrs Lereko's assertion that "*learners must be taught the importance of good relations*," is understood to mean that teachers want the best for their learners. As a teacher she knows that it is beneficial to have good learner-teacher relations in order to facilitate teaching and learning. She might have seen from experience that when teachers and learners have good relations, learners' participation and motivation towards leaning are enhanced. The words "*between teachers and learners*" might suggest that learners felt for a long time that they could not have good relations with teachers; they would only have relations with other learners with the understanding that are meant to teach and assess learners only.

Mr Molise the principal of the school's response, "*We should never underestimate our learners, they know things that could contribute to effective teaching and learning*," is understood to mean that as teachers they should not take the contributions of the learners for granted, because they are the actual people who are involved in teaching and learning. Their response should be taken seriously as equal members of the team trying to contribute towards strengthening strategies that teachers of large classes could use. The words further could mean that the principal of the school was surprised by the way learners have responded and contributed to the advantages of having good learner-teacher relationships.

#### 4.6.2 The curriculum (English)

In Lesotho, just like in many other countries, a new curriculum was developed, 43 years after independence. According to Raselimo and Mahao (2015:1), the goal of this curriculum policy is to ensure access, quality, equity and relevance in the education sector. With the new Lesotho curriculum, not only the curriculum has changed, but also the assessment. The contents of the curriculum cater for learners with different learning abilities. Curriculum design, instruction, techniques and assessment all influence learner engagement and learning outcomes (De Matos-Ala, 2013:11). A curriculum should strive to provide learners with skills, attitudes and values such as creativity, critical thinking, leadership, problem solving, conflict resolution, taking initiative, working with others, and willingness to learn in order to promote personal and social development (MOET, 2009:14). The above paragraph shows the best practice of curriculum in Lesotho. In our discussion with the participants the following themes were revealed:

**Mrs Ithabeleng** asserted,

*Ho bua nnete curriculum e ncha e koala lithloko tsa batho bohle.*

[Frankly speaking, the new curriculum caters for all individual learners.]

**Tumelo** put forward,

*Matichere a rona a fa ba bang mosebetsi o mongata ba bang ba fuoa o monyane.*

[Our teachers give us the class work differently, others much work others less.]

**Thabo** reported,

*Batsoali baka ba thabela ho nthusa ka mosebetsi oa hae.*

[My parents enjoy helping me with my schoolwork.]

The assertion by Mrs Ithabeleng that, “*frankly speaking, the new curriculum caters for all individual learners,*” is understood to mean that as a teacher, she is satisfied and happy with the new curriculum. That is why she used the words “*frankly speaking*”. Her response further entails that as teachers they are aware that the way the curriculum has been designed is responding the needs of their learners with different learning abilities.

The statement by Tumelo that, “*our teachers give us the class work differently, others much some less,*” is a clear indication that teachers facilitate teaching and learning to the

principles of the new curriculum because it stipulates that since learners' learning abilities are different they should be taught in different pace. Teachers teach learners the same concept, but with different objectives, knowing that learners have different learning acquisition. Thabo's response, "*my parents enjoy helping me with my schoolwork,*" could further be analysed to mean that since the new curriculum has a lot of content, learners are given work every day, parents like Tumelo's are ready to help their children.

#### **4.6.3 Lack of supportive engagement**

Classroom management and discipline are the most widely perceived problems when teaching large classes. In Thailand, a research showed that when teachers create a friendly environment for learners' learning, learning tends to be well managed and they easily engage in learning (Doung & Nguyen, 2016:80). Good discipline is maintained when learners are seated where their attention is directed toward the teacher (Dunbar, 2004:4). In Saudi Arabian schools, research has shown that when meeting learners for the first time, the teacher should set rules as one of the first priorities, read it to them and make learners sign it (Bahanshal, 2013:55).

In our interactions with the participants we discussed the following themes as possible solutions towards classroom management:

**Mrs Lereko** commented,

*Hake bua hantle le bona ke ba bontsa le phoso ba fapana le hake ba omany.*

[When I talk to my learners politely showing them their mistakes they react differently from when I yell at them.]

**Mrs Ithabeleng** added,

*Maqalong a selemo re lumellana ka melao ea class le liphello tsa ho e tlola.*

[At the beginning of the year, we agree on classroom rules and regulations and punishments for breaking them.]

**Bony** asserted that,

*Ka nako ea tinare ha re ile mabaleng a lipapali re bapala li papali tse fapaneng, re khutlela sehlopheng ka mora tinare re khatholohile ebe re mamela tichere ka hloko.*

[During lunch time we go to sports grounds and play different sports, and then we actively return to class after lunch.]

**Mrs Kenny** (A parent) added,

*Re le batsoali re lokela ho khalemela bana ba rona ho fokoletsa matichere mosebetsi.*

[As parents we should assume responsibility to discipline our children.]

The assertion made by Mrs Lereko, *“When I talk to my learners politely showing them their mistakes they react differently from when I yell at them,”* is indicative that children respond well to discipline that is delivered in a polite manner. When teachers speak to learners in a soft tone, learners understand their mistakes better, learn from them and avoid repeating them in future. If teachers yell at learners, they find it hard to understand their mistakes because of the raised voice and tone of the teacher, which traumatises them instead of helping them realise their mistakes. The response of Mrs Lthabeleng that they agree on rules and regulations at the beginning of the year is understood to mean that if teachers and learners discuss the rules and regulations of the class together, it becomes easier for the learners to stick to the rules because they came up with them by themselves. The school prospectus could have a section with rules and regulations designed by learners. When the learners come up with the rules and regulations they feel empowered and in charge of their learning process. When they are simply told the rules, they do not understand most of them and as a result find it hard to abide by them. This idea is supported by Esia-Donkoh & Antiwi (2015:67) when they posit that learners should participate actively in the creation of guidelines governing classroom behaviour. Learners will support the rules they established. Rules should be clear, consistent and encouraging positive behaviour.

The assertion made by Bony reveals the importance of extra-curricular activities such as sports in the learners’ learning process. She indicated, *“During lunch time we go to sports grounds and play different sports, and then we actively return to class after lunch,”* which is understood to mean that when learners are refreshed by sports, they find it easy to

listen to teachers and participate in class. It also indicates that after lunch, when learners are tired, they become irritable and as a result they do not listen to teachers when they discipline them. The response by Mrs Makhotso that “*As parents we should assume responsibility to discipline our children,*” is indicative that when parents take charge of the discipline their children, they have good manners and become well behaved. Learners who have good manners easily abide by rules and they do not start conflict and disruptions in class. When parents do not assume responsibility for the discipline of their children, they become ill-mannered and hostile. This means that teachers take more time disciplining learners than teaching them. These delays and disrupt the process of learning English in a large Grade 8 class.

#### **4.6.4 Assessment**

Literature indicates that in Canada, due to large classes, teachers use commercial software, which provides a source of testing material and a mechanism for learner feedback and assessment, thus easing the marking burden, resulting in more time for instructor-learner interaction. It further shows that multiple-choice format, self or peer assessment is easily managed and therefore yields quick feedback (Kerr, 2011:4). Also, engaging learners in peer feedback might reduce the marking burden on teachers. It encourages learners to take greater responsibility for their own learning. Learners could share their work and give one another feedback based on assessment criteria. The teacher can visit different groups and give comments and suggestions. Also, he/she can highlight particular aspects on the board so that learners can engage in further peer feedback (Anmpalagan & Smith, 2012:27). In our discussion with the participants the following themes were raised:

**Mr Molise** asserted that,

*Baithuti ba rona ba bangat ka hoo matichere a chenchana ka libuka ba thusane.*

[Our learners are many so teachers sometimes exchange exercise books so that learners can help mark each other.]

**Mrs Ithabeleng** added,

*Ka nako tseling ke ngola chalk bordeng ebe re bua ka taba kofela ha rona.*



[Sometimes I write questions on the board and we discuss them, all participate. Because learners are many, we all discuss the questions on the board instead of individually.]

**Bony** commented,

*Ha re tsoauoa ka bongooe tichere e nka nako e tellele ebe nako ea fela a so qete.*

[When the teacher marks us one by one, she takes a long time, the lesson time goes by without her being done.]

The assertion made by Mr Molise that sometimes teachers exchange exercise books is understood to mean that the teachers of this school put peer feedback into practice. This allows them to deliver feedback within time so that learners can benefit. Feedback that is returned in due time allows learners to revise the assessment that was given and as a result they perform better. The response of Bony correlates with the response of Mr Molise. This indicates that not only do teachers benefit from peer feedback because of reduced marking stress, but learners also benefit. Their work is evaluated, which increases their self-esteem. When their self-esteem is increased, they engage fully during class activities and benefit from English lessons, even if their classes are large. Mrs Ithabeleng mentioned that sometimes she wrote questions on the board and they all discussed them. In this way, when the lesson ends, assessment take place. It is also understood to mean that learners get to participate in their assessment process. This encourages them to work harder and better to improve themselves. This improves their performance in learning English in large classes.

#### **4.6.5 Parental engagement**

According to Dookie (2013:26), parental involvement is typically defined as the activities that parents engage in, both at home and at school, supporting their children's educational achievement. Parent involvement brings greater progress in the child's performance, greater school enjoyment, improved behavioural, school and educational standards, efficiency and effectiveness, and even the running of the school (Sibanda, 2015:26-27). According to Engelbrecht, Harding, Tsanwani and Maree (2013:37-39), the study conducted in Limpopo Province has shown good performance by schools such as Mbilwi High School in Thoyandou in Vhembe district is the secret to having direct

relationship with parents. A good relationship has a remarkable influence on excellent performance. In our interactions we discussed the following themes:

**Mr Molise** pointed out,

*Ho kenella ha batsoali thutong ea bana ho bohlokoa.*

[The involvement of parents in the education of their children is important.]

**Mr Mosuoe** stated,

*Bana ba rona ba tsaba ha re bitsoa sekolong.*

[Our children become scared when we are called to school.]

The response by Mr Molise is a clear indication that the involvement of parents in their children's education plays important roles. He might have realised that when parents are involved, learners participate more fully and take responsibility for their schoolwork. When parents are involved, they also become part of the school and participate in school functions. The statement by Mr Mosuoe is an indication that children are scared when their parents are called to school. It implies that learners are more afraid of their parents than they are of their teachers; therefore, it is wise to involve parents in school matters. Learners must improve in all their subjects, but most importantly, in English, which is not their mother tongue. Parents, together with teachers, could work collaboratively to help learners to speak English even when they are at home.

## **4.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter addressed the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the generated data during the meetings and discussions with the participants on how teachers can better teach English language in large Grade 8 classes. The data were analysed and interpreted through the use of CDA, while the three levels of critical discourse analysis were also used to analyse and interpret data in the challenges experienced by the participants of the research.

## **CHAPTER 5:**

### **SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, the findings from the analysed data, recommendations, discussions and conclusions to strengthen strategies that teachers use in teaching English as second language at one high school are presented. The chapter commences with the background to the study. In addition, the findings are presented drawn from the theoretical framework and the related literature. Also, the discussions, findings and recommendations are in conjunction with the objective of the study.

#### **5.2 BACKGROUND AND THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS**

This study aimed to strengthen the strategies that teachers use to overcome the challenges of teaching English as a second language in large classes, with specific reference to one high school in the Thaba-Tseka District in Lesotho. In different contexts and cultures, people may have different perspectives and tolerance of class size. However, in this study, a class is classified as one in which the number of learners is larger than what a teacher would prefer to manage and larger than what the available resources can support (Otieneh, 2010:60; Qiang & Ning, 2011:1). A large class is not just an issue of number, but also an issue of the challenges faced when providing quality education and equal learning opportunities for all learners (Maringe & Sing, 2014:765). English as second language is defined as a traditional term for the use of study of the English language by non-native speakers (Silver 2012:58). According to Fajrian (2017:305), teaching strategies are defined as a combination of processes whereby a teacher manages and uses all the necessary facilities to enhance learners' understanding.

The research indicates that learners from African countries face the challenge of adapting to the English language due to a society that fails to embrace diversity. Teachers also find it very hard to motivate learners and to instil the importance of language when

teaching large classes (Marais, 2016:5). Due to noisy and restive classmates in large classes, learners fail to pay full attention to the teacher and to participate optimally, which all tend to result in negative academic achievements (Mgeni, 2013:117).

In Canada, a major problem with large classes is that learners are distracted by the general lack of civility in large classes, which leads to activities such as side conversations on the side, being late for class and the inappropriate use of electronic devices (Kerr, 2011:3). In Nigeria, teaching of English language, especially in large classes, is affected negatively due to inadequate learning materials and aids and inadequately trained teachers (Udu, 2017:56). In China, because of large classes, English is taught by using whole-class/teacher-centred methodologies, which proved to be ineffective and also promoted a low level of motivation, commitment and poor classroom management (Wright & Zheng, 2017:1-2). The teaching of English second language is a pivotal problem, not only in Lesotho, but globally.

### **5.2.1 Research question: Restated**

How can the teaching of second language English in large classrooms be strengthened?

### **5.2.2 Aim and objectives of the study: Re-affirmed**

This research study is aimed to strengthen strategies for teaching English second language in large Grade 8 classes. The objectives of this study were as follows:

- to discuss challenges around the teaching of English as a second language in the context of large Grade 8 classes;
- to outline the solutions to the challenges encountered;
- to identify the threats associated with the solutions in teaching second language English in large classes; and
- to highlight evidence of success indicators in teaching a second language in large Grade 8 classes.

## **5.3 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.3.1 Findings about learner-teacher interaction**

Literature has indicated that, in order to strengthen strategies in teaching English, both the learners and the teacher should interact continuously. Learners who have good relationships with their teachers are considered to perform better. The literature further

indicates that in a large class it is not easy for a teacher to interact with all learners at the same time, which makes teaching more difficult and strictly teacher centred. It was also determined that learning a second language is dependent upon social interaction that occurs in class in order to give learners more opportunities to practise the skills acquired orally or in writing.

The study found that learner-teacher interaction is an active collaboration in teaching and learning. However, it was revealed in a study that learner-teacher interaction is difficult to maintain in a large class, because it is not easy for a teacher to organise dynamic and creative teaching and learning sessions. Moreover, teachers pay attention only to the few learners who participate, because the study showed that most learners do not participate well when they are many in a class. This shows that learner-teacher interaction plays a vital role in teaching and learning. However, the study showed that it is depressing for teachers to interact with many learners in a class. For example, marking is not easy.

The study further found that poor learner-teacher interaction approach contributes to ineffective teaching and learning, resulting in a need to strengthen strategies for teaching large English classes. It was also revealed that due to poor learner-teacher interaction, many things in a class such as classroom destruction, learners sleeping, some playing in class, lead to poor performance, to mention but a few. Good relationships between a learner and a teacher enhance active participation from learners.

### **5.3.2 Recommendations about learner-teacher interaction**

It is recommended that both learners and teachers build strong relationships that will help them in all possible ways to interact, even if the learning and teaching take place in a large class. Based on the findings, it is recommended that in order to interact effectively and efficiently, a teacher should strive to know all learners by their names. That will help him or her to call them to arouse their interest. When a teacher knows learners by their names, they feel part of learning and teaching.

It is further recommended that active participation be enhanced so that a learner-teacher relationship be achieved. Teachers should involve all their learners in class activities that will help them to engage in actions and consequently stop them from displaying unnecessary behaviour in a class. Learning English as second language is not easy for non-native speakers; therefore, it is recommended that teachers try by all means to help

their learners with activities that will assist them in becoming proficient in the language. Teachers should encourage learners to speak as much as possible English inside and outside the classroom.

Based on the findings, teachers must involve learners in extracurricular activities such as English debating, drama and poetry that will promote learners' competency in a language that is not their mother tongue. It is also recommended that teachers divide their learners into groups to facilitate learning and teaching in small groups. Again, it is recommended that blended learning and flipped classes be used to help learners play a more active role in their learning.

### **5.3.3 Risk to learner-teacher interaction**

Based on the findings of the study, teachers can pose a threat to learner-teacher interaction. Teachers are trained to facilitate teaching and learning, but in a large class they assume the job of nurses and police by trying to interact effectively with their learners. They spend most of the time to discipline and take care of learners who do not interact due to the large class. Some of the learners may not fully interact with their teachers for fear that they will be known and forced to participate in class. We know that there are learners who like to remain at the back, regardless of the size of the class. When learners and teachers interact openly, some learners can take advantage of disrespecting their teachers. As interaction is manifested by group discussions; some learners may pose a threat by not listening to their group members and causing more disorder.

## **5.4 FINDINGS PERTAINING TO THE CURRICULUM (ENGLISH)**

Findings pertaining to the curriculum revealed that the majority of the stakeholders in education such as teachers and parents were not involved during its development. However, teachers are the major implementers of the curriculum, although they do not participate in its development. The participants in this study highlighted that the integrated curriculum in Lesotho poses a huge challenge to teachers and learners because there are no teaching resources and materials as demanded by the new curriculum. It has also been found that the government at large was not fully prepared because teachers were not trained for the new, integrated English curriculum. The integrated English curriculum

has a lot of content compared to the old or traditional one and require of learners to fully engage in active learning.

The study further found that learners are expected to develop skills such as having experience with regard to language usage, knowledge of grammar and literacy texts, and approaches to them. It has been found also that the curriculum has been designed to ensure that learners get adequate learning and academic experience that benefit their academic development (see section 2.4.4). The experiences of the participants revealed that the aspects of the new curriculum are beyond teachers' knowledge and skills. It was also found that learners are given excessive homework and their parents or guardians are expected to help them with it.

#### **5.4.1 Recommendations for curriculum**

It is recommended that the government involve stakeholders such as teachers, parents and learners when the curriculum is developed so that they can air their views with regard to the new curriculum, as the implementation is exercised mainly by teachers. The literature revealed that the curriculum should be decentralised in order to respond to the needs of the country at large. It is further recommended that the ministry buy textbooks that will guide both the learners and the teachers concerning the new curriculum. The government, through the Ministry of Education by this Department of National Development Centre (NCDC), should make sure that teachers are thoroughly trained for the new curriculum to be able to impart new skills and knowledge to the learners.

The participants in this study revealed that both the curriculum and the assessment policy should be taken care of. They recommended that the traditional mode of assessment where their children had to pass to go from one class to the next be implemented again, rather than the current situation where it is assumed that learners have the abilities, skills and knowledge in their different learning areas that will allow them to transit to the next class.

#### **5.4.2 Risk pertaining to the curriculum**

The government does not include all stakeholders during the development of the curriculum. Such behaviour poses a threat to the implementation of the new curriculum, because people who have not been involved are now the ones to implement it. It may be difficult to both learners and teacher to adapt to the rules of the new curriculum.

## **5.5 FINDINGS ON LIMITED ASSESSMENT METHODS**

The study found that, due to the high number of learners in English second language classes, assessment methods were limited due to excessive marking loads. They cannot provide sufficient and prompt feedback. The study further revealed that teachers in English classes were not able to prepare and set proper tests, resulting in unmarked exercises books or tests. It was also found that there was a challenge of helping learners to carry out speaking, reading and writing tasks and setting up the communicative tasks such as essay writing, comprehension and letters. It was not easy for a teacher to help individual learners with grammatical mistakes, because of the class size and teachers feel overworked.

The study also found that immediate feedback played an important role in terms of its provision of information about the accuracy and communicative success among learners. Moreover, teachers as participants found that it was not easy to manage the paperwork and if they did not finish marking the previous day, they had to do something else the following day. They indicated that they gave superficial tests that did not cover all levels of assessment. Esia-Donkor (2015:65) opines that it is difficult for teachers to spot learners' problems, give feedback, industry-specific needs and gear teaching to meet their set individual targets and evaluate progress. In the same vein, it was also found that a delayed feedback hindered learners' progress.

### **5.5.1 Recommendations about assessment methods**

It is recommended that teachers try their best to assess their learners continuously, because continued feedback has the potential to help learners to learn and monitor their academic progress more closely (Singer-Freeman & Bastone, 2016:8); also, that English teachers assess their learners more often to check if the necessary language skills have been acquired. It is further recommended that teachers implement both formative and summative assessment.

Based on the findings it is also recommended that the needs, interest and the talents of learners be taken in to account when preparing assessments. When learners' needs are considered, teachers are forced to move away from the traditional teacher-centred approach to the learner-centred method. Importantly, the literature recommends that the content to be assessed should align with the main learning goals of the curriculum,



because the achieved goals contribute to quality education, the main objective of teaching and learning in Lesotho. It is opined by Mahao and Raselimo (2015:9) that the implementation of continuous assessment in Lesotho is likely to bring about quality in teaching and learning.

Besides that, it is recommended both learners, parents and the community at large understand clearly what kind of level of performance learners are expected to achieve. (Stephen 2005:4). When all are involved in education learners will perform better. Another recommendation is that teachers engage learners in peer feedback, thus getting them to mark one another's work as a technique to reduce the marking load of teachers and which also encourages learners to take responsibility for their academic work. Another method can be an exercise where learners engage with one another in small groups (Singer-Freeman & Bastone, 2016:12).

The literature further recommends that English language teachers team up and assess their learners collaboratively. This will ease their work and feedback will be given in due time. Anoefa *et al.* (2016:22-43) posit that team teaching provides enabling environment for teachers and learners to assess their progress.

### **5.5.2 Risk pertaining to assessment**

Learners' peer teaching can pose a threat towards quality performance. A teacher can assume that good work is done, while it is not. Some learners might not like to be marked by their fellow learners and can report that to their parents, which can result in a teacher being accused by parents. The participants (learners) indicated that although teachers let learners do peer marking, the learners hated this, because they did not want other learners to see how they performed.

Moreover, team teaching can have a negative impact on learners because they are not familiar with the teaching approaches of other teachers apart from their own teachers. Therefore, learning can decline instead of improving. Participation and motivation of learners can be affected negatively. Most teachers rely on a type of assessment that helps them to mark, such as multiple questions. Although it is one of the best approaches, when used often, it can lower the standard of performance, because learners should develop and be able to master all levels of questioning.

## **5.6 FINDINGS ABOUT PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT**

The literature indicates that parents, family and communities' engagement correlates with higher academic performance and school improvement. Their suggestions and contributions help to improve the administration, teachers and learners. It was also observed that parents' engagement starts at home when parents provide an environment conducive to learning and help their children with schoolwork. Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017:140) also support this notion that parenting includes all activities parents engage in to raise happy and healthy children who become capable learners due to parents' support.

The study revealed that when parents were engaged in the learning of their children teachers would get to know their learners better through communicating with their parents. They would also understand the learners' background, which would help teachers to deal with an individual learner accordingly. Teaching and learning English require dedication by both learners and teachers. In this regard, teachers should work collaboratively with parents to monitor the progress of their children by encouraging their children to read and write in English, even when they are at home. This is supported by Gordon (2015:18), who posits that English is a social and natural phenomenon that should be learned within the home environment and from a very early childhood stage.

The participants revealed that when parents did not engage in the learning of their children, children misbehaved at school, and their attendance and performance in general declined. The study showed that parents could be engaged by playing an active role at the school. According to Ntekane (2018:1), parents become involved in their children's learning through becoming school board members, being concerned about their children's academic performance, and showing dedication in learning through availing themselves during parents meetings.

### **5.6.1 Recommendations on parental engagement**

The study recommended that parents engage in school activities such as attending meetings and becoming active members of the school board. It is recommended that parents should buy extra books that are recommended by teachers that will help their children with English vocabulary because English as second language requires a lot of

practice. According to Mengistie (2019:24), teachers have a great responsibility to use various strategies for teaching vocabulary.

It is recommended that parents visit the school often to talk with teachers about their children's performance, such as daily attendance and their relationship with teachers in order to learn better in large English classes. Chetty (2015:54) maintains that parental involvement engages specifically with learners' misconduct. Parents are collaborators in this process and the most important stakeholders in the education of their children. As a result they should be given the opportunity to air their views about strategies that could be used to teach English. Parents should regularly be informed about their children so that they will see a need to showcase their responsibilities. Parents' participation is recommended mostly because it promotes an active role played by teachers when they realise that they are supported. Parents have experience as community members that can contribute towards the growth and development of the school with regard to strengthening teaching strategies for teaching English as a second language to their children. It is also recommended that schools create an environment that allows parents to have equal rights to speak and question for clarity an environment where they will be treated with respect and dignity.

### **5.6.2 Risks to lack of parental engagement**

The risk of not engaging parents in their children's learning is that learners may break school rules without fear of being reported to their parents. During my more than 24 years' experience as a teacher, I have observed that learners have more respect for their parents than for their teachers. When parents are not engaged, they will not know when their attendance is poor; they can even drop out of school without the knowledge of their parents, which often happens.

Parents are considered the primary caregivers of their children. When they are not engaged, learners may not acquire some essential skills, values and attitude and might not grow holistically. When parents are not engaged, it will be difficult for a teacher to know how to handle learners who come from different backgrounds and diversities. Parents will not know that teachers have a problem teaching large classes if they are not

engaged. They have experience that they can share with teachers to solve the problem of teaching English to large classes.

## **5.7 FINDINGS ABOUT SUPPORTIVE ENGAGEMENT**

The literature indicates that when learners are not fully engaged in learning and teaching they end up disturbing the whole class. Bahanshal (2013:50) supports this statement when he mentions that if a learner misbehaves and begins disturbing the class, the teacher has to attend to this and control the noise. In a large class, especially in an English class, it is not easy for a teacher to help learners unleash their full potential when learners do not participate. It was found that large classes promoted passiveness, even from teachers, because they could not move freely around in the class.

### **5.7.1 Recommendations about supportive engagement**

It is recommended that teachers treat learners with respect and dignity, which make them better participants in a class free of bad behaviour. In order to engage learners, it is recommended that a teacher prepare the classroom with a clear structure and set of expectations and communicate those to the learners. According to Egeberg and McConney (2016:8), teachers must place learners at the centre of learning, focusing on the whole child, and his/her social emotional and academic needs. It is recommended that teachers help learners to acquire skills that will motivate them to achieve educational goals. Participants recommended that a school should be a learning centre where learners are treated with equality and decisions be respected; collaboration among learners is recommended.

### **5.7.2 Risks of lack of supportive engagement**

Learners are the primary stakeholders in education; therefore, it would be a risk not to support them to engage in teaching and learning. Furthermore, CER emphasises the importance of collaboration and people's emancipation. Learners should be emancipated from being taught in large overcrowded classrooms. When learners are not fully engaged, they will consequently not participate in the class and end up being demotivated, drop out of school and end up getting involved in anti-social behaviour such as being trapped in drug abuse and other vices.

## **5.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The study was limited to only one school as a research site. The study aimed to strengthen strategies for teaching English language in large Grade 8 classes based only at one school. Therefore, the findings of this study cannot be generalised to include other schools that were not sample schools, because schools differ. The literature reveals that what is considered a large class by some teachers is regarded small by others. The initial intention was to collect data from at least four teachers but due to unforeseen circumstances, only two teachers and the school principal participated in the data generation. Another limitation is that the data were generated during the teachers' strike in Lesotho, which made it impossible to meet with other participants. We also had to reschedule time in order to meet with the participants in this study.

## **5.9 CONCLUSION**

This chapter focused on the findings and recommendations of the study, which revealed that there is need to strengthen the strategies for teaching English as a foreign or second language in large Grade 8 classes. During the research process it also became evident too that when teachers did not have good relations with their learners, that could result in demotivated learners who, as a result, could drop out of school. It was also found by the participants that parents sometimes did not attend school activities because of lack of knowledge concerning education. It was also revealed by the participants during the research that when learners, parents and teachers did not share the same vision, teaching and learning would not be enhanced.

Based on the findings of the study, it was found that there are many strategies that teachers can use when teaching English to overcrowded classes. The suggested strategies include collaborative teaching, which suggests that teachers must work together as a team in order to close the gap that exists; peer teaching, which requires clear planning and outlining of the objectives and activities to be taken by learners; technology and the provision of feedback. All these strategies have been cited by the participants as the best in their context to be used by teachers in large classes.

The study further recommends that teachers empower their learners with skills that will help them to realise the need to learn English. It also recommended that the government

of Lesotho provide some schools with more buildings to have smaller classes, as well as an increasing a number of teachers to achieve the teacher-learner ratio. The participants in this study recommended that teachers should create a warm atmosphere; user-friendly schools with both the learners and parents having a feeling of ownership to enable the learners to develop skills in English.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX 1: LETTER TO DISTRICT EDUCATION MANAGER REQUESTING PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA**

Mapotsane Mohale  
Box 455  
Thaba-Tseka 550  
February 2019  
District Education Manager  
Education office  
Thaba-Tseka 550

Dear Sir/Madam

#### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

This letter serves to request permission to conduct research in the selected school within your district.

My name is Mapotsane Mohale (2004211419) and I am currently studying for a master's degree at the University of the Free State. As part of my master's study, I am required to conduct a research on the topic of my own. The title of my research project is "Strategies to strengthen teaching of second language English in large Grade 8 classes".

The purpose of the study is to strengthen the strategies teachers use to overcome challenges of teaching second language English in large classes. The study is conducted because the researcher would like to investigate the challenges encountered by teachers when teaching English second language in large Grade 8 classes, to outline solutions to the challenges, to enhance teaching strategies that teachers can adopt to improve teaching, to identify the threats associated with teaching large classes, and to highlight the evidence of success indicators in teaching English in large classes.

The role of participants in this study is to be involved in sharing of knowledge on the challenge of teaching English as a second language in large classes. The study will be of great benefit to all teachers of Grade 8 classes who are faced with challenges of teaching

in large classes. Solutions of the mentioned challenges will help them improve their teaching of second language English. The study will also be useful to the learners who are taught in large classes. They will be engaged in discussions that will help them come up with suitable ideas and perspectives in regard to attaining effective learning in overcrowded classes.

If you would like to be informed more about this study please contact me on +2666322672/53238032 or email [ameliamohale@gmail.com](mailto:ameliamohale@gmail.com) or should you have concerns consent about the way the research has been conducted, please contact Dr B.P.N. Maseko on +27820529622 or e-mail [masekopbn@gmail.com](mailto:masekopbn@gmail.com) and Prof M. Nkoane at +27769826901 or e-mail [nkoanemm@ufs.ac.za](mailto:nkoanemm@ufs.ac.za).

I hope that my request reaches your outmost consideration.

Yours sincerely

Mapotsane Mohale

## **APPENDIX 2: LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL**

Mapotsane Mohale

Box 455

Thaba-Tseka 550

February 2019

The Principal

..... High school

Thaba-Tseka 550

Dear Sir/ Madam

### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

This letter serves to request permission to conduct research at your school.

My name is Mapotsane Mohale (2004211419) and I am currently studying for a master's degree at the University of the Free State. As part of my master's study, I am required to conduct a research on the topic of my own. The title of my research project is "Strategies to strengthen teaching of second language English in large Grade 8 classes".

The purpose of the study is to strengthen the strategies teachers use to overcome challenges of teaching second language English in large classes. The study is conducted because the researcher would like to investigate the challenges encountered by teachers when teaching English second language in large Grade 8 classes, to outline solutions to the challenges, to enhance teaching strategies that teachers can adopt to improve teaching, to identify the threats associated with teaching large classes, and to highlight the evidence of success indicators in teaching English in large classes.

The role of participants in this study is to be involved in sharing of knowledge on the challenge of teaching English as a second language in large classes. The study will be of great benefit to all teachers of Grade 8 classes who are faced with challenges of teaching in large classes. Solutions of the mentioned challenges will help them improve their teaching of second language English. The study will also be useful to the learners who are taught in large classes. They will be engaged in discussions that will help them come up with suitable ideas and perspectives in regard to attaining effective learning in overcrowded classes.

If you would like to be informed more about this study please contact me on +2666322672/53238032 or email [ameliamohale@gmail.com](mailto:ameliamohale@gmail.com) or should you have concerns about the way the research has been conducted, please contact Dr B.P.N. Maseko on +27820529622 or e-mail [masekopbn@gmail.com](mailto:masekopbn@gmail.com) and Prof M. Nkoane at +27769826901 or e-mail [nkoanemm@ufs.ac.za](mailto:nkoanemm@ufs.ac.za).

I hope that my request reaches your outmost consideration.

## APPENDIX 3: CLEARANCE FROM THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION



**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING**  
**THABA - TSEKA DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICE**  
**P.O. BOX 170, THABA – TSEKA 550.**  
**TEL: 22900206 / 22 900491**

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22 January 2019

MS Amelia Mohale  
University of Free State  
Faculty of Education  
Bloemfontein 9300  
South Africa

Dear Ms Mohale

**RE: AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT NTAOTE HIGH SCHOOL**

Your request for permission to conduct research entitled: **STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH-SECOND LANGUAGE IN LARGE GRADE 8 CLASSES** in Thaba-Tseka district at Ntaote High school is authorized.

Before proceeding with your study at this school, please ensure that you pass through the principal's office.

We hope your data collection will not in any way temper with the smooth running of the above mentioned school

Yours faithfully

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Mampqa Hlojeng  
(Education Inspector)

## APPENDIX 4: CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I .....(Participant's name) confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience for participation. I have understood the study as explained and I have had enough opportunity to ask questions. My participation is purely voluntary, I have not been coerced into participating, and I can willingly withdraw from participation at any time without suffering any prejudice. I agree to the recording of the specific data to be collected.

Full name of participant

.....

Signature of participant..... Date .....

Full name of researcher

.....

Signature of researcher..... Date .....

## APPENDIX 5: CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I ..... (Participant's name) confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience for participation. I have understood the study as explained and I have had enough opportunity to ask questions. My participation is purely voluntary, I have not been coerced into participating, and I can willingly withdraw from participation at any time without suffering any prejudice. I agree to the recording of the specific data to be collected.

Full name of participant

.....

Signature of participant..... Date .....

Full name of researcher

.....

Signature of researcher..... Date .....



## APPENDIX 6: CONSENT FORM TO BE COMPLETED BY CHILDREN

### ASSENT FORM FOR MINORS BELOW THE AGE OF 18

**Name of child:**

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**Name of Parent:**

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- Has the researcher answered all your questions? Yes ☐ No ☐
- Do you understand that you can withdraw from the study at any time? Yes ☐ No ☐
- Do you understand this research study and are you willing to take part in it? Yes ☐  
No ☐

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Signature of Parent/Guardian

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Signature of child

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Date

## **APPENDIX 7: CONSENT FORM TO BE COMPLETED BY PARENTS FOR PERMISSION FOR THEIR CHILDREN**

Name of Child.....

Name of Parent.....

- Do you understand this research study and are you willing to let your child take part in it? Yes ☐ No ☐
- Has the researcher answered all your questions? Yes ☐ No ☐
- Do you understand that your child can withdraw at any time? Yes ☐ No ☐
- I give the researcher permission to make use of the data from my child's participation. Yes ☐ No ☐

## **APPENDIX 8: RESEARCH INSTRUMENT**

The instrument in this research will be questions that will be discussed with the participants.

Questions to be discussed with teachers.

1. Do we have challenges in teaching large classes?
2. What are some challenges we face in teaching English in Grade 8?
3. What do we think are the solutions to the challenges we encountered? Let's discuss as many as possible.
4. As teachers, what can we do in order to strengthen the techniques of teaching second language English in large Grade 8 classes?
5. Do we think that other teachers in other schools experience similar challenges?
6. Do we think as teachers we can identify indicators of success in teaching and learning in large classes?

Questions to be discussed with learners.

1. How do you feel that you have passed Grade 7?
2. How does it feel to be in Grade 8?
3. Do you like English language as a subject?
4. Since there are many of you in your class, how do your teachers help you learn English, are there challenges you encounter?
5. Do we participate every day in class activities?
6. What do we think our teachers can do to help us participate fully during English class?
7. Are we satisfied with the way our teachers give us feedback?

Questions to be discussed with parents.

1. As parents, are we aware that our children are many in class in Grade 8?
2. Have we ever asked our children to tell us how they perform in English language?
3. Do we check our children's work regularly?
4. What challenges do teachers face when teaching our children English?
5. What do we as parents think our teachers can do in order to teach English in large Grade 8 effectively?

## APPENDIX 9: TURN IT IN REPORT

### Final Submission

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#### ORIGINALITY REPORT

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<b>10%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>8%</b>
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

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#### PRIMARY SOURCES

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<b>1</b>	<b>Submitted to University of the Free State</b> Student Paper	<b>1%</b>
<b>2</b>	<b><a href="https://scholar.ufs.ac.za/8080">scholar.ufs.ac.za:8080</a></b> Thesis	<b>1%</b>