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Collaborative dialogue and deliberative communication: Reading circles with Young Adult novels and adolescent learners of English as a Second Language

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MEd Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages

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Abstract

Learning a second language (L2) requires extensive input, and interaction in the target language can allow learners to notice and adjust their language use. Pedagogical activities that involve small-group discussions around literary texts have the potential to provide such learning opportunities. There is limited empirical research in the fields of L2 learning and teaching, however reader response research demonstrates that in-depth exploration of interpretations can be facilitated and suggests that critical pedagogies where learners act as problem-posers and problem-solvers may facilitate democratic dialogue (Short, 2011). This interdisciplinary shared goal of negotiation of meaning follows the Education 2030's (UNESCO, 2016) global aims of furthering democracy. This qualitative study aims to provide insights into how reading circles can facilitate opportunities for interaction in L2 English and responses to literary texts. Data was generated from classroom observations and transcripts of audio recordings of learner-led reading circles with roles, Young Adult (YA) novels, and adolescent learners of English as a Second Language at a Swedish middle school. Selected purposively to draw insights from established communicative practices, this school implements reading circles regularly with their L2 English learners. Framed by sociocultural theory and the concept of languaging (Swain & Watanabe, 2013), the iterative linguistic and reader response analysis generated an analytical framework that draws on findings from Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research and reader response studies with picturebooks and younger learners. Main findings demonstrate how the learners co-constructed collaborative dialogue that involved appropriation of lexis and self- and other-repair of form, lexis, and narrative details. Supporting previous SLA research, this suggests how learner-led reading circles can provide opportunities for noticing form and lexis and adjustment of language in interaction. It also contributes to understanding how they can allow for negotiation of narrative details and regulation of reading comprehension. Adding to reader response research with adolescent L2 learners and YA novels, a typology of responses was developed that demonstrate how the learners made intertextual links within the novels and between the novels and their own narratives of life. This contributes to the discussion of the potential of literary texts to foster empathy by providing insights into how the learners drew on emotional responses to express compassion for or reject the characters' actions. In sum, the learners' interactions and negotiation of meaning suggest they were involved in deliberative communication, a pedagogical pursuit that aims to facilitate democratic processes (Englund, 2006).

Table of contents

Abstract 2
List of tables 6
Acknowledgments 7
Author's declaration 8
Abbreviations 9
Chapter 1 Introduction 10
1.1 Reading circles in the research context 10
1.2 Key issues in L2 learning and reader response 13
1.3 Research aims and questions 17
1.4 Reflexive discussion of researcher positionality 19
1.5 Thesis overview 22
Chapter 2 Literature review 25
2.1 Conceptual framework 25
2.1.1 Theoretical underpinnings and relevant concepts 25
2.1.2 Learning and reading as situated communicative practices 29
2.1.3 Methodological considerations 31
2.1.4 Section conclusion 34
2.2 Literary texts in L2 education 35
2.2.1 L2 reading and literary texts in L2 education 35
2.2.2 Communicative practices around literary texts in L2 classrooms 40
2.2.3 Section conclusion 45
2.3 Reader response 45
2.3.1 Theoretical underpinnings 45
2.3.2 The mediating role of social interaction 50
2.3.3 Empathy and literary texts 53
2.3.4 Section conclusion 56
2.4 Chapter conclusion 57
Chapter 3 Methodology 59
3.1 Overview of the study's qualitative nature 59
3.2 Research site, fieldwork, and research tools 62
3.2.1 The learning site, teacher profiles, and assessment practices 62
3.2.2 Sampling procedures and participant recruitment 65
3.2.3 The reading circles 66
3.2.4 Classroom observations 67
3.2.5 Research tools 69
3.3 Transcription and translation processes 71
3.3.1 Development of the transcription system 72

3.3.2 Translation of data extracts and researcher quotes 75
3.4 Analytical procedures 77
3.5 Ethical considerations 83
3.5.1 Access to the research site 83
3.5.2 Gaining learners' consent and conducting research with children 85
3.5.3 Anonymisation and confidentiality 86
3.6 Trustworthiness and researcher integrity 87
3.6.1 Trustworthiness criteria 87
3.6.2 Development of the research questions 89
3.7 Presentation of YA novels 92
3.8 Chapter conclusion 95
Chapter 4 Analytical framework 97
4.1 Linguistic analysis 98
4.1.1 Languaging and collaborative dialogue 98
4.1.2 Incorporating findings from other approaches to analyse talk 102
4.1.2.1 Interthinking: Using language to think together 102
4.1.2.2 Repair-analysis: Identifying the task focus of the reading circles 104
4.1.2.3 Extending the analysis of self- and other-repair 106
4.2 Reader response analysis 109
4.2.1 Intersection of the linguistic and reader response analyses 110
4.2.1.1 Communicative functions: Indicative, semiotic, and rhetorical 110
4.2.1.2 Linguistic analysis of intertextuality 111
4.2.2 Constructing a typology of responses 113
4.2.2.1 Identifying the readerly gap 113
4.2.2.2 Evaluating the novels as works of art 115
4.2.2.3 Making links to narratives of life 115
4.3 Chapter conclusion 117
Chapter 5 Linguistic repertoires mediating communication 119
5.1 Linguistic analysis of intertextuality 119
5.1.1 Interweaving narrative retellings with meaning making 120
5.1.1.1 Reading the role reports 120
5.1.1.2 Responding to the Discussion leaders' questions 125
5.1.2 Appropriating utterances to co-construct meaning 128
5.1.2.1 Repeating lexis from the novels 128
5.1.2.2 Repeating lexis that represented the participants' meaning 131
5.1.3 Section discussion and conclusion 135
5.2 Repairing form, lexis, and narrative retellings 136
5.2.1 Repairing form and lexis 137
5.2.1.1 Self-initiated self-repair of form and lexis 137

5.2.1.2 Other-repair of lexis 145
5.2.2 Repairing narrative retellings 149
5.2.2.1 Self-repair...149
5.2.2.2 Other-repair 152
5.2.3 Section discussion and conclusion 156
5.3 Chapter discussion and conclusion 158
5.3.1 Development of language 158
5.3.2 Development of responses 163
Chapter 6 Typology of responses..168
6.1 Identifying the readerly gap 168
6.1.1 Referential responses: Stayed within the gap 169
6.1.2 Creative responses: Moved along the gap's borders 176
6.2 Evaluating the novels as works of art 183
6.3 Making links to narratives of life 187
6.3.1 Compassionate responses 187
6.3.2 Value judgements 193
6.3.3 Generalising from the characters' struggles 203
6.4 Chapter discussion and conclusion 210
6.4.1 Insights into the participants' meaning making processes 211
6.4.2 Collaborative dialogue as deliberative communication...................................215
Chapter 7 Conclusion 221
7.1 Answers to the research questions 221
7.2 Contributions to the field 223
7.2.1 Theoretical contributions 224
7.2.2 Pedagogical implications 226
7.3 Limitations and future research directions 229
7.4 Researcher reflections 235
7.5 Concluding remarks 236
Appendices 237
Appendix 1 Reading circles: Instructions for learners 237
Appendix 2 Participant profiles 241
Appendix 3 Fieldwork journal: Sample entry 242
Appendix 4 Transcription system 243
Appendix 5 Researcher journal: Sample entry 244
Appendix 6 Recording my responses to the YA novels 245
Appendix 7 Manual coding of printed copies of transcripts 246
Appendix 8 Manual handling of codes 247
Appendix 9 Coding in NVivo 248
Appendix 10 Initial categories 250

Appendix 11 Final categories 254
Appendix 12 Analysis of Discussion leaders' questions 256
List of references 260

List of tables

Table 1 Reading circles roles 12
Table 2 Research tools and data generation 69
Table 3 Speaker codes for data extracts 71
Table 4 Duration of reading circle sessions 77
Table 5 Trustworthiness criteria as complied by in this study 88
Table 6 The analytical framework used for the linguistic analysis 109
Table 7 The repetition of "judge" across *Running's* sessions 132
Table 8 Self-repair of form and lexis 138
Table 9 Self-repair of lexis 138
Table 10 Self-repair mediated by private speech 142
Table 11 Other-repair of lexis 145
Table 12 Self-repair of narrative retellings 150
Table 13 Other-repair of narrative retellings 152
Table 14 Self- and other-repair of form, lexis, and narrative retellings 157
Table 15 Identifying the readerly gap: Referential responses 169
Table 16 Identifying the readerly gap: Creative responses 176
Table 17 Evaluating the novels as works of art 183
Table 18 Making links to narratives of life: Compassionate responses 188
Table 19 Making links to narratives of life: Value judgements 194
Table 20 Making links to narratives of life: Generalising from the characters' struggles.203
Table 21 Developing the verbal interaction 231
Table 22 Introducing new perspectives on literary texts 232
Table 23 Participant profiles 241
Table 24 Analysis of the Discussion leaders' questions 256

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Author's declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Printed Name: Madeleine Strobel

Signature: Madeleine Strobel

Abbreviations

CEFR	The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
L1	First language
L2	Second language
LREs	Language-related episodes
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TESOL	Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages
YA novels	Young Adult novels

Chapter 1 Introduction

1. CD_Q5

William: what is the lesson to be learned from this work of literature?

Emelie: I think you need to be like more a **better person** and don't – **take revenge** on things I think

William: you're saying that the past doesn't necessarily need to define you … and go and win the show instead of {Emelie: yeah} having his **revenge** – in order to live a **better life**

Emma: yeah I think it was wrong erm that he entered the show to **take revenge** cause it's never good to like **take revenge** – cause you should be like the **better person** – yeah

This quote exemplifies how adolescent learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) participate in a reading circle, a pedagogical activity that involves learner-led small-group discussions around literary texts. The extract is from the last reading circle session with a group of learners reading *Q&A* (Swarup, 2005), a Young Adult (YA) novel, and William, acting as Discussion leader, invited his peers to identify a "lesson to be learned" from the novel. Extracted from the data generated from the study reported in this thesis, this quote illustrates important aspects of language learning and reader response. First, how the participants noticed, and repeated vocabulary items used by their peers, marked in bold, to maintain a shared perspective. This exemplifies how interaction in the target language can provide opportunities for learners to modify their language use, which may in turn lead to the development of their linguistic repertoires (VanPatten et al., 2020, p.9). Second, how the Discussion leaders' question framed the participants' responses to the novel to appraise a didactic message. This illustrates how small-group discussions around literary texts as a pedagogical activity can allow children to act as problem-posers as well as problem-solvers, leading the line of inquiry and concluding it (Short, 2011).

1.1 Reading circles in the research context

This thesis reports on a qualitative study of reading circles with YA novels and adolescent learners of English, studying at a middle school in Sweden. The identified school regularly implements reading circles with their learners of English. Spanning five weeks, these involve weekly learner-led sessions where the learners talk about the reading they have completed in preparation. This reading is an extract of a literary text, either a graded reader, children's book, or YA novel. This study focuses on the reading circles with one

class of 27 learners in year 9 (aged 15). Organised into five groups of five-six learners, each group read a different YA novel. Presented and discussed in more detail below (section 3.7), these five novels were *Looking for Alaska* (Green, 2005), *Goodnight Mister Tom* (Magorian, 1981), *Q&A* (Swarup, 2005), *Now is the time for running* (Williams, 2012), and *The fault in our stars* (Green, 2012). Central to the reading circles were different reading tasks referred to as “roles”. Described in table 1 below, these were Discussion leader, Summariser, Character tracer, Creative connector, and Literary wizard. Following a rota, at the end of the reading circle cycle, each learner had completed each role once. Except for the Discussion leader who led the sessions and prepared two discussion questions, the remaining roles prepared written reports which they read aloud to their peers. For the groups with six learners, the teacher created the role Discussion Summariser. This role required no preparation and there were no written instructions. Instead, the teacher verbally instructed the Discussion summarisers to summarise the discussion to their peers at the end of the reading circle sessions.

Table 1 Reading circles roles

Roles	Description
Discussion leader	Prepare three questions based on the content of this week's reading. You will lead the discussion during the book circle, addressing your fellow students by name and thanking them for their participation. We finish the discussion with your questions. Try to write questions that you find interesting and that would inspire a discussion. Avoid "yes and no" questions. During the discussion it is of outmost importance that everyone contributes: it's everyone's responsibility to keep the discussion going by asking questions, encouraging each other and trying to find a flow in the conversation. The discussion leader encourages everyone to contribute, especially the more quiet ones.
Summariser	Prepare a brief summary of this week's reading. You present your summary after the discussion leader has welcomed everyone to the book circle. The summary should cover the key events and main highlights of this week's reading assignment.
Character tracer	Choose a character and list some character traits the person has shown in this week's reading, e.g., "I think this person is very caring because he really tries to make Liz feel better. He even bakes her a cake, even though he hates spending time in the kitchen." Always motivate your arguments.
Creative connector	Find connections between the novel and the world outside. Try to connect what you've read to your own life, things you've seen, heard or experienced.
Literary wizard	Find two or three different paragraphs in this week's reading that you think are interesting, funny, or puzzling. Read the paragraphs out loud to your classmates and share your thoughts on why you've chosen these paragraphs.

These role descriptions are extracted from the participating teacher's written learner instructions (appendix 1) and were developed from the original material (Larsson, 2010) the team of English teachers received at the professional development seminar where they first learned about the reading circles. Since then, the teachers have implemented the reading circles once a year with their learners in year 7-9 (aged 13-15) and developed an extensive library of literary texts. At this school, reading circles are called *bokcirklar* ('book circles'). First recorded in early 19th century, this term reflects the Swedish tradition of reading communities for knowledge-developing purposes, *studiecirklar* ('study circles'), or reading literary texts for pleasure, referred to as *bokcirklar* ('book circles'), *läsecirklar* ('reading circles), or *litteraturcirklar* ('literature circles') (Rydbeck, 2016, p.236). A recent trend can be noted in Swedish popular media and research of using the

noun as a verb, *att bokcirkla* ('to book circle'), or an adjective, *bokcirklande* ('bookcircling') when e.g., providing book recommendations (Sveriges Radio, 2019), arguing the benefits of bibliotherapy (Frid, 2016, p.119), and investigating current and historical practices in Sweden (Rydbeck, 2023). However, term *bokcirklar* ('book circles') is not used in the literature on reader response or second language (L2) learning and teaching. Instead, small-group discussions around literary texts are usually referred to as e.g., book talks, book clubs, literature circles, or reading circles. To follow disciplinary terminology and to reach an international audience, this thesis uses the term reading circles.

This first chapter introduces the study and outlines relevant key issues in the fields of L2 learning and reader response (section 1.2), outlines research aims and questions (section 1.3), offers a reflexive discussion of researcher positionality to clarify how my beliefs as a researcher and language teacher have influenced the research (section 1.4), and concludes with a thesis overview with chapter summaries (section 1.5).

1.2 Key issues in L2 learning and reader response

In the above description of the reading circles, several connections to key issues in the research fields of L2 learning and teaching and reader response can be identified. These include the role of reading and vocabulary, talking about texts as a pedagogical activity, and readers responding to literary texts. This situates the study in relation to global aims for education and language learning, and introduces the theory framing this study, sociocultural theory.

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is a research field concerned with the study of learning processes and learners learning other languages after learning a first language (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2016, p.1). Several observations have emerged from this field that SLA theories need to consider. Relevant to this thesis, language input is necessary and learning can happen, not only as a result of explicit instruction, but also incidentally during communicative interaction (VanPatten et al., 2020, p.9). In this perspective, input is defined as any sample of target language learners attempt to understand during communicative activities (VanPatten et al., 2020, p.10). For example, interaction can allow learners to notice linguistic aspects in the input and allow them to modify their own language use and to express meanings beyond their current linguistic repertoires (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2016, p.111). Central for L2 learning is learning vocabulary and to read in

the target language (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2016, p.144) and it is widely agreed among SLA researchers that reading extensively is beneficial for vocabulary growth and reading fluency (Grabe & Yamashita, 2022, p.421). Agreeing that careful text selection is important, there is a discussion on whether the best approach is to allow learners to read texts in the target language produced for the general market or texts that have been adapted for language learners. On the one hand, researchers argue that learners should read comprehensible input tailored to their current proficiency level (Nation & Waring, 2019, p.6). On the other hand, SLA research has observed that learners can to some extent guess the meaning of words by drawing on previous knowledge of e.g., content, context, and culture (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2016, p.163). Nevertheless, extensive reading as a pedagogical approach requires access to texts, careful text selection, extensive learner effort, and extended time, which might explain why it is not always prioritised in L2 classrooms (Grabe & Yamashita, 2022, p.429). In addition, the communicative reasons for learning a second language may determine the extent to which reading and what reading practices are emphasised. Distinguishing between academic and interpersonal competences (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2016, pp.143-144), the former highly prioritises reading to acquire information for professional and occupational reasons. The latter deprioritises reading and instead emphasises spoken and written interaction which involves more rapid language processing and negotiation of meaning.

Related to the argument that learners can draw on previous knowledge to guess meaning, many researchers of SLA and L2 teaching agree that talking about texts can facilitate reading comprehension and allow for the development of reading fluency and vocabulary. Depending on which competences and reading practices are prioritised, the types of texts used and the focus of the verbal interactions differ. For example, to promote strategic readers, Grabe and Stoller (2020, p.149) advocate learner or whole class discussions on main-idea comprehension and strategies for understanding texts while reading. To engage learners in extensive reading projects and promote voluntary reading, Grabe and Yamashita (2022, p.429) argue that it is important to allow learners to self-select texts and to talk about why, or why not, they find them interesting. Taking this argument forward, L2 classrooms informed by the research field reader response aim to promote in-depth exploration of different interpretations of literary texts (Hall, 2016, p.462). Further discussed below (section 2.3), this field aims to understand how different readers respond to different texts and analytically considers responses as reactions to texts, communicated via any media or means for communication available (Arizpe & Styles, 2016, p.140). There has always been a close connection between L2 learning and literary texts, either as

a tool to learn the language or as an end to read literary texts in the target language (Paran et al., 2021, p.326). Using the text as basis, reader response approaches encourage small-group discussion and reflection to achieve consensus, either by agreeing or agreeing to disagree (Hall, 2016, p.462). In research with younger readers of picturebooks, the reader response sub-field with the largest body of empirical research, the aim is to facilitate small-group discussions that allow for responses and questions to emerge spontaneously and unprompted and to not define responses as right or wrong (Arizpe & Styles, 2016, pp.183-184). This means that reading practices informed by reader response involve small-group discussions where learners negotiate their interpretations and reflections of literary texts. This resonates with the observation made by the field of SLA that negotiation of meaning is integral for L2 interactional competence and that interaction can allow learners to notice and adjust their language use (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2016, pp.143-144).

Mentioned in brief above, another shared concern of L2 learning and teaching and reader response is careful text selection. Reader response advise using texts that interest the target age group and with potential for in-depth and vibrant exploration and discussion (Arizpe & Styles, 2016, pp.182-183). For example, studies with young L2 learners suggest that children’s literature has the potential of fostering more skills than reading fluency and vocabulary growth. Pedagogical approaches drawing on the reading practice called critical literacy involves critical assessment of how texts can manipulate readers’ interpretation, and intercultural understanding. This draws on the idea that texts can open windows to new perspectives and allow readers co-construct culture (Bland, 2018). This rationale draws on the metaphor of reading literary texts as a process of providing mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors (Bishop, 1990). Mirrors refer to how literary texts can allow readers to see themselves reflected in the texts, to open windows into the lives of others, and walk through doors to become part of fictional worlds. This potential for promoting critical literacy and intercultural understanding resonates with the global goals for education outlined by Education 2030 (UNESCO, 2016). At the World Education Forum in 2015, the participating organisations of the United Nations adopted the Incheon Declaration of Education, outlining sustainable development goals to work towards until year 2030. Signed by the 193 member states, this declaration was formulated in response to prevailing inequity, environmental crisis, racism, and social injustice and outlines the relevance and purpose of

> “education as inclusive and as crucial in promoting democracy and human rights and enhancing global citizenship, tolerance, and civic engagement as well as sustainable development. Education facilitates intercultural dialogue

> and fosters respect for cultural, religious and linguistic diversity, which are vital for achieving social cohesion and justice" (UNESCO et al., 2016, p.26).

With this statement, Education 2030 moves beyond a utilitarian approach and takes the stance that education should be based on democratic beliefs and values where individuals are positioned as active global citizens with civic engagement. Communicating a shared global accountability and responsibility, Education 2030 describes itself as a "transformative education agenda" and recognises the importance of education as leader of development (UNESCO, 2016, p.7). By making its stance transparent, this declaration follows education research, that learning and teaching are always influenced by values (Biesta, 2017, p.316). However, in the history of education, this stance represents new ideas that repositions learning as maintaining established social practices towards learning as transcending them. To use metaphors of learning, the acquisition metaphor construes the human mind as a container to be filled with fixed meanings (Sfard, 1998, p.5). In comparison, the participation metaphor construes learners as moving from the periphery to the centre of social practices by learning, through social interaction, to participate and contribute. By contrast, metaphors of authorial learning emphasise personalised knowledge building and transcending established practices by challenging systemic and traditional perspectives (Kullenberg & Säljö, 2022, p.546). Instead of mastering already defined skills, learners develop and transform them into something new. This shift in perspective is suggested in the companion volumes the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). These volumes advance a revised descriptive scheme of language proficiency that "highlight the interpersonal and sustained self-expression", to "counter-balance the pervasive transmission metaphor that sees language as information transfer" (Council of Europe, 2018; 2020, p.33).

These beliefs are well supported by scholars in education and language education in their discussion on how to translate the democratic goals of Education 2030 into pedagogical activities, focusing on the right to gain access to established practices of communication. Forming the basis for this thesis' conceptual framework (section 2.1), sociocultural theory considers language as humanity's most essential and powerful artefact and resource for communication (Säljö, 2014, pp.34-35). Using language, we can interpret and name our social world, a process described as making meaning. In other words, in this thesis, to make meaning is to communicate, either speaking, writing, or using other communicative means. This is an interpretive process and to allow for the sharing of experiences and accumulation of knowledge we need established meaning making practices, referred to as literacies (Säljö, 2013, p.208). Applied to SLA research, sociocultural theory is a learning

theory that emphasises the role of input and interaction for language learning (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2016, p.26). For example, during interaction in the target language, L2 learners can use their interaction skills in their first language (L1) as a resource, e.g., requesting, promising, and apologising (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2016, p.17), and when reading, learners can draw on their L1 reading practices (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2016, p.168). Relating sociocultural theory to the global goals discussed above of transcending established practices, aligns well with Stetsenko's (2017, p.9) interpretation of Vygotsky, considered the first scholar of sociocultural theory, to communicate a revolutionary position and a transformative activism. In her development of sociocultural theory, Stetsenko (2017, pp.341-342) argues that daring pedagogies are necessary to foster activist, creative, and intentional individuals that can transform society. Relevant to L2 research framed by sociocultural theory are thus inquiries into communicative practices and the opportunities for learning made available by the social environment to its participants and how they make or do not make use of them.

1.3 Research aims and questions

Discussed from the perspectives of SLA and reader response research and global goals for language education, the above section outlined key issues in implementing reading circles with L2 learners. In sum, these concerned how interaction can facilitate negation of meaning and allow L2 learners to notice and adjust their language use, how small-group discussions around literary texts informed by reader response theory can facilitate negotiation of different interpretations and reflections, and how current global goals for language education are framed by values of furthering democracy. To provide insights into these issues, this study focuses on learner-led reading circles with roles, adolescent ESL learners, and YA novels at a middle school in Sweden. Following an interdisciplinary approach, this study bridges a sociocultural perspective on language learning and teaching with the field of reader response and aims to generate insights into how reading circles can provide opportunities for interaction in the target language, English, and responses to literary texts. Designed as a qualitative inquiry with an initial exploratory approach that narrowed down during the data analysis, this study attempts to answer the following two research questions:

1. How do the reading circles facilitate verbal interactions around literary texts that could allow for opportunities for learning English as a Second Language?

2. How do the reading circles facilitate opportunities for the development of responses to literary texts?

These questions can be described as process-questions, interested in the underlying processes of the activities and their outcomes under study, prompting qualitative inquiry (Maxwell, 2013, p.83). By observing and recording reading circle sessions with ESL learners reading YA novels, these research questions attempt to provide insights into how the participants verbal interactions in English might have provided opportunities for language learning and development of responses to literary texts. This study is framed by a conceptual framework that draws on sociocultural theory and the concepts of appropriation and intertextuality, discussed below (section 2.1). The two research questions prompted two different analyses that inform one another, a linguistic analysis and a reader response analysis, and the iterative data analysis generated the inductive-deductive development of an analytical framework. Drawing on concepts developed by sociocultural SLA theorists, the first question prompted a linguistic analysis that also incorporates findings from other approaches to SLA research (section 4.1). The second question prompted a reader response analysis and although this study concerns YA novels, it draws on the insights generated from the sub-field of readers' responses to picturebooks (section 4.2). This field comprises an extensive body of research and a rapidly growing research area of using picturebooks with language learners (Arizpe & Styles, 2016, p.140).

The insights generated from this study do not claim generalisability, instead it is aspired that readers will be able to identify how they might be applied to their own contexts and research. This is consistent with qualitative inquiry following a constructivist paradigm. Discussed below (section 3.6.1), this study's quality is evaluated using trustworthiness criteria, i.e., credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Relevant for the current discussion – how this study might inform research and other educational contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.124). As argued by Richards (2003, p.266), detailed accounts of instructional contexts are especially important in the field of language teaching because they enable readers to determine the applicability for their particular context. In this study, a detailed account is achieved by provision of the instructional material used by the participating teacher (appendix 1), thick description of how the reading circles were implemented in the studied context (sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.3), my estimations of the participants' English proficiency (section 3.2.3), participant profiles generated from the participants' self-reported linguistic repertoires and estimations of how much they read of the novels (appendix 2), and presentation of the YA novels (section

3.7). Moreover, the data analysis focuses on how language was used in context and the presentation of findings includes descriptions of how the participants' language use was situated and emerged from the communicative practices prevalent in the researched context (chapters 5 and 6). Finally, theoretical contributions and pedagogical implications that can be drawn from this study are discussed (section 7.2).

1.4 Reflexive discussion of researcher positionality

This section includes a reflexive discussion of my positionality, aiming to make clear how my personal assumptions and beliefs influenced the object of study and the conceptual framework. Positionality refers to researchers' assumptions, biases, and dispositions in relation to the research and making these explicit may clarify how researchers have arrived at their findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p.249). To critically examine how researchers impact and are impacted by the research process contributes to the integrity of qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p.249). However, as opposed to quantitative research, qualitative research takes the stance that it is impossible to eliminate researchers' influence and instead aims "to understand it and use it productively" (Maxwell, 2013, pp.124-125). This section discusses my personal rationale as a language teacher who has used reading circles extensively, the selection of sociocultural theory for the conceptual framework, and how my positionality influenced the terminology used in the thesis.

My teaching experiences meets the research literature

Drawing on my experience as a middle school ESL teacher in Sweden, this study emerged from my experience of implementing reading circles. I considered the reading circles as a tool for language learning, and I continuously tried to develop them to make them as efficient for language learning as possible. I tried different literary texts with different learners, and I repeated texts I had noticed interested the learners and stimulated their reflections. My observation was that the reading circles stimulated the learners to reflect critically, engage in lively discussions, and connect literary texts to their life experiences. Often, I had to stop their discussions because we ran out of time. As Furr (2016, p.6) stated, the reading circles are magical. Yet there were learners that remained quiet and struggled with the reading and the roles. This intrigued me, why did this pedagogical approach work so well for some and not so well for others? How could I help these learners? How could I more efficiently identify texts that would interest them but also challenge them linguistically? With these questions I started the PhD programme, hoping my research project would generate valuable insights. With no training in the fields of

literary criticism and reader response, I remember being mesmerised when I first started reading about the insights generated from this field of research. For example, that readers often identify themselves with characters that are like them (Nikolajeva, 2014b, pp.86-87), that YA literature frequently is political (Beauvais, 2015a, p.149), the infinite number of ways to take pleasure in reading (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003, pp.25-26), and the complexity in understanding how readers draw on background knowledge to make meaning of literary texts. This made me realise that the relationship between readers and text is much more complex than I had realised. On the other hand, this also generated boundless potential routes for the research design.

Selecting sociocultural theory as conceptual framework

Choosing sociocultural theory for this study's conceptual framework was not only based on finding the most suitable theory to answer the research questions, but also a deliberate and careful choice to reflect my positionality on learning and education. To me, sociocultural theory provides a framework that values agency, inclusion, and social justice. I found two quotes particularly inspiring. First, in her expansion of the work of Vygotsky, Bakhtin, Freire, and other scholars of critical and sociocultural theory, Stetsenko (2017, p.25) argues there are no naturally endowed and hardwired paths for human development and that:

> "all human beings have unlimited potential – and are thus profoundly equal precisely in this infinity of their potential regardless of any putatively 'natural' endowments and ostensibly 'intractable' deficits"

Similarly, from his interpretation of Vygotsky's work and other scholars of sociocultural theory, Säljö (2014, p.12) argues that:

> "*Det som vi uppfattar som inlärningssvårigheter, och som vi förlägger till individer och deras 'förmåga' att tillägna sig matematik, engelska, samhällskunskap, kan kanske bättre förstås om vi analyserar de regler och traditioner för kommunikation som vuxit fram inom skola och utbildning, och de svårigheter barn (och vuxna) kan ha att identifiera och anpassa sig till dem.*"

> "What we perceive as learning difficulties and ascribe to individuals and their 'ability' to acquire Mathematics, English, Social Sciences, might be better understood if we analyse the rules and traditions for communication that have emerged in schools and education, and the challenges children (and adults) may have in identifying and adapting to them." [my translation]

These two quotes illustrate how sociocultural theory posits that studying interaction over measuring knowledge presumed to exist in people's mind can provide more useful insights into human learning. In other words, the explanation for why learning outcomes vary does not lie within the brains of individuals but with the communicative practices and people's access to, or exclusion from, mediating resources. Knowledge does not exist in minds, but in activity. Human activity is situated, and contexts can both open and limit opportunities, yet these are not received passively, but people have agency and can choose to engage or not. In our everchanging world, where we now exist in a constant flow of information, disinformation, and opinions, we need to challenge ourselves to respectfully share our perspectives and listen to others, aware that we might not agree, but that we can learn from each other (Säljö, Flensner & Larsson, 2021). People's voices matter and their actions have an effect in the material world, whether they realise it or not. In sum, I find the sociocultural perspective to be a learning theory with a glass half full approach and we need such positive approaches to move forward.

Terminological decisions

As my understanding of scholarly discussions evolved during the PhD programme, I became more aware of how the vocabulary I use represent different concepts and terminology and imply my positionality. For example, in my professional capacity as a language teacher, I was accustomed to use the terms of first, second, and foreign language learning and distinguishing genres of literary texts, e.g., children's literature as different to young adult literature. However, the more of the scholarly discussion I read and listened to, I came to understand that these labels came with ontological assumptions, positionality, and discriminating connotations. I did not realise that labelling languages in numerical, relational, and geographical terms alluded to learning metaphors of the mind as a container (Bagga-Gupta, 2004, pp.17-18). A conceptualisation of language as a system that can be learned and to distinguish between languages as e.g., first (L1), second (L2), and third language (L3), means that they exist independently from each other inside as well as outside the human mind. This is related to the emerging research field of how we instead are always involved in a process of translanguaging, continuously drawing on the sum of our linguistic repertoires (García & Wei, 2018). The concept translanguaging takes into account the growing awareness that most people in the world are plurilingual and that using labels such as L1 reduces and simplifies the complex nature of humanity's capacity for language (Bagga-Gupta, 2004, p.17).

In terms of children's literature, even though the intended audience is children, people of all ages enjoy them. Although bookshops, libraries, and publishers categorise books according to genre, e.g., adventure stories, these attempts are situational and do not reflect the often hybrid character of children's literature. For example, J.K. Rowling's series about *Harry Potter* draws on mystery, gothic, satire, fantasy and stories of character development, family, schools, and Astrid Lindgren's *Pippi Långstrump* blends elements of adventure stories, fantasy, nonsense, and realism (Westman, 2021). Thus, in my close reading of the YA novels in this study, I avoid using labels of genre and instead present them in terms of how the participants responded to themes shared across the different novels (section 3.7). Nevertheless, labels are commonly used in discussions of language learning and children's literature and to reach a wider audience, this thesis attempts to make a compromise. The labels L1 and L2 are used to differentiate between different research fields where researchers have focused on participants using the language in the context where the research took place compared to contexts where participants were using a language that was different. The label Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is used to describe the research field of the latter and YA novels is used to describe literary texts of book length and intended for adolescents. Finally, another decision concerned how to refer to the participants as a group. Biesta's (2010) suggestion to use speakers would be in line with the study's conceptual framework of recognising individuals' agency, but in the end I decided to follow convention and to use "learners" and "participants".

This section has described how the decisions I made during the research process has influenced the research design, the conceptual framework, and the writing of the thesis. Following established practices of qualitative inquiry that every stage of the research project should involve a reflexive process (Maxwell, 2013, p.2), I will continue the reflexive discussion at select intervals throughout the thesis. First in relation to ethical considerations in the discussion of research methodology (section 3.5), second, how the research questions developed during the research process (section 3.6.2), and third, in offering final researcher reflections in the conclusion (section 7.4).

1.5 Thesis overview

This chapter has introduced the objective of study, reading circles, an activity that involve learner-led small-group discussions around literary texts. The study is situated in research contexts following the global democratic aims for education and language learning and need for pedagogical activities that aim to foster democratic global citizens. The research

aims and questions were outlined, and it was discussed how these prompted a qualitative research approach. Finally, a reflexive discussion of researcher positionality was provided, describing how my beliefs influenced the research design. The chapter ends with this section, a thesis overview with chapter synopses.

Chapter 2 begins with an outline of the conceptual framework framed by Vygotskian sociocultural theory and the central concepts of artefacts and mediation, and incorporating concepts from Bakhtin's dialogism, appropriation, and intertextuality. These are discussed in relation to other SLA theories interested in how interaction can lead to language learning. This is followed by a review of the scholarly discussion on the role of extended reading and literary texts in language education and learning and previous empirical research on L2 reading circles. The chapter ends with a review of reader response, discussing its theoretical underpinnings, reviewing previous empirical research focusing on the mediating role of social interaction, and outlines the current discussion of literary texts' potential to foster empathy.

Chapter 3 describes the study's qualitative research design, including the ontological and epistemological position, fieldwork, research tools, transcription of the participants' verbalised interaction during the reading circle sessions, data translation, analytical procedures, and ethical considerations including a reflexive discussion of researcher positionality and how the research questions developed during the research. Throughout this chapter, trustworthiness criteria are considered in relation to the different elements of the methodology. The chapter ends with a presentation of the YA novels the participants read for the reading circles and the result from my close reading of the novels.

Chapter 4 describes the analytical framework as it developed in response to the emerging findings from the iterative data analysis. To provide answers to the two research questions, the data is analysed from two different perspectives – a linguistic analysis and a reader response analysis. This chapter describes how sociocultural theory framed these analyses and concepts and findings from previous relevant studies are incorporated into the framework. The data analysis began with an inductive approach, identifying how emerging findings supported previous research and applying relevant concepts and findings deductively. As the data analysis progressed, no theory could encompass all findings and the analytical framework is therefore informed by various theories and research approaches.

Chapter 5 presents and discusses the findings from the linguistic analysis of the participants' verbalised interactions during the reading circle sessions. As outlined in the analytical framework, this chapter first describes how the communicative functions of the participants' speech indicated an intention to make meaning of the narratives and to convince peers of their conclusions and interpretations by paraphrasing elements of the novels. Second, it describes how the participants repaired their own and their peers' utterances in terms of form, meaning, and narrative retellings. These findings are discussed through the lenses of the literature review and analytical framework and suggests that the reading circle sessions facilitated collaborative dialogue. This provides a link to the first research question on how the reading circles in the researched context facilitated verbal interactions around literary texts that could allow for opportunities for learning English as a Second Language.

Chapter 6 presents and discusses the findings from the reader response analysis of the participants' verbalised interaction during the reading circle sessions. Framed by sociocultural theory and informed by the extensive body of research with children reading picturebooks, this chapter presents a typology of the participants' responses. Divided into three broad themes, this typology describes how the reading circles facilitated responses that adhered to and bordered the readerly gap, evaluated the literary texts as works of art, and made links to the participants' narratives of life. As in chapter 5, these findings are discussed through the lenses of the literature review and analytical framework and suggests that the reading circle sessions facilitated a space to practice deliberative communication. This relates to the second research question on how the reading circles in the researched context facilitated opportunities for the development of responses to literary texts.

Chapter 7 is the final chapter in this thesis and summarises the most important and generative insights generated by this study. This chapter discusses how the insights generated from this study answers the research questions, identifies contributions to the field, identifies limitations and suggests future research directions. The chapter also includes final researcher reflections and concluding remarks.

Chapter 2 Literature review

Introduced in the previous chapter, this thesis' conceptual framework is framed by sociocultural theory and was selected for its activist agenda for social justice and potential to provide insights into learning processes. Conceptual frameworks represent the system of assumptions, beliefs, concepts, and theories that inform and shape research designs (Maxwell, 2013, p.39). This chapter begins by outlining sociocultural theory and defining concepts relevant for this thesis (section 2.1). This is followed by a review of the research and scholarly discussion around learning to read in a second language and the use of literary texts in the language classroom (section 2.2). The chapter ends with a review of the field of reader response, the few reader responses studies with language learners and the substantial body of research on readers' responses to picturebooks (section 2.3).

2.1 Conceptual framework

Introduced in the introduction as framing this study's conceptual framework, sociocultural theory stands out among the most common contemporary SLA theories because it considers human experience to be embedded in social, cultural, and historical contexts and argues that cognition, including language, emerges from social activity (Ortega, 2015, p.250). Sociocultural theory originated with the Russian psychologist Vygotsky's (1896-1934) work and has since been interpreted and developed by various scholars, encompassing an extensive theoretical background and research application. With references to Vygotsky's original writings, this thesis draws on contemporary sociocultural scholars on learning within and outside educational contexts, e.g., Säljö (e.g., 2014) and in the field of language learning, Lantolf, Poehner, and Thorne (e.g., 2020), Swain (e.g., Swain & Watanabe, 2019), and van Lier (e.g., 2004a). To explain this thesis' conceptual framework and how it frames the research design and methodology, this section outlines the theoretical underpinnings of sociocultural theory and identifies relevant concepts (section 2.1), identifies L2 learning and reading as situated communicative practices (section 2.2), discusses how it has been applied to SLA research and compares it to other SLA theories interested in verbal interaction (section 2.3), and concludes with a section conclusion (section 2.4).

2.1.1 Theoretical underpinnings and relevant concepts

A premise of sociocultural theory is that cognition is socially mediated and constructed during social activity. As Vygotsky (1987, p.251) stated, "thought is restructured as it is

transformed into speech". This means that speech is not a direct representation of thought. Instead, we adjust our speech to the communicative context and purpose, drawing on our accumulated repertoire of linguistic resources. In this view, language is an artefact that mediates communication and is integral to human development and knowledge building (Säljö, 2014, p.82). Vygotsky developed the concepts artefacts and mediation as a reaction to how the developmental theories associationism and behaviourism explained learning as responses to gradual increase of complexity in stimuli (Säljö, 2013, p.25). Vygotsky (1978, pp.39-40) argued that this explanation was too reductive because his research suggested that all thought processes transform mental activity. Instead, he advanced the concept of mediation to describe this transformative process occurring between response and stimuli. Using the example of tying a knot as a memory aid, Vygotsky explained that this act externalises the memorising process into the material world and gives it physical form. The knot has been assigned meaning and serves as a reminder; it has become an artefact that mediates the reminder. Mediation is the primary concept in sociocultural theory and underpins all its varieties (Lantolf, Poehner & Thorne, 2020, p.241). In writings on sociocultural theory, artefacts are referred to by various terms, e.g., mediational means, resources, tools, and semiotic devices, and can be more than physical objects. Artefacts can also be intellectual and take the shape of calculators, cooking instructions, and scientific theories (Säljö, 2013, pp.28-30). In short, they externalise human experience and knowledge and are present in the physical world as tangible objects or linguistic items.

As stated above, language is our most important artefact because it mediates communication, one of our most fundamental human activities. No matter the medium, verbal, written, imagery, body movements, smoke signals, etc., humans always find a way to communicate. Yet, we cannot share our experiences with others as we experienced themselves, instead, we reconstruct them via our linguistic resources (Säljö, 2014, p.87). Moreover, although dictionaries and grammars provide useful summaries of linguistic resources, these do not represent how they are used meaningfully in social activity. People are creative and ingenious and use language as a dynamic meaning making system that can be manipulated to serve the communicative purpose (Säljö, 2014, p.87). This means that language is not a closed and fixed system, it is emergent and ever developing parallel to the development of human knowledge building (Thorne & Lantolf, 2007, p.189). We learn to make meaning of our environment by interacting with it and learning the language and tools of those that came before us. To use a term from sociolinguistics, often used in discussions on language learning, human interaction is mediated by the "linguistic repertoires" made available to them in their communities and cultures (Gumperz, 1972,

pp.20-21). Discussed in the introduction (section 1.2), meaning is socially constructed and draws on knowledge and insights accumulated in communities across time and history (Säljö, 2014, p.21). With language as the most important communicative resource, we make meaning by naming phenomena in our social world (Säljö, 2014, pp.34-35). When we communicate – speaking, writing, or using other resources for communication – we make meaning. This process is interpretative and established meaning making practices, referred to as literacies, are required to allow for the sharing of experiences and accumulation of knowledge (Säljö, 2013, p.208). Inherent to these processes is intersubjectivity, referring to a mutual understanding between people of sharing attention and coordinating activity (Säljö, 2013, p.83). This process is vital for human interaction and development. To be able to agree on what the problem is, decide the next course of action, and coordinate social activity is what has allowed for our contemporary world to emerge. More often unintentionally than intentionally, everyday communication facilitate the emergence of our interpretations of how the world works and how it should be interpreted (Säljö, 2014, p.66). In this perspective, learning occurs all the time, whether it involves friends catching up, listening to news reports, or reading a novel.

In current interpretations and discussions of sociocultural theory, Vygotsky's ideas are frequently linked to his contemporary Bakhtin (1895-1975), a Russian literary critic and philosopher. Connections between them are how they defined learning and emphasised that all interactions carry the history of interactions that came before (Bazerman, 2004a, pp.56-57). Later termed as the theory of dialogism (Holquist, 2002, p.14), Bakhtin (1981, p.263) argued that utterances are imbued with multiple meanings and intentions, deriving from their historical and social contexts. This understanding of language comprising multiple voices and perspectives is demonstrated in the often-cited quotation:

> "there are no 'neutral' words and forms – words and forms that can belong to 'no one'; language has been completely taken over, shot through with intentions and accents" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.293)

Applied to sociocultural theory, this means that when we use language, we appropriate utterances used by others for our own purposes. Our mental activity is discursive, and all our actions are mediated by the linguistic repertoires created by people that came before us, recreated and transformed through continuous interaction between and within people (Säljö, 2013, p.44). This phenomenon of how texts are interwoven and relate to each other is now described as intertextuality (Bazerman, 2004a). Although the term was first advanced by Kristeva (1967), the discussion of the phenomenon it represents originated

with Bakhtin[1] and his approach to literary theory to understand language as framed and situated in context and by its speakers (Allen, 2011, p.16). In concrete communicative activities, this understanding of intertextuality means all utterances are simultaneously responses to the preceding utterances and prerequisite of subsequent utterances (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p.10). For example, how clarification requests can be both considered questions as well as responses to the preceding utterance. Moreover, people's life stories can be considered as verbalised texts, constructed as we externalise them and make them available to the world (Bruner & Weisser, 1991, p.136). When we talk about our life, we come to know it, and for as long as we are alive, we are constructing our life stories. In this perspective, narratives of life and other texts can be compared for intertextual analysis to establish links between them.

Whereas intertextuality describes the relationship between utterances, Bakhtin's (1981, p.293) term of appropriation refers to the act of using linguistic resources for our own purposes and imbuing them with our own intentions. This understanding resonates with the sociocultural concept of affordances. In the field of SLA, input and output have traditionally been separated analytically (Swain, 2000). However, a sociocultural view on language learning and teaching avoid these concepts and instead use affordances to describe the reciprocal nature between individuals and the social environment and how individuals perceive, act on, or ignore the provided learning opportunities (van Lier, 2000, p.252). Relevant to education and learning research are thus inquiries into what affordances are made available by the social environment to its participants and how the participants make or do not make use of them – we appropriate linguistic resources for our own contexts and purposes. Beyond the scope of this thesis, in sociocultural theory, there is a discussion regarding the concepts of appropriation and internalisation, and which best describes learning (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p.160; Säljö, 2013, p.51). As this thesis does not make any claims on measuring learning, Bakhtin's definition of appropriating linguistic resources for one's own purposes is sufficient. Language development is understood as acting on affordances and learning to mediate experiences through the linguistic repertoires made available through social interaction.

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1 Initially published in Russian, Kristeva introduced Bakhtin to the French-speaking world (Allen, 2011, p.14). Although Kristeva's early writings has informed today's understanding of intertextuality, modern translations of Bakhtin demonstrate he should be considered the first scholar of intertextuality (Allen, 2011, p.16). Noted here to acknowledge this thesis' intertextuality, some consider Bakhtin the author of texts by the scholars Medvedev and Volosinov, who were also influential in the development of intertextuality (Allen, 2011, p.14; Bazerman, 2004a, p.53, Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p.22).

2.1.2 Learning and reading as situated communicative practices

The above section defined and discussed the concepts of artefacts, mediation, literacies, linguistic repertoires, intertextuality, and appropriation. This section extends the discussion of literacies, to discuss how a sociocultural perspective on SLA research frames L2 learning and reading as situated communicative practices. This is linked to the discussion of learning metaphors above (section 1.2) and of how sociocultural theory follows the participation metaphor, constructing L2 learning as a process of becoming an active participant and user of the target language (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p.138).

In a sociocultural perspective on L2 learning, to become a user of another language is learning to mediate, or regulate, one's activity in that language (Lantolf, Poehner & Thorne, 2020). Sociocultural theory distinguishes between inner, egocentric, private, and social speech, referring respectively to our mental activity, younger children's self-directed speech en route to become inner speech, older children's and adults' self-directed speech, and speech between interlocutors (Lantolf, Poehner & Thorne, 2020, p.227). Learning to purposefully use an L2 for self-regulatory and other-regulatory functions, i.e., to direct one own's and other's activity, represent higher mental processes (Lantolf, Poehner & Thorne, 2020, p.226). For example, to notice and attend to errors in one's own and other's L2 production assumes self-and other-regulation, two functions associated with higher mental functions (Lantolf, Poehner & Thorne, 2020, p.226). However, to become self-regulated in a second language is not a constant condition and in stressful situations, speakers may shift from self-regulation to other- or object-regulation (Lantolf, Poehner & Thorne, 2020, pp.226-227). In other words, in these instances, speakers may have moved from self-regulating their speech to be regulated by their peers or the task itself. For example, in terms of L2 learners using their L1 as a resource, even the most proficient L2 learners occasionally use their L1 to mediate their L2 production (Lantolf, Poehner & Thorne, 2020, pp.226-227). L2 learning thus becomes about expanding one's linguistic repertoire to include new and more semiotic resources to communicate and express meaning. As L2 learning derives from social interaction, L2 learner success can be evaluated by the quality of access to and participation in learning communities, expert and peer mediation, and making use of mediation (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2016, p.123). This is relevant to research on L2 learning in educational contexts, where activity is constructed to intentionally create affordances for learners to learn the target language.

In sociocultural theory, reading and writing are considered central human activities mediated by established social practices. We are not born with the knowledge of reading, this a socially acquired and constructed skill (Säljö, 2013, p.115). For example, when children first learn to read and are spelling their way through texts, educators and parents come to their assistance to mediate the activity, e.g., by distinguishing pronunciation between letters (Säljö, 2013, p.37). When we meet symbols and texts, we need to know how to make meaning of them as situated in social practice (Säljö, 2013, p.53). This means that we learn to approach the reading of different text types with different expectations, e.g., we read newspapers differently from how we read literary texts. As meaning making involves linking past to new experiences, learning to read involves learning to make meaning of written texts and become familiar with the literacy practices associated with the text type in question (Säljö, 2014, p.15). Viewed in the light of the above discussion of regulation, from a sociocultural perspective, reading involves both inter- as well as intrapersonal mediated interaction. For example, it involves interaction between the reader and the author which results in a changed "state of knowledge", as well as interaction with oneself, drawing on previous knowledge e.g., to translate vocabulary items or cultural knowledge (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2016, pp.120-121). Texts provide invitations for meaning and suggest interpretations, yet are always open to individual meaning making (Säljö, 2013, p.55). To reduce reading to the decoding of symbols or the eliciting of information would be trivializing how reading practices are sociocultural in nature (Säljö, 2014, p.187). Social practices for how to make textual meaning developed with the emergence of institutionalised educational contexts (Säljö, 2013, p.57). One of the first scholars to discuss this phenomenon was the literary theorist Fish (1980) when he introduced the term interpretive communities. This concept refers to how we approach the reading of literary texts not as individuals, but as part of communities of readers. In sum, reading in any language is a learned and situated skill, not something individuals discover on their own.

By researching established practices of meaning making, valuable insights can be gained from investigating communicative patterns of different interpretive communities and how these influence how participants argue, reason, and write (Säljö, 2014, p.188). This is related to this study's object of inquiry, the participants' verbal interaction in English during the reading circles. To participate successfully, the participants needed to be familiar and able to draw on established interpretive practices. Texts are central to institutional learning and learning to read and write one of its main goals. It thus becomes important to investigate what meaning making practices, referred to as literacies (Säljö,

2013, p.208), are accepted and encouraged in institutionalised practices. Written communication was long only a practice for the few and generally inaccessible or irrelevant to most people (Säljö, 2013, p.209). For example, Heath's (1983) seminal ethnography of reading practices in American families paved the way for the understanding that children growing up in school-oriented families were more likely to succeed in school because they had already learned the practices valued in educational settings. New Literacy Studies challenged the supposed objective nature of existing theories of literacies, offered a new perspective to account for diverse cultural literacy practices, and foregrounded how communicative practices are situated and embedded in their contexts (Street, 1984). Extending the idea that learning is social and situated, theories of communities of practice and participatory learning emerged (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The New London Group (1996, p.64), a group of sociocultural scholars, identified how increasing cultural and linguistic diversity worldwide necessitated a redefinition of literacy to move beyond the written form to include multimodality, e.g., audio, behaviour, spatial, and, visual modes of meaning making, as well as a reframing of learners and educators to see themselves as active participants in social change and makers of social futures. This latter aim coincides with Stetsenko's (2017, p.9) interpretation of Vygotsky's work to communicate a revolutionary position and a transformative activism.

To be discussed further below (section 2.3.3), this connects sociocultural theory with reader response and discussions of how critical reflection of texts can foster critical awareness and democratic societies (Freire & Macedo, 1987). It is also connected to the learning metaphors discussed above (section 1.2) of how SLA research framed by sociocultural theory follows the participation metaphor. In this perspective, L2 learning is a process of becoming an active participant and user of the target language (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p.138). However, even if the participation metaphor emphasises active and engaged learners, it still describes a view of the lesser educated individuals expected to learn the practices of the community (Kullenberg & Säljö, 2022, p.555). This interpretation resonates with Stetsenko's (2017, pp.341-342) interpretation and development of sociocultural theory that daring pedagogies are necessary to foster activist, creative, and intentional individuals that can transform established social practices.

2.1.3 Methodological considerations

The section above discussed how sociocultural theory considers L2 learning and reading as situated communicative practices, this section focuses on the role of verbal interaction in

L2 learning and methodological implications for SLA research. Sociocultural theory is not unique among SLA theories to emphasise the role of interaction. Discussed above (section 1.2), the shift in perspective from learning metaphors of acquisition to participation was also reflected in the field of SLA. Often referred to as the "social turn", an increasing number of SLA scholars have since the 1990s pointed to the social nature of language learning (Block, 2003, p.3). Today, a range of SLA theories follow the understanding that rather than involving referential messages, language learning is situated and involves whole feeling and thinking individuals, "language *is* experience" (The Douglas Fir Group, 2016, p.37, emphasis in original). For example, in addition to sociocultural theory, theories such as the complexity theory, the interaction approach, and usage-based approaches all emphasise the significance of participation and interaction in the target language (Ortega, 2015, p.257). To discuss how sociocultural theory informs research methodologies and provide the initial underpinnings for this study's analytical framework, outlined below (chapter 4), this section discusses how sociocultural theory compares to the interaction approach.

Useful for this discussion are the above-mentioned observations made by SLA researchers (section 1.2) that language input is necessary for L2 learning and learning can happen, not only as a result of explicit instruction, but also incidentally during communicative interaction (VanPatten et al., 2020, p.9). Both the interaction approach and sociocultural theory agree with these observations, albeit starting from different premises. Formerly referred to as the interaction hypothesis, Gass and Mackey (2020, p.192) identify how extensive empirical research have allowed for theoretical advancement in this field and how it is now generally referred to as the interaction approach. This approach argues that input alone is insufficient, instead, of consequence is how learners interact, through social interaction, with input to solve linguistic problems (Gass & Mackey, 2020, p.211). Drawing on the position that all observations are theory-laden, sociocultural theory argues that social interaction drives L2 learning but that the individual cannot be separated from the social environment as suggested by these observations (Lantolf, Poehner & Thorne, 2020, pp.237-238). In the interaction approach, input, output, and interaction are integral to learning because they allow learners to generate linguistic hypotheses which they can test in their output. Critical for this process is learners' attention and how it can be manipulated by interactional feedback (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2016, p.118). First advanced by Corder (1967, p.165), the concept of intake is used to distinguish the aspects of input a learner pays attention to and their attention mediates between intake and learning (Gass & Mackey, 2020, p.204). Extending this concept, the field draws on the hypothesis that SLA

is primarily propelled by learners noticing and paying attention to linguistic aspects in the input and how they understand these aspects to be significant (Schmidt, 2001, pp.3-4). This has implications for interaction in the target language as upon receiving feedback from their more competent interlocutors on the comprehensibility of their utterances, learners can modify their language to more comprehensible output. This draws on the output hypothesis that feedback can push learners to make appropriate modifications (Swain, 1995).

Comparably, sociocultural theory avoids the concepts of input and output and instead uses affordances, discussed above (section 2.1.1), to emphasise how learning opportunities arise from how individuals perceive, act on, or ignore learning opportunities arising during social interaction (van Lier, 2000, p.252). In this perspective, L2 development can be guided by adapting the interaction to learners' emergent needs (Lantolf, Poehner & Thorne, 2020, pp.237-238). In concrete pedagogical activities, this would involve teachers or peers responding to communicative needs as they arise during interaction. This could be achieved through e.g., repeating vocabulary (Swain & Watanabe, 2013, p.4), using L1 (Swain & Watanabe, 2019, p.5), or repairing utterances by reformulating them (Ohta, 2001, p.97). This mediational process and emphasis on negotiation of meaning is a shared concern of the interaction approach and sociocultural theory. Negotiation strategies analysed in the interaction approach are confirmation checks, clarification requests, comprehension checks, and recasts (Gass & Mackey, 2020, p.199); further discussed below in relation to how they were applied to this study's analytical framework (section 4.1.2.3). However, as the interaction approach and sociocultural theory define L2 knowledge differently, research following these two theories differs methodologically. The interaction approach advance questions such as how many times learners need to repeat L2 output correctly before it can be determined that learning has occurred (Gass & Mackey, 2020, p.208). To ascertain learning outcomes, this approach relies on interventions that seek to manipulate learner interactions, feedback, and output, and attempts to gain insights into the learning process through e.g., post-tests, introspective or retrospective commentary (Gass & Mackey, 2020, p.209). This methodology of combining observation with commentary allows for insights into whether a relationship can be established between interactional feedback and learner output.

As discussed above, sociocultural theory defines L2 knowledge as mediated and situated. Methodologically, research in this field can be identified as focusing on four domains of human development outlined by Vygotsky: phylogenesis, sociocultural, ontogenesis, and

microgenesis (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p.19). Respectively, these describe human development as a species, as cultures over time, as individuals over life spans, and the development of mental processes over short time periods. Research on L2 learning has mostly focused on the ontogenetic and microgenetic domains (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p.19). As this study focuses on reading circles with weekly sessions during five weeks, it encompasses a short period in the participants' L2 development. In addition, without making claims on measuring individuals' development, this study intends to identify communicative patterns across all reading circle groups. This is to answer the first research question of how the reading circles in the researched context can facilitate verbal interactions around literary texts that could allow for opportunities for learning English as a Second Language. This identifies this study's analytical focus as microgenetic and relevant to this study's methodology are thus fine-grained analysis of talk-in-interaction e.g., conversation analysis (Thorne, 2005, pp.398-399). This is intended to provide insights into how the participants' verbal interaction mediated affordances and how the learners made use of these affordances.

2.1.4 Section conclusion

This section has identified and discussed this study's conceptual framework. Representing the system of assumptions, beliefs, concepts, and theories, a well-defined conceptual framework clarifies the position from which the research design is informed and shaped (Maxwell, 2013, p.39). The theoretical framing of sociocultural theory and Bakhtin's concepts of appropriation and intertextuality outlined here provides the underpinnings for this study's conceptual framework. Framed by the central ideas of artefacts and mediation and that language is an artefact that mediates communication, relevant concepts have been identified and defined: affordances, intersubjectivity, literacy, meaning making, narratives of life, regulation, and negotiation of meaning. As discussed above, learning occurs throughout life. By understanding all human activity as situated, learning difficulties are not explained as caused by personal attributes and characteristics but as a result of learning or not learning the artefacts and communicative practices inherent in the educational contexts (Säljö, 2014, p.12). Translated to pedagogical intention, the aim is not to match the activities and material with presumed stages of development occurring independently inside learners' minds, but to allow learners to be confronted with and to appropriate new tools for mediation (Säljö, 2013, pp.69-70). Thus, successful communicative participation involves identifying the communicative rules valued in those contexts (Säljö, 2014, p.209). Applying this understanding to this study's research questions of how reading circles can

facilitate verbal interaction and the development of responses to literary texts, it becomes relevant to investigate how the participants made use of the artefacts available to them – linguistic resources, the literary texts, and their own narratives of life. As the study's conceptual framework, this understanding of language and learning frames the research methodology (chapter 3) and analytical framework (chapter 4). The following two sections reviews the role of literary texts in L2 education (section 2.2) and reader response for L2 learning (section 2.3), situating this study in the context of relevant previous empirical research, theoretical underpinnings, and scholarly discussions.

2.2 Literary texts in L2 education

The previous section outlined the conceptual framework, sociocultural theory, and relevant concepts. Central ideas include that language is a tool that mediates communication, learning occurs throughout life and is mediated by social interaction, and reading is a communicative practice appropriated through interaction in interpretive communities. Guided by this study's research aim and conceptual framework, this section outlines L2 reading, how it has been conceptualised and researched. The central ideas outlined above frames this discussion and by identifying how L2 reading has been researched, outlines the argument for this study's methodology. This section begins with a discussion of the relevance of literary texts in L2 education (section 2.2.1) and continues by summarising scholar and teacher voices on communicative practices around literary texts in L2 classrooms (section 2.2.2).

2.2.1 L2 reading and literary texts in L2 education

Opening any L2 teacher handbook or summary of research on L2 reading demonstrates agreement that reading extended texts frequently, often referred to as extensive reading, is beneficial for language development. Similarly, research demonstrates that extensive reading, regardless of type of text and whether it be for pleasure or aligned with one's current reading level, is beneficial for language learning and reading fluency (Grabe & Yamashita, 2022, p.419). However, its role in L2 education is often discussed. Drawing on both SLA research and pedagogies for L2 learning, this section discusses how L2 reading compares to L1 reading, identifies how literary texts are used for different L2 learning outcomes, summarises the history of extensive reading, and outlines the discussion of text selection and authenticity of language representation.

Research has demonstrated that extensive reading has positive effects on reading comprehension, reading abilities more generally e.g., reading rate and fluency, and motivation for reading compared to texts and reading instruction in textbooks (Grabe & Yamashita, 2022, p.420). A positive effect related to overall L2 development is vocabulary growth through implicit and incidental learning; the more frequently vocabulary items reoccur in texts, the better (Grabe & Yamashita, 2022, pp.427-428). For example, Nation (e.g., 2013; Nation & Waring, 2019) has published extensively on the vocabulary gains from extensive reading and argues that for learning to occur, it is integral that learners read at their current level. For example, drawing on empirical research, Hu and Nation (2000) suggest that learners should know 95-98% of the running words. In other words, only five per 100 words should be unknown. This is related to Krashen's (1985) Comprehensible Input hypothesis, summarised with the formula i+1, which argues that learners need massive input of the target language just above their proficiency level. A premise for this hypothesis is a distinction between acquiring and learning a language, where the former refers to automated and implicit knowledge and the latter to conscious and explicit knowledge (Waring, 2022, p.385). Implications for pedagogy involve learners reading extensively without instruction to acquire the target language implicitly. This relates to reading motivation, suggesting that familiarity with the majority of the vocabulary would reduce the need for dictionaries. This argument draws on an understanding of reading from a cognitivist approach that readers draw on bottom up processing strategies of decoding words when they cannot rely on automatic reading processes (Hall, 2015, p.68). This decoding requires knowledge of the target language and involves the identification of e.g., vocabulary, morphology, phonology, and syntax (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2016, p.162). In this model of reading, bottom-up processing is contrasted with top-down processing strategies of approaching texts by drawing on prior knowledge of content, context, and culture (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2016, p.163). This can allow learners to guess the meaning of words to some extent, compensating for limited linguistic repertoires. This is largely achieved by drawing on reading abilities in already known languages, e.g., L1 reading proficiency, a process referred to as transfer (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2016, p.168). Recent research findings suggest that reading abilities emerge from the interaction between L1 transfer and L2 language skills (Grabe & Yamashita, 2022, p.169). In my interpretation, this transfer between languages relates to the sociocultural perspective of how reading is an established social practice, mediated by social tools of how to make meaning.

However, the role of reading in L2 education is determined by factors such as learner needs, national curricula, and access to resources. In general, L2 reading is less important in contexts that prioritise interpersonal communication and more important in academic settings. For example, successful L2 academic reading as an international student does not necessarily require fluent speaking ability (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2016, p.144). An often-cited source of reference for advocating communicative competence is the first edition of The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001). CEFR lists literary texts and novels among the recommended sources of reading material in L2 teaching but does not provide an in-depth discussion of their affordances nor how to implement them. Similarly, current reference resources, e.g., reading programs and textbooks, around the world suggest that extensive reading plays a minor role in classrooms (Grabe, 2009, p.312). In my teaching experience, limited access to books, lesson time constraints, and a focus on teaching for competencies and gatekeeping assessment make extensive reading a challenging project for language learners and teachers to undertake. Grabe (2009, pp.312-313) suggests that reading accuracy and comprehension are favoured at the expense of fluency. Extensive reading can be completed as homework or sought out by learners independently. This hands over the control to the learners, disempowering the teachers who are accustomed to take an active teaching role in the classroom. This matches my understanding of how language teachers perceive extensive reading and consider literary texts primarily as tools for language learning, not aesthetic experiences of works of art. This position of considering extensive reading as supplementary or expendable is reflected in the materials on display at conferences for L2 teachers or in language learning sections in book shops (Waring, 2022, p.390). These materials are focused on L2 learning for assessment or as something that can be accelerated with test preparation, intensive reading, and intensive vocabulary growth. Hall (2015, p.111) observes that literary texts are often considered as materials for activities, without considering the potential of extensive reading to provide insights into L2 reading and its challenges.

The term extensive reading for L1 as well as L2 reading can been traced back a century ago in teacher handbooks and research. During this period, there have been repeated claims for the benefits of extensive reading as a pedagogical activity with buzzwords such as “book floods” in the 1950s, “hooked on books” in the 1960s, and “sustained silent reading” programs in the 1960-70s (Grabe, 2009, p.312). In foreign language education, extensive reading became a well-established pedagogical aim in the 1920s and 1930s (Waring, 2022, p.385). With the intention to consolidate learners’ L2 knowledge before

reading at higher levels, West (1941) developed reading materials that intended to avoid introducing unknown vocabulary and instead recycle grammar features and vocabulary. Nevertheless, it was not until the 1970s with the publication of L. G. Alexander's *Longman Structural Readers,* often referred to as the first graded readers, that extensive reading gained momentum in foreign language education (Waring, 2022, p.385). Offered to target different reading levels, graded readers are often rewritten, abridged, or adapted versions of already published stories through lexical substitution or adding explicitness, e.g., clarifying referents, the deletion of irrelevant details, or adding context clues (Nation & Waring, 2019, pp.170-171). Today, the publication of graded readers has grown considerably with 6,000-7,000 titles available on the market (Waring, 2022, p.385) and literary texts as a compulsory component of foreign language education can be identified worldwide (Paran et al., 2021, p.326). Almost two decades after its first publication, CEFR published a companion volume (Council of Europe, 2018) that acknowledges the relevance and use of literary texts in language classrooms and includes descriptors for reading as a leisure activity and critical analysis of literary texts. This publication, and its subsequent update (Council of Europe, 2020), is indicative of the recent arguments and trends in the research and discussion of literary texts in L2 classrooms. Current research literature is now in unison regarding their agreement that the reading of literary texts is useful for language learning (Paran et al., 2021, p.326). In sum, two broad aims for using literary texts in L2 education can be identified. One argues that reading should in some form be assessed and monitored, and the other, more relevant to this thesis, advocates a practice of reading for pleasure to promote voluntary reading habits (Waring, 2022, p.385).

When the use of literary texts in L2 education is motivated by benefits for language learning, it is often argued that text selection should be informed by how reading can improve reading comprehension and vocabulary gains. This means selecting texts with content familiar to the learners because it can allow for the transfer of L1 reading abilities (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2016, p.168). It can also mean the use of graded readers, discussed above, constructed with the intention to allow for a structured reading approach that matches learners with reading levels. Text selection highlights an ongoing discussion among researchers and teachers on the notion of authenticity. The issue concerns whether graded reads can be considered authentic representations of language. Graded readers are produced to be used by learners around the globe and this influences their content. Often aimed at adolescent or adult readers, they frequently lack illustrations but include activities, e.g., comprehension questions (Bland, 2018, p.277). Even though graded readers published now represent most genres, e.g., drama, romance, and thrillers, to attract

customers in demanding markets, e.g., countries where citizens are protected by the state from outside influences, graded readers are written with the aim to be digestible (Nation & Waring, 2019, p.176). This is characteristic of English Language Teaching (ELT) coursebooks in general as publishing houses advise their writers to avoid sensitive topics, often summarised by the acronym PARSNIP, referring to politics, alcohol, religion, sex, narcotics, isms and pork (Gray, 2010, p.119). As teachers, schools, or policy makers decide which material and literary texts learners should read, this self-censorship of graded readers involves an additional gatekeeping layer of how texts are made available in L2 classrooms. On the other hand, Krashen (2004, pp.37-38) argues that free voluntary extensive reading is essential to language learning because it facilitates comprehensible input and reduces anxiety about the challenges of reading. Hall (2018b) argues that literary texts provide a richness of language, exceptionally resourceful in terms of linguistic range and stylistics. Although no linguistic feature can be isolated to define literary texts, corpus analyses demonstrate that they comprise a linguistic range and variation not found in other texts and the more specified the literary genre is, e.g., 19th century realist novel, the more commonalities can be found (Hall, 2018b, p.272).

As stated above, researchers and teachers agree that extensive reading is beneficial for language learning, despite disagreements on how to assess authentic representations of language. Drawing on empirical research, Grabe (2009, pp.327-328) argues there is little evidence that authentic literary texts lead to more reading fluency than graded readers. On the other hand, Hall (2015, p.176) argues that learners and teachers often report it is challenging to move from graded readers to authentic literary texts. Both scholars attempt to find a middle ground with Grabe (2009, pp.327-328) arguing that learners need help to make informed text selections they find enjoyable and interesting and Hall (2015, p.176) arguing that learners' perceptions of their reading confidence and feelings around texts should be sought. These different views on the role of literary texts in L2 education discussed in this section demonstrates how educational contexts can serve both a gatekeeping function as well as a facilitating function in providing language learners with opportunities to read literary texts. Another aspect of how verbal interactions around literary texts can provide L2 learning opportunities is discussed below. This focus is related to the first research question and follows this study's conceptual framework that language mediates communication and social interaction mediates learning. Thus, it follows that talking about literary texts can be beneficial for L2 learning.

2.2.2 Communicative practices around literary texts in L2 classrooms

The previous section summarised current arguments in SLA research and pedagogies for L2 learning for using literary texts in L2 education and concluded by identifying how this thesis is aligned with voices that argue for the benefits of literacy development, understood as established communicative practices. Relevant to this thesis, is how talking about literary texts in institutionalised educational contexts can establish communities of readers with shared communicative practices, guiding how they read and talk about texts (Säljö, 2013, p.57). Continuing to draw on both SLA research and L2 pedagogies, this section outlines the discussion on how facilitating verbal interactions around literary texts can facilitate opportunities for language learning. Drawing on SLA research and teacher handbooks on small-group discussions around literary texts, this section discusses the ideas of authentic reading experiences and conversations in the target language, and how SLA scholars talk about verbal practices around literary texts. It also reviews L2 teacher reports on reading circles and empirical research on reading circles and identifies a limited number of studies with linguistic analyses of learner talk.

Instead of evaluating texts as authentic representations of language, discussed above (section 2.2.1), another perspective would be to focus on the relationship between the learner and the text. For example, authentic reading experiences could be regarded as reading continuously without stopping too frequently to decode vocabulary items (Waring, 2022, pp.386-387). From the perspective of using literary texts for literacy development, there is a strong argument for this type of authenticity. This is related to above arguments to not read above one’s proficiency level (Nation & Waring, 2019, p.6) or free voluntary extensive reading (Krashen, 2004, pp.37-38). In this strand of the discussion there is an emphasis on how individual learners respond to literary texts and how texts can provide aesthetic experiences. Krashen and Bland (2014, p.2) argue for compelling comprehensible input and hypothesise that optimal language and literacy development benefit from compelling reading experiences. This involves literary texts that are so interesting they are compelling and allow for experiences than can described as “lost in the book” or “in the reading zone”. Discussed above (section 2.1.2), literacy in this study is understood as established communicative practices, whether restricted to smaller contexts such as classrooms or larger contexts such as cultures. In this strand, advocates for using literary texts with language learners highlight benefits that could be interpreted to extend beyond basic reading and writing skills. For example, to foster reading for pleasure, intercultural

competence, and critical literacy. Drawing on a critical review of empirical studies on texts used in L2 education, there is a widely accepted theoretical argument and growing body of empirical research that texts, non-fiction as well as fiction, can foster intercultural competence (Lea Heggernes, 2021, p.1). With pedagogies that facilitate discovery and self-critical reflection on intertextual connections, literary texts can offer a space for open-ended intercultural dialogue in the target language (Delanoy, 2018, pp.147-148). This is linked to critical literacy, an approach to reading that aims to empower the reader by reading with the intention to understand how literary texts are constructed from the authors' beliefs and values and with the power to manipulate (Bland, 2013, p.3).

Furthermore, the arguments for authentic experiences are extended to include the potential to facilitate authentic conversations. Drawing on Bakhtin's dialogism, Kramsch (1993, p.131) argues that literary texts can offer representations of particularity, dialogic negotiation of meaning, and support learners to find their own voice in the target language. Discussions around literary texts can involve pluricultural elements of experiencing cultures from afar and learning new metaphors to describe their own environment (Hall, 2018a, p.270). Instead of only serving as a tool for language learning, literary texts can inspire learners to express themselves in the target language, e.g., through creative writing or in book talks (Bland, 2018, p.269). However, despite these different arguments, the voices in the discussion agree that educators and reading programs are integral for successful use of literary texts in the L2 classrooms. In making this argument, Grabe (2014, p.12) draws on an extensive review of the efficacy of reading programs in terms of reading comprehension. Nation and Waring (2019, p.27) argue that although different reading levels of graded readers are helpful, teachers need access to the word lists the publishing houses use to determine the levels to facilitate the matching learners and books. Drawing on research of children's access to literary texts in their home environment, Bland (2013, p.7) argues a compensatory role of schools to ensure all learners have access to literary texts in English and learn critical literacy as a step towards learner empowerment. Extending the argument for social justice to text selection, Hall (2020, p.9) argues that L2 English classrooms need to consider that most English users do not come from "white middle class nuclear families in the UK or US" and aim to use literary texts that are more representative of our diverse global world. This argument is relevant to using literary texts to foster intercultural competence and how using diverse texts can facilitate spaces where learners engage dialogically, not only with each other, but with the voices of the texts (Lea Heggernes, 2021).

There is a strong advocacy for small-group discussions around literary texts among SLA researchers and mainstream L2 teacher handbooks. Yet, few draw on empirical research and there is little advice or critical discussion of the challenges involved. For example, Urquhart and Weir (1998, p.187) suggest that evaluating texts and sharing personal responses orally is a valuable post-reading activity. Day and Bamford (1998) agree, but only suggests activities that involve little learner interaction, e.g., oral reports or book talks led by the teacher. Eskey (2002) suggests that oral reports are useful because that is what “literate members of some cultures do”. Publishing extensively on the value of reading, Krashen (2004) advocates a approach called sustained silent reading, but only briefly discusses the value of literature circles and book talks for vocabulary gains and reading achievement. Intended to offer activities designed to stimulate discussion around literary texts, Duff and Maley (2007) provide jigsaw activities, matching exercises, and other task-based activities following Communicative Language Teaching. Hedgcock and Ferris (2009, p.264) mention literature circles as popular in adult education and suggest their usefulness for younger learners in providing structure and allowing learners to support each other in their reading. Without elaborating, Grabe (2009, pp.313, 327) argues that talking about shared reading is useful. As discussed above (section 2.2.1), Nation (2013; Nation & Waring, 2019) focuses on research that demonstrates vocabulary gains and highlights some examples of the affordances of book clubs and talking about reading. To promote strategic readers, Grabe and Stoller (2020, p.149) advocate learner or whole class discussions on main-idea comprehension and how to optimise comprehension during reading. In contrast and specific for using children’s literature with young learners, Bland (2018) draws on empirical research to argue for L2 classrooms to include deep and extensive reading, with book talks that facilitate reflection. Yet, although small-group discussions around literary texts are often cited as useful for L2 learning, it is still an under-researched area.

Teacher reports of the opportunities for language learning of book talks, book clubs, literary reading circles, and literature circles begin to abound. This observation of the popularity of small-group discussions around literary texts is supported by the Companion Volume to CEFR (Council of Europe, 2018, p.115), and repeated in the most recent update (Council of Europe, 2020, p.106), suggesting they can provide a space to express personal responses to literary texts. Teacher reports of using reading circles with L2 learners often draw on Daniels’ (1994; 2002; 2004; 2006) literature circles with roles in L1 contexts and discuss the implications of implementing them in an L2 context. The key feature of these reading circles is to read a novel over the course of an extended period and break down the

reading into sections. Learners meet in small groups to share and discuss their reflections of each reading section. Often, the reading circles include reading tasks, referred to as roles, to prepare for each reading circle sessions. For example, connector, questioner, literary luminary, and illustrator, designed to provide different "takes" on the literary text (Daniels, 2002, p.103). For an L1 teaching context with multilingual learners, Pentón Herrera and Kidwell (2018) expand on this pedagogical activity and suggest roles aimed to foster multiliteracies and multilingualism, e.g., bias detective, investigative journalist, and tweeter. For an L2 teaching context, Furr (2016, p.68) suggests discussion leader, summariser, word master, connector, passage person, and culture collector. Furr (e.g., 2007; 2011; 2016) has published extensively on literature circles with L2 learners. Drawing on his own teaching practice, Furr (2016) describes literature circles as "magical" because they allow for a deeper understanding of literary texts and authentic and vibrant discussions in the target language. Extending Daniel's and Furr's work to the teaching of English for Academic Purposes, Seburn (2016) advanced the activity Academic reading circles with academic journal articles and roles such as Contextualiser and Visualiser. However, as Hall (2015, p.290) argues, reading circles is an area under development requiring empirical research to better understand how they facilitate language learning. Over the last 20 years, most of the empirical research undertaken on reading circles, with or without roles, has measured effects on reading comprehension and generated learner reports on perceived effects on reading comprehension and motivation. Here below, follows a review of this body of research and includes research in L1 English teaching contexts with English Language Learners or learners learning English as an Additional Language, i.e., learners with a different language as L1.

Studies that measured effects on reading comprehension implemented reading tests before and after the reading circle cycle with experimental and control groups. For example, in a seven-month long study in the US with 75 ELLs in grades 5 and 6 at risk for retention, the experimental group participating in literature circles outperformed the control group and increased their reading level with one grade (McElvain, 2010). A study in Indonesia with 200 EFL fifth graders learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) also report positive results on reading comprehension as well as reading habits after a three-month project with different reading pedagogies, including literature circles (Diem, 2011). Finally, a study in Taiwan with 160 EFL university students participating in a one-semester project with three different reading activities, including literature circles, did not outperform the control group on factual comprehension, but did so on interpretive comprehension (Shen, 2013). In this study, the factual comprehension was defined as tests that included comprehension

checks and interpretive comprehension as measuring the participants' ability to read between the lines, cite text evidence, and integrate meaning into a whole (Shen, 2013, p.66). In sum, these studies demonstrate a skill-oriented approach to reading circles to promote reading skills. This suggests a theory of language and reading where texts constitute fixed meanings, and that successful language learning involves identifying this meaning. The studies that generated learner reports on perceived effects on reading comprehension and motivation mostly relied on questionnaires and in some instances interviews. Reviewed here are two studies conducted by teachers researching their own teaching practice and learners. For example, 49 US university students of French reported that the literature circles helped them co-construct meaning together and that listening to their peers' interpretations developed their own interpretations (Dupuy, 1997). This allowed the students to develop their reading confidence and motivated future independent reading in French. Another study conducted individual and focus group interviews with 33 adult EFL learners in Tajikistan after they had participated in critical literature circles during one academic year (Fredricks, 2012). Drawing on Freirean critical pedagogy, texts were selected for their representations of other countries and the learners reported they had been emotionally and psychologically challenged by the reading and that they found the books as a source of knowledge about life and the world.

To my knowledge, only a few studies have analysed learners' talk during reading circles. One ethnography analysed audiotape recordings of adult ESL university students in the US participating in one literature circle cycle and describes how the participants negotiated meaning and developed cultural awareness (Li, 2005). Demonstrated with transcript excerpts from literature circle sessions, Li (2005) observed how the learners offered peer assistance to understand the text, that their limited linguistic proficiency in English did not hinder their thoughtful interactions, and how they compared the characters' cultural circumstances to their experiences of their home countries. Similarly, Shelton-Strong (2012) observed that his adolescent learners of English in Vietnam continuously self-evaluated their comprehension and negotiated meanings collaboratively, allowing them to follow the narrative arch of stories targeted for an L1 audience despite their limited linguistic proficiency. The findings from these two studies support the observations made by Furr (2016, p.6), discussed above, of how literature circles in his own teaching practice has facilitated discussions at a "deeper level". This suggests that analysis of learner talk during reading circle sessions is an under-researched area, a research gap this study intends to address.

2.2.3 Section conclusion

This section has summarised and discussed different arguments in favour of using literary texts for pedagogical purposes. Two strands were identified, either to develop language, e.g., gains in reading fluency and vocabulary, or literacy, e.g., to foster critical literacy and intercultural competence. Many emphasise the challenges of learning to read in a second language and selecting appropriate texts, e.g., in terms of content and vocabulary. There is a pervasive argument for using activities and texts that challenge, engage, and motivate continued voluntary reading as well as reflect the increasingly global use of English. Following this study's conceptual framework and research aims, this discussion was followed by a review of teacher reports and empirical research on reading circles. This review identified a small research field comprising unison voices that small-group discussions around literary texts are beneficial for all the reasons mentioned above. Yet, existing research has focused on reading comprehension and motivation and only a few studies have analysed learner talk. This creates a gap for this study where the first research question aims to provide insights into how reading circles can facilitate verbal interactions around literary texts that could allow for opportunities for learning English as a Second Language. This study's process-oriented focus leads into the following section which outlines and discusses the field of reader response, a research approach that examines how readers make meaning of literary texts by examining their verbal responses.

2.3 Reader response

To provide insights into the research aim of exploring how the reading circles allowed the participants to talk about the novels, this study draws on the field of reader response which is concerned with readers' meaning making processes. This section summaries the theoretical underpinning of reader response (section 2.3.1), reviews previous empirical studies (section 2.3.2), and outlines the scholarly discussion of whether literary texts can be used for educational purposes to foster empathy and moral edification (2.3.3).

2.3.1 Theoretical underpinnings

This section introduces the field of reader response by summarising its theoretical underpinnings and the most literary scholars. In short, this field aims to understand how readers make meaning of literary texts and research methodologies are concerned with how texts generate responses, capturing these, and analysing them (Benton, 2004). Rosenblatt's transactional theory, developed from Dewey's understanding of

constructivism, was developed by Iser's indeterminacy gaps, and now extended to include the social aspect of social constructivism. These theoretical underpinnings have guided the fields' research aim to empirically investigate how readers make meaning of literary texts and allowed for an understanding to emerge that literary texts can facilitate intercultural spaces.

Drawing on Dewey's democratic values and constructivist understanding of learning, the transactional theory of reading was first proposed by Rosenblatt (1995) in 1938, in the first edition of *Literature as exploration*, as a response to the then prevalent idea that reading literary texts is limited to interpreting the writer's meaning. From the premise that literary texts are works of art, this theory argues that each reading event evokes a poem, a personal reading of the text (Rosenblatt, 1978). The reading experience is a transaction between the text and the reader, a jointly constructed experience of the responses texts evoke in readers and the meanings readers bring to texts. This means that everyone reads all texts differently and that every time a reader returns to read a text again, this evokes a new reading. The experience of reading a story when we were little generates a different experience when reading the same story again as adults. It is a transaction of meaning making; texts evoke responses in their readers and readers in turn bring their unique experiences to texts. This follows a constructivist understanding of learning and reading, which argues that we learn when we are actively engaged in the learning process, integrating new knowledge with existing knowledge (Tracey & Morrow, 2017, p.56). Constructivism views learning as the natural state of the human mind involving a continuous and never-ceasing process of making sense of our social world, reassessing what is already known and adding what is newly learned. This position provides an example of where constructivism and sociocultural theory intersect, which, as discussed above (section 2.1.2), considers learning as situated and the appropriation of communicative practices, not ready-made messages (Säljö, 2013, p.67). To investigate readers' responses, Rosenblatt (1985) argued that instead of analysing readers and texts separately, each reading event should be analysed with respect to what makes the event a unique and personal experience, including the particular reader and text, and cultural, social, and temporal aspects. In this perspective, literary texts are not considered to contain fixed messages waiting to be discovered by readers, instead every reader constructs their own unique meaning.

A critique of the transactional theory could be that it is possible that literary texts would generate a proliferation of unique responses. This is addressed by Iser's (1974) concepts of

gaps and indeterminacy in literary texts. Alongside Rosenblatt, Iser can be considered one of the most influential reader response theorists in how literary texts can be used in education (Benton, 2004, p.114). Sharing Rosenblatt's devotion to emphasise readers' responses, Iser (2000, p.314) focused on trying to understand how reading can evoke images in readers' minds, how this phenomenon can be manipulated through textual strategies, and why humans feel a need to immerse themselves in stories. Possibly the most influential concept to emerge from Iser's (1974) writings were the ideas that all literary texts comprise gaps and elements of indeterminacy. This builds on the understanding of stories to inherently draw on the omission of details, indeterminacy, to create narrative momentum of anticipation and retrospection. Readers fill in these gaps by making connections and constructing personal readings (Iser, 1974, p.280). These unique readings constitute readers' meaning making processes. Different literary and reader response scholars have tried to describe how readers transact with literary texts and this gap-filling process. Interpreting Iser's gaps and indeterminacy, Bruner (1986, p.52) suggests that reading involves an active and creative process of generating hypotheses and constructing possible worlds as well as a critical analysis of the requirements of these perspectives. Extending this understanding, Beauvais (2015b, p.6) argues that as well as creating creative and interpretive spaces, "a gap can only be defined by what surrounds it; and that which surrounds it necessarily encloses it". Thus, readerly gaps are inherently enclosed by boundaries and readers' responses are curbed by the potentials and limitations set forth by the text. This meaning making process seems to be controlled by what interpretations readers perceive to be plausible and reasonable. Eco (1994, p.8) compares it to a walk through a narrative wood where readers can choose to walk well-trodden paths or create their own, yet they must be reasonable choices that respect their surroundings. Emphasising how readers make meaning by linking past experiences to new, Rosenblatt (1982, p.270) stated:

> "In order to shape the work, we draw on our reservoir of past experience with people and the world, our past inner linkage of words and things, our past encounters with spoken or written texts."

From the perspective of critical pedagogy, Freire (1985) explains reading as reading the word and the world, of readers being engaged in a process of moving back and forth between the text and their previous experiences. An often used metaphor is Bishop's (1990) mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors which describes how literary texts can allow readers to see reflections of themselves, offer windows into the lives of others, and open imaginative doors to become part of fictional worlds. Using the concept of

intertextuality, discussed above as describing how texts build on previous texts (section 2.1.1), Pantaleo (2008, p.29) describes reading as a process of understanding how all texts are intertexts of other texts and that readers bring their own intertextual histories to bear on the literary text, producing the reading experience. In sum, the conceptualisations described here attempt to explain the invisible process of what readers bring to literary texts to make meaning, variously referred to as background knowledge, previous experiences, and personal memories.

Drawing on these understandings, empirical research has attempted to describe how readers' verbalised responses carry traces of what they bring to the reading using various categories, one of the most frequently used being life-to-text and text-to-life elements. These were first introduced by Cochran-Smith (1984, p.173), an ethnographic study of story reading events with children in nursery schools. The children's life-to-text responses were defined as drawing on extra-textual information such as cultural heritage, human nature, and literary conventions to understand the stories. Text-to-life responses constituted the opposite, drawing on the literary text to throw light on and make sense of real life. These types of responses gained traction after Sipe (2008) applied them in his extensive grounded theory study of picturebook readalouds with children in kindergarten through second-grade. More recently, in an overview of recent and innovative research on young children's responses to picturebooks, Arizpe (2017, p.132) notes that these elements are "almost always present in responses to picturebooks". For example, *Visual Journeys*, an international multi-site research project investigated how immigrant children aged 11-13 responded in small group reading sessions to a wordless picturebook on immigration. The authors, Arizpe et al. (2014, p.90), drew on Sipe's (2008) categorisation of responses and noted in their participants' responses an overlap between elements of life-to-text and text-to-life and the frequent references to travelling. This prompted further exploration and led to a reconceptualization of the phenomenon using the concept of intertextuality (Arizpe et al., 2014, p.95). This allowed for an exploration of how the participants verbalised different types of intertextual connections between the text and different types of cultural landmarks, e.g., history, popular cultural media, and intercultural spaces. The latter involved linking the wordless narrative to their own narratives of life, discussed above as a conceptualisation of people's personal histories as externalised texts (section 2.1.1). As the children participated in small-group discussions, this allowed them to listen to their peers' narratives and together create an intercultural space and collaborative community that valued diversity (Arizpe et al., 2014, pp.141-157).

Discussed above in relation to L2 learning (section 2.2.2), this idea of how small-group discussions around literary texts can generate intercultural spaces is a recurrent theme in reader response studies but has been conceptualised differently by different researchers. For example, drawing on Bakhtin's dialogism, Thyberg (2009) examined small-group discussions around a postcolonial YA novel with high school ESL learners in Sweden using the concept of contact zones. This allowed Thyberg to analyse whether the reading allowed the participants to see versions of the characters in themselves and if their worldviews and perceptions were challenged by the literary text. Thyberg's findings suggest that book talks around literary texts can provide democratic spaces where learners challenge their viewpoints against the text and each other. Another example is Brooks and Brown (2012) culturally situated reader response model generated from a grounded theory analysis of L1 English middle school learners' small-group discussions around a children's book. Their model identified how the participants responded from five different cultural positions: ethnic group, community, family, peers, and homeplace. The final position, homeplace, interacted with and was informed by the other positions. This model allowed the authors to conceptualise the participants' responses as transactions mediated by their perceived place in the world and illuminated how children of similar ethnic background may respond very similarly or very differently. Finally, a growing focus in reader response is how intercultural spaces can be created deliberately by using literary texts that can be considered challenging, e.g., picturebooks where images at first-glance lack congruence or evoke themes that are often considered controversial or taboo (Farrar, Arizpe & McAdam, 2021). Finally, as discussed above (section 2.2.2), to foster intercultural competence is one of the main rationales for using literary texts with L2 learners.

This section has described the theoretical underpinnings of reader response and outlined one of its main research aims, to understand how readers make meaning of literary texts. This focus has generated a body of research that empirically has attempted to conceptualise this process by examining readers' verbalised responses. This has generated a current discussion and focus of how literary texts can evoke intercultural deliberations and challenge readers' assumptions and worldviews. Discussed and outlined in the analytical framework below (section 4.2), this study attempts to contribute to this endeavour by drawing on previous reader response research and bringing a sociocultural perspective, reviewed in the following section.

2.3.2 The mediating role of social interaction

As the empirical research referenced in the above section illustrates, most reader response studies use qualitative methodologies and focus on small-group discussions around literary texts. These are referred to by various labels, e.g., book clubs, literature circles, readalouds, reading sessions, and shared reading, and the extent to which an educator or researcher mediates the interaction varies. When designing reader response studies and determining their analytical focus, text selection is frequently guided by the texts' defining features e.g., novel, wordless picturebooks, or picturebooks that combine images and text. However, as this study is non-interventional and framed by sociocultural theory which focuses on language learning processes as they unfold, the concepts of artefacts and mediation become the analytical focus. In this study, the artefacts available to the participants during the reading circles sessions were primarily verbalised utterances. Thus, this section reviews previous reader response studies that have analysed verbal interaction around literary texts, identified how the participants used language as a tool, and constructed typologies of their verbalised responses.

The mediating role of mediators and social interaction with peers is frequently acknowledged in reader response studies and have been analysed from different perspectives. For example, in their study with younger children and picturebooks, Arizpe and Styles (2003, p.9), acting as mediators of shared reading sessions, observed that the children copied how the researchers asked and responded to questions. Bloome and Egan-Robertson (2004, p.57) demonstrate how first grade learners acted and reacted to each other's meanings, allowing for an intersubjective understanding of shared meanings to emerge and establishing socially constructed intertextuality. Sipe (2008, pp.200-202) identified five categories of talk used by the adult mediators: readers, managers and encouragers, clarifiers and probers, fellow wonderers, and speculators. In addition, this study also discussed how the children enabled peers' responses through chains of speculative hypothesis, longer sequences of conversational turns during which they elaborated and challenged each other's hypotheses (Sipe, 2008, pp.99-101) and clarified the meaning of textual and visual features (Sipe, 2008, pp.225-227). In a study with Portuguese EFL learners aged 16-18, Mourão (2013) analysed learner-led interactions around a picturebook. Drawing on Mercer's (2000) sociocultural concept "interthinking" which aims to describe how people use language to think together, Mourão (2013) describes how the interactions mediated knowledge development and allowed the participants to help each other clarify narrative elements they found unclear. Similarly,

Arizpe et al. (2014, p.92) observed how their participants e.g., drew on each other's background knowledge, invited each other to share their interpretations, and co-constructed dialogue to the wordless picturebook. Drawing on dialogic theory, among which Mercer's work feature, Lea Heggernes (2019) identified dialogic features during whole-class discussions around a graphic memoir mediated by the teacher and with Norwegian learners of English aged 13-14. The findings demonstrate that the participants used different dialogic features such as contributing with and inviting thoughtful responses, and justifying, challenging, and elaborating on ideas. Shared by these studies is an attempt to use their findings of how small-group discussions around literary texts can generate new and deeper understandings to demonstrate their relevance for educational contexts.

The final sociocultural analytical approach identified in previous reader response studies is how a few studies have examined how the participants used their multilingual repertoires as a tool to mediate their responses. These studies have primarily focused on how participants drew on their linguistic repertoires in different languages to co-construct meaning. For example, Martínez-Roldán (2005) conducted a case study of small-group discussions around literary texts with second graders attending a school with an explicit English and Spanish bilingual agenda. Focusing on discussions intended to be undertaken in Spanish only, Martínez-Roldán (2005, p.1515) observed how one participant assisted a peer who was not fully bilingual by translating utterances shared by their peers. Similarly, Arizpe et al. (2014, pp.153, 168) observed how a participant noticed a fragment of a birth certificate in Polish integrated into the picturebook and translated it to his peers who did not speak Polish. This allowed the group to expand on the identified theme of immigration and travelling and draw links to their understandings of passports. Finally, in Dey's (2019) study in Scotland with immigrant young children of Pakistani origin, the participants drew on their bilingual repertoires during literature circles. A speaker of Urdu as well, Dey (2019, p.84) mediated the sessions and encouraged the participants to translanguage between English and Urdu, their home language. With each session, the participants translanguaged more frequently and accessed their linguistic and cultural repertoires in both languages. These three studies illustrate how multilingual repertoires can be used as a resource in discussions around literary texts.

Another approach to analyse discussions around literary texts is to construct typologies that categorise the participants' responses. This methodology has been frequently used by researchers examining responses to picturebooks (Arizpe & Styles, 2016, p.143).

Discussed in the previous section, Sipe's (2008, p.35) analysis of young children's responses using grounded theory has become very influential for the reader response field. Sipe (2008, p.35) constructed, applied, and developed his typology of responses to picturebooks across several studies, identifying five main categories of responses, each with several sub-categories: analytical, intertextual, personal, transparent, and performative. This typology has since been applied and developed with different age groups and in different contexts. For example, Braid and Finch (2015) applied Sipe's analytical category to their participants', aged 9-10, responses during picturebook readalouds and identified analytical responses ranging from simple to complex. Discussed in the previous section (section 2.3.1), Arizpe et al. (2014, pp.94-95) extended Sipe's typology by drawing on findings from other studies and developed a model that highlights the challenge of creating clear-cut categories. Demonstrating how different responses overlap and inform one another, this model includes the four categories of referential, compositional, intertextual, and personal responses and identifies three contact lines between them. One of these contact lines was described above (section 2.3.1) in relation to the discussion of intertextual connections based on personal experience.

The above section reviewed typologies constructed from the responses of children in L1 contexts. Similar typologies have emerged from reader response studies with adolescent or adult L2 learners. For example, Lee (2013) constructed a typology from the responses to an YA novel by Taiwanese adolescent EFL learners that participated in an after-school book club. In this study, the participants' literary responses were categorised as interacting, interpreting, and evaluating, and drawing on cultural awareness. Similarly, Kim (2004) analysed the responses of adult ESL university students, reading one short story and one novel, and identified response categories of literal comprehension, personal connections, cross-cultural themes, interpretation, and evaluation of the literary work. Although using different labels to categorise the responses, a theme across these typologies is to differentiate between responses that are more analytical and responses that are more personal. This conceptualisation share similarities with Rosenblatt's (1995, p.1) concepts of efferent and aesthetic reading. Proposed to exist on a continuum, efferent reading refers to reading for the purpose of extracting information and aesthetic reading to the lived-through experience of evoking literary texts as works of art. In a study with EFL university students reading short stories, Tutaş (2006, p.138) drew on these concepts explicitly and developed several sub-categories, e.g., categorising character identification as efferent reading and making judgements as aesthetic reading. In my review of reader response

studies, this makes Tutaş (2006) study unique in that it attempts to categorise how the readers verbalised their evoked feelings.

This section has reviewed previous reader response studies focused on small-group discussions around literary texts with a sociocultural perspective. These demonstrate how verbal interaction can mediate responses and how multilingual repertoires can be used a resource to mediate collective meaning making to move beyond the limitations of communicating in only one language. A frequent approach to analyse readers' responses is to construct typologies that identify different response types, a methodology shared across studies with L1 and L2 speakers. Finally, this review has demonstrated how typologies frequently distinguish between analytical and personal responses and the limited number of studies that identify how responses are shaped by the readers' beliefs and values. This is related to the emergent line of inquiry of investigating the argument that literary texts can foster empathy and moral improvement.

2.3.3 Empathy and literary texts

That literary texts have the potential for empathic and moral edification is a long-standing argument traced back to the emergence of children's literature, written purposefully for the assumed didactic effects. Children's literature carry a long history of being written with didactic intent purpose, sometimes expressed and other times implicit (Beauvais, 2015b, pp.79-81). Although there are strong voices that argue in favour, there is little supporting empirical research. In recent years, reader response researchers have begun to investigate these claims empirically. This section begins with a review of the arguments for and against, with scholars speaking from the position of using literary texts in education. Connected to this discussion is how literary scholars argue that the reading of literary texts inherently involves an ethical confrontation.

Proponents of pedagogies for critical multiliteracies argue that discussions around literary texts can motivate learners to act against social injustices. To foster critical and democratic citizens, Rosenblatt (1995, p.214) argued that a pedagogical approach to literary texts should encourage learners to identify and critically reflect on their primary and spontaneous responses. Although not referencing Rosenblatt or other reader response theorists, Freire (1985) agreed and argued that mediators and teachers need to embody the position to read critically and to be curious and open alongside their learners. Developed to form part of a critical pedagogy, the premise is that critical reflection of texts can foster

critical awareness and democratic societies (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Just as Vygotsky argued that thoughts are realised in verbalised speech, so did Freire (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p.xviii) when arguing that utterances and meaning making occur interdependently and simultaneously. Botelho and Rudman (2009) applied the metaphor of mirrors, windows, and doors, defined above (section 2.3.1), in their design of a pedagogical approach involving critical multicultural analysis of literary texts with the intention to problematise children's literature and promote social justice. Shared by these scholars, is the idea that reading literary texts will not suffice, but that educators need to mediate the process to encourage learners to view texts not only through mirrors and windows, but also to cross the threshold and walk through the door (Arizpe, Farrell & McAdam, 2013, p.246).

Rosenblatt (1995, p.16) argued that it is impossible to use literary texts in educational contexts without confronting ethical problems or speaking from a position of a social philosophy. Unless criticised, this practice reinforces, consciously or unconsciously, existing ethical attitudes. Similarly, Meek (1988, p.29) likens the reading to a confrontation of value systems between readers and texts, e.g., heroism and cowardice, and argues that it involves a transformative process. This inherent ethical confrontation is also argued by Booth (1998, p.375) who describes the process as inescapable and that readers cannot avoid but to appraise human activity as better or worse than their self-perceived qualities. Arguing from a more tentative position, Nikolajeva (2014b, p.94) suggests that literary texts can be used in educational contexts to serve as training fields for empathy and as a space where empathy can be practiced and nurtured. One of the most prolific scholars in favour of using literary texts to foster empathy and moral edification is Nussbaum (1997; 2008; 2017). Nussbaum (2017) argues that literary texts are integral to cultivate the imagination necessary to understand other people's choices and motivation, an ability that is integral to develop democratic world citizens. Using Greek tragedies or novels by Dickens as examples of complex literary works, Nussbaum's argument that literary texts can foster empathy draws on the premise that certain texts have inherent qualities that compel readers to identify or empathise with the characters.

To summarise, it is important to identify how this scholarly discussion is based on two ideas. First, that reading literary texts involves an inherent confrontation of value systems. Second, that this process is transformative and can lead to a change in beliefs. Agreeing with the first position, Landy (2008, p.68) emphasises how easy it is to read into literary texts one's own beliefs and values and claim them as emerging from the text. Agreeing

with this understanding of projecting oneself onto a text rather than learning something from it, Mallan (2013, p.105) argues that empathy can be self-serving. Instead of reframing our perspective to move closer to Others, we bring Others closer to Ourselves. In other words, we are more likely to empathise with people that are like us and reject people that are unlike us. Landy (2008, pp.71-72) argues that just as reading Shakespeare's *Hamlet* will not turn us into murderers, reading Dickens' *Hard times* will not make us better people. From the perspective of psychology, to argue that reading literary texts motivates empathy builds on the observation that when we share victims' feelings of resentment, we might feel animated to injure the offender (Bloom, 2018, p.191). For example, when we see charities use upsetting footage of famine and war, we are more prone to make donations. However, decisions on what is right or wrong stem from moral judgement and psychological processes that are based on our values (Bloom, 2018, p.50). Just as anger can determine our moral judgement of right and wrong and distance us from deliberate reasoning, so can empathy (Bloom, 2018, p.209). From a different perspective, these feelings may be important for us when reading literary texts as feeling anger for the villains and empathy for the tragic heroes can be sources of pleasure (Bloom, 2018, p.2; Nodelman & Reimer, 2003, p.25). In fact, it can even provide a space of having one's moral values confirmed and make one feel like a generally good person (Landy, 2008, p.68).

Discussed at various points above, the use of literary texts in educational contexts is often motivated by how they might inspire intercultural understanding, social justice, and social action. Researchers of readers' responses have begun to investigate this claim empirically. Two strands of research can be identified, either to examine texts to ascertain how they invite readers to empathise with characters or to examine readers' responses for traces of empathy (Mallan, 2013, p.106). Keen (2007) advanced a theory of narrative empathy, identifying literary techniques authors can use to promote character identification and empathetic feelings for the character. For example, first person narrative and focalization of characters' mental states, i.e., providing first-hand access to characters' feelings and thoughts. This list provides a toolbox for authors to use and an analytical tool to compare to readers' responses. However, research on responses to literary texts that employ different narrative techniques demonstrate that readers' responses cannot be predicted nor controlled (Keen, 2017, p.1291). Some readers are more empathetic than others and the context and time of the reading event matters, where some books may trigger empathetic responses with later generations of readers rather than their contemporary. In the second strand of analysing readers' responses for traces of empathy, Nikolajeva's (e.g., 2013;

2014a; 2014b; 2016) research stand out as the most prolific. When suggesting that literary texts may serve as training fields for empathy, Nikolajeva (2014b, pp.86-87) draws on her extensive research to suggest that the extent to which readers identify themselves with the characters influence their position towards them. On the one hand there is immersive identification when readers identify with characters to the extent that they become the character; they cannot separate the characters' emotions from their own. On the other, there is empathetic identification or empathy, when readers are curious about the characters without sharing their opinions or emotional experiences.

Additionally, studies suggest that fostering empathy purposefully is not a straightforward issue. For example, in Evans' (2015) study with children aged 9 in small-group discussions around a picturebook, the children responded to issues of migration. Evans (2015, p.255) describes how the participants empathised with the characters, yet in one of their discussions, they expressed anti-immigration beliefs. This session was interrupted by the school bell and the research report does not elaborate further on this instance. Similarly, a reader response study with Swedish high school ESL learners reading and discussing a post-colonial YA novel in English constructed the characters as less informed than themselves and maintained colonial prejudices of Us and Them (Thyberg, 2009, p.107). Moreover, in another study with Swedish high school ESL learners, Fjällström and Kokkola (2015) used a short story that was written from the point of view of a seven-year-old focalized main character. The study demonstrates how the participants in their re-writings of the story had difficulties understanding irony and empathising with an unfocalized adult character. It is the findings from studies such as these which demonstrate the complexity of labelling responses to literary texts as empathetic and prompts a call for careful deliberation of why and for whom empathy is directed (Farrar, Arizpe & McAdam, 2021, p.51)

2.3.4 Section conclusion

The section has outlined the scholarly discussion whether the use of literary texts in education can foster empathy and motivate learners to fight for social justice. In this discussion, there is agreement that reading literary texts involve an inherent process of ethical confrontation between the readers' and the texts' value systems and readers assessing characters' actions and feelings based on their beliefs and values. However, there is disagreement if this can lead to a shift in perspectives or if it only confirms what readers already believe. This section has also reviewed reader response studies that have analysed

readers' responses for traces of empathy, indicating the complexity of labelling responses at empathetic. However, as the plethora of research and readers' self-reports indicate, literary texts have the potential to evoke emotional responses. To feel for a main character's plight or to resent the antagonist are emotions that can motivate us to keep reading. This means that it is apparent that something related to empathy and compassion is happening when we read. For a language learner, to keep reading is integral and thus these feelings should not be underestimated. Yet, as this section demonstrates, literary texts in educational contexts should be implemented with care and caution.

2.4 Chapter conclusion

Guided by the research questions of how this study's object of inquiry, reading circles, can facilitate verbal interactions that could allow for opportunities for learning English as a Second Language and the development of responses to literary texts, this literature review has outlined the conceptual framework and reviewed relevant literature. This conceptual framework is framed by sociocultural theory and the central concepts of artefacts and mediation, arguing that language is a tool that mediates communication. This framework also incorporates concepts from Bakhtin's dialogism, appropriation, and intertextuality, encapsulating the understanding that all discourse carries the meaning of past utterances and that every speaker situates their utterances in their context and for their intended purposes. This chapter has also reviewed the scholarly discussion on the role of extensive reading in L2 learning, using literary texts in L2 education, and empirical research on small-group discussions around literary texts with L2 learners. This identified how a limited number of studies have analysed learner talk during L2 reading circles with roles, a research gap this study attempts to fill. Guided by the process-oriented focus of the research questions, this prompted a review of the field of reader response and how it has been applied in research with L2 learners. Outlining theoretical underpinnings, relevant empirical research, and current scholarly discussions, the field of reader response is based on the premise of considering literary texts as works of art and that each reading event, for every reader, is unique. From this literature review emerged three under-researched areas: how readers' multilingual repertories can mediate small-group discussions around literary texts, typologies constructed from the responses of adolescent readers reading YA novels, and empirical investigations of how readers' responses relate to the arguments that literary texts can foster empathy and involve an ethical confrontation between readers' and texts' value systems. This creates a research gap in which this study is situated. A reader response analysis of how this study's participants talked about the literary texts may

provide more insights into how reading circles can facilitate development of responses and suggest implications for L2 learning. This theoretical application could potentially address Grabe's (2009, p.328) observation that despite the wealth of research on the benefits on L2 learners' reading comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary gains, extensive reading remains a "fringe issue" in L2 education. This aspiration concludes the literature review, and the following chapter outlines the study's methodology.

Chapter 3 Methodology

The previous chapter outlined and discussed the conceptual framework of sociocultural theory (section 2.1), reviewed the scholarly discussion and empirical research on extensive reading and small-group discussions around literary texts with L2 learners (section 2.2), and outlined theoretical underpinnings of reader response, reviewed empirical research of the mediating role of social interaction, and discussed the link between empathy and literary texts (section 2.3). This chapter outlines and discusses how the research aims and questions were translated into a research methodology and provides an overview of this study's qualitative nature (section 3.1) and describes the research site, fieldwork, and research tools (section 3.2). This is followed by an outline of transcription and translation processes (section 3.3), analytical procedures (section 3.4), ethical considerations (section 3.5), trustworthiness and researcher integrity (section 3.6), and concludes with a presentation of the YA novels read by the participants (section 3.7).

3.1 Overview of the study's qualitative nature

As described in the introduction (section 1.3), this study was designed as qualitative inquiry with an initial exploratory approach that was narrowed down during the data analysis to answer the research questions:

1. How do the reading circles facilitate verbal interactions around literary texts that could allow for opportunities for learning English as a Second Language?

2. How do the reading circles facilitate opportunities for the development of responses to literary texts?

As these questions focuses on "the processes by which these events and activities and their outcomes occurred", they prompted qualitative inquiry (Maxwell, 2013, p.83). Broadly defined, qualitative research focus on words rather than numbers, inductive theory generation from empirical research, epistemological positions that emphasise the participants' perspectives, and ontological positions that define reality as socially constructed (Bryman, 2016, p.374). To describe how this definition applies to this study, these terms are defined and described how they were translated into a research methodology. This discussion is premised on an understanding of the function of research paradigms to serve the research aims and that different, rather than unified and

unquestioned, positions are useful in the shared endeavour to open up new line of inquiries and to improve our understanding of our social world (Maxwell, 2013, p.42).

In research, the logic used to generate explanations about the researched phenomena is usually described as inductive or deductive. Inductive refers to building theory from data and deductive the reverse, to apply theory to data (Gibbs, 2007, pp.4-5). This chapter on methodology is followed by a chapter describing and discussing the development of the analytical framework, which used a so-called inductive-deductive approach. This refers to a combination of both inductive and deductive logic, the most common approach in qualitative inquiry (Harding, 2019, p.24). Described in more detail below (section 3.4 and chapter 4), the initial stages of the iterative data analysis evolved inductively to take account of the particularities of the researched phenomenon. This was followed by a deductive stage of applying concepts from the conceptual framework and findings from previous empirical research on learner talk and reader response. As discussed above (section 2.1.1), the conceptual framework integrates sociocultural theory with the concepts of appropriation and intertextuality, and discussed below (chapter 4), the analytical framework incorporates findings from linguistic analyses of learner talk and reader response studies.

The term epistemology refers to theories of knowledge (Bryman, 2016, p.690) and ontology to the nature of social phenomena and their meanings (Bryman, 2016, p.693). Qualitative research is broadly framed by the epistemological position of interpretivism and the ontological position of constructionism (Bryman, 2016, p.374). Interpretivist research assumes that social research requires a different research strategy to the natural sciences, to understand rather than explain, and to seek distinctiveness and particularities of social phenomena (Bryman, 2016, p.26). In this study, this position was realised by how the research methodology was developed to provide answers to the research questions. Of primary interest was the participants' interaction during the reading circle sessions and how this generated opportunities for language learning and reader response. In other words, what they said and how they said it were the objects of inquiry. Discussed in the conceptual framework (section 2.1), researching communicative patterns in specific contexts can according to sociocultural theory generate an understanding of how the participants use language as a tool for communication and allow for insights into their learning processes. Moreover, the study was designed to initially cast a wider a net to allow for insights to emerge from the fieldwork and more data was generated than has been analysed. The research tools used, described in more detail below (section 3.2.5), were

qualitative in nature and designed to generate the participants' perspectives via interviews and reflective open-ended questionnaires and to audio record their interaction in English during the reading circle sessions. This initial exploratory approach occurred concurrently with the review of the literature and led to an iterative data analysis during which emerging findings generated the development of the conceptual framework (section 2.1) and the analytical framework (chapter 4).

The ontological position, constructionism, also referred to as constructivism, argues that social phenomena and their meanings are continuously constructed and revised by their participants through social interaction (Bryman, 2016, p.29). All knowledge claims of describing and explaining the world are made through conceptual frameworks and researchers do not discover findings, but generate them (Schwandt, 2000, pp.197-198). In this study, this was realised in the writing of the thesis by positioning the conceptual framework at the beginning of the literature review (section 2.1) to describe how this framed the study. This follows the understanding that we are always "guided and framed by pre-existing ideas and concepts" and it is difficult for researchers to conduct research void of prior conceptual frameworks (Gibbs, 2007, p.5). Taking this argument further, social constructionists, or constructivists, assume that knowledge claims cannot be impartial nor neutral but are, to different extent, ideological, political, and value-laden (Schwandt, 2000, p.198). As described in the introduction (section 1.2), this study was motivated by an interdisciplinary aim to contribute to the research fields of SLA, L2 teaching, and reader response. Moreover, this study was also motivated by a social aim to generate insights into how reading circles can facilitate verbal L2 interactions around literary texts and how these insights can be used to further democracy. Thus, to provide an audit trail and transferability of findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.125), this chapter provides thick description of contextual details and outlines the decision-making process in designing the research methodology. To enhance the trustworthiness of this study's findings, throughout this chapter, the quality of the research is evaluated following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) quality criteria for qualitative inquiry, discussed in more detail below (section 3.6.1). Moreover, to identify how my values as a researcher and language teacher shaped the research, this thesis includes reflexive discussions of my researcher positionality. Situated in relation to relevant points of the research process, these include research aims (section 1.3), ethical considerations (section 3.5), the development of the research questions (section 3.6.2), and final reflections on my development as an early career researcher (section 7.4).

To further demonstrate how this study adheres to the epistemological and ontological positions of interpretivism and social constructivism, they are discussed throughout the thesis in relation to specific aspects of the research. To facilitate the readability of this study's initially explorative approach and the iterative data analysis using the linear format of the thesis, this chapter outlines the analytical procedures in terms of digital and physical handling of the data (sections 3.3 and 3.4) and the following chapter outlines the emerging analytical framework (chapter 4).

3.2 Research site, fieldwork, and research tools

The focus of this study, reading circles with adolescent learners of English at a middle school in Sweden, and the identified research context was introduced above (section 1.1). This section provides more details concerning the learning site, teacher profiles, and assessment practices (section 3.2.1), sampling procedures and participant recruitment (section 3.2.2), how the participating teacher implemented the reading circles with her learners (section 3.2.3), how the classroom observations were conducted (section 3.2.4), and the different research tools used (section 3.2.5).

3.2.1 The learning site, teacher profiles, and assessment practices

This study was undertaken in one of Sweden's larger cities at a publicly funded non-municipal school, referred to as a *friskola* ('free school'), that offers all four stages of compulsory school: preschool class (age 6), year 1-3 (ages 7-9), year 4-6 (ages 10-12), and year 7-9 (ages 13-15). With further details on sampling procedures below (section 3.2.2), the school was selected purposively for implementing reading circles regularly in year 7-9 in their L2 English classes. At the time of the fieldwork, the team of English teachers comprised four teachers and one of them invited me to join her year 9 class of 27 learners aged 15. The fieldwork was completed December 2019 – March 2020, following the teachers' plan to run the reading circle project concurrently with one of her colleagues to facilitate joint assessment. The teacher explained that during the reading circle sessions, her role was to remain silent and take notes for comparison and discussion with her colleague to improve their assessment practices and ensure fair assessment. As measuring learning outcomes did not form part of the research aim, data was not generated on the teacher's assessment procedures. However, to facilitate transferability of findings and the implementation of reading circles in other contexts, this section describes how the reading

circles were implemented at the identified school, provides teacher profiles, and discusses how the reading circles relate to Swedish assessment criteria and practices.

At the school, the reading circles were initially only implemented in English, but teachers who also taught Swedish saw their cross-curricular potential and with time, the reading circles became an established pedagogical activity in both subjects. To teach more than one subject is common in Sweden and at the time of the fieldwork, two of the four English teachers also belonged to the team of seven Swedish teachers and attended regular meetings with their colleagues in both subjects. Over the years, the English teachers had developed an extensive library of literary texts, comprising graded readers, children's books, and YA novels, with sets of six copies per title, five learner copies and one teacher copy. The Swedish teachers on the other hand had focused on acquiring whole-class sets of novels representing different themes which they assigned to different years, e.g., a World War II themed novel for year 9. As the teachers needed to read the texts in preparation for the reading circles, this approach allowed the Swedish teachers to discuss the titles and draw on each other's experiences more than the English teachers. From the learners' perspective, this created opportunities for sharing experiences and transfer skills and knowledge across the two languages, particularly the learners that had the same teacher in both subjects. This study's participating teacher had been teaching her class English and Swedish since year 7 and she was also the learners' class teacher, responsible for mentoring their scholastic progress and maintaining regular communication with their parents. Together, they had already undertaken two cycles of reading circles, once in Swedish and once in English. Therefore, at the time of the fieldwork, the learners knew each other well and were experienced participants of the reading circles.

The assessment criteria used by the participating teacher can be found in the 2011 Swedish curriculum (Skolverket, 2011b), developed by the Swedish government and *Skolverket* ('The Swedish National Agency for Education') and since then replaced by the 2022 reform (Skolverket, 2022c). The assessment criteria are not task-specific but holistic and only intended for semester and final grades, making them unsuitable for formative assessment (Skolverket, 2018a, p.18; 2022a, p.20). There are no specific requirements for how to record evidence of learner performance except for collecting material that supports learner development and ensures a wide and varied assessment practice (Skolverket, 2018a, p.20, 23; 2022a, p.21). However, teachers are required to locally establish consensus on how assessment material can be analysed and evaluated (Skolverket, 2018b, p.2; 2022d, p.2) and implement formal assessment, situations organised purposefully to

assess learner performance, as well as informal assessment through continuous evaluation, e.g., teachers observing learners undertaking tasks (Skolverket, 2018a, p.19; 2022a, p.21). In 2022, the Swedish curriculum was reformed with less detailed assessment criteria to ensure fair assessment and reduce the risk of assessment controlling teaching and learning practices (Skolverket, 2023), addressing some of the issues that emerged from the 2011 curriculum. For example, with the intention to increase learners' understanding of how pedagogical activities underpin assessment, teachers have created rubrics with the assessment criteria, disconnecting them from their holistic intention to assess long-term performance (Skolverket, 2020, pp.51-52) and implemented peer- and self-assessment with such frequency that learners have reported experiencing continuous assessment at the expense of learning (Skolverket, 2020, pp.11-12).

To understand the assessment criteria used by the participating teacher, it is helpful to trace the development of the 2011 and 2022 Swedish curricula. The 2011 curriculum was launched as a response to domestic discourse of emphasising subject content knowledge and the international movement of following multidimensional and transversal, i.e., not subject-bound, competence-based educational frameworks, e.g., Education 2030, outlined by international and influential organisations (Nordin & Sundberg, 2021). A discourse analysis shows how the 2011 curriculum balanced these transnational influences with domestic opinion by interpreting competences as abilities developing within traditional school subjects (Nordin & Sundberg, 2021, p.28). In my interpretation, this hybrid competence discourse can also be identified in the 2022 reform which maintains subject knowledge as the organising principle and outlines the mandatory subject syllabuses, comprising *syfte* ('aim'), *centralt innehåll* ('core content'), and *betygskriterier* ('assessment criteria'). Representing "an essentialist subject knowledge discourse following the Piagetian stages of development" (Nordin & Sundberg, 2021, p.29), the core content outlines required subject knowledge to be covered by teachers nationwide. The aims outline abilities learners are expected to develop and the assessment criteria identify intended learning outcomes for the different grades, phrased in a competence-like discourse and including transversal competences such as problem-solving, yet constrained to subject knowledge (Nordin & Sundberg, 2021, p.29).

A comparison of how the reading circles relate to the English (Skolverket, 2011b, pp.30-41; 2022c, pp.35-42) and the Swedish (Skolverket, 2011b, pp.222-238; 2022c, pp.224-234) syllabuses shows that the English contains more competence-like discourse than the Swedish, which focuses more on specific subject-knowledge. For example, the core

content in both uses the umbrella term literary texts, but the Swedish specifies genres and text types, e.g., poetry and picture books, and requires texts that highlight people's experiences and perceptions. Reading comprehension and verbal interaction are emphasised in the aims for both languages but differ to the extent they are specified in the assessment criteria. Without further details, the English criteria connect these abilities to accessible text genres whereas the Swedish specifies literary texts and require knowledge about the circumstances under which the texts were produced. Both subjects include discussion skills in their assessment criteria, but the English criteria relate them to facilitative communicative strategies and linguistic comprehensibility and the Swedish to developing the conversation and underpinning opinions with arguments. Despite these differences, and beyond the scope of the present discussion, there are many similarities between the two syllabuses which represent transversal competences and, if emphasised, could allow learners to transfer knowledge and skills across the two languages.

3.2.2 Sampling procedures and participant recruitment

As outlined above, this study used purposive sampling (Ritchie et al., 2014, pp.113-114) to identify the school and to tap into the English teachers' extensive experience and the established communicative practices generated by the reading circles. Participants were recruited following convenience sampling, i.e., on the basis of availability and willingness (Ritchie et al., 2014, pp.113-116). After receiving ethical approval from the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at the University of Glasgow and the board of the identified school, I put forth the question to participate to the four English teachers. Three agreed to participate in a group interview and one invited me to her year 9 class. Subsequently, I joined the teacher during one of her lessons to invite all 27 learners to participate and everyone agreed. To recruit all learners instead of a selection involved a careful deliberation of potential benefits and drawbacks of different sampling procedures as well as a reflexive examination of my researcher beliefs. This decision process illustrates the constant tension between ethics and research quality (Webster, Lewis & Brown, 2014, p.81). Although recruiting all 27 learners involved the risk of generating an overwhelming amount of data, it increased the chances of generating sufficient data to answer the research questions and avoided the potential harming effects of singling out individuals. Recruiting a smaller selection of learners could have allowed for a more in-depth study but would have made the study vulnerable to participants choosing to withdraw or generating an insufficient amount of data. This also followed my aim to offer everyone involved a chance to share their voices and that selecting participants based on

certain qualities would be unethical and potentially skew data generation. For further ethical considerations involved during the process of gaining access and consent including participation information sheets and consent forms, see discussion below (section 3.5). This section continues outlining the fieldwork by describing how the reading circles were implemented with this specific group of learners.

3.2.3 The reading circles

As the research aim was to generate an understanding of the reading circles as they formed part of the teacher's and the class's regular pedagogical activities, the study was non-interventional and followed the teacher's plan. The fieldwork commenced when the teacher had made the preparatory work and was ready to begin the reading circle project.

The teacher created groups of five-six learners and without the learners' input, assigned one YA novel from the school's library per group and the learners borrowed them for the project duration. The titles were: *Looking for Alaska* (Green, 2005), *Goodnight Mister Tom* (Magorian, 1981), *Q&A* (Swarup, 2005), *Now is the time for running* (Williams, 2012), and *The fault in our stars* (Green, 2012). Presented and discussed in more detail below (section 3.7), the novels are henceforth referred to by their abbreviated titles *Alaska*, *Goodnight*, *Q&A*, *Running*, and *Stars*. As the teacher described in her interviews, this selection was informed by her understanding of the learners' interests and linguistic repertoires, and she assessed them to be capable of reading YA novels in English produced for the general market. As assessment did not form part of this study, the learners' grades were not collected. To provide an overview of their linguistic proficiencies, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001) is a useful reference tool. Both the 2011 and 2022 Swedish syllabuses for English are informed by CEFR and compares the Swedish grading scale to the CEFR scale of A1-C2 (Skolverket, 2011a, p.7; 2022b, p.6). According to this comparison, the participating learners were expected to achieve an English proficiency of at least level B.1.1 on the CEFR scale at the end of year 9. From my observations of the reading circle sessions, I would describe the learners as achieving this level and beyond, with some learners at C1 level and almost all as comfortable interacting in English.

The teacher also printed written learner instructions (appendix 1), with descriptions of the reading circle roles, the role rota, page numbers for the weekly reading extracts, and a sample script for the Discussion leaders to organise the reading circle sessions. As

described in the introduction (section 1.1), the roles were Discussion leader, Summariser, Character tracer, Creative connector, and Literary wizard. For the groups with six learners, the teacher created the role Discussion Summariser. This meant that in the groups with five learners, all learners completed all roles once in response to different reading extracts, but in the groups with six learners, they completed five of the six roles.

I joined the class in their final lesson before the Christmas break when the teacher handed out the novels and the written instructions for how to complete the reading circles. This lesson, and the first lesson after the holidays, were reading lessons, allowing the learners to read the first reading extract and prepare their role reports. After this, the subsequent ten lessons followed the same structure: the teacher started the lessons and left the classroom to wait in a neighbouring classroom. One reading circle group at a time joined her to complete their reading circle session while the remaining learners remained in the main classroom, reading, and preparing their roles. This study focused on the reading circle sessions only and the activity of the learners waiting for their turn in the main classroom did not form part of data generation. The teacher’s role during the reading circle sessions was to observe silently the learners’ performance and take notes for assessment purposes. With two lessons per week á 60 and 70 minutes, this meant each reading circle group met once per week and the teacher allocated 20 minutes per session. Two groups met on Mondays: *Q&A* and *Goodnight*, and three groups met on Wednesdays: *Stars*, *Alaska*, and *Running*, and I joined them from when the teacher initiated the reading circle project to when it was completed.

3.2.4 Classroom observations

To summarise, the fieldwork lasted four months and I joined the participating teacher and her learners during their English lessons twice a week during this period. This prolonged engagement enabled the breadth of inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.304), facilitating the employment of multiple research tools, outlined below (section 3.2.5). Observation is traditionally one of the main data collection methods in qualitative inquiry, particularly in the field of education, and is often combined with other methods (McNaughton Nicholls, Mills & Kotecha, 2014, p.244). Observation as a research method can be categorised along the continua of participant versus non-participant and structured versus unstructured. As described above, all reading circle sessions were completed in a neighbouring classroom with only the teacher, one reading circle group, and myself present. All of us were seated around a table, facing each other. My role during these sessions was to turn on and off the

two recording devices, take notes in my fieldwork journal, and remain silent. Two recording devices were used, placed in the centre of the table, as precautionary measures in case of forgetfulness or malfunction. I only actively participated when called upon, e.g., a few times the teacher and the learners asked me for vocabulary items in English. This would categorise the observations as semi-participant when researchers are open about the research purpose, aim to be as unobtrusive as possible, engage very little in the setting, record the observations with field notes or recording devices, but do not intend to become an active group member (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018, p.543; McNaughton Nicholls, Mills & Kotecha, 2014, p.247).

Despite my passive role during the lessons, I had a clear but exploratory observational agenda and was very active mentally. As it is impossible to observe everything during observations, careful deliberation was necessary to decide which aspects to note down (McNaughton Nicholls, Mills & Kotecha, 2014, p.253). Taking notes in my A5 spiral fieldwork journal, I used an open-ended observation pro forma to guide my observations, which included the participants' seating arrangements and use of their laptops or other materials as well as my in-situ reflections. One of the key affordances of observations is that they provide a direct insight into the real-life settings where the phenomenon under study occurs (Patton, 2015). By observing the reading circle sessions, I could be systematically observant of the participants' behaviour while at the same responsive to what was being observed, thus categorising my observations as semi-structured (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018, p.543). The notes recorded in the fieldwork journal complemented the researcher journal I started writing at beginning of the PhD project and generated extensive reference material to track pivotal decisions and reflections. This writing practice facilitated a continuous reflexive process, contributing to the credibility and trustworthiness of this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.328). Moreover, this thesis follows the position on qualitative inquiry that the data analysis begins during data generation and that analysis and coding are part of the same process – data interpretation (Saldaña, 2021, p.12). This means that my field and researcher journals informed the analytical process and formed part of the iterative data analysis. For example, in the first week of the reading circles, I noted how the participants tried to understand the characters' circumstances and perspectives (see appendix 3 for sample fieldwork journal entry). This theme prevailed throughout all reading circle sessions and became one of the main themes in the reader response analysis. As this section demonstrates, that although the study was exploratory, "empty-headedness is not the same as open-mindedness" (Wolcott, 2009,

p.36), and the classroom observations became key in narrowing down the analytical approach and facilitating the decision to make the audio recordings the main research tool.

3.2.5 Research tools

As the study's focus was more exploratory in the beginning of the research process of how to best answer the research questions, the fieldwork generated more data than has been analysed, summarised in table 2 below. During the analysis and development of the analytical framework, it became clear, that the data generated that would provide the most insights to the research questions were the recordings of the reading circle sessions. The generation of field notes and audio recordings were discussed in the previous section, this section describes how the remaining data was generated and the research tool used. This research design involved a continuous balance of tensions between the participants' busy schedules, their voluntary participation, and maintaining a rigorous research design. To minimise the impact of the study, all interviews were scheduled, and online questionnaires were administrated at the participants' convenience, during schooltime and in the school building.

Table 2 Research tools and data generation

Analysed data	Data that was not analysed
Field notes	Interviews with the reading circle groups
Reading circle sessions, recorded, and transcribed	Interviews with the teacher
The learners' role scripts	Interview with the team of English teachers
Questionnaire to generate participant profiles	Weekly reflective open-ended questionnaires
My close reading of the novels	

As described above (sections 1.1 and 3.2.3), the participants read one reading extract of the novels per week, and they completed different roles for each reading circle session, following a rota. The roles took the form of written reports and were saved onto the laptops the school had lent the learners for the duration of their studies. This means that the participants brought their laptops to each reading circle session and read their role reports aloud and off their screens. At the end of the fieldwork, the teacher asked her learners to share their written reports with me to facilitate the transcription of the reading circle sessions. This was of an enormous help and enabled the analysis of the in-situ changes the

participants made to their reports. Also, I asked the participants to complete a questionnaire to generate participant profiles (appendix 2), detailing their self-reported linguistic repertoires and how much of the novels they had read. This decision was prompted by the participants' responses in the interviews to my question on how many languages they knew and my observations during the reading circle sessions that how they talked about the novels suggested that not all participants had read the novels in their entirety. This is another example of how my prolonged engagement in the field allowed me to be open to contextual factors that influenced the researched phenomenon and increases the credibility of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.304). To construct the questionnaires, I used the online questionnaire tool Online Surveys (Jisc, 2022) provided by the University of Glasgow. The online format was selected because the participants always brought their laptops and because of its resemblance to the participants' everyday pedagogical activities which often comprised online assignments. The questionnaires were semi-structured, with open-ended questions to allow for personal responses and for participants to respond in their own words (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018, p.475). However, I gave guidance on how to estimate how much of the novels they had read, e.g., using percentages. This procedure follows Cohen et al.'s (2018, p.475) advice of providing some support for participants, without restricting their responses to the researcher's agenda. To generate the participant profiles, I converted the responses to percentages. As in situ reflections are best elicited as soon as possible after the event of interest (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p.148), the questionnaire was administered after the reading circle cycle had been completed. My close reading of the novels and how it facilitated the data analysis is described below together with the presentation of the five YA novels (section 3.7).

This section has outlined and discussed how the reading circles were implemented at the identified school, Swedish assessment guidelines and practices, and the methodological decisions involved in the research design, including sampling procedures, participant recruitment, fieldwork, and research tools. As the research design was initially designed as exploratory, multiple research tools were used to generate data. During the initial stages of the iterative data analysis, it was decided to focus on the participants' verbal interactions during the reading circle sessions as this data had the most potential to generate answers to research questions. In addition, it follows the conceptual framework of sociocultural theory and the ontological position of this study, constructivism, that to generate insights about meaning making processes, the object of inquiry should be activities (Bryman, 2016, p.29). The following section describes the process of transcribing the recorded reading circle

sessions and the translation of participant speech in Swedish to English as well as scholarly quotes used in this thesis.

3.3 Transcription and translation processes

Once the fieldwork was completed, I began the process of transcription and data translation. Following the conceptual framework and sociocultural theory that language is a tool that mediates communication, the transcripts and translations are considered conceptual artefacts shaped by my interpretation of the participants' voices during the recordings and my knowledge of English and Swedish. As each of the 25 reading circle sessions were transcribed as separate documents, this resulted in 25 transcripts labelled with the title of the reading circle group's novel and their session number, 1-5. In the thesis, data examples are presented with speaker codes, summarised in table 3 below, to identify speaker, reading circle role, novel, and session number. These codes were constructed in the following order: participant's pseudonym, abbreviations of the role and novel, and session number. For example, the code "Alice_Sum_A1" refers to Alice as Summariser in the group reading *Alaska's* first reading circle session. The code CD is an abbreviation of collaborative dialogue, referring to the dialogue generated by the Discussion leaders' questions. For example, the code "Emma_CD_Q3" refers to an utterance shared by Emma during collaborative dialogue from the group reading *Q&A*'s third session and "CD_S5" refers to a sequence of utterances shared by different participants during collaborative dialogue from the group reading *Stars'* fifth session. This system facilitates data retrieval and provides a quick overview of where in the sequence of the reading circle cycle the data examples have been extracted.

Table 3 Speaker codes for data extracts

Codes for roles		**Codes for novels**	
CD	Collaborative dialogue	A	*Looking for Alaska* (Green, 2005)
CC	Creative connector	G	*Goodnight Mister Tom* (Magorian, 1981)
CT	Character tracer	Q	*Q&A* (Swarup, 2009)
DL	Discussion leader	R	*Now is the time for running* (Williams, 2012)
DS	Discussion summariser	S	*The fault in our stars* (Green, 2012)
LW	Literary wizard		
Sum	Summariser		

This section first describes the development of the transcription notation system (3.3.1), followed by a reflexive discussion of the translation of the participants' speech and scholarly quotes in Swedish into English (section 3.3.2).

3.3.1 Development of the transcription system

The decision to transcribe the audio recordings was made early in the research process to facilitate data immersion and prepare the data for thesis presentation. However, to ensure the transcription system followed the research aim, it was developed concurrently with the development of the analytical framework and the iterative and inductive-deductive analysis. This section outlines and motivates the decisions involved, following an understanding of transcription systems as representing theories about language (Chafe, 2014, p.55; Ochs, 1979, p.44) and that all transcription decisions should be motivated by research aims and made in relation to transcribers' competence (Kowal & O'Connell, 2014, p.66). The transcription system is described in detail below and summarised in appendix 4.

To ensure truthful written representation of the participants' speech, repeated listening sessions were undertaken, allowing for disambiguation of unintelligible speech, speaker identification, and a systematic approach (Kowal & O'Connell, 2014, p.70). In addition, the recordings were played through the audio software Express Scribe Pro with foot pedal control (NCH, 2020) because it allowed alternating between normal and slowed speech and easy access to the functions play, pause, and playback. Following the thesis' conceptual framework, sociocultural theory, transcripts are artefacts that mediate human activity and transcription involves the mediation of the transcriber's constructs and interpretation (Gibson & Brown, 2009, p.125). Thus, the transcripts were constructed to reflect not only the analytical aim, but also with an awareness of potential problems experienced by thesis readers. Discussed below (section 3.4 and chapter 4), the analytical framework developed concomitantly with my understanding of sociocultural theory, the conceptual framework underpinning this study, and came to encompass an ontology that considers language as a tool that mediates interlocutors' mental actions, speakers' as well as hearers' (Lantolf, Poehner & Thorne, 2020, p.225). In other words, language shapes meaning making and in this study, the concept languaging is used to explain this process by analysing the interdependence of utterances (Swain, 2006, p.98). This also follows the methodology of most reader response studies which involve the close examination of readers' responses and identifying conversational turns (Arizpe & Styles, 2016, p.143). This meant that the sequential organisation of the participants' interaction became the first

concern of the transcription. In sociocultural theory, the utterance is the main unit of analysis (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p.6), however, marking utterances in writing influences how readers perceive them as more or less independent verbal acts (Ochs, 1979, p.47). Following sociocultural theory and languaging, the transcripts were constructed to spatially represent how utterances are always a response to previous utterances as well as qualifying the proceeding (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p.10). In other words, in the transcripts, one line represents one utterance, also considered one turn.

Transcribing turn-taking involves, in short, identifying (1) measurable pauses between turns, (2) no measurable pauses, i.e., latching, or (3) overlapping speech (Kowal & O'Connell, 2014, p.75). Thus, when transcribing conversations where overlapping speech occurs, decisions need to be made when to consider an utterance a new turn. As transcription software was not used in this study, pause lengths were not measured and the assessing of pauses relied on my perceptual ability as a transcriber. Fortunately, the participants primarily marked turn-taking with substantial pauses between turns and most utterances were easily demarcated. In addition, during the reading of role reports, the turn-taking sequence followed the teacher’s instructions (appendix 1) and the end and beginning of utterances were often marked with utterance launchers and finishers. When responding to the Discussion leaders’ questions, however, the participants self-selected to speak, which sometimes led to latching and overlapping speech. Transcribing overlapping speech as a new turn can involve identifying linguistic features such as intonation as well as syntactical intent (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974). To achieve this, I relied on the insider perspective I had generated from my observations of the reading circle sessions and my interpretation of the participants’ turn-taking. Summarised in appendix 4, to develop the transcription system involved several decisions of how to represent audio in writing. This required focused transcription, where not only what was said but also how it was said became relevant (Gibson & Brown, 2009, p.120). In the instances of latching when the first speaker did not syntactically end their utterances, but instead stopped speaking mid-clause or mid-word, the following speaker’s turn was marked as an interruption. This also applied to the instances of overlapping speech when the second speaker syntactically initiated a turn and continued speaking until the first speaker finally gave up completing their utterance and yielded the turn (Biber et al., 2021, p.1057).

Whereas turn-taking pauses were marked with separate lines for each turn and overlapping speech with curly brackets, pauses within speakers’ turns were marked with long dashes. Mid-utterance pauses were either filled or unfilled, i.e., filled with a sound or silence. Even

though British English transcription conventions distinguish between filled pauses with only a vowel sound or with accompanying nasalisation (Biber et al., 2021, p.1047), as phonological features did not form part of the research aim, all filled pauses were transcribed "erm" for convenience. As discussed above, without transcription software, the identification of unfilled pauses relied on my perceptual assessment. As the participants' utterances were sometimes quite long, to facilitate readability, I marked perceptually salient unfilled pauses with long dashes. Specific attention was paid to instances of self-repair as this formed part of the linguistic analysis and self-repair have been observed to often co-occur with unfilled pauses (Biber et al., 2021, p.1047). Self-repair in the form of repeats, i.e., the repetition of lexis, often co-occurred with cut off speech mid-word, marked in the transcripts with short dashes. Other relevant paralinguistic features that were identified were instances of rises in intonation to indicate questions, marked with a question mark in the transcripts. Change in voice volume was described in square brackets as the linguistic analysis identified repair-work mediated by private speech, i.e., self-directed speech, which has been observed to range from fully audible to very low volume (de Guerrero, 2018, p.19). Moreover, marked with underlining in the transcripts, participants often marked self-repair by stressing parts of their utterances, e.g., stressing the first syllable the second time they repeated the vocabulary item. The final paralinguistic features to be considered were laughter and smiley voices, described in square brackets, as previous reader response studies have identified that responses to literary texts can sometimes intend a comical effect (Sipe, 2008, p.86). To exemplify how some of these linguistic features were represented in the transcripts, data extract 2 below provides an excerpt from collaborative dialogue from the third session with the group reading *Goodnight*.

2. CD_G3

Oliver: yeah I think erm – sh- || I don't think Willie has a dad so she's trying to keep her children a secret to not feel ashamed of || <u>ashamed</u> about- {Ella: but-}

Ella: [interrupted] but people already know Willie – I {Oliver: yeah} mean he – he went school there and he –

This data extract demonstrates the robustness of the transcription system and illustrates how efforts were made to facilitate readability. The onset of self-repair is marked with double vertical lines and when the participants self-repaired their scripts while reading them aloud, the original writing that was repaired is provided in parentheses. Many of the participants' utterances were very long and some of the data extracts presented in the thesis

include truncated utterances, marked with three full stops, to save space and facilitate readability. The final effort to pinpoint readers to the analytical focus, involved the marking of lexis in bold, linking the discussion of data categories with data examples. To summarise, this section has outlined and discussed the decisions made during the development of the transcription notation system. The following section describes and discusses the process of data translation as the participants occasionally used Swedish during the reading circle sessions and I have cited scholars in Swedish and translated their quotes into English.

3.3.2 Translation of data extracts and researcher quotes

This thesis acknowledges that research projects across international contexts involving cross-cultural and cross-linguistic contexts are increasing (Nikander, 2008) and attempts to achieve accessibility across international contexts and international mobility of research findings. Moreover, how learners draw on their multilingual repertoires when learning other languages has long been keep outside the object of inquiry in studies on L2 learning (Ortega, 2019, p.24). However, to embrace diversity and inclusivity in educational contexts and research, these aspects are important to consider. This follows this study's conceptual framework and a sociocultural perspective on L2 development that language is the primary tool for mediating human activity and learning a new language is more than the direct translation of vocabulary items. This section discusses the decisions involved when translating into English the participants' occasional use of Swedish and scholarly quotes in Swedish.

Discussed above, during the data analysis the transcripts were considered living documents to which I adjusted as I listened to the audio recordings repeatedly and could carefully improve my written rendering of the participants' speech. As my first language is Swedish and I consider myself fluent in English, I made the judgement that I had sufficient linguistic knowledge to complete a trustworthy analysis of the data. Transcripts are the result of transcribers' interpretations and more determined in meaning compared to audio recordings which are more open to interpretation (Nikander, 2008, p.229). As such, it was not until the writing up of the findings and selecting data extracts to be included in the thesis that I translated utterances in Swedish to English. In most instances when the participants switched to Swedish, their utterances in English comprised one or a few vocabulary items in Swedish. In the data extracts, I have replaced the items in Swedish with close English equivalents and made efforts to preserve the participants' meaning and

voice. Considering the spatial components of transcripts, as discussed above (section 3.3.1), I developed my transcription conventions of translated items by surveying previous studies on codeswitching. I decided to follow the practice of Lantolf and Thorne (2006) because I considered this to be the most reader-friendly and the least intrusive on the participants' original speech. The utterances in Swedish are marked in italics followed by translations into English enclosed by parentheses and marked by single quotation marks, e.g., *ja* ('yes'). My aim was to ensure that international readers should be able to guess which translated word corresponds to which in the original to ensure transparency (Nikander, 2008, p.229).

When connecting this thesis to previous research, I have drawn on my plurilingual repertoires and read research literature in English and Swedish. When there were no translations into English of scholarly works in Swedish, (e.g., Säljö, 2013; 2014), I have provided the original quote in Swedish together with my translation to English or paraphrased the original writing in my own words in English. The spatial organisation of original and translated quotes have been taken into consideration, as reading from top to bottom and left to right are given primacy in the European culture of literacy (Nikander, 2008, p.227). Therefore, original quotes have been placed first and the translation second. Additionally, in the list of references, I have translated titles in Swedish to English in square brackets. The decisions outlined in this section were informed by this thesis' position of acknowledging the agency of researchers and translators that translating from one language to another involves choices which have material consequences. My rigorous approach to translation is an attempt to follow through on the thesis' conceptual framework through the entire research process from data generation to research output.

This section and the preceding have described the procedures for generating data. Described above (section 3.2.5), the main data source became the recordings of the reading circle sessions, and the transcriptions generated an extensive data set. Table 4 summarises the duration of the recordings of the sessions per group and the number of words generated in the transcripts. To be noted, to make sure the recordings would capture the audio from the entire sessions, I started them as soon as the participants sat down at the table. This means that the recordings also captured social chat before the reading circle sessions commenced.

Table 4 Duration of reading circle sessions

	Alaska		*Goodnight*		*Q&A*	
	Minutes	**Words**	**Minutes**	**Words**	**Minutes**	**Words**
1	11:41	1,164	20:27	4,080	20:20	3,171
2	17:05	1,974	24:32	3,682	19:37	4,419
3	16:14	1,430	23:40	3,794	20:10	2,507
4	21:37	3,150	14:11	2,258	18:30	3,384
5	16:00	2,027	24:39	3,354	23:42	3,245
	82:37	9,745	102:34	17,168	106:54	16,726

	Running		*Stars*	
	Minutes	**Words**	**Minutes**	**Words**
1	11:51	1,778	12:33	2,255
2	13:25	2,223	11:24	1,950
3	10:50	1,827	09:58	1,644
4	13:34	1,950	11:20	2,081
5	13:34	2,580	14:43	2,534
	66:51	10,358	59:48	10,464

As can be noted in table 4 above, the duration of the sessions varied greatly between the groups. The shortest session was *Stars'* fifth session, lasting 9:58 minutes, and the longest was *Goodnight's* fifth session, lasting 24:39 minutes. In total, *Stars'* sessions comprised the fewest minutes, with 59:48 minutes, and *Q&A* the most, with 106:54 minutes. The teacher had allocated 20 minutes per group and this variance can be explained by the fact that the sessions were learner-led and that the learners themselves decided when to end them. This concludes the outline of transcription and translation processes, and the following section explains the procedures used for analysing the participants' verbal interactions during the reading circle sessions.

3.4 Analytical procedures

Discussed above (section 3.2.5), the initially casted wider net of generating data from different research tools was narrowed down during the iterative data analysis to focus only the participants' speech during the reading circle sessions. Guided by the research questions, the emerging findings were linked to the development of the analytical framework (chapter 4), integrating sociocultural theory with the concept of intertextuality

and findings from SLA research and reader response studies. Following Lincoln and Guba's (1985, p.328) framework for establishing trustworthiness about knowledge claims, the data was analysed iteratively until findings that provided insights into the research questions could be identified. Outlining the iterative analytical process, a five-stage process was identified:

1. Collating analytical insights
2. Data familiarisation and coding preparation (data handling)
3. Identifying emerging themes
4. Moments of key analytical insights
5. Writing the thesis

Stage 1: Collating analytical insights

Introduced above (section 3.2.4), during the research I made use of two types of journals, a fieldwork journal, and a researcher journal. The former was handwritten, using an A5 spiral notebook (see sample in appendix 3), and the latter completed digitally (see sample in appendix 5), using the digital note taking app OneNote (Microsoft, 2022a). This created a procedure that documented and supported the interpretive process of the analysis. When writing these journals, I followed Saldaña's (2021, p.59) recommendation to stop whatever I was doing at the moment whenever I thought of something pertinent to data interpretation and make a note of it. All journal entries have been dated and together, these comprise my reflexive reflections from the beginning of the PhD programme throughout the writing of the thesis. During the iterative data analysis, this allowed me to return to my notes to collate insights and confirm or disconfirm hunches. For example, included in the fieldwork journal are my responses to the YA novels while reading at the same pace as the learners. I recorded my longer responses in the fieldwork journal and shorter responses in the margin of my personal paperback copies (see sample in appendix 6). Using OneNote for the reflexive journal enabled easy access, search, and retrieval of insights and notes.

Stage 2: Data familiarisation and coding preparation

Once the fieldwork was completed, the first step involved transcribing the reading circle sessions in Word (Microsoft, 2022b) and creating an inventory of generated data (table 2 in section 3.2.5). This process of preparing the data for coding facilitated data familiarisation and the initial development of analytical insights. Described above (section 3.3.1), the transcription process continued until the end of analysis as I returned to the audio recordings to allow for new analytical insights to emerge. Once the first drafts of the transcripts were produced, I imported them to NVivo 12 Mac (QSR, 2021), a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, which allows for the editing of transcripts. Software such as NVivo do not substitute the data analysis but are tools for managing data analysis and files (Friese, 2014, p.211; Silver & Lewins, 2014, p.17). As I was a beginner user of NVivo, there was a period of trial-and-error before I could fully appreciate features such as the coding stripes, highlighting of coded data, fast retrieval of codes and datum, and query the data with the text search and matrix coding functions.

In addition to NVivo, I supplemented the analytical process with manual coding of printed copies of transcripts (see sample in appendix 7). Physical handling of data and codes have been noted to allow for the emergence of new perspectives and further analytical insights (Saldaña, 2021, p.46). For example, I found it very useful to write codes on small post-its and to re-arrange them on a small portable whiteboard into different patterns (exemplified in appendix 8). To complement my notes in the margins of my personal paperback copies of the YA novels, I also purchased them as eBooks because it allowed for quick retrieval of the passages the participants talked about during the reading circle sessions. This stage also involved a descriptive analysis of the online questionnaire administered to generate participant profiles, described above (section 3.2.5) and results presented in appendix 2.

Stage 3: Identifying emerging themes

After the initial data familiarisation followed a period of data immersion where the analytical focus was exploratory and open to make new discoveries. Two initial patterns of how the participants talked during the reading circle sessions across all groups were identified, either they read their reports aloud or they responded to the Discussion leaders' questions. To move beyond this initial finding and construct themes across the two types of talk, an iterative process of coding the data according to different theories and empirical research began. Guided by the research questions, I analysed the transcripts from one reading circle group at a time, refining the codes with each iteration. Using the coding

process as a heuristic to systematically label and link data, link data to ideas, and link ideas to data, required in-depth data immersion and continuous refinement of codes (Saldaña, 2021, pp.12-13). Although I perceived this stage as messy, it generated an in-depth understanding of the data, and three main emerging findings were identified. First, when the participants responded to the Discussion leaders' questions, they shared thoughts and conclusions, supported by paraphrases of the narratives, and they continuously elaborated on, reformulated, and counter-argued their peers' utterances. This process was identified as representing the concept of languaging (discussed in section 4.1.1), as used in sociocultural theory and defined as the shaping of experience and knowledge through language (Swain & Watanabe, 2019, p.1). Second, the participants frequently repeated lexis from the novels and items used by themselves or their peers, discussed below as an emerging finding (section 4.1.2.1). In sociocultural theory, repetition is a type of languaging that allows speakers to maintain a shared perspective and repeated items become artefacts that mediate meaning making (Swain & Watanabe, 2013, p.4). Third, when the participants talked about the novels, they often compared themselves to the characters and problematised the characters' actions in terms of right or wrong, discussed below as an emerging finding (section 4.2.2). This was identified to be reminiscent of previous reader response studies (Arizpe et al., 2014; e.g., Sipe, 2008), yet sufficient divergences were identified to motivate a rethinking of codes and categories. As each reading circle session contained unique interactions, each session represented a different data source. This stage of the analysis came to an end after the analyses of the transcripts from the groups reading *Stars*, *Running*, and *Q&A*. From this stage, the first key analytical insight emerged which allowed for a synthesis of emerging findings across all reading circle groups. This involved the triangulation of sources, comparing different data sources to ensure that interpretations held across the entire data set, a technique to ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.305). To illustrate this process, appendix 9 provides sample screenshots of my coding in NVivo and demonstrates how the triangulation of data sources was realised using this computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software.

Stage 4: Moments of key analytical insights

The previous stage resulted in the identification of three emerging findings, this stage comprises three moments of key analytical insights that allowed for the development of the analytical framework and provided significant thrust to move the analysis forward. The first key analytical insight involved identifying how the participants' utterances comprised the communicative functions indicative, semiotic, and rhetorical (Säljö, 2014, pp.83-84).

Explained in the analytical framework (section 4.2.1.1), this allowed for an understanding to emerge of how the linguistic analysis and the reader response analysis intersected. On the one hand, the participants shared the meaning they made of the narrative, the semiotic function, which would be analysed by the reader response analysis. On the other hand, the participants pointed to specific places in the narrative to share retellings, the indicative function. In the context of the reading circles, the participants' retellings served the purpose of providing evidence for the semiotic meaning and convincing their peers of their conclusions and interpretations, the rhetorical function. When the participants responded to the Discussion leaders' questions, they used each other's retellings as artefacts to mediate their own meaning, thus co-creating collaborative dialogue. Moreover, their retellings comprised direct and indirect quotations of the narratives and were signposted linguistically, creating an interweavement of intertextuality (Bazerman, 2004b).

The second moment of key analytical insight came from a negative case analysis, inspired by Becker's (1998, p.87) advice that "the trick … is to identify the case that is likely to upset your thinking and look for it". In addition to the participants reading their reports and responding to the Discussion leaders' questions, there were intermittent short episodes when they deviated from this pattern. This prompted the question of what was important enough for the participants to stop following the outlined purpose of the reading circles? This type of heuristics is referred to as discrepant (Saldaña, 2021, p.27) or negative case analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.309) and involves the identification of data that does not fit the identified patterns and thus motivates a rethinking of categories and findings. From the identification of these negative cases, an understanding of how the participants repaired their own and their peers' utterances emerged. This enabled the rethinking necessary to pull together the study into a coherent whole (Saldaña, 2021, p.27) and became a major development in the development of the analytical framework, further contributing to identifying where the linguistic and reader response analysis intersected. To understand these repair instances, the analytical framework draws on findings from previous studies of classroom talk and spontaneous conversation, outlined below (section 4.1.2). Drawing on this empirical work, the negative case analysis involved a process of reviewing and redefining interpretations of every data source until most cases were included, contributing to the credibility of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.309). This reminded me of my field observations of how the participants frequently hesitated while reading their scripts and I compared the audio recordings with their submitted role scripts. This allowed for the identification of instances when the participants' speech did

not match their scripts. However, as only 25 of 27 learners submitted their scripts, this analysis does not represent all audio recorded role reports.

The third and final moment of key analytical insight involved the reading of four key readings. First, Beauvais' (2015b) discussion of readerly gaps in literary texts, representing the interpretive space created by authors' omissions of details. Second, Bloom's (2018, p.17) distinction between emotional empathy, to feel what others feel, and cognitive empathy, to feel care, compassion, or concern for others without empathic resonance. Third, Nussbaum's (2017) discussion of the relationship between literary texts, empathy, compassion, and democratic world citizenship through what she refers to as processes of narrative and civic imagining. Fourth, Bazerman's (2004a) understanding of intertextuality as a literacy skill, involving an intentional meaning making process of identifying links within and between utterances. These readings together provided the theoretical understanding necessary to analyse the semiotic function of the participants' utterances, as described above, understood in this study as their responses to the novels. This facilitated the generation of categories of responses and hierarchically organising them into a typology (presented in chapter 6), following a frequently employed methodology in reader response (Arizpe & Styles, 2016, p.143).

Stage 5: Writing the thesis

The final stage of the iterative data analysis involved the writing of the thesis, spurred on by the timeline of the PhD programme – the deadline was drawing near. This allowed me to tackle the challenge of realising that "analysis is a journey with no defined end point" (Gibson & Brown, 2009, p.203). However, the careful and systematic iterative analytical process had generated answers to the research questions, discussed below (section 7.1), the aim of the research. As Jackson and Bazeley (2019, p.77) counsel, a well-defined signal to stop analysis is when sufficient insights have been generated to answer the research questions. Before I could put pen to paper, this final stage involved the reorganisation of categories until a coherent synthesis of the data emerged (Saldaña, 2021, p.297). This process involved the deleting, merging, and moving of categories into a coherent hierarchy of categories. What was 86 categories (appendix 10), was reduced to 44 categories (appendix 11). This involved a final triangulation of data sources, comparing the coding of each reading circle session (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.305). This ended the messiness of the analysis and writing. Participant quotes were selected on the basis of demonstrating the significance of the categories and were embedded in the analytical writing that narrated the

research story (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.93). Earlier thesis drafts with accounts of the analytical procedures were collated and revised into a coherent story of the analytical process. Findings were summarised and discussed in relation to the conceptual and analytical framework and compared to previous empirical research and relevant theoretical discussions of L2 learning and reader response.

These identified five stages of key moments of analytical insights created a gradual narrowing down of the analytical focus to ensure a noteworthy and significant contribution to knowledge, as well as enabled the identification of pedagogical implications. Finally, throughout the process, the continuous meetings with my supervisors provided methodological advice, code checking, and reflexive discussions. Termed peer debriefing, this is a technique to enhance the credibility of findings and trustworthiness of qualitative studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.308).

3.5 Ethical considerations

It is important to consider ethical aspects at every stage of the research, from research design to disseminating the findings and beyond. This involves developing an ethical conscience, with continuous reflection throughout the research process (Webster, Lewis & Brown, 2014, p.78). This involves both anticipating and responding to situations that may be cause for ethical concern and careful consideration of the respectful treatment of the research participants. This study received ethical approval from the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at the University of Glasgow. Additionally, since the fieldwork was completed in Sweden, the Swedish Act on the Ethical Review of Research Involving Humans (Sverige, 2003) was consulted and as these were in line with the University of Glasgow's code of ethics, the study also follows Swedish ethical regulations. This section describes and discusses the considerations involved when requesting the participants' consent, undertaking research with children and teachers, and ensuring participants' anonymisation and confidentiality.

3.5.1 Access to the research site

The process of gaining access to research site began by contacting in writing and receiving written permission from the school's *huvudman* ('accountable authority'), the legal authority responsible for educational and childcaring provisions as required per law, as stated in the Swedish Education Act (Sverige, 2010). In my letter, I described the research purpose and assured the well-being and safety of the participants. With the *huvudmans*

('accountable authority's') permission, I followed the directives by the school principal on how to proceed. Via email, I informed the English teachers of the research design and asked for their voluntary participation. As a teacher myself and now a PhD candidate, I was aware that this change of status might influence the relationship with the participants. I needed to be careful to ensure that participation was wholly voluntary without any feelings of obligations or vulnerability (Brooks, te Riele & Maguire, 2014, p.102). I clearly expressed that participation, non-participation, or withdrawal from study, would not lead to any social repercussions. Also, I clearly expressed I was not there to assess the teachers' work and that I had the fullest understanding for their busy schedules. I was there to learn and for a chance to observe classroom practices through the lens of scientific inquiry. However, to acknowledge there always exists a relationship of reciprocity between researchers and their participants (Brooks, te Riele & Maguire, 2014, p.97), I will return to the research site with a token of gratitude once the PhD has been awarded. After asking for their advice on what type of books they need, I will donate one set of books for the reading circles of a value not exceeding £50. Using incentives in educational research is not a matter without concern and requires careful deliberation, as researchers are the ones that stand to gain the most and owe their participants for giving generously of their effort and time (Brooks, te Riele & Maguire, 2014, p.97). Thus, this decision involved identifying my underlying motivations to demonstrate appreciation, to offer something in return, and to reduce potential power inequality between myself and the participants. To circumvent a situation where the participants would choose to participate for the reward, I made explicit in the forms and the information sessions that I were to donate the books regardless.

As a language teacher, I considered myself as more than a researcher undertaking fieldwork – I was a teacher blessed with the opportunity to learn more about learning in educational contexts. However, instead of trying to minimise the impact of these subjective motivations, I attempted to make use of them productively and reflexively, while upholding researcher integrity (Maxwell, 2013, pp.124-125). As the fieldwork encompassed two lessons per week for 11 weeks, I spent many hours shadowing the participating teacher. In addition to generating data, I arrived in good time for the lessons and stayed a while after they were finished to allow staff and learners to become accustomed to see me on the school grounds and to immerse myself in the community. I was assigned a desk in an office with 12 teachers where I could e.g., read the novels or write up reflections in my fieldwork journal. When possible, I joined the teachers for coffee and lunch, expressing my gratitude and that I valued the opportunity to undertake this research project.

3.5.2 Gaining learners' consent and conducting research with children

Mentioned in the discussion on participant recruitment (section 3.2.2), to gain the learners' consent I visited the school in October 2019 and informed the teacher and the class about the research. The learners received printed copies of the consent forms and the participant information sheets and their parents received digital copies via email. As the established language of communication at the school is Swedish, the forms were written in Swedish and had been prepared with consideration of the children's age. To ensure the forms used vocabulary appropriate for research in Sweden, I consulted relevant sources such as the Swedish Ethical Review Authority (Etikprövningsmyndigheten, 2022), and Swedish Act on the Ethical Review of Research Involving Humans (Sverige, 2003). The children and their parents were encouraged to contact the teacher, the principal, or myself directly if they had any questions or concerns. When I returned in December 2019 to begin the fieldwork, all 27 learners had returned the consent forms to their teacher and with their parents' consent, consented to participation in the research and dissemination of findings. I held another information session with the teacher and the learners, to reiterate the content in the Consent Forms and Participant Information Sheets and answered the learners' questions. For example, I repeated that participation was entirely voluntary and that the participants could withdraw at any time without any repercussions. In the case of withdrawing, we would discuss how, if at all, any existing data would be used.

Delighted that all learners had agreed to participate, I think it could be explained in part by my friendly rapport with the participating teacher. In my teaching experience, demonstrating collegial support is very helpful in establishing relations and trust with new learners and their parents. The learners and their teacher also shared a history together and I imagine the learners cared for her and wanted to do her a favour. Their decision to participate might also have been influenced by an intention to improve their chances of receiving higher grades. They would soon graduate year 9, the final year of Swedish compulsory schooling, and all had applied to high school which required a passing grade in English. This meant the learners' work during the English lessons had a direct impact on their chances to be accepted to high school and the school of their choice. These potential influencing factors demonstrate how the power relationship between researchers and participants already favours the researcher, and even more so in educational research with children who are in a dependent-relationship with adults (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018, p.136).

Finally, aware that the recording devices and my presence in the classroom could cause distress, during the fieldwork I remained vigilant of any signs of participants experiencing distress. Participant observations, and in particular the close-up nature of educational contexts, can be very demanding for participants as they may be perceived as a threat to their personal space (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018, p.558). Both the teacher and I asked the learners repeatedly if they felt comfortable with the recording devices during the reading circle sessions, but after initial comments of nervousness, no one expressed any concerns. To seem less threatening, I kept my fieldwork journal open for everyone to see and kept the notetaking to a minimum. The prolonged engagement in the field, enhanced by my friendly and collegial relationship with the teacher, allowed me to establish a friendly rapport with the participating learners.

3.5.3 Anonymisation and confidentiality

As per the ethical approval from the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at the University of Glasgow, anonymisation and confidentiality in research must be maintained when possible and follow the regulations outlined in the General Data Protection Regulation (European Union, 2016) and the UK Data Protection Act 2018 (United Kingdom, 2018). However, as the school and participating teacher wanted to be named, I outlined procedures of maintaining the participating learners' confidentiality and this procedure was approved by the Ethics Committee. All participants would be referred to by pseudonym and data would be de-identified with unmarked equivalent descriptions, i.e., replacing identifying information with equivalent descriptions without marking in the data that a replacement had been made. For example, phrases such as "this reminds me of my sister" could be replaced with "this reminds me of my brother". However, during the data analysis it became clear that to use pseudonyms and de-identify what the participants said during the reading circle sessions was more challenging than I had imagined. The learners knew each other well as they had spent almost all lessons together since year 7 and some knew each other from earlier, e.g., since preschool or through extra-curricular activities. It could still be possible for them to identify each other, and I feared that changing details would not be enough to de-identify the data. Thus, to be able to protect the participants' anonymity, the name of the school is not mentioned, and the participating teacher is simply referred to as "teacher". As this is contrary to what was originally agreed, this illustrates a frequent tension in educational research of weighing teachers' wishes to be credited against participants' right to anonymity (Shulman, 1990). However, ultimately,

researchers are responsible for ensuring their participants' well-being and safety during as well as after the research project has ended (Sterling & De Costa, 2018, p.174).

3.6 Trustworthiness and researcher integrity

This chapter has at select points discussed how the research design contributed to establishing the study's trustworthiness, following the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.328). This audit trail is integral to establishing dependability and confirmability, comprising a record of all important decisions made during the research process. In particular, for this purpose, a reflexive journal is vital in facilitating a continuous reflexive process and to track decisions pivotal for the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.328). Contributing to researcher integrity, this section summarises how this study complies with most of the trustworthiness criteria and discusses how not all of them could be addressed (section 3.6.1). Moreover, a reflexive discussion of how the research questions developed during the research process is provided (section 3.6.2).

3.6.1 Trustworthiness criteria

This study follows the criteria for evaluating qualitative research of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Originally proposed by Guba (1981) and developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), these terms were advanced as a reaction to the traditionally used criteria of reliability and validity in social science and with the intent to propose criteria more suitable for naturalistic inquiry (Patton, 2015, p.684). These criteria are suitable for this study because they were developed from a constructivist perspective, discussed above as the ontological position of this study (section 3.1), which argues that meaning making shapes action (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2018, p.113). Summarised in table 5 below, each criteria this study complies with has been ticked off including a reflexive journal, prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation of sources, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, thick description, and audit trial. Below follows a discussion to why the remaining criteria of member checking, referential adequacy, and triangulation of methods and investigators, could not be addressed.

Table 5 Trustworthiness criteria as complied by in this study

Criteria	Applied techniques ✓
Credibility	Prolonged engagement ✓ Persistent observation ✓ Triangulation of sources ✓ Peer debriefing ✓ Negative case analysis ✓ Member checking Referential adequacy Triangulation of methods and investigators
Transferability	Thick description ✓
Dependability and confirmability	Audit trail ✓

This study's trustworthiness could have been improved by implementing member checking, referential adequacy, and triangulation of methods and investigators, however for various reasons these techniques could not be applied. Referential adequacy refers to the purposeful archival of data to make available for other researchers to check the validity of key assertions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.313). However, to maintain participant anonymity, open access to research data did not form part of participant consent. Member checking establishes credibility by presenting analytic interpretations and conclusions to the participants, who are given the chance to confirm whether these are adequate representations of their reality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.314). In this study, member checking was not carried out because this would have been considerably demanding for the participants. It would also have been logistically challenging as the participating learners were about to graduate middle school, requiring the collection of their contact information and additional ethical consent. Triangulation by investigators is only possible with teams of researchers where corroboration can be sought between researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.307). As this is a PhD thesis, I am the sole investigator and interpreter of the studied phenomenon. Triangulation of methods involves generating data using several different research tools, e.g., interviews, observations, and questionnaires, to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the researched phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.306). Initially, triangulation of methods was considered to form part of the research design and as outlined above (section 3.2.5) fieldwork included data generated from several different research tools and sources. However, during the analytical process it became clear that the analysis of the participants' speech reading circles would generate a significant contribution to knowledge and to make this justice I came to the painful

realisation that it was beyond the scope of the doctoral programme to include an analysis of the remaining collected data.

3.6.2 Development of the research questions

This study's research questions reflect the narrowing of the research aim, the development of the conceptual and analytical frameworks, and my learning experience as an early career researcher. As I have learned more about existing research, my understanding of which questions are worth asking has improved. Characteristic of the interpretive nature of qualitative research, this process represents a progressive focusing of the research aim to maximise the understanding of the case and hone-in on pertinent issues (Stake, 1995, p.9). As the study progressed, the research questions were reformulated at specific points to mark the sharpening of the research aim and to better address the research gap and social need for this study. This section describes this journey of reformulating the research questions from the initial research proposal to the writing up of the thesis.

As described in the introduction (section 1.4), choosing the reading circles as the object of study was inspired by my experience of using the reading circles in my own ESL teaching practice. I was strongly motivated by my conviction that reading circles can facilitate extensive learner progress in terms of reading and speaking abilities. The initial steps taken during the PhD programme drew on my accumulated experiences of an MEd teaching degree in English and Spanish from the University of Gothenburg, ten years teaching experience in Sweden, and a recent MEd in Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) from the University of Glasgow. This informed the formulation of the research questions for the research proposal:

- What are the cognitions of ESL teachers regarding reading circles?
- How do ESL teachers assess learners' participation during the reading circles and what do they characterise as successful learner participation?
- How do learners approach read and prepare for the reading circles, and do they use learning strategies to be successful participants?
- Can an improvement in learners' reading comprehension be identified after participating in the reading circles?

Reading these questions today, I can see how their formulation suggest I would generate data by asking the teachers for their beliefs, evaluate the learners' behaviour as strategic

and successful – and presumable the reverse – and measure their reading comprehension before and after the reading circles. Not only would these questions generate considerable amounts of data, but I can also see how they reflect an understanding that teachers' voices are important and that language development can and should be measured, suggesting a quantitative research approach. Although the aim of understanding learners' communicative practices is alluded to, these questions show that I had not yet learned the potential of investigating learner talk. Almost a year later, for my first annual progress review I presented these revised research questions:

- To what extent do the reading circles facilitate meaningful language input and output?
- Which language features and skills do the learners practice during the reading circles?
- How do the reading circles create opportunities for responses to literature?
- How do the reading circles facilitate the development of language and responses to literature over the course of the five weeks?

Distinguishing between variance and process questions, the former are best answered with a quantitative approach and the latter a qualitative approach (Maxwell, 2013, p.82). The first two questions above suggest an intention to measure variability, focusing on difference with the utterances "to what extent" and "which". The second two "how" questions focus on process and how activities unfold, yet an intention to measure development can be read into the final question. I entered the field with the above stated research questions and generated the data I had set out to generate, as discussed above (section 3.2.5). While observing the participants completing the reading circle sessions, one of my first observations was the richness of their speech. The two years I had been away from teaching, reviewing the literature, and now observing another teacher's teaching practice allowed me to take a step back and examine the reading circles more reflexively. I think it released from my former responsibility of assessment. Instead, I entered the field with the privileged intention to learn and be open to surprises, providing me with a different set of glasses. With my data generated, I could continue the work to revise the research questions to actively involve them in the research process, from research design to interpreting the data (Maxwell, 2013, pp.85-86).

As the conceptual and analytical frameworks developed, the analysis became more focused and prompted a final revision of the research questions. The terms used in the above stated questions reflect the communicative practices of language teachers in Sweden. For example, I was accustomed to talking about language learning in terms of input, output, skills, and features. However, as I learned more about different SLA theories and how sociocultural theory had been applied to SLA research (e.g., Ortega, 2015), I began to see how these terms revealed my positionality. For example, SLA scholars working in a sociocultural tradition have identified how the terms input and output are associated with learning theories that ascribe to the acquisition metaphor, arguing that learning involves an exchange of information and already completed messages (Swain, 2000; van Lier, 2004a). The term affordances on the other hand, a concept framed by sociocultural theory, ascribes to a participation metaphor of learning and argues that learning arises from people constructing their own learning opportunities from unique interactions between people and their environment (van Lier, 2004a, p.90). Moreover, with "meaningful" my intention was to evaluate how useful and personally valuable the participants' use of English was. But as sociocultural theory explains, all communication is meaningful because it is situated, uttered in response to previous utterances, and intended to have a material effect (Lantolf, Poehner & Thorne, 2020, p.239). Finally, during the final stages of the analysis the research was limited to its current focused form, to generate insights into how reading circles facilitate language learning opportunities and development of responses to literary texts. This focused aim needed to be reflected in the research questions to better communicate to readers what the research was about, which questions my findings will answer, and why these findings matter (Maxwell, 2013, p.86). This purpose allowed me to prepare the two research questions that guided the analysis:

1. How do the reading circles facilitate verbal interactions around literary texts that could allow for opportunities for learning English as a Second Language?

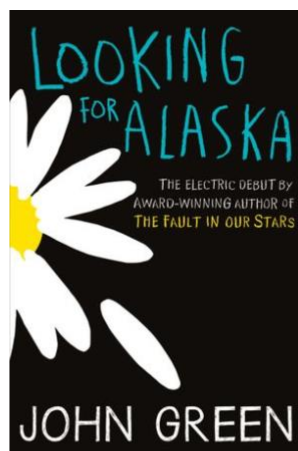
2. How do the reading circles facilitate opportunities for the development of responses to literary texts?

This section has described the development of the research questions, beginning with how they were formulated in the research proposal, reformulated for the first annual progress review, and finalised in the writing up of the thesis. During the PhD programme, I have developed the research questions as I have learned more about research methodology and existing research on language learning and reader response. Demonstrating how the

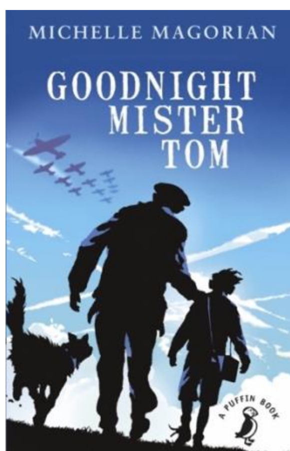
questions have developed illustrates my learning process as an early career researcher and how the research aim narrowed down during the PhD programme.

3.7 Presentation of YA novels

The final section of the methodology chapter presents the YA novels the participants read and the result from my close reading. The novels were *Looking for Alaska* (Green, 2005), *Goodnight Mister Tom* (Magorian, 1981), *Q&A* (Swarup, 2005), *Now is the time for running* (Williams, 2012), and *The fault in our stars* (Green, 2012). To provide a more immersive reading experience, the covers of the editions used by the participants are provided below. One of the covers is titled *Slumdog millionaire* (Swarup, 2009), the film tie-in edition of *Q&A* (Swarup, 2005), where the cover is from the film based on the novel but the content remains the same. Complying with the UK copyright law to reuse images, reference information about the cover designs is provided below each novel.

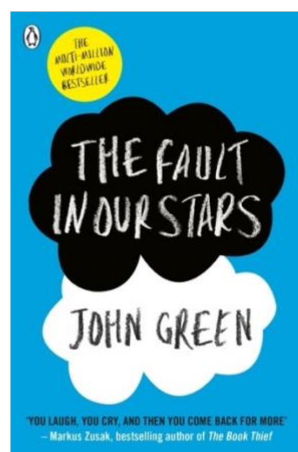


HarperCollins*Publishers* (2013)

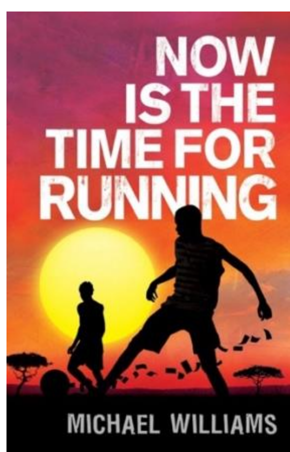


Frankland (2014)

Celador Films Ltd (2009)



Corral (2013)



Blacksheep (2012)

Described above (section 3.2.3), the teacher selected the texts based on her understanding of the learners' interests and linguistic repertoires. Another element in the teacher's selection was the requirement in the Swedish syllabus for English to provide opportunities for learners to reflect on living conditions in areas and contexts where the language is used and to make comparisons to their own experiences and knowledge (Skolverket, 2011b, pp.30-41; 2022c, pp.35-42). All five novels take place in English-speaking countries, in the order of the cover images, from left to right: the US, the UK, India, the US, and Zimbabwe and South Africa.

To facilitate data analysis and a more immersive fieldwork experience, I read the YA novels twice, first for my own pleasure and second, to join the learners in reading the extracts in preparation for the five reading circle sessions. This two-step strategy follows literary criticism and the methodology of critical content analysis, where an initial read for

pleasure aims to stimulate researchers' personal responses to texts and a second read is purposeful, with a specific focus in mind (Short, 2017, p.8). During the reading circle cycle, this focus developed. First, I made notes in the margins of my personal copies, "oh!", "huh?", or "huh!", marking moments in the narrative which surprised me, confused me, or became clear (Beach et al., 2009, p.134). I also attempted to predict the learners' responses, something which proved easier said than done. A few times, the learners and I focused on the same aspects, but most of the time the learners discussed the texts from angles I had not anticipated. This follows observations often made in previous reader response studies (e.g., Arizpe & Styles, 2003, p.241). Upon this realisation, I changed my strategy to memorise as many details from the narratives as possible. This allowed me to better understand the learners' responses as I listened to them during the reading circle sessions and develop my reflections in my fieldwork journal. During the data analysis, I continuously kept the novels close to compare the narratives with the learners' responses. In addition to all taking place in English-speaking countries, this allowed me to identify two main patterns across the five novels, the characters' experiences of bereavement and their high levels of self-reliance, described below.

Death is present in all five novels and all main characters lose someone they love. Miles in *Alaska* becomes good friends and falls in love with the character Alaska, who is killed in a car accident. William in *Goodnight* loses his first, and best, friend Zach during a World War II bombing of London and his abusive mother commits suicide. Ram in *Q&A*, an orphan raised by a priest who is killed in the first chapter, and later Ram loses his close friend to rabies. The brothers Deo and Innocent in *Running* lose their entire family: first their father leaves them, then their mother, grandfather, and neighbours are murdered in an attack on their village, and finally, Innocent is killed by a xenophobic mob, leaving Deo without a family. Hazel in *Stars* loses her boyfriend Augustus to osteosarcoma cancer, all while she herself is living under the threat of a reoccurrence of her thyroid cancer. In addition to these experiences of bereavement, all five characters experience a longing for a different life and perceive themselves to have lost, or not yet gained, experiences that are often taken for granted by those privileged to have experienced them. Miles is looking for the meaning of life, William has never learned to read, Ram is a street urchin living in poverty, Deo has never met his father and takes care of his older brother, and Hazel wants to be a normal teenager that goes to school and falls in love. Their sense of loss and longing pushes the characters to take actions and become the makers of their own dreams.

All five novels can be described as portraying characters on journeys of finding their personal meaning with life. As described above, none of the main characters are blessed with an easy and straightforward life, instead they are torn by their struggles, trying to make the best of their circumstances. This quest suggests high self-reliance. Despite his parents not understanding why, Miles decides to move to a boarding school in his junior year in high school, where he needs to make all day-to-day decisions by himself and be responsible for his own well-being. When Ram is orphaned a second time, adults place him in children's homes until he is old enough to run away and find work on his own, which eventually, after many misadventures and different employers, leads him to win a billion rupees on a TV quiz show. From the start, Deo takes care of his older brother Innocent and leads them on the perilous journey as refugees from Zimbabwe to South Africa. Compared to these characters, Hazel and William are different. Where the other characters are self-reliant almost from the start of the of book, these two grow into it. Both need to rely on their caregivers and friends before they with age and life experiences gain enough confidence to realise their own dreams. At first, Hazel's mother drives her everywhere and cares for her daily, but after Hazel meets Augustus and with his guidance, decides to open and fall in love. Hazel travels with him to Amsterdam and takes her driving license, allowing her to visit Augustus daily during his final days. William is shy and quiet when he is first evacuated from wartime London to Mister Tom in the countryside, but under his care and tutelage and with the support of his new friends, William builds self-confidence and learns to enjoy life. Despite the differences in Hazel's and William's character development to Miles', Ram's, and Deo's early self-reliance, these five characters represent young adults with agency. In the former two, adults listen and respect their opinions and wishes, and in the latter three, the characters eventually make adults listen to them. These two patterns identified from my close reading, bereavement, and agency, will be discussed again in relation to the learners' responses (section 6.4).

3.8 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has described this study's qualitative research design and epistemological and ontological positions, the research site and how the fieldwork was undertaken, including contextual details, participant recruitment, and sampling procedures. It has also outlined the research tools used, transcription of the participants' speech during the reading circle sessions, translation of their occasional speech in Swedish and researcher quotes, analytical procedures undertaken during the iterative data analysis, ethical considerations, how the

study complies with trustworthiness criteria, and finally, presented the YA novels and the findings from my close reading. Throughout, methodological considerations have been discussed in relation the study' conceptual framework, sociocultural theory, as well as how to ensure the study's trustworthiness, Together, methodological considerations and decisions involved add up to a rigorous and systematic research approach. The following chapter extends the methodology chapter by describing and discussing the development of the analytical framework. A unique approach is outlined to data analysis that identifies intersections of theories and perspective across SLA and reader response research.

Chapter 4 Analytical framework

The thesis introduction (section 1.2) outlined the social need for language education to foster democratic world citizens and argued for the potential of pedagogical activities involving verbal interactions around literary texts. SLA research demonstrates how interaction in the target language can facilitate L2 learning opportunities in terms of providing extensive input and allowing learners to notice aspects in the language input and modify their own language use accordingly. Reader response research shows how small-group discussions around literary texts can allow for in-depth and rich exploration of meaning and for learners to lead the line of inquiry, acting as problem-posers as well as problem-solvers. The literature review discussed and outlined the conceptual framework (section 2.1) and reviewed the scholarly discussion and previous empirical research in the fields of SLA and L2 teaching (section 2.2), and reader response (section 2.3). Discussed in the methodology chapter above (section 3.6.2), this literature review allowed for the development of the research questions and prompted the finalising of the research questions:

1. How do the reading circles facilitate verbal interactions around literary texts that could allow for opportunities for learning English as a Second Language?

2. How do the reading circles facilitate opportunities for the development of responses to literary texts?

These process-oriented questions called for qualitative inquiry and a conceptual framework that values social interaction and attempts to explain how communicative processes can stimulate development, for which Vygotskian sociocultural theory was selected. This conceptual framework framed the review of the research on L2 reading and identified a lack of process-oriented empirical studies that focused on how learners' verbal interactions can facilitate meaning making. This prompted a review of the reader response studies, examining how readers make meaning of literary texts, and identified a call for studies with adolescents and YA literature that investigate the role of emotional responses. The research questions and the identified research gaps together inspired the development of the analytical framework and the dual analytical purpose, a linguistic and a reader response analysis. This chapter describes the analytical framework as a finished construction, whereas the methodology chapter described how it developed concomitantly with the iterative data analysis (section 3.4). Aiming to facilitate readability, this exemplifies the

challenges in presenting an iterative data analysis using the linear mode of the thesis. Underpinned by sociocultural theory, the linguistic analysis draws on findings from other approaches to analyse classroom talk and spontaneous conversation (section 4.1). The reader response analysis identifies an intersection of theory between sociocultural theory and intertextuality (section 4.2.1) and builds on the extensive amount of research on readers' responses to picturebooks (section 4.2.2). Throughout this chapter, the logic involved in the analysis is identified as inductive, generating explanations for the particularities of the research phenomenon from the data, or deductive, applying theory to explain the particularities (Gibbs, 2007, pp.4-5).

4.1 Linguistic analysis

As described above (section 2.1), a central idea in sociocultural theory is how language mediates communication, both realising it as well as a shaping it. In this study, the concepts of languaging and collaborative dialogue, framed by sociocultural theory and applied to SLA research, are used to explain this process and focus the analysis of the interdependence of utterances (Swain, 2006, p.98). This section explains how the linguistic analysis of the first research question is framed by sociocultural theory, applying the concepts of languaging and collaborative dialogue (section 4.1.1) and draws on findings from other methodological approaches to analyse classroom talk and spontaneous conversation (section 4.1.2).

4.1.1 Languaging and collaborative dialogue

As discussed in the conceptual framework (section 2.1), one of the main tenets of sociocultural theory is that knowledge does not exist in people's minds but are realised between people. As the often-cited quotation by Vygotsky (1987, p.251) reads, "thought is restructured as it is transformed into speech". This means that language is a tool that mediates communication and that sounds, words, phrases, utterances are used as linguistic artefacts to make meaning. Any utterance can be challenged, elaborated on, repeated, or reformulated. Following Swain (2000; 2006), languaging and collaborative dialogue are concepts constructed to provide analytical lenses to explain these processes.

Swain (2000) developed the concept of collaborative dialogue to shift from a perspective of interaction as input and output to a sociocultural understanding of language as a process and a tool. Collaborative dialogue is defined as "dialogue in which speakers are engaged in problem solving and knowledge building" (Swain, 2000, p.102). In doing so, Swain

aligned herself with other voices (e.g., Kramsch, 1995; van Lier, 2000) who had moved away from the acquisition metaphor of learning and instead moved towards the participation metaphor. As discussed in the introduction (section 1.2), this entails a shift away from considering language learning to involve the acquisition of fixed meanings and messages, e.g., computers' information processing. Instead, it is by participating in social interaction that we learn, focusing our attention on linguistic challenges and solving them if the social activity offers the incentive and means to do so. Termed affordances, this describes the reciprocal relationship between environment and people subject to how individuals perceive, act on, or ignore provided opportunities (van Lier, 2000, p.252). To expand on this sociocultural understanding of interaction and language learning, Swain (2006, p.98) also advanced the concept of languaging, referring to the "process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language". One can language with oneself, e.g., thinking aloud or writing memos to oneself, or language with others by using collaborative dialogue.

Since the advancement of languaging and collaborative dialogue, an accumulating body of research has identified different conceptual and linguistic tools used by language learners during these processes, referred to as mediational means. For example, repetition and scaffolding (Swain & Watanabe, 2013), and computer-mediated communication and use of L1 (Swain & Watanabe, 2019) are tools that help learners solve problems and build knowledge. Examples of empirical research include, the analysis of collaborative dialogue aimed to generate the production of a written text, e.g., pairs of learners involved in a collaborative task such as jigsaw or dictogloss tasks (Swain & Lapkin, 2000), and individual learners reflecting on videotaped self-directed talk while solving grammar exercises (Swain et al., 2009). The first edited collection of empirical L2 studies employing the concept of languaging demonstrates a research field focused on either collaborative dialogue or orally or written self-directed talk (Suzuki & Storch, 2020). As these studies demonstrates, most involve a written product and either individuals or pairs of learners. A commonly used analytical unit are episodes referred to as language-related episodes (LREs), defined as "any part of a dialogue where the students talk about the language they are producing, question their language use, or correct themselves or others" (Swain & Lapkin, 1998, p.326). For example, a study of LREs during pair talk between less or more knowledgeable partners suggest that self-perceived language proficiency may influence the interaction more than measured proficiency (Watanabe & Swain, 2008). My review of previous research shows that studies on LREs commonly focus on identifying their efficacy, frequency, and purpose, often described as form-based or lexis-based (e.g.,

Swain & Lapkin, 2001), but do not identify how the correction was undertaken, i.e., the mediational mean used. Finally, the knowledge claims made in this field are often based on studies designed as interventions with stimulated recall or pre- and post-tests. This marks an ontological difference to this thesis, which draws on a social constructivist ontology that knowledge does not exist independently but is created as it is realised in social interaction and situated practices (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2018, pp.220, 234). This means that the act of making meaning shapes activities and of interest to research are the activities themselves as they occur without intervention from researchers.

In this study, during the iterative data analysis, one of the first emergent findings was how the participants were languaging during the reading circle sessions. They languaged with themselves, e.g., used self-directed speech to retrieve items from memory. They languaged with each other, i.e., used collaborative dialogue, when responding to the Discussion leaders' questions and worked together to solve the problem and build knowledge. To co-construct meaning, the participants called attention to their own previously stated utterances or used each other's utterances as artefacts to e.g., elaborate, reformulate, and counter-argue. However, in addition to the methodological differences described above, there were several differences between this study and the research field of languaging and collaborative dialogue that hindered a direct implementation of the methodologies commonly used in this field. First, most studies discussed above involved individual or pairs of learners, whereas this study involved groups of five-six learners, creating a communicative space with several different points of view. Second, the studies discussed above concerned the generation of written products, i.e., there was a clearly defined problem, and the communicative purpose was to find a solution and construct a physical artefact. In this study, the participants' speech was the purpose as well as the product. The instructions from the teacher prompted the participants to co-construct verbal interactions around literary texts but did not include requirements for reaching consensus nor finding solutions (appendix 1). Instead, the teacher encouraged the participants to share different interpretations and perspectives. Moreover, this study's focus on speech was a methodological challenge as speech is ephemeral and invisible. During the role presentations, the participants read their pre-prepared role scripts off their laptop screens. During the collaborative dialogue, they relied on their memory of what had been said during the ongoing and previous reading circle sessions. In sum, the only resources available to the participants were their role scripts and their spoken utterances; they had no access to the novels during the sessions.

The third reason concerns the definitional premise of languaging, which, as discussed above, refers to verbalised speech and how processes such as speaking to a friend or to oneself might facilitate solving complex cognitive problems (Swain & Watanabe, 2019, p.1). Speaking to ourselves, either aloud or whispering, is referred to as private speech and facilitates a self-regulating function, e.g., focusing our attention or orienting ourselves to tasks (Lantolf, Poehner & Thorne, 2020, p.227). As discussed above (section 2.1.2), private speech is contrasted with inner speech, referring to our mental communication with ourselves (Lantolf, Poehner & Thorne, 2020, p.227). We use private speech when we are alone as well as during interaction with others. During social speech, this shift in directing our speech can be marked lexically or audibly, either fully audible or at a very low volume (de Guerrero, 2018, p.19). To my knowledge, studies of private speech and languaging have primarily focused on how learners use self-directed talk to mediate problem-solving activities. For example, to notice and solve form-related problems during introspective commentary when asked to discuss differences between their own texts and reformulations made by the researcher (Brooks & Swain, 2009, p.72). In this study, the participants frequently stopped themselves mid-utterance to depart from their role scripts or to reformulate themselves during the collaborative dialogue. These instances were sometimes marked with private speech, e.g., the participants verbalised their intention to reformulate themselves or retrieve an item from memory. This follows the definition of LREs, discussed above and defined as language-related episodes involving instances when learners for example correct or question their own language use (Swain & Lapkin, 1998, p.326). In my understanding, LREs only concern verbalised speech and can involve private speech in cases of correcting or questioning oneself (e.g., Swain & Watanabe, 2019, p.3). However, in this study, most instances of the participants' self-repair were not accompanied with private speech, but instead marked with a sudden change of direction in speech, short silences, or non-lexical utterances such as "erm". To account for these differences, the section below describes how the analytical framework draws on findings from other approaches to analysing learner talk and spontaneous conversation. Mentioned in brief above, the purpose of LREs can be described as form-based or lexis-based, the former referring to a focus on modifying e.g., morphology or syntax, and the latter to vocabulary choices (Swain & Lapkin, 2001, p.104). Discussed further below (section 4.1.2.2), this distinction of form- and lexis-based was applied in the analysis of identified LREs in this study as well as the instances of self-repair that were not mediated by private speech.

4.1.2 Incorporating findings from other approaches to analyse talk

The section above defined the concepts of languaging, collaborative dialogue, and LREs, and explained how these applied to this study's emerging findings from the iterative data analysis. An ontological difference was identified in how knowledge claims are made, where this study is qualitative and draws on social constructivism. Moreover, my review of previous research on languaging, collaborative dialogue, and LREs highlighted differences in how learner activities were constructed. To my knowledge, existing studies have primarily concerned learners producing written products and collaborating in pairs, not groups of three or more learners. This study concerns groups of five-six learners and the reading circles aimed to generate different verbalised meanings, not consensus. This suggests a research gap which this study attempts to address, and this section describes how the analytical framework draws on findings from other approaches to analyse talk to account for these differences. First, how Mercer's (1995; 2000; 2019) work on how L1 English classroom talk can mediate problem-solving by using language to think together and how the element of time influences classroom talk (section 4.1.2.1). Second, how Seedhouse's (2004) conversation analysis of L2 classrooms identifies how learners self- and other-repair their utterances (section 4.1.2.2). Third, how findings from corpus analysis of L1 English spontaneous conversation (Biber et al., 1999; 2021) and negotiation strategies from the interaction approach, formerly referred to as the interaction hypothesis (Gass & Mackey, 2020), complement Seedhouse's (2004) work (section 4.1.2.3).

4.1.2.1 Interthinking: Using language to think together

To understand the communicative purpose of the reading circle sessions and the links between participants' utterances better, this study draws on how Mercer (1995; 2000; 2019) and colleagues have analysed L1 English classroom talk and learner dialogue with a sociocultural lens and developed different concepts for explaining how learners use language to think together. Relevant for this thesis is how Mercer (2000, pp.174-175) defines interthinking as a process where speakers continuously monitor and repair their interaction to develop and act on shared understandings to achieve, or fail to achieve, practical outcomes. To describe this process, other relevant concepts for this thesis are concepts that aim to describe the relevance of time in educational contexts: ground rules, shared experiences, and we-statements (Mercer, 2000; Edwards & Mercer, 2012). Following sociocultural theory, Mercer's work builds on the premises that verbalised

speech become available for collective scrutiny and the benefits of collaborative analysis and reasoning.

According to Mercer (1995, p.80), education should aim to encourage learners to learn linguistic tools to think together because this will allow “them to become active members of wider communities of educated discourse”. With this agenda in mind, Mercer argues the benefits of talk that allow for advancing and questioning different opinions, justifying arguments, and working collaboratively towards a common goal. Drawing on an extensive analysis of classroom talk between learners and between teachers and their learners, Mercer (1995, p.104) identifies three types of talk that evaluate how the participants use language to think together: disputational, cumulative, and exploratory. Respectively, these refer to talk characterised by disagreement, uncritical consensus, and constructive critical engagement with different ideas. This resonates with the concept of collaborative dialogue; however, Mercer emphasises the explicitness of reasoning and the generation of different ideas. When defining exploratory talk, Mercer (1995, p.105) uses key phrases such as explanation, explicit agreement, explicitly stated reasoning, evaluation, challenge, counter-challenge, and justification. These processes are more conflict-oriented than the empirical work on collaborative dialogue which is more support-oriented, learners supporting each other towards L2 production. This illustrates how different communicative purposes influence the language used. Described above (section 4.1.1), empirical studies on collaborative dialogue with L2 learners have focused on learners completing collaborative tasks and reaching consensus. Although the communicative purpose is still focused on problem-solving, Mercer’s exploratory talk values conflict because this is considered integral, and unavoidable, to attaining the best solution possible. Mercer (1995, p.105) argues that constructive conflict involves both questioning as well as the open sharing of ideas and can lead the way to rational consensus. In his later work, Mercer (2000, p.12) discusses the educational relevance of investigating how we use language to pool intellectual resources and emphasises that for most of us, all days involve conflicts of opinion, involving small to large matters. This aim matched the communicative purpose of the reading circle sessions in this study where the participants shared different perspectives on the shared reading without a requirement to reach consensus. Thus, this study draws on Mercer’s work when identifying counter-claims that challenged peers’ perspectives.

Another aspect of Mercer’s work relevant for this study is the analysis of time and the identified findings of ground rules, shared experiences, and we-statements. In educational contexts, the available time for courses and lessons both limits the pedagogical purpose as

well as enables possibilities. Edwards and Mercer (2012, p.42) use the concept of ground rules to describe the implicit understandings between interlocutors to communicate and understand each other's meaning. Similarly, Säljö (2014, p.209) argues that a useful skill for participants in educational settings is to be able to determine and comply with the expected rules for communication. This follows the concept of intersubjectivity, discussed in the conceptual framework (section 2.1.1), integral to human interaction because it necessitates agreement, even when disagreeing (Säljö, 2013, p.83). By analysing communicative patterns in groups of learners, interpretations can be made about accepted and preferred behaviour. Shared experiences refers to utterances that evoke shared previous experiences, establishing links between the past and the present, for example we-statements (Mercer, 2008). Mercer (1995, pp.33-34) observed how teachers used we-statements to link the past to the present and to demonstrate relevant aspects of shared experiences. In this study, the participants made frequent references to the novels and to previous utterances by repeating vocabulary items used in the novels, by their peers or themselves. This emerging finding of lexical repetition has been identified in the field of languaging as a mediational mean of collaborative dialogue (Swain & Watanabe, 2013). For example, DiCamilla and Antón (1997) observed how learners of Spanish completing collaborative writing tasks mediated and maintained a shared perspective by repeating phrases, words, and syllables. To my knowledge, DiCamilla and Antón (1997) is the only study on collaborative dialogue with language learners and framed by sociocultural theory that focuses on repetition. Moreover, as Mercer (2008) highlights, the concept of intertextuality is useful to describe this phenomenon because it focuses on how utterances are always interlinked. In this study, this created an intersection of theory and is discussed below (section 4.2.1).

To summarise, this study draws on Mercer's emphasis on making reasoning visible and applies how learners can use counter-claims and references to shared experiences to think together. However, the communicative purpose of the analysed talk in Mercer's work focuses on generating solutions to problems, whereas in this study, the participants' collaborative dialogue was open-ended. To explain the communicative patterns across the reading circle sessions, the concepts of ground rules and intersubjectivity were applied.

4.1.2.2 Repair-analysis: Identifying the task focus of the reading circles

As mentioned above, during the iterative data analysis a pattern emerged of how the participants frequently repaired their own and their peers' utterances – without verbalising

their intention do so. As they were not using verbalised speech to mediate their L2 production, this means they were not languaging. Instead, they simply stopped mid-utterance and reformulated themselves, thus using inner speech and invisible mental processes to mediate the repairs. As this study is process-oriented, to understand these repair instances, the analytical framework draws on Seedhouse's (2004) conversation analysis of language classrooms. Applicable to this study is how Seedhouse (2004, pp.34-35) analytically separates between speakers and others, i.e., hearers, and identifies who initiated and who completed the repair. Making this distinction in the analytical framework can provide insights into the participants' intentions and opportunities for actions. This follows the conceptual framework, sociocultural theory, that intentional activity and self-regulation are characteristics of higher mental functions and suggests development. Furthermore, it can also indicate how the social environment of the reading circle sessions made available affordances to its participants, what these affordances were, and how the participants made or did not make use of them (van Lier, 2000, p.252).

Following the premise of intersubjectivity, conversation analysis assumes that the purpose of interaction is to fulfil explicitly or implicitly stated social goals and interlocutors aim to organise their interaction to achieve these goals (Seedhouse, 2004, p.23). By analysing repair, insights can be gained into the social goals and the task goals. Seedhouse (2004, pp.34-35) defines repair as attending to breakdowns in communications and outlines four types of repair, identifying who initiated the repair and who undertook it. Self-initiated self-repair refers to speakers taking the initiative to repair their own utterances and self-initiated other-repair refers to speakers engaging their hearers to repair their utterances. Other-initiated self-repair refers to hearers prompting the repair of speakers' utterances and speakers undertaking the repair. Other-initiated other-repair, when hearers prompt and undertake the repair, has been observed to be the least preferred option. By examining the purpose of learners' repair, insights can be gained into the pedagogical purpose and communicative goals (Seedhouse, 2004, pp.158-159). From his extensive repair analysis, Seedhouse (2004, p.142) identifies three types of L2 classroom contexts: form-and-accuracy, meaning-and-fluency, and task-oriented contexts. In form-and-accuracy contexts, learners are focused on expressing specific strings of linguistic forms as outlined by the teacher (Seedhouse, 2004, pp.143, 149). In meaning-and-fluency contexts, learners are focused on expressing personal meaning over accuracy of linguistic forms (Seedhouse, 2004, p.149). In task-oriented contexts, teachers withdraw to allow learners to work out the task themselves, leading to a focus on removing all hindrances to complete the task (2004, p.153).

In this study, once the emerging finding of repairs had been identified, the four repair types outlined above were applied deductively and facilitated an understanding to emerge of how the participants repaired their utterances. These findings are presented in the chapter resulting from the linguistic analysis (section 5.2). To understand the purpose of the repairs, the distinction of form- and lexis-based LREs, discussed above (section 4.1.1) was applied. Developed further in the presentation of findings (section 5.2.2), a third category was generated inductively, called narrative retellings, intersecting the linguistic analysis with the reader response analysis. How this provides insights into how the participants perceived the communicative goals of the reading circles and the L2 classroom context is discussed at the end of the presentation of the findings from the repair analysis (5.2.3). However, Seedhouse's' (2004) analysis does not identify sub-categories of self-initiated self- or other repair. To explain how the participants reformulated themselves and called on each other for help, the section below describes how the analytical framework draws on corpus analysis (Biber et al., 1999; 2021) and the interaction approach (Gass & Mackey, 2020).

4.1.2.3 Extending the analysis of self- and other-repair

The above section explained how the analytical framework draws on conversation analysis of L2 classrooms (Seedhouse, 2004) to explain the emerging finding of the participants' self- and other-repair. To understand these instances in more depth and to identify sub-categories, this section describes how findings from corpus analysis of L1 spontaneous conversations and negotiation strategies from the interaction approach (Gass & Mackey, 2020), were incorporated into the analytical framework and informed the analysis.

Biber et al. (1999), reissued recently as a redesigned edition (2021), conducted a corpus analysis of the corpus Longman Spoken and Written English and relevant to this thesis is their analysis of the identified register category called conversation. Participants were identified to represent a range of English speakers in the UK and the US and the corpus was compiled by providing the participants with tape recorders to record all their spoken conversational interactions during one week (Biber et al., 2021, p.29). Although this corpus comprised spontaneous conversation outside classroom contexts, Biber et al.'s (2021) study was selected for its comprehensive and detailed discussion of spoken interaction. This positions this study as valuing classroom discourse and outside-classroom discourse equally, moving away from the often-used distinction between authentic and inauthentic discourse. This follows the conceptual framework of sociocultural theory that

all communication is meaningful and situated because it follows the communicative purpose of the context. Not specifying the communicative purpose further except labelling it spontaneous conversation, Biber et al.'s (2021) analysis identified how the L1 English speakers' utterances frequently contained dysfluencies such as hesitators and retrace-and-repair sequences. Their analysis followed three principles of spontaneous speech: limited planning time, expectation to keep talking, and the option to qualify speech retrospectively (Biber et al., 2021, p.1061). Their findings provide insights into the usefulness of investigating the grammar of spoken interaction, by some considered inchoate compared to written language. The authors described how grammatically incomplete utterances are common during spontaneous conversation and that situational pressure may lead to more dysfluencies (Biber et al., 2021, p.1047), but that they serve a useful purpose for the speakers.

Dysfluencies provide speakers with more time to plan their speech and opportunities to reformulate themselves. Hesitators such as filled (e.g., erm) and unfilled pauses (short silences) and repeats (e.g., re-re-repeats) signal to hearers that speakers have not yet finished speaking (Biber et al., 2021, p.1046). Retrace-and-repair sequences refer to reformulations or abandoning grammatically incomplete utterances to start anew (Biber et al., 2021, pp.1056-1057). In this study, these findings informed the transcription of the reading circle sessions and facilitated the interpretation of silences, repairs, and overlapping speech, discussed above in relation to the development of the transcription system (section 3.3). It allowed for distinguishing between instances of peers interrupting and taking the floor from co-operative completions, when interlocutors collaboratively finish utterances together (Biber et al., 2021, pp.1057-1058). Finally, Biber et al. (2021, p.1058) observed how speakers may sometimes favour abandoning incomplete utterances over other unpleasant experiences. In this study, these findings were applied deductively to the analysis of the participants' speech and provided the analytical lens to understand how the participants used dysfluencies as a tool to qualify meaning and reformulate themselves. At first, the analysis identified all dysfluency types described here, generating a long list of categories (appendix 10). However, to answer the first research question on language development, when writing up the thesis, the identified instances were collapsed and reduced (appendix 11). This means that the presented findings from the linguistic analysis (chapter 5) focuses on instances when the participants' dysfluencies and repair generated more language.

The final approach to analyse talk that was incorporated into the analytical framework were negotiation strategies from the interaction approach: confirmation checks, clarification requests, comprehension checks, and recasts (Gass & Mackey, 2020). Discussed above (section 2.1.3), the interaction approach draws on the output hypothesis that interactional feedback can push learners to modify their language use (Swain, 1995). Initially proposed by Long (1996), negotiation strategies attempt to explain how learners' negotiation of meaning can facilitate L2 acquisition. Confirmation checks involve hearers confirming they have understood speakers' utterances, e.g., "is this what you mean?". With clarification requests, hearers aim to clarify speakers' utterances, e.g., "what did you say?". Comprehension checks aim to confirm hearers' comprehension, e.g., "did you understand?". With the intention to correct, recasts involve hearers rephrasing speakers' utterances using a more target-like form. In addition, LREs, described above (section 4.1.1), are also studied in the interaction approach, including assistance requests (Gass & Mackey, 2020, p.203). However, there is a methodological difference between the interaction approach and this study. Research following the interaction approach aims to ascertain learning outcomes, through e.g., post-tests, introspective or retrospective commentary (Gass & Mackey, 2020, p.209). As this study does not intend to measure learning outcomes but instead attempts to explore learning processes as they unfold, the analysis focuses on how the participants used their speech as a tool to draw on resources made available through verbal interaction. Despite this methodological difference, the negotiation strategies provided a useful concept to understand how the participants other-repaired their utterances. Presented and developed further below (section 5.2), the negotiation strategies were applied deductively to the data which allowed for the identification of assistance requests, clarification requests, confirmation checks, and recasts.

This section has described how the participants' speech during the reading circles could be explained in part by the sociocultural concepts of languaging, collaborative dialogue, and LREs. To account for the identified differences the analytical framework draws on other approaches to analyse talk, summarised in table 6 below. This incorporation of different approaches illustrates how different analytical perspectives provide different angles of interpretation on similar phenomena. In common for all approaches is a focus on explaining how speakers negotiate meaning and establish intersubjectivity.

Table 6 The analytical framework used for the linguistic analysis

Analytical approach	Concepts incorporated into the analytical framework
Languaging	Collaborative dialogue, use of L1, private speech, repetition
Interthinking	Counter-claims, ground rules, shared experiences, e.g., we-statements
Repair analysis	Self-initiated self-repair, self-initiated other-repair, other-initiated self-repair, other-initiated other-repair L2 classroom contexts: form-and-accuracy, meaning-and-fluency, and task-oriented contexts
Corpus analysis	Hesitators, i.e., unfilled and pauses and repeats, retrace-and-repair sequences, co-operative completion of utterances
Interaction approach	Assistance requests, clarification requests, confirmation checks, and recasts

Table 6 describes chronologically an iterative data analysis that began inductively by identifying emerging themes in the data and then turned to previous research and analytical approaches beyond sociocultural theory. This involved a careful and rigorous interpretive process to find useful explanations that would generate answers to the first research question on how the reading circles can facilitate verbal interactions around literary texts that could allow for opportunities for learning English as a Second Language. Once a suitable analytical explanation was identified, appropriate concepts were applied deductively to the data until another gap emerged inductively. This process was repeated until a satisfactory level of explanation and answers to the first research question could be attained. This section has discussed and outlined the development of the part of analytical framework that framed the linguistic analysis, the section below discusses and outlines how the reader response analysis was undertaken.

4.2 Reader response analysis

The literature review outlined the field of reader response (section 2.3) and showed how research has mostly focused on children's responses to picturebooks, the construction of typologies, and how this trend also applies to reader response studies with L2 learners. This study draws on this wealth of knowledge to answer the second research question of how the reading circles facilitated opportunities for responses to literary texts. However, as this study was framed by sociocultural theory, the conceptual framework and this section explains how this generated an intersection of theory, identifying points of contact between sociocultural theory and intertextuality, a concept often applied in reader response (section

4.2.1). This is followed by a discussion of how this study's reader response analysis generated the construction of a typology of responses (section 4.2.2).

4.2.1 Intersection of the linguistic and reader response analyses

One of the first emerging findings during the iterative data analysis was how the participants linked their utterances to the novels, their own and their peers' previously stated utterances, and to previous experiences. As discussed above in relation to Mercer's (1995; 2000; 2019) work on interthinking (section 4.1.2.1), this illustrates the benefits of collaborative analysis and reasoning, making the participants' reasoning visible and available for collective scrutiny. To better understand how the participants used this as a tool, this section describes a theoretical intersection of sociocultural theory and intertextuality. First, the three communicative functions of the participants' utterances are identified and linked to intertextuality (section 4.2.1.1). This is followed by an outline of how this intersection facilitated a linguistic analysis of intertextuality (section 4.2.1.2).

4.2.1.1 Communicative functions: Indicative, semiotic, and rhetorical

To understand learning from a sociocultural perspective, Säljö (2014, pp.83-89) suggests three communicative functions of language that may provide useful insights: *indikativ* ('indicative'), *semiotisk* ('semiotic'), and *retorisk* ('rhetorical'). The indicative function refers to the naming of phenomenon, physical objects such as books, but also abstract ideas, such as democracy, learners, or how we name our feelings. Important here is that we want our interlocutors to understand *what* we are talking about. The semiotic function refers to how language represents the interpretations and meanings we make of our social world, e.g., the associations we make and the conclusions we draw. In this study, this is how meaning making is understood and the meaning we make is always situated, contingent on what we want to claim or communicate. The rhetorical function refers to how we want to influence our environment and inspire people to action with our utterances. In concrete interaction, this means we might prompt our interlocutor with a question, request information, or attempt to change someone's convictions or interpretations.

Applying these concepts to this study's data facilitated an understanding of how the participants' responses to the novels were constructed. Almost all utterances in the data comprised paraphrases of the novels represented by direct or indirect quotations of varying length. These were identified by how the participants used vocabulary items found on the

written page or synonyms, i.e., vocabulary items with similar meaning. These direct and indirect quotations served two purposes at once and illustrates how there are analytical overlaps between indicative and semiotic functions (Säljö, 2014, p.89). One the one hand, the participants pointed to specific narrative elements, the indicative function, and on the other, they described the meaning they made of the narrative, the semiotic function. In this study, the former is referred to as narrative retellings and the latter became the focus during the construction of the typology of the participants' responses, discussed below (section 4.2.2). The term narrative retelling derives from the reader response study *Visual journeys* which defines them as utterances that share "literal descriptions of the story" (Arizpe et al., 2014, p.124). Juxtaposed to more interpretive statements such as hypotheses and inferences, Arizpe et al. (2014, p.134) noted that the lines between literal and inferential statements were sometimes blurred, suggesting that retellings should be considered interpretive work. In this study, which aims to identify how the participants used language as a tool to mediate the development of language and responses to the novels, retellings are conceptualised as conceptual tools. From this perspective, retellings served the purpose of providing evidence for the participants' meaning making; they provided justification for the semiotic function of their utterances by pointing to specific places in the narrative, the indicative function. The rhetorical function of their utterances was to make their reasoning visible and available for public scrutiny. This supports Mercer's (2000, p.98) findings from his analysis of talk during problem-solving activities and links the linguistic analysis with the reader response analysis. Findings from this analytical lens is presented in the chapter resulting from the linguistic analysis, describing how the sharing of narrative retellings mediated the collaborative dialogue (section 5.1.1).

4.2.1.2 Linguistic analysis of intertextuality

The previous section described how applying the analytical lens of the communicative functions, indicative, semiotic, and rhetorical, allowed for an understanding to emerge of how the participants linked their meaning making to narrative retellings. This section focuses on the emerging finding of how the participants frequently repeated lexis from the novels or their own or peers' previously shared utterances. Discussed above (section 4.1.1), repetition mediates collaborative dialogue because it facilitates intersubjectivity and allows speakers to maintain a shared perspective (Swain & Watanabe, 2013, p.4). To make sense of this finding, the analytical framework draws on studies of rhetoric which employs the concept of intertextuality (Bazerman, 2004b). Discussed above in relation to how sociocultural theory shares an analytical focus with intertextuality (section 2.1),

intertextuality provides an analytical lens to how texts, in any medium, are constructed in relation to each other. As Bazerman (2004a, p.53) states "we write in response to prior writing, and as writers we use the resources provided by prior writers". This quote illustrates how Bazerman (2004a, p.56) draws on the sociocultural perspective that language is a tool that mediates communication and interprets Vygotsky to talk about the phenomenon of intertextuality when he argued how utterances are always interdependent and situated.

As an analytical concept, intertextuality provides a tool to trace the emergence of perspectives and views. A corollary of such an understanding is to consider all discourse as texts. From a multiliteracies perspective, this includes not only linguistic communication but all modes of meaning making, e.g., gestural, spatial, and visual, including multimodal when combining other modes (New London Group, 1996, p.80). Relevant to this analytical framework, is to analytically consider people's life stories as texts. Discussed above (section 2.1.1), narratives of life are constructed as we externalise them and make them available to the world (Bruner & Weisser, 1991, p.136). As we talk about our life, we come to know it, and for as long as we are alive, we are constructing our life stories. This means that narratives of life can be analysed for intertextuality and allow for the identification of links between our textualised lives and other texts. However, as links between texts can be subtle and open for interpretation, it is methodologically challenging to analyse intertextuality. The most recognizable and most easily analysable analytical units are direct quotations (Bazerman, 2004b, p.89). In this study, this explicit expression of intertextuality was applied to the emerging finding of the repeated lexis and coincides with findings from research on collaborative dialogue that repetition mediates intersubjectivity and communication. Although the concept of intertextuality originated in literary studies, in this study it is used to linguistically analyse the links between the participants' utterances. Drawing on previous research on languaging and LREs, discussed above (section 4.1.1), this analysis employs terms commonly used in this field, i.e., lexis and vocabulary items (Swain & Lapkin, 2001, p.104), to describe and discuss how the participants used lexical repetition. This study acknowledges the complexity in defining what it is considered a "word" (e.g., Nation, 2013, pp.9-11) and here, the terms lexis and vocabulary items are used to refer to the participants' repetition of utterances, partially or in their entirety. Findings from this analysis are presented in the chapter resulting from the linguistic analysis (5.1.2). This concludes this section which has described how the identified point of contact between sociocultural theory and intertextuality in how

utterances are connected created an intersection of theory and merged the linguistic and reader response analysis.

4.2.2 Constructing a typology of responses

Following in the footsteps of previous reader response scholars (Arizpe & Styles, 2016, p.181), one of first observations I made during the fieldwork was how the participants responded emotionally to the characters' struggles and collaboratively tried to understand their perspective. This section explains how the reader response analysis was framed by sociocultural theory and resulted in the construction of a typology of responses that attempts to identify the purpose of the participants' meaning making and what they were trying to achieve. However, to understand situated speech and its intended material effect, the analysis needs to consider all three communicative functions, indicative, semiotic, and rhetorical (Säljö, 2014, p.89). People are argumentative and ideological, and our actions are intentional and shape the way we act and think, whether we are aware of it or not. The ethics and moral we live by are shaped through communication (Säljö, 2014, p.89). Discussed in relation to two major studies of children's responses to picturebooks, Sipe (2008) and Arizpe et al. (2014), this section describes the theoretical underpinnings of the three main categories in the typology: identifying the readerly gap (section 4.2.2.1), evaluating the novels as works of art (section 4.2.2.2), and making links to narratives of life (section 4.2.2.3). This introduces the interpretive process behind the construction of the typology and chapter 6 presents findings and discusses how the typology provides insights into the participants' meaning making.

4.2.2.1 Identifying the readerly gap

This category concerns instances when the participants linked different narrative elements such as characters' actions and thoughts and drew conclusions about them. Responses such as these are identified in most reader response studies, however they are described and labelled differently. For example, Sipe (2008, p.90) labelled them "making narrative meaning" and described them as analytical responses with several different communicative purposes: "the children described, evaluated, speculated, or made inferences about the actions or characters or other plot events; predicted the plot of the story; or provided alternative suggestions for the plot". Similarly, Arizpe et al. (2014, p.93) developed the category "referential", to identify responses that described story elements, i.e., what was happening, to whom, when, and where. In this study, these categories would have encompassed such a large data sample that the particularities of the participants'

communicative purposes would be lost. Just as Arizpe et al. (2014, p.124) observed, in this study, the referential category was identified as representing most of the participants' responses. Defined above (section 4.2.1.1), to understand these responses better, the concept of utterances' rhetorical function was applied concerning how language is used to convince and influence. This follows the conceptual framework (section 2.1), which emphasises the intentionality of people's actions and how they are situated in context. With this frame in mind, a pattern emerged during the iterative data analysis of how the participants separated between two actions. On the one hand, they strove to understand what the written page meant, and on the other, they speculated beyond the written page. This distinction was inspired by the scholarly discussion of the readerly gap, discussed above when outlining reader response theory (section 2.3.1). The readerly gap attempts to explain the interpretive space generated by authors' inclusion and omission of details, creating a gap to be filled by readers' imagination (Beauvais, 2015b). In this study, two sub-categories were created: referential responses, referring to responses when the participants stayed within the readerly gap, and creative responses, when they moved along its borders. Developed further in the presentation of the typology (section 6.1), these two categories generated the identification of different types of responses.

An analytically important difference between studies of responses to picturebooks where readers can see the books while talking about them, in this study, the participants had to rely on their own and their peers' memory of the YA novels. To resolve this, the participants shared narrative retellings to support their meaning making and turned to each other to assist and challenge retellings. This is a finding that was introduced in the discussion of the linguistic analysis and is presented in full below (section 5.2.2). It is re-introduced here to explain how the participants co-constructed a verbal representation of the novels and their own readerly gaps. If they omitted details or departed from the written the page and these instances were unacknowledged, then it formed part of the socially constructed readerly gap. Compared to the visual aspect of picturebooks, Sipe (2008, p.99) observed that the participating children's hypotheses were sometimes confirmed by the written page but that they mostly "represented gaps in the text and illustrations upon which the children could only speculate". Comparably, Arizpe et al. (2014, p.124) observed that the participating children responded to the wordless picturebook by constructing dialogue. These observations inspired my thinking when creating the sub-category creative responses and generated an understanding of how literary texts can provide an imaginary space to elaborate beyond the written page. In this study, the participants' creative responses involved inventing narrative details that followed their socially constructed

readerly gap, creating prequels and sequels, and making implausible links to other literary texts. When making sense of the latter, I drew on Sipe's (2008, p.86) observation of how the children, aged 5-7, used their bodies and voices for playful and performative re-enactments and labelled these as "carnivalesque responses". This label derives from Bakhtin's (1984, p.12) idea of carnivals where the humour is mocking and deriding. Everyone is part of the joke and speakers invite hearers to laugh with them. In this study, the responses categorised as creative suggests the participants made bids for unique contributions to the novels and created their own pieces of art within the constraints of the readerly gap as constructed by the narratives (Beauvais, 2015b, p.6) and their negotiated narrative retellings.

4.2.2.2 Evaluating the novels as works of art

This category concerns instances when the participants evaluated the novels as works of art. Sipe (2008) identified similar responses in his typology and conceptualised them as analytical responses. His participants questioned the authors' and illustrators' decisions as the creators of the picturebooks (2008, p.111), identified patterns in how the story was constructed (2008, p.98), inferred messages and themes in the picturebooks (2008, p.105), and sometimes resisted the inferred didactic message (2008, p.110). In this study, the category of evaluating the novels as works of art comprises three types of responses: appraised literary craft, didactic messages, and aesthetic value, presented and developed further below (section 6.2). The participants did not consider the readerly gap, nor did they consider the story as ongoing and under development. Instead, in these responses, the participants placed themselves outside the stories and regarded them from a distance, as a finished product. In both Sipe's study and mine, the participants identified referential elements of the narratives and evaluated them.

4.2.2.3 Making links to narratives of life

The construction of the third category proved the most conceptually challenging and is where this study diverges the most from previous reader response research. However, it attempts to respond to the call for more research by Arizpe (2017, p.132) in relation to the identified epistemological tensions around how different reader response studies have conceptualised elements of "text to life" and "life to text". Instead of identifying the type of background knowledge the participants drew on, discussed above as a frequent approach by other reader response studies (section 2.3.1), the analysis tried to identify the rhetorical

function by constructing three broad sub-categories: compassionate responses, value judgements, and generalising from the characters' struggles.

The first category, compassionate responses, identifies how the participants reduced the distance between themselves and the characters by verbalising an emotional connection with their struggles. This is reminiscent of an understanding of a didactic discourse of children's literature to position children as part of a struggle of noticing how they are "cared for, guided, and manipulated" by Others but that their inherent agency allows them to find their own place as one of many Others (Beauvais, 2015a, p.79). To Nussbaum (2008, p.150), this process involves a transcendence of differences between readers, characters, and Others, and understanding that we all are vulnerable to human suffering. This is related to the growing field of inquiry identified in reader response of whether literary texts can foster empathy (section 2.3.3). However, the literature concerned with this discussion rarely defines the terminology used and various concepts are used to describe the process of feeling *for* or *with* other people, e.g., empathy, theory of mind, and mind-reading skills. Thus, to understand these emotional connections better, the analysis draws on Bloom's (2018) case against morally directionless empathy and call for rational deliberation. Although neither working in SLA nor reader response, Bloom (2021), a professor in psychology, researches how people make sense of the world, focusing on art, fiction, morality, pleasure, and religion. This cross-disciplinarity brings a new perspective to SLA and reader response and hopes to extend current understandings.

The second category concerns value judgements and describes how the participants labelled the characters' actions as right or wrong, and either aligned themselves with them or rejected their actions. This brings to mind Meek's (1988, p.29) argument that readers need to challenge their own value system with that of the text's and how interactions as constructed in terms of e.g., truth versus falsehood or trust versus betrayal. Sipe (2008, p.93) describes how the participating children sometimes rejected the characters' actions, but did not conceptualise these responses into a category of their own. In a reader response study with short stories, Tutaş (2006, p.138) also identified this dynamic process of taking stances for or against characters' actions and conceptualised them as aesthetic responses. To be discussed in the findings chapter, this category extends the discussion on empathy mentioned in the previous category and links to the above identified current discussion whether literary texts can foster empathy (section 2.3.3).

The third category, generalising from the characters' struggles, describes how the reading circle sessions provided a space for the participants to verbalise links to how they understand the world we live in. When constructing this category, Brooks and Browne's (2012) culturally situated reader response model was very insightful and might have played a larger role if this study only focused on one novel. Instead, as the different reading circle groups read different novels which took place in different countries and concerned different issues, the participants responded from different cultural positions. Moreover, the analytical focus of this analysis was to identify the rhetorical function of the participants' responses. Thus, the response types were identified based on how the participants drew on their previous experiences of the e.g., historical period or geographical area the novel concerned. This category is reminiscent of the ongoing discussion whether literary texts have the potential to inspire social change. Discussed in the literature review (section 2.3.3), this position informs literacy pedagogy and research directions, yet empirical findings are inconclusive and more research is needed before claims can be made (Arizpe, 2021, p.269). Except for one response type, "reframed perspectives", when the participants articulated how the narrative had inspired them to change their perspective, this study does not any make claims that the novels inspired the participants to take social action.

This concludes the theoretical discussion of how the typology of the participants' responses was constructed, what remains is to describe and exemplify each type of response, presented in chapter 6. As argued here, this typology was constructed with the intention to demonstrate the rhetorical function of the participants' responses. This is elaborated on in chapter 6 where data examples are discussed in relation to whether the responses were shared as part of a role report or in response to the Discussion leaders' questions. The typology was applied to these questions as well and as this was a purely descriptive analysis, it has been added as an appendix (appendix 12). This is referenced to when relevant to describe how the questions framed the collaborative dialogue and which question types were among the most frequent.

4.3 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has outlined and discussed the development of the analytical framework and described how it is underpinned by the conceptual framework, sociocultural theory. The logic used during analysis was first inductive, generating emerging themes followed by consulting the literature to identify theoretical explanations and settled on concepts with

the most explanatory power. However, as this chapter has discussed, no concept could explain everything, and I returned to the literature to repeat the process until satisfactory explanations and answers to the research questions could be attained. This means that the iterative data analysis drew on an inductive-deductive logic. This follows most qualitative inquiry which uses a combination of both (Harding, 2019, p.24). The following two chapters present the findings from the linguistic analysis (chapter 5) and the reader response analysis (chapter 6).

Chapter 5 Linguistic repertoires mediating communication

As explained in the methodology chapter (section 3.4), the analysis involved an iterative process characterised by moments of key analytical insights and this chapter presents, exemplifies, and discusses the findings from two insights. First, the identification of two different functions of the participants' utterances: an indicative function referring to how the participants used language to name and point to narrative elements, and a semiotic function, how they made meaning (Säljö, 2014, pp.83-88) of these narrative retellings (Arizpe et al., 2014, p.124). This intersection of theory facilitated a linguistic analysis of intertextuality, merging the linguistic analysis with the reader response analysis (section 5.1). This allowed for the understanding to emerge of how the participants interwove narrative retellings with meaning making (section 5.1.1) and appropriated utterances through lexis repetition to co-construct and develop meaning (section 5.1.2). The second insight, generated from a negative case analysis, allowed for the identification of intermittent episodes of repair (section 5.2), representing talk that deviated from the two main communicative patterns of reading the role reports and responding to the Discussion leaders' questions. The participants' repair focused on form and lexis (section 5.2.1) and narrative retellings (section 5.2.2). The chapter ends with a summary and discussion of the findings generated by these analyses (section 5.3).

5.1 Linguistic analysis of intertextuality

The linguistic analysis of intertextuality of the participants' utterances identified how the participants verbalised intertextual links (Bazerman, 2004a) between the narratives and their meaning making in the form of paraphrases, verbatim quotes, and vocabulary items. Drawing on the concept of languaging in sociocultural theory (Swain & Watanabe, 2019, p.1), this demonstrates how the participants used language as an artefact to mediate their communication and link utterances to previous utterances to develop their meaning making. This section first describes how the participants' utterances comprised an interweavement of the indicative and semiotic functions when constructing the two main communicative patterns, the reading of role reports and responding to the Discussion leaders' questions (section 5.1.1). Second, it describes how the participants repeated lexis from the novels and previously verbalised utterances to point to narrative retellings and co-construct meaning within and across reading circle sessions (section 5.1.2).

5.1.1 Interweaving narrative retellings with meaning making

This section describes how the participants' utterances simultaneously comprised an indicative and a semiotic function, through the interweaving of narrative retellings and meaning making. The term narrative retelling derives from Arizpe et al.'s (2014, p.124) reader response study and is defined as "literal descriptions of the story". In this study, the participants' descriptions of the novels were signposted by repeating lexis from the novels and using various reporting strategies. In their role reports, which mostly comprised pre-prepared talk, narrative retellings and meaning making were interwoven into coherent reports (section 5.1.1.1). When responding to the Discussion leaders' questions, which comprised spontaneous speech, the participants used each other's narrative retellings and meaning making to co-construct collaborative dialogue (section 5.1.1.2).

5.1.1.1 Reading the role reports

All reading circle sessions began with the Summarisers, Character tracers, Creative connectors, and Literary wizards reading their role reports. During this phase, the turn-taking sequence was managed by the Discussion leaders, following the scripted interactional sequence provided by the teacher (appendix 1) which involved prompting their peers to read their reports one after another. The reading was characterised by stretches of uninterrupted speech that varied in length; the shortest comprising 73 transcribed words (Josefine_Sum_A5) and the longest comprising 773 transcribed words (Liam_Sum_Q5). While reading, the participants kept their laptops open and remained focused on their screens. The participants had prepared their reports prior to the reading circle sessions and patterns in how they shared narrative retellings in their reports could be identified across all roles. They repeated lexis from the novels and either maintained meaning or imbued the vocabulary items with their own meaning, or they shared verbatim quotes or paraphrases, signposted with various reporting strategies.

Category 1 Repeated lexis from the novels and maintained meaning

In several role reports, the participants shared verbatim quotes from the novels without acknowledging they were making a direct quotation. Instead, they shared paraphrases sprinkled with intermittent vocabulary items or phrases from the novels, constructing narrative retellings that comprised an interlocking of their own and the authors' voices. As the participants did not signpost these as direct quotes, their identification resulted from my close readings of the novels and my understanding of the participants' linguistic

repertoires. For example, first consider the below quote excerpted from the first reading extract of the novel *Running* and focus on the items highlighted in bold.

> **Excerpt from the novel *Running***
>
> There are five, maybe six, soldiers in each jeep. Some of them … **wear army waistcoats and belts with ammunition**. **They all carry guns, porcupine quills pointing at the sky**. (Williams, 2012, pp.5-6)

Traces of this reading extract can be identified in data extract 3 as Johanna paraphrased the scene in her own words but repeated verbatim the description of the soldiers' gear, highlighted in bold.

> **3. Johanna_Sum_R1**
> during the course of the match the boys get a view of the soldiers in their jeeps – the soldiers are **wearing army waistcoats and belts with ammunut- ammunition** – **they all carry guns porcu- porcupine quills pointing at the sky**

The lexis Johanna repeated from the novel include vocabulary items that are very subject-specific and possibly new to Johanna's linguistic repertoire, e.g., "porcupine quills". However, although the part of the utterance highlighted in bold in extract 3 represents a direct quotation and intertextually links Johanna's voice with the author's, Johanna still maintained control of which items to quote and how she purposefully used the quote (Bazerman, 2004b, p.88). Her introduction, "during the course of the match the boys get a view" is an indirect quotation from the novel that summarises several pages. By sharing this narrative retelling, Johanna provided her peers with an opportunity to hear the narrative again and to re-experience the reading through the filter of her own words as the second author. Thus, this exemplifies the process of appropriation, of how utterances always belong partly to someone else and only becomes speakers' property when used, i.e., appropriated, for their own intentions and communicative context (Bakhtin, 1981, p.293).

Category 2 Repeated lexis from the novels and imbued personal meaning

This category contrasts with the previous category in that the participants repeated lexis from the novels but changed the meaning. For example, first consider the excerpts below from the novel *Stars* and the items highlighted in bold:

> "my mother decided I was **depressed**, presumably because I rarely left the house, spent quite a lot of time in bed, **read** the same **book** over and over" (Green, 2012, p.3)

"Mom: '**Television** is a **passivity**'." (Green, 2012, p.7)

Extract 4 shows how Filip used these items in his report as Character tracer to describe how the main character's, Hazel, parents interpreted their daughter's behaviour and contrasted this with his own interpretation.

4. Filip_CT_S3

Hazel's parents think that their daughter is just too **passive** and they're afraid that she does not use her life to its full potential – that she's **depressed** and that she couldn't she just want to – that she shouldn't just want to watch **TV** and **read books** all day at home – but apparently they don't know **how tough it is from Hazel's perspective** – basically they don't (think) know Hazel's fighting hard enough for her life … **she is a real fighter**

Highlighted in bold, Filip constructed a retelling of the novel by repeating the items "passive", "depressed", and "read books". Yet, this retelling was more than a simple reiteration of the plot. Filip imbued these items with his interpretation of how the parents saw Hazel's behaviour as "just too passive" and "she shouldn't just watch TV and read books". Moreover, the item "potential" cannot be found in the novel, suggesting that the utterance "they're afraid that she does not use her life to its full potential" represents Filip's interpretation. Together, this narrative retelling allowed Filip to explain to his peers that he did not agree with Hazel's parents, "but apparently", and how he had drawn the conclusion that Hazel's parents must be unaware of "how tough it is from Hazel's perspective". In doing so, Filip placed himself at advantage, suggesting his interpretation of Hazel and her situation was more accurate, "she is a real fighter". Compared to the category above, which also involved indirect quotation (Bazerman, 2004b, p.88), extract 4 above comprise less of the author's voice and more of the speaker's voice. Instead, the repeated vocabulary items represent more subtle cues indicating intertextuality (Bazerman, 2004b, p.92) and suggests a higher degree of appropriation and imbuement of personal meaning (Bakhtin, 1981, p.293). This illustrates the, sometimes, fine line between paraphrase and interpretation, and evokes the discussion in the field of L2 reading assessment of whether literary understanding can be defined and measured (Alderson, 2000, p.66).

Category 3 Interweaving narrative retellings and meaning making during role reports

This category is distinct to the above in that it identifies how the participants explicitly signposted paraphrases or verbatim quotes from the novels, thus involving both indirect

and indirect quotations (Bazerman, 2004b, p.88). These were obvious markers of intertextuality, signalling how the participants in their role reports moved between narrative retellings and meaning making. Extract 5 shows how Ida as Character tracer used various strategies, discussed below, to signpost her retellings of the character Salie, the soccer coach of the main character Deo in the novel *Running*.

> **5. Ida_CT_R5**
> … Salie is a very caring man who wants the best for everybody which **you can read on page 179 and 180 when** Salie finds Deo kicking a ball against a wall and then **he asks** Deo if he wanted to come with him to join the national street soccer team – normally you would think that it's something wrong when a random person comes to you under a bridge and asks you to come with him – but in this case – Deo didn't has anything to lose … Salie pushed the players very hard to reach their full potential – **for example on page 195 when** Alfabeto asked Sa- Salie when they would play some soccer instead of running laps around the pitch and the short answer was when I say so

Extract 5 exemplifies some of the strategies the participants used to linguistically signpost their retellings. For example, Ida referred to the shared reading with the phrase "you can read", she referenced page numbers, reported character speech with "he asks", and pointed to another page with "for example". Additionally, Ida used the adverb "when" twice to signpost specific scenes in the novel, representing the most frequently used strategy. "When" was often, as here, used in conjunction with other items such as "earlier in the book" or "later that day". Moreover, phrases that referenced the shared reading experience were particularly frequent, e.g., "as we have read", when the participants shared interpretations and conclusions, they had made of the quoted narrative element. By including their peers with these we-statements, the shared experience of reading was evoked, and peers were invited to see the narrative through the speakers' eyes. This might indicate an intention to establish intersubjectivity and mutual agreement (Kullenberg & Säljö, 2022, p.550) in the form of a shared literary understanding and interpretation of the narratives. As Biber et al. (2021, p.329) observed in their corpus analysis of conversations, when speakers include listeners with the plural second-person pronoun "we", the communication becomes more personal and interactive. In terms of classroom talk, Mercer (2008, p.37) observed that "we" statements were commonly used by teachers to bring to their learners' attention the accumulative aspect of learning. With nine years of schooling already completed, it is possible the participants had learned that "we" statements were an established and valued communicative pattern in educational contexts.

Although signposting strategies were used when responding to the Discussion leaders' questions as well, they were considerably more frequent in the participants' role reports which comprised numerous signposted narrative retellings. By using such explicit signposting markers, the participants demonstrated how they relied on the novels as a deliberate source for their meaning making, constructing an overt level of intertextuality (Bazerman, 2004b, p.86). Summarisers' reports were almost entirely constructed by narrative retellings, varying in richness of narrative details, from very detailed to brief overviews. Character tracers' reports were characteristically constructed by first sharing an interpretation of a chosen character followed by a narrative retelling to support it, thus interlocking the authors' and the speakers' voices. Creative connectors focused on one narrative retelling followed by an elaborate description of how the speakers intertextually connected the narrative detail to their own narratives of life. The reports by Literary wizards were similar in that they shared two verbatim quotes and paraphrases from different places in the reading extracts and described how they intertextually connected the narrative details to their own narratives of life. The little variation between the construction of the role reports indicates a shared understanding among the participants of how they interpreted the teacher's instructions. As described above (section 3.2.1), the participants had already completed the reading circle project twice before, once in English and once in Swedish, with the same teacher. Moreover, it also suggests a shared perspective on what constitutes language development and how to perceive and intentionally make use of affordances provided by the environment (van Lier, 2000, p.253). This repeated and purposeful sharing of narrative retellings suggests the participants perceived that the purpose of the role reports was to demonstrate reading comprehension.

This section has focused on describing the various strategies used by the participants to construct narrative retellings and how they verbalised intertextuality between the retellings and their meaning making. The participants repeated lexis from the novels in their role reports to share narrative retellings in the form of direct and indirect quotations, i.e., maintaining or changing the meaning. These narrative retellings were often signposted linguistically using various reporting strategies. These findings support the empirical observation that repeated items become artefacts that mediate meaning making and support languaging in that it allows speakers to maintain a shared perspective (Swain & Watanabe, 2013, p.4). In this study, the frequency of repetition of lexis suggests an intentionality and shared perspective among the participants in how to best identify and make use of affordances for language development during the reading circles. The section below describes how the participants shared and acted on narrative retellings during the second

phase of the reading circle sessions, when they responded to the Discussion leaders' questions.

5.1.1.2 Responding to the Discussion leaders' questions

Once the Summarisers, Character tracers, Creative connectors, and Literary wizards had read their role reports, the Discussion leaders initiated the second phase of the reading circle sessions. This involved inviting their peers to respond to their pre-prepared questions based on the current reading extract and which they read to their peers off their laptop screens. Compared to the first phase, the interactional sequence for the second phase had not been scripted and the speech pattern changed from stretches of uninterrupted utterances to spontaneous speech and shorter utterances. There were sessions when the participants followed a strict turn-by-turn sequence, with the Discussion leaders ending the session once all participants had shared at least one response each to their questions. There were also sessions when Discussion leaders asked elaborating questions or nominated peers to take a turn, or sessions when the Discussion leader exercised almost no control, and the conversation was characterised by frequent interruptions and overlapping speech. Characteristic for all reading circle sessions, during this phase, the participants drew on each other's narrative retellings to develop their own meaning making. Informed by the concept of languaging in sociocultural theory (Swain & Watanabe, 2019, p.1), this demonstrates how verbalised utterances became artefacts to be elaborated on, reformulated, and counter-argued.

Category 4 Interweaving narrative retellings and meaning making when responding to the Discussion leaders' questions

Extract 6 provides an abridged excerpt from the group reading *Alaska*, when two participants, Elsa, and Julia, responded to the Discussion leader Erik's question. Vocabulary items that signposted the participants' narrative retellings are highlighted in bold.

6. A2_CD

Erik: do you think **Miles and Alaska's friendship's** going to dev- develop or stay the same in the future?

Elsa: yeah I I think erm – I think they will be together {Julia: mm} in the future – **cause it seems like** that they both like each other – I I think it seems like that – {Julia: yeah} and then I think they are going to be together

Julia: yeah also they like || first they – || **when** he met Alaska **she said** – that **she think** he's cute and stuff like that

Elsa: yeah **and that she want**- want to kiss him

Erik invited his peers to focus on the narrative element, "Miles and Alaska's friendship", suggesting there was a tension between them and that their relationship was still under negotiation, "to develop or stay the same". Elsa responded by predicting how the narrative would unfold, supported by her interpretation of the characters' feelings, signposted with "cause it seems like". Julia agreed and elaborated with more details from the narrative to support this prediction, signposted with the adverb "when" and the report of the character Alaska's speech, "she said" and "she think". Elsa agreed and elaborated by providing more evidence for their shared prediction, signposted with "and that she want". This brief exchange demonstrates how the participants were involved in a languaging process and used each other's utterances as artefacts to co-construct knowledge and meaning (Swain & Watanabe, 2019, p.1). Signalled with the discourse marker "yeah", Elsa and Julia agreed with each other and elaborated on the shared prediction that Miles' and Alaska's friendship would evolve into a romantic relationship. They supported this prediction by providing evidence from the novel in the form of narrative retellings which they interpreted suggested there were romantic feelings between the two characters.

Extract 6 above exemplifies the prevalent pattern of how the participants shared narrative retellings to support their responses to the Discussion leaders' questions and how they drew on their peers' retellings to advance their own responses. This prevalence might be explained by the communicative situation of the reading circle sessions. The participants did not have access to the novels, instead they had to rely on their memory of the reading extract. When responding to the questions, neither the teacher nor the participants knew how the conversation would unfold, but the teacher's instructions prompted all participants to respond to the questions and to collaborate to generate a discussion (appendix 1). Thus, the participants needed to establish a shared understanding of what *happened* in the novels while they simultaneously *made meaning*. To attain intersubjectivity and shared understanding became integral to their languaging process. Compared to reader response studies with readalouds and shared reading of picturebooks, the spreads are there for everyone to see and discuss while reading. In this study, the reading extracts for each reading circle session comprised several chapters, involving extensive amounts of information in the target language, English, of which the participants' linguistic repertoires varied. Moreover, as the participants' responses to the participant profile questionnaire

indicates (appendix 2), not all participants read the entire novels and it is possible not all were focused on details while reading. Thus, the reiteration of what happened in the reading extracts during the reading circle sessions might have facilitated a remediation of the novels, reminding the participants of narrative details.

Although extract 6 above does not contain any disagreement, it represents a typical example of how the participants' conversations around the Discussion leaders' questions unfolded. The Discussion leaders' questions were all anchored in the texts, inviting their peers to focus on different narrative elements and from different perspectives (see appendix 12 for analysis). Together, the participants collaborated by drawing on each other's narrative retellings to co-construct dialogue and develop their responses to the novels. This follows the definition of collaborative dialogue, a type of languaging when speakers collaborate to solve problems and build knowledge together (Swain & Watanabe, 2019, p.1). During collaborative dialogue, language is used as a cognitive tool and utterances are treated as artefacts that can be elaborated on, counterargued, or questioned. In sociocultural theory (Swain & Watanabe, 2019), this type of dialogue can facilitate language development and allow the emergence of new or deeper understandings. Thus, to take this finding into consideration in this thesis, this phase of the reading circle sessions is henceforth referred to as collaborative dialogue and remaining chapters contribute with more evidence to support this finding. For example, as extract 6 above illustrates, the identified speech patterns of the collaborative dialogue suggest the participants treated it as a prompt to problematise the narratives and evaluate them from different perspectives. This finding is described and discussed in chapter 6 which provides a typology of the participants' responses to the novels.

As described in the analytical procedures (section 3.4), this section has demonstrated the results of the first key moment of analytical insight which identified how the participants talked about the novels in terms of an indicative and a semiotic function. On the one hand, they pointed to specific places in the narratives, and on the other, they described the meaning they made of these narrative retellings. This section focused on the former and described how the narrative retellings were realised linguistically. The participants used direct and indirect quotations from the novels, appropriating lexis used by the authors, and various signposting phrases that focused their listeners' attention to specific narrative elements. Moreover, this section demonstrated how the participants languaged together when responding to the Discussion leaders' questions, drawing on each other's narrative retellings to elaborate, reformulate, and counterargue. As argued above, this follows the

definition of collaborative dialogue where interlocutors are involved in a knowledge-building and problem-solving process (Swain & Watanabe, 2019, p.1). This finding of describing the reading circle sessions in the studied context as a space where collaborative dialogue emerged encompasses all findings presented in this thesis and is discussed in all following chapters. As argued here, the collaborative dialogue both invited and restricted the participants' meaning making process. However, in comparison to the reading of the role reports which were independent acts, this phase of the reading circle sessions involved no invitation for dialogue. The meaning shared in the role reports was mostly left unacknowledged, unless the participants verbalised intertextual links between their meaning making during the collaborative dialogue and their role reports through the repetition of lexis, as discussed in the section below.

5.1.2 Appropriating utterances to co-construct meaning

The previous section identified how the participants interwove their utterances and collaborative dialogue with narrative retellings and meaning making, this section elaborates on the finding of how the participants repeated lexis from the novels and imbued them with personal meaning. Discussed above (section 2.1.1), this process is referred to as appropriation and draws on the idea that utterances are always reminiscent of utterances that came before them (Bakhtin, 1981, p.293). Split into two sub-sections, the first describes how the participants repeated lexis from the novels, and the second how they repeated items used by peers. This involved both self- and other-repetition and served the dual purpose of pointing to specific narrative elements and referring to already shared meaning. These items became artefacts that supported the participants' languaging, during collaborative dialogue as well as role reports.

5.1.2.1 Repeating lexis from the novels

Category 5 Repeating lexis from the novels

This category concerns instances when the participants repeated lexis from the novels and used them as artefacts to develop their responses to the novels. To exemplify and describe, presented below are extracts from the group reading *Q&A* which involved the repetition of the vocabulary item "revenge". This phrase is used by the main character Ram in the final reading extract of *Q&A*, when he is about to answer the final question on the quiz show *Who will win a billion?* and the quiz host Prem Kumar announces a commercial break. Together they leave the studio to use the washroom and when Ram finds himself alone

with Prem, Ram takes the opportunity to explain his true motivations for entering the show (Swarup, 2009, p.348):

> "'I did not come on your show to win money. No, far from it.' I shake my head exaggeratedly. 'I came on your quiz show to take revenge … on you'"

After this exchange, Ram explains to Prem that his reasons for revenge were Prem's physical assault of Ram's girlfriend Nita and his former employer Neelima, leading to Nita's hospitalisation and Neelima's suicide. Ram intended to shoot Prem, but his conscience gets the better of him, and in a plea for his life, Prem promises to help Ram win the billion. That Ram is aware of Prem's actions is a revelation not only to Prem, but also to the participants of this study who up until this point believed Ram's motivation was money and that there was no connection between Prem and the two women. In the reading circle session that followed this reading extract, the first participant to mention this scene is Liam in his report as Summariser. Extract 7 provides an excerpt from Liam's report when he retold these events.

> **7. Liam_Sum_Q5**
> they both go on the toilet and Ram says he only was there for **revenge** – Prem Kumar is **the guy who beat up Nita**

In this extract, Liam summarised the details of Ram's motivations for "revenge" by briefly describing that Prem "beat up Nita". Liam was the first say to "revenge" in this session and the only one to include it in a role report, but it was repeated seven times during the collaborative dialogue demonstrating how lexis repetition allowed the participants to maintain a shared perspective. In response to the Discussion leader's first question which invited the participants to consider possible "messages of the story", extract 8 exemplifies how Emelie was the first to repeat "revenge".

> **8. Emelie_CD_Q5**
> maybe **revenge** erm doesn't change your **life** to the **better** side and I think you need to be – like more a better person and don't – **take revenge** on things I think

In this example, Emelie used "revenge" twice to explain how she perceived Ram's decision to not shoot Prem to be a message from the author that humans should strive to be above retribution. In extract 9, William, the Discussion leader, elaborated on Emelie's interpretation by reformulating it and incorporating more details from the narrative. With

the repetition of “revenge”, William intertextually linked their utterances and signalled that they were making the same meaning, establishing intersubjectivity.

9. William_CD_Q5

you’re saying that the past doesn’t necessarily need to define you {Emelie: *ja* (‘yes’)} even though you lived a life in poverty and he was erm || maybe this guy maybe- destroyed a bit for him he was a cigarette || Prem Kumar was a cigarette boy **the guy who beat up** {Emelie: mm} **Nita** but – even then he could go – past all that and p- || get- and – and go and win the show instead of {Emelie: yeah} having his **revenge** – in order to live a **better life**

In addition to “revenge”, William’s utterance contained more intertextual links to his peers’ utterances with the items “better” and “life” from Emelie’s utterance and “the guy who beat up Nita” from Liam’s utterance. With William’s utterance, three participants had repeated “revenge”. The fourth, and final repetition, was shared in response to William’s second question when he prompted his peers for their “takes on these revelations within these last chapters”, referring to the plot twist that “Smita was actually to the Gudiya girl and the coin was actually a two-headed all along”. Extract 10 provides Emma’s response.

10. Emma_CD_Q5

yeah I think it was wrong erm that he entered the show to **take revenge** cause it’s never good to like **take revenge** – cause you should be like the better person – yeah

In addition to repeating “revenge”, Emma repeated the phrase “better person” from Emelie’s utterance in extract 8 above as well as her argument. Both girls used the phrase “take revenge” to extrapolate the main character Ram’s motivations to humanity at large and argued that revenge is morally wrong. As described above, “revenge” was repeated eight times during this session with *Q&A* and by four different participants. In addition, “revenge” was collocated with “take” in four of these instances. This section has provided one example from each of these participants and demonstrated how the participants used the item to share their responses to the Discussion leaders’ questions. They used “revenge” as an artefact to reference, describe, and respond to the main character’s motivations and their shared meanings. This supports the discussion above of how the participants used language as a tool to mediate communication and that they were involved in collaborative dialogue where previous utterances were used to develop their language and responses to the novels (Swain & Watanabe, 2019, p.1). By repeating select vocabulary items, the participants created intertextual links between their utterances, positioning themselves with their peers and situating their meaning making in the shared context of the collaborative

dialogue. As argued above, repetition mediates languaging and allows speakers to maintain a shared perspective (Swain & Watanabe, 2013, p.4). Moreover, this section also identified the repetition of other items, “beat up Nita” and “better person”, which are not used by the author of *Q&A* but instead came from the participants’ own linguistic repertoires and meaning making process – the topic of the section below.

5.1.2.2 Repeating lexis that represented the participants’ meaning

Category 6 Repeating lexis that represented the meaning participants made of the narratives

This category concerns instances when the participants repeated lexis that represented the meaning they made of the narratives – but which originated with the participants themselves and could not be found in the novels. To exemplify and describe, presented below are extracts from the second, fourth, and fifth sessions with group reading *Running* when the item “judge” was repeated in total 14 times. Summarised in table 7 below, judge was first introduced in the second session with the most occurrences and re-emerged in the fourth session by one participant who repeated it again in the fifth session. In these occurrences, “judge” was collocated with different items such as “people” and “a book by its cover”.

Table 7 The repetition of "judge" across *Running's* sessions

"judge"	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**Total**
Hanna	0	2	0	1	4	7
Ida	0	1	0	0	0	1
Ebba	0	4	0	0	0	4
Johanna	0	1	0	0	0	1
Viktor	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total	0	9	0	1	4	14

Before examining data extracts, first consider the reading extract for *Running's* second session when the reader is invited to follow Deo's thoughts and reaction to Patson, a boy with one leg, who wanted to play football with Deo and the other children (Williams, 2012, p.65):

> "He digs his crutches into the dirt again and takes another step forward. He is staring at me, daring me. How does this boy think he can play with only one leg? I feel sorry for him, but he can't play with us."

Soon after this, Deo initial negative evaluation is proven mistaken as Patson demonstrates that he is an extraordinarily good player. In *Running's* second session, Ida was the first participant to retell this scene and shared her response to it in her report as Literary wizard, excerpted in extract 11.

> **11. Ida_LW_R2**
> I think that it's wrong to **judge** people just because of how they look – the inside may be just as important or even more important

In this extract, Ida evaluated Deo's initial reaction and assessed his actions as wrongful. This rejection of the main character's actions was a recurring response by the participants, discussed further in the chapter on the reader response analysis (section 6.3.2). This example and the examples below demonstrate that the participants reading *Running* agreed in their rejection of Deo's actions and used "judge" to elaborate on their shared understanding that judging people for their looks is a type of discrimination. Later the same session, the Discussion leader Ebba retold the same scene in one of her questions from her point of view that Deo had "judged a book by its cover" and invited her peers to consider whether this was something they could relate to.

12. CD_R2

Ebba: when Patson the boy who were missing a leg came to be a part of one of the soccer teams then no one thought he was able to play until he showed them – do you often **judge** a book by its cover and is it easy to **judge** someone depending on how- on how they look?

Hanna: yeah exactly I also think that like when you meet a person you'll always have like a thought or how you think {Ebba: mm} the person – erm will be but I don't think you should like **judge** them **before** you have talked to them or – || erm yeah like – like erm Patson || erm instead of like **judging** him yeah **before** he – like shows what he can do – erm you should like give them a ch- a chance and erm – let them show you – and

Ebba: yeah

Viktor: yeah I agree it's a big problem that- that we **judge** people **before** we get to know them – so we know – their qualities and such

Ebba: yeah – what do you {girl: yeah} think?

Johanna: erm I think that it's wrong to **judge** somebody **before** you get to know them because when you get to know a person everyone – is – often very kind {Ebba: yeah}

As demonstrated in Ida's utterance in extract 11 above and the four participants' utterances in extract 12, all attending participants in the second session with group reading *Running* repeated the item "judge". They collocated it with a noun or a pronoun, "people", "somebody", "them", and "him". In the collaborative dialogue in extract 12, the function of "judge" is at least twofold, to situate each participants' response in relation to Ebba's question and to share the meaning each individual participant made. In addition, "before" is repeated four times, repeating the shared understanding that making premature judgements about people is wrong. This demonstrates how the participants' utterances are linked intertextually and how each utterance is an elaboration on the previous (Bazerman, 2004a, p.63). First, Hanna made the argument to not judge people and urged that "you should give them a chance and let them show you". Viktor identified it as "a big problem" and Johanna argued that first impressions are unreliable, and that people are "often very kind" once you get to know them. Similarly to the category co-operative completion of utterances below (section 5.2.1.2, extract 27), extract 13 demonstrates how the participants co-constructed collaborative dialogue when responding to the Discussion leaders' questions and facilitated the development of language and responses to the narratives. That collaborative dialogue can allow for the emergence of new and refined knowledge (Swain

& Watanabe, 2019, p.1) is exemplified in the remaining instances that “judge” appeared in the reading circle sessions with the group reading *Running*. In their fourth and fifth session, the participant Hanna repeated “judge” and linked it to xenophobia and racism. Extract 13 provides an excerpt from her report as Creative connector in which she described her response to the scene when an angry mob attacked immigrants in Johannesburg, because “they don’t like immigrants”. Hanna signposted the shared reading, “they tell us”, and described her interpretation of the scene as an act of racism.

13. Hanna_CC_R4

> in this week’s reading of now is the time for running they tell us about people getting killed by other people who don’t like immigrants … I think that erm racism erm comes from the fear of the unknown and prejudice against people – erm instead of erm **judging** people **before** we’ve met them erm we should get to know them properly

In this extract, by repeating not only “judge” but also “before”, Hanna repeated the argument against premature judgements and critically evaluated the origins of racism as stemming from “fear”. She also argued that to fight racism “we should get to know them properly”, including her peers in the effort. This call for action was a frequent response shared by the participants in reaction to injustices experienced by the characters, further discussed in the presentation of the reader response analysis (section 6.3.3). Extract 14 provides an abridged excerpt from Hanna’s report as Literary wizard, when she read a direct quote from an interview with Deo’s teammate on the street soccer team and elaborated on her argument against racism.

14. Hanna_LW_R5

> how do the others erm South Africans erm on the team feel about playing with refugees from other – erm they are not refugees they are people says T-Jay cutting of the erm journalist erm I chose this paragraph because I think T-Jay is completely right … they are in the team because they are good soccer players – and not because they erm come from a certain place … instead of **judging** people – because of their nationality erm we should meet them without prejudices – and erm let them show erm what they are capable of doing

In Hanna’s report, which originally contained four repetitions of “judge”, Hanna agreed with the character T-Jay that his teammates were primarily people and “good soccer players”, not refugees. She elaborated on her previous call for action to fight racism by arguing that we should ignore nationality and instead focus on people’s competence. Extract 14 marks the final repetition of “judge” and as described above, “judge” was first introduced by Hanna’s peers, but Hanna was the last participant to use it and the one who

repeated it most frequently, with seven instances of the total of 14 (table 7 above). In the first session, the participants used "judge" to describe how they interpreted Deo's initial negative reaction to the boy Patson with one leg who wanted to play football. They extended this meaning to intertextually include all situations when we "judge people before we get to know them" and the participants agreed this is "wrong" and a "big problem". In the following sessions, Hanna broadened the perspective of "judge" even further. In response to violent crimes against immigrants in the novel, Hanna used "judge people" to intertextually link to acts of racism, argue against it, and make calls for actions. In sociocultural theory, the self- and other-repetition of artefacts, in this case lexis, in new communicative situations, suggests they have been internalised and attributed with specific relevance for the speaker (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p.69). This suggests that to Hanna, the issue of racism was very important or at least that it was something she felt comfortable talking about in English and that she used the role reports as an affordance to develop her response to the novel (van Lier, 2000, p.253). Moreover, as stated above, the author of the novel *Running* did not use the item "judge". Yet, as illustrated by the various narrative elements retold by the participants in the above extracts and their response, xenophobia is a recurring theme in the novel. In fact, there is an author's note in the end pages where the author explains the meaning of "xenophobia" and how it has played a decisive role in the history of South Africa. As the data extracts in this section demonstrates, the participants responded to this theme and used the vocabulary item "judge" as an artefact to express their rejection of xenophobic beliefs and behaviour and made calls for action.

5.1.3 Section discussion and conclusion

This section has described, exemplified, and discussed how lexis repetition facilitated the participants' language development and responses to the novels. In doing so, two points of origin were identified, from the novels and from the participants' meaning making. In both cases, the participants repeated lexis to intertextually link their utterances to utterances shared by their peers and situate their own utterances in the emerging shared perspective. The participants appropriated the items and used them to communicate their own intentions and meanings (Bakhtin, 1981, p.293), pointing to narrative elements as well as how they made meaning of these elements. Thus, these items became linguistic artefacts that supported the languaging process and facilitated the co-construction of collaborative dialogue (Swain & Watanabe, 2013). They became a shared resource to reuse and mediate the collective meaning making (Kozulin, 2018, p.28). This supports and extends the finding of repetition as a mediational mean during collaborative dialogue with pairs of L2

learners around language-related problems (DiCamilla & Antón, 1997) to illustrate how repetition in this study facilitated the development of responses to novels in groups of five-six learners. Explained with the concept of intertextuality (Bazerman, 2004b), the identification of lexis repetition represents overt intertextual links between utterances and allowed the participants to develop their responses to the novels.

By linking the findings of lexis repetition to the findings from the identification of how the participants distinguished between narrative retellings and how they made meaning of these retellings, emerged an understanding of how utterances were linked intertextually. First, the participants interwove their utterances and dialogue with narrative retellings and meaning making using the retellings as artefacts to develop their responses to the novels. This finding provides insights into the discussion of what constitutes reading comprehension of literary texts (Alderson, 2000, p.66). In this study, the participants demonstrated an intention to establish intersubjectivity and a shared understanding of the novels by signposting the shared reading experience, elaborating on peers' narrative retellings, and the repetition of shared meanings, linguistically realised by lexis repetition. This discussion concludes this section and below follows a description of how the participants repaired their own and their peers' utterances in terms of form, lexis, and narrative retellings.

5.2 Repairing form, lexis, and narrative retellings

As explained in the analytical procedures (section 3.4), the analysis involved an iterative process where three key moments of analytical insights propelled the analysis forward. This section presents, exemplifies, and discusses the findings from the second insight, the negative case analysis. This analysis identified talk that deviated from the two main communicative patterns: reading role reports and responding to the Discussion leaders' questions. This resulted in the categorising of short intermittent episodes of talk that were embedded in the two main communicative patterns. In other words, during these episodes, the participants temporarily abandoned the main purpose of their talk to e.g., organise the turn-taking. As described in the analytical procedures (section 3.4), this negative case analysis generated more findings than reported in this thesis. Instead, to answer the research questions, this section focuses on the types of talk that generated verbal interaction in English and the development of responses to the YA novels. These concerned instances of repair focused on form and lexis (section 5.2.1) and narrative retellings (section 5.2.2). Moreover, this analysis followed the categorisation used in

conversation analysis of L2 classroom talk, identifying who undertook the repair, either the speakers, i.e., self-repair, or the hearers, i.e., other-repair (Seedhouse, 2004, p.34).

5.2.1 Repairing form and lexis

As stated above, an extensive number of instances of repair was initially identified (appendix 10) but the repair types reported here were reduced to focus on answering the research questions. Thus, this section reports on instances of repair of form and lexis that developed the participants' language and responses to the novels. Except for the Discussion summarisers, all role reports were pre-prepared and when presenting them during the first phase of the reading circle sessions, the participants read their prepared scripts aloud. As the participants submitted their written scripts, they could be compared to the audio recordings and instances when they deviated from one another could be identified. In the second phase of the sessions, when the participants responded to the Discussion leaders' questions, their speech was spontaneous, and retrace-and-repair sequences were identified. Defined above (section 4.1.2.3), retrace-and-repair sequences refer to reformulations or abandoning grammatically incomplete utterances to start anew (Biber et al., 2021, pp.1056-1057). This analytical focus follows sociocultural theory, this thesis' conceptual framework, that intentionality is vital to learning (Ortega, 2015, p.250). This section first describes how the participants self-initiated self-repair of their utterances, focusing on form and lexis (section 5.2.1.1), and second, how peers repaired speakers' utterances, focusing on lexis only (section 5.2.1.2).

5.2.1.1 Self-initiated self-repair of form and lexis

This section describes how the participants self-initiated self-repair of form and lexis. Summarised in table 8 below, the focus of the participants' repair differed between reading the role reports and the collaborative dialogue generated by the Discussion leaders' questions. During the former, the repair focused on correcting form and adding lexis, and during the latter, the focus was placed on reformulations and modifying meaning. Self-repair of lexis, in total 478 instances, was considerably more frequent than self-repair of form, in total 226 instances, across both the reading of the role reports and responding to the Discussion leaders' questions.

Table 8 Self-repair of form and lexis

No.	Category	Role reports	Collaborative dialogue	Total
7	Form	136	90	226
8 and 9	Lexis	220	258	478
	Total	356	348	704

As discussed in the analytical procedures (section 3.4), the initial number of categories (appendix 10) was reduced during the final stages of the analysis to better answer the research questions. To understand how the participants self-repaired lexis, the most frequent sub-categories are reported here: added and replaced lexis (table 9 below).

Table 9 Self-repair of lexis

No.	Category	Role reports	Collaborative dialogue	Total
8	Added lexis	133	13	146
9	Replaced lexis	87	245	332
	Total	220	258	478

In addition, a few repair instances involved private speech. As discussed above (3.1.1), private speech refers to verbalised speech with a self-regulating function, e.g., focusing attention or orienting oneself to tasks (Lantolf, Poehner & Thorne, 2020, p.227). Using private speech during conversation involves a temporary shift of interlocutor, from directing speech to the interlocutors to instead use self-directed speech. Frawley (1997, p.179) summarises the distinction between private and social speech during interaction as "public speech for private means". This section describes and exemplifies the categories listed in tables 8 and 9, following the order of self-repaired form, added lexis, replaced lexis, and ends with examples of self-repair mediated by private speech.

Category 7 Self-repaired form

Compared to self-repair of lexis, the instances of self-repair of form were fewer in number (table 8 above) and they mostly concerned correcting verb inflictions to match the subject. Extract 15 provides an excerpt from Sara's report as Literary wizard when a verbalised verb form was different to the one in her script. In this example, the verb form used in the script is in parentheses, "have not", followed by the verbalised correction "hasn't".

15. Sara_LW_S1

… I don't think that a pers- person – who **(have not)** hasn't been in that situation would react in the same way …

Here, Sara correctly collocated "who" with "hasn't", thus not verbalising the written form "have not". This suggests Sara noticed the error while reading her script and repaired it while reading aloud. These instances were often accompanied with dysfluencies, i.e., repeats and filled and unfilled pauses, suggesting that when the participants noticed the error, they used hesitators to give themselves time to retrieve the correct form. In extract 16, the self-repair was preceded by a repeat, "pers- person", and an unfilled pause, suggesting that Sara was reading ahead using inner speech and planning her speech before reading her script aloud. In comparison, during the second phase of the reading circle sessions which involved spontaneous speech, the participants retraced and repaired their verbalised utterances. Extract 16 exemplifies how Hanna noticed an error in her utterance "they will foun-" but cut herself off before articulating completely the final item and modified "foun-" to "find".

16. Hanna_CD_R3

I don't think they will **foun- erm find** him because I mean he would like visite- erm visit – erm them in Gutu if he – like could I think – erm maybe he's (like?) kidnapped or – killed so I don't really think they will find him.

As in extract 15 above, the self-repair in extract 16 was preceded by a dysfluency, here in the form of a filled pause, suggesting that Hanna gave herself more time to plan and execute her modification.

Category 8 Added lexis that elaborated on meaning

This category concerns instances when the participants added lexis to elaborate on and qualify the content of their role reports and responses to the Discussion leaders' questions. Extract 17 provides an example of how Ebba added two vocabulary items, "but" and "even", to her report as Summariser, describing the main characters' Deo's and Innocent's life at a tomato farm.

17. Ebba_Sum_R3

… they got food a place – to sleep on and even money – **but** they were offered a new job – (were) where they were going to get **even** more money so they planned to leave…

In his example, the "but" linked two clauses together, functioning as a coordinating conjunction, and the "even" qualified the message, emphasising the comparison of work salaries at the tomato farm and the offered job. In addition, extract 17 also contains an example of self-repair of form as Ebba's script contained the item "were", but she pronounced it as "where". As Ebba's peers did not have access to her script, only she was aware of her self-repair. However, during the second phase of the reading circle sessions which involved spontaneous speech, the self-repair process was transparent to all the participants. Extract 18 exemplifies how Ella qualified her utterance by adding the item "dusty", when describing how she imagined the main character William drawing in the dust.

18. Ella_CD_G2

I just picture he's sitting on the floor || **and a dusty** floor and just drawing in the dust … I don't think he – ever drawn on paper with a pen and stuff because {Elias: no I don't-} he was really excited when he got it from Mister Tom so

In this example, Ella qualified her description of the floor by adding the lexis "and a dusty" to describe her hypothesis that William learned to draw on dusty floors when living with his mother, which would explain why he was "really excited" when Mister Tom gave him coloured pencils and drawing paper. By adding a qualification to what she had already said suggests that Ella was working out what she was going to say as she was speaking. This follows the principles of spontaneous speech, where limited planning time might create a need to elaborate retrospectively (Biber et al., 2021, pp.1061-1062). The adding of lexis while reading the reports as well as responding to the Discussion leaders' questions suggest a degree of flexibility. To be able to qualify one's utterances while speaking suggests a level of self-regulation involving self-reflection and intentionality to formulate oneself as precisely as possible.

Category 9 Replaced lexis to modify meaning

The above category identified how the participants added lexis, this category identifies how the participants replaced lexis to modify and elaborate on meaning. Extract 19 provides an excerpt from Viktor's report as Creative connector and contains one example of modifying form and three examples of replacing lexis.

19. Viktor_CC_R2

… by reading the world news – **(it is) it's easy** to find a similar phenomena outside of **(this) the** book as well – using smugglers is often regarded as the

> only option for **(migrants) emigrants** who **(seeks) seek** a better life outside their own country …

In this extract, most modifications did not change the meaning of Viktor's utterance. This concerns two of the three lexis replacements, the replacing of "it is" with the contraction "it's" and "this book" with "the book", and the self-repair of form, "seeks" to "seek", which correctly conjugates the verb with the subject "emigrants". However, there is a slight change of meaning with the replacement of "migrants" with "emigrants", the former encompassing immigrants as well as emigrants, and the latter specifying the reference to only concerning people that leave their home countries. Thus, the self-repair to "emigrants" more correctly matches the sequence that followed "who seek a better life outside their own country". To compare to instances of self-repair during the second phase of the reading circle sessions, these involved the replacing of single vocabulary items to the reformulation of longer segments of speech. To exemplify, extract 20 provides an excerpt from one of Wilma's responses to the Discussion leader's question regarding how the participants thought the main character William's passion for drawing would "affect his future".

> **20. Wilma_CD_G2**
> … I think like **as you – || as everyone** had said like I- I agree with you and like I think – maybe it'll like will help- help him in school I don't know – like – **like he can – || like if he can** – || **paint is like kind of like similar to like writing** {Emil: yeah} so maybe **like he – || if he** can move his hand …

This utterance contains four instances of reformulation. First, Wilma replaced "as you" with "as everyone", clarifying that she referred to everyone in the group. Second, she made two false starts before adding a comparison of painting to writing and then finished her argument with "like if he can move his hand", suggesting that the movements of painting could help William in school. This argument draws on the group's shared understanding of the narrative that William was learning how to read and write, but that he had a talent for drawing. Extract 20 above exemplifies how the second phase of the reading circle sessions comprised spontaneous speech, when the participants were thinking on the fly and formulating meaning as they were speaking. The illustrates how the participants frequently used retrace-and-repair sequences to retrace their steps and overwrite what they had just said by reformulating themselves. This follows the principles of spontaneous speech, where limited planning time might lead to sequences of retrace and repair and retrospective elaborations (Biber et al., 2021, pp.1061-1062).

Self-repair mediated by private speech

In the examples of self-repair provided so far, the onset of repair was often marked with hesitators such as repeats and pauses. In some instances, self-repair of form and lexis was accompanied with private speech. Private speech refers to verbalised speech with a self-regulating function, e.g., focusing attention or orienting oneself to tasks (Lantolf, Poehner & Thorne, 2020, p.227). Private speech is considered distinct from egocentric speech, referring to children's social speech under the development to become inner speech (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p.75). In this study, the participants' private speech was realised in English or Swedish. This section reports on two categories, how private speech mediated self-repair and verbalised lexical searches. Summarised in table 10 below, self-repair mediated by private speech occurred more frequently during the reading of role reports than during the collaborative dialogue generated by the Discussion leaders' questions. This might be explained by how responding to the questions was more social and interactional in nature than reading the reports aloud.

Table 10 Self-repair mediated by private speech

No.	Category	Role reports	Collaborative dialogue	Total
10	Self-repair of form and lexis			
	With private speech in Swedish	26	15	41
	With private speech in English	4	6	10
11	Lexical searches			
	With private speech in Swedish	0	4	4
	With private speech in English	0	7	7

Category 10 How private speech mediated self-repair of form and meaning

This category identifies instances when the participants' self-repair was mediated by private speech and the instances in Swedish considerably outnumbered the instances in English (table 10 above). Extracts 21 and 22 provide excerpts of utterances, extracted from two different reading circle sessions, from the second phase of collaborative dialogue, comprising spontaneous speech. The first exemplifies private speech in Swedish, "*eller*" ('or'), and the second exemplifies the lexical equivalent in English, "or".

21. Sara_CD_S1

… they probably <u>knew</u> ***eller*** ('or') || know that {Anton: yeah exactly} – that she's sick already …

22. Anton_CD_S4

… she was gone very much erm **or** – || not at the house …

Even though the private speech in extracts 21 and 22 was linguistically interactive in that it signalled the onset of speech modification, it did not form part of the speakers' main message. Instead, the private speech was prompted by the speakers' self-repair. Frawley (1997, p.179) summarises the distinction between private and social speech during interaction as "false dialogue, public speech for private means". During the spontaneous speech in the reading circle sessions, the participants' private speech verbalised the cognitive process of noticing and modifying their speech and provided them with more planning time.

Category 11 How private speech mediated lexical searches

In addition to mediating self-repair, the participants used private speech in English and Swedish to facilitate lexical searches. In contrast to the instances when the participants used private speech to mediate self-repair, lexical searches mediated by private speech were more often undertaken in English than Swedish. Extract 23 provides an example of private speech in Swedish when Ebba hypothesised why the main character Deo in the novel *Running* began sniffing glue.

23. Ebba_CD_R5

yeah it's – || ***vad ska jag säga*** ('what should I say') it's kinda calm your feelings – so it's like you get in a || another mood when you do it …

Below, extract 24 provides an example of private speech in English when Elsa shared her thoughts on the scene when the main character Miles in the novel *Alaska* is thrown into a lake as part of a hazing ritual. According to his classmates, Miles had made friends with the wrong people, and this was why they decided to also duct taped his hands to his sides.

24. Elsa_CD_A1

… of course it's not right he – || **what is it called** he has right to be with – erm who he wants to be – with …

In extracts 23 and 24, the private speech is preceded by unfilled pauses, verbalising the cognitive process of the lexical search, and providing the speakers with more planning

time. With the private speech, the participants signalled their intention to their peers to search and retrieve lexis. The instances identified here share the characteristic of "false dialogue" (Frawley, 1997, p.179), as described above, because the answer to the speakers' self-addressed questions was only known to the speakers themselves. Only Ebba and Elsa knew what they were intending to say next, and they self-regulated their production in English by using private speech. As stated above, in this study, lexical searches mediated by private speech only occurred during spontaneous speech.

This section has identified how the participants self-repaired their utterances while reading their role reports and responding to the Discussion leaders' questions. The instances of repair focused on form and lexis, albeit the lexis repairs were considerably more frequent. In addition, this section has also identified how the participants sometimes mediated their repairs with private speech and undertook lexical searches. In doing so, in addition to the frequent use of hesitators, i.e., unfilled and pauses and repeats, characteristic of spontaneous speech (Biber et al., 2021, p.1057), they gave themselves more time to plan their speech. This suggests the act of reading their scripts and verbalising their reports allowed the participants to pay attention to their language production, identify form and lexis they wanted to modify, and give themselves time to retrieve the intended form or lexis. Although the role scripts were preprepared, the frequency of repairs suggests the participants considered the reading circle sessions as a final opportunity to create a polished version of their role presentations. In doing so, they created and acted upon their own affordances for language development (van Lier, 2004a, p.95). This indicates intentionality and self-regulation, two integral aspects for language development in sociocultural theory (Lantolf, Poehner & Thorne, 2020, pp.226-227). Moreover, most instances of private speech were verbalised in Swedish, the first language of most participants as reported by themselves (appendix 2). L1 private speech is considered a languaging type, involving self-directed talk to generate and refine knowledge (Swain & Watanabe, 2013, p.4). As discussed above (section 2.1.2), according to sociocultural theory, to be a proficient language user is to be able to self-regulate in that language, bearing in mind that this is not a constant condition and that even the most proficient L2 users revisit earlier stages of self-regulation (Lantolf, Thorne & Poehner, 2015, p.209). In other words, these findings support the large body of research on the usefulness of using the L1 in the L2 classroom (Lee, 2018). This section has focused on self-repair, the section below focuses on other-repair, when hearers repaired speakers' utterances.

5.2.1.2 Other-repair of lexis

The previous section focused on how the participants self-regulated their speech with self-repair of form and lexis. This section focuses on how the speakers' peers repaired the speakers' utterances. Following Seedhouse's (2004, p.34) distinction, the repair of interlocutors' utterances can be initiated by speakers or hearers, i.e., others. In sociocultural theory, this distinction of other- and self-regulation is integral to understanding language development as a process of gaining greater self-control of one's performance (Lantolf, Poehner & Thorne, 2020, pp.226-227). In this study, other-repair focused only on lexis and only occurred during spontaneous speech, not when the participants were reading their reports. To answer the first research question, three categories of other-repair are described and exemplified in this section. Summarised in table 11 below, these are assistance requests for lexis, recasts of lexis, and cooperative completions of utterances.

Table 11 Other-repair of lexis

No.	Category	Total
12	Assistance requests for lexis	5
13	Recasts of lexis	21
14	Co-operative completions of utterances	15

Category 12 Assistance requests for lexis

This category identifies instances when the participants made assistance requests and turned to their peers for lexical searches, requesting their peers to translate lexis in Swedish to English for them. In extract 25, Johanna began her utterance in English but changed to Swedish to make an assistance request.

25. CD_R2

Johanna: erm I think that it's wrong to judge somebody before you get to know them because when you get to know a person everyone – is – often very kind {Ebba: yeah} you think that a person maybe is mean because how they look or || ***vad heter det? vad heter sämre?*** ('what is it called? what is worse?')

Viktor: worse {girl: worse}

Johanna: *a* ('yeah') worse then erm they is – so yeah

In response to Johanna's prompt, Viktor and an unidentified girl offered "worse". Johanna responded positively with an "*a*" ('yeah') in Swedish, indicating that she agreed with her peers' offer, repeated "worse", and proceeded to complete her utterance. According to the interaction approach, assistance requests involve instances when learners request assistance from peers or teachers and can be interpreted as indications of gaps in learner knowledge (Gass & Mackey, 2020, p.204). However, in this example, Johanna's affirmation and her readily repetition of the vocabulary item offered by her peers might suggest that she recognised the item but was temporarily unable to retrieve it. This supports the observation made in SLA research that learners' linguistic repertoires of the target language can vary across different linguistic features (VanPatten et al., 2020, p.11). From a sociocultural perspective, even highly proficient learners revert to earlier stages of development to self-regulate the production of the target language in challenging communicative situations (Lantolf, Thorne & Poehner, 2015, p.209). Instead of considering the use of Swedish in the assistance requests for lexis as an indication of gaps in the participants' linguistic repertoire, in this study they served the constructive function of developing language and reader response. This supports findings of collaborative dialogue with pairs of immersion learners who frequently used their L1 English to undertake target language lexical searches (Swain & Lapkin, 2000).

Category 13 Recasts of lexis

This category identifies instances when speakers pronounced utterances with an interrogative or struggling tone of voice and their listeners recasted vocabulary items for them. In half of these instances, the items were recasted by their peers, and in the other half, it was by their teacher. As discussed above (section 4.1.2.3), according to the interaction approach, recasts involve hearers rephrasing speakers' utterances using a more target-like form, while maintaining original meaning (Gass & Mackey, 2020, p.199). In extract 26, Ella in the group reading *Goodnight* repeated "therapeutic", but stopped herself short with a struggling tone of voice.

26. CD_G2

Ella: yeah I think it's kinda {Elias: inaudible} **therapeutic therape-** [struggling tone of voice]

Oliver: **therapeutic**

Ella: **therapeutic** {Elias: yeah} I don't know how to erm [laughs] pronounce it but – since he- he just could sit in the church for hours and hours and just sit there and draw…

In this example, Ella was clear about what vocabulary item she wanted use but was uncertain about how to pronounce it. Oliver acted on this uncertainty and offered his understanding of how to pronounce "therapeutic" by recasting the vocabulary item. Ella repeated it and Elias uttered a supportive "yeah" in overlapping speech. This was followed by Ella explaining to her peers that she didn't "know how to pronounce it" and she proceeded to justify her interpretation of the main character William's experience of drawing as "therapeutic". In this extract, Ella repeated the recasted item, whereas in others, speakers only affirmed the recast with a backchannelling comment, e.g., "yes" before continuing speaking. This supports the extensive empirical research following the interaction approach that recasts make little participatory demands and that learners may not perceive them as provision of feedback (Gass & Mackey, 2020, pp.202-203). In the sociocultural perspective, identifying learning affordances and acting on them intentionally is integral to learning (Ortega, 2015, p.256). Thus, as exemplified in extract 26 above, when Ella drew on Oliver's linguistic repertoire to refine her pronunciation and complete her utterance, the instances when the speakers repeated the recasted items can be interpreted as collaborative dialogue and a joint effort to facilitate the speakers' language learning (Swain & Watanabe, 2019, p.1).

Category 14 Co-operative completions of utterances

This category identifies instances when peers took the initiative to complete speakers' grammatically incomplete utterances and speakers accepted the completions, either through backchanneling, e.g., "yeah", or by repeating their peers' completions. In extract 27, Alice in the group reading *Alaska* began to share a response to the Discussion leaders' question on what she perceived to be the novel's message and together with Elsa, they co-constructed a response together.

27. CD_A5

Alice: … I- I think that this book have like || it's about erm people get like drunk and something li- something like that – so maybe – it's like – something that

[silence]

Elsa: **you should not drink**

Alice: erm **you should not drink** because {Elsa: **when you drive**} **when you drive** or it's should like not drink because – you are like sad and something because that's what Alaska does sometimes

Alice's first utterance contained multiple hesitators, repeats, filled and unfilled pauses, false starts, a self-repair and four repetitions of the hedging vocabulary item "like", one of the most used stance adverbials to convey epistemic imprecision (Biber et al., 2021, p.862). One of Alice's peers, Elsa, spoke next and offered an elaboration of Alice's utterance and a moral statement, "you should not drink". Alice repeated Elsa's utterance and was about to justify this argument with "because", when Elsa elaborated on her own utterance in overlapping speech "when you drive". Alice repeated this utterance as well and finished describing her justification by sharing the narrative retelling that the character Alaska drinks alcohol when she is sad to provide evidence for Elsa's interpretation of the novel's didactic message. Although this extract contains floor-taking and overlapping speech, by repeating Elsa's utterances and providing support from the novel for her interpretations, suggests Alice agreed with her. As this extract exemplifies, in the instances of co-operative completion of utterances, the participants drew on each other's linguistic repertoires and responses to the novels and co-constructed meaning together. Just as in the category above, this can be interpreted as collaborative dialogue where speakers work together to develop knowledge and solve problems (Swain & Watanabe, 2019, p.1).

This section has focused on identifying instances when other-repair facilitated the development of language and reader response in the form of assistance requests for lexis, recasts of lexis, and co-operative completions of utterances. These instances only occurred during the second phase of the reading circle sessions, when the participants responded to the Discussion leaders' questions. This supports the interpretation stated above (section 5.1.1) that the reading of the role reports provided a space for individual performance whereas the latter concerned collaborative dialogue. Moreover, the findings of the participants' use of Swedish during the other-repair support the now large body of research on the usefulness of L1 in L2 classrooms (Lee, 2018). The collaborative aspect of the other-repair follows the definition of collaborative dialogue to involve problem-solving and knowledge building dialogue (Swain & Watanabe, 2019, p.1). This means that the instances of other-repair of lexis can be considered hierarchically as short episodes of collaborative dialogue nested in the larger collaborative dialogue focused on responding to the Discussion leaders' questions. The findings reported here were generated thanks to the iterative analysis and the negative case analysis. This allowed for the identification of instances when the participants' talk deviated from the main communicative patterns of reading the role reports and responding to the Discussion leaders' questions to form and lexis repair. In addition, instances of repair of the participants' narrative retellings were identified, to which this chapter now turns.

5.2.2 Repairing narrative retellings

As explained in the analytical procedures (section 3.4), the analysis involved a negative case analysis which allowed for the identification of talk that deviated from the identified two main communicative patterns, the reading of role reports and responding to the Discussion leaders’ questions. From this analysis, the identification of brief and intermittent episodes of talk emerged and this chapter reports on the instances of repair which facilitated development of language and responses to the novels. The above section described how the participants repaired the form and lexis in their own and peers’ utterances. Following the categorisation of self-repair and other-repair (Seedhouse, 2004, p.34), this section describes the finding of how the participants repaired their own and their peers’ narrative retellings. As discussed above, the term narrative retelling originates with Arizpe et al.’s (2014, p.124) reader response study which defines narrative retellings as “literal descriptions of the story”. Described above (section 5.1), in this study, the participants used narrative retellings to point to and paraphrase specific elements in the novels and these retellings mediated the development of responses to the novels. As the participants did not have access to the novels during the reading circle sessions, this meant the participants relied on their memory to self-repair their retellings (section 5.2.2.1) or benefitted from their peers’ memory with instances of other-repair (section 5.2.2.2).

5.2.2.1 Self-repair

This section describes and exemplifies how the participants self-repaired their narrative retellings while reading their role reports and during the collaborative dialogue when responding to the Discussion leaders’ questions. Summarised in table 12 below, these instances were more frequent during the latter. When reading their role reports, the participants corrected or added details in a few instances. Whereas during the spontaneous speech of responding to the questions, the participants added details as a tag-on to their already verbalised utterances. Finally, there were ten instances when the participants verbalised private speech to self-negotiate details from the narrative. Below, each self-repair type is described and exemplified.

Table 12 Self-repair of narrative retellings

No.	Category	Role reports	Collaborative dialogue	Total
15	Self-repair of narrative retellings			
	Corrected detail	4	0	4
	Added detail	7	33	40
	Narrative searches	0	10	10
	Total	11	43	54

Category 15 Self-repair of narrative retellings

During the reading of role reports, in four instances the participants did not read the narrative detail stated in their script, but uttered a detail that better matched the novel, thus correcting their script on the fly. Extract 28 provides an excerpt from Liam's report as Summariser in the group reading *Q&A* when Liam corrected a detail in his script.

> **28. Liam_Sum_Q5**
> Shankar dies and Ram goes into Swapni Devi's party and puts Shankar's (dead) body – erm on the **(floor) table**

In this instance, the correction was proceeded by an unfilled and a filled pause, indicating that Liam was reading ahead using inner speech and when noticing that his script did not match his memory of the narrative, Liam verbalised "table" instead of "floor". This matches the novel and the character Ram's account: "I climb on to the table, and place Shankar's body gently in the middle" (Swarup, 2009, p.326). Extract 28 above also contains an example of how Liam omitted the vocabulary item "dead", which avoided repetition, or tautology, as Liam had already stated that "Shankar died". To compare, in seven instances the participants added more details from the narrative. Extract 29 below provides an excerpt from William's report as Character tracer in the group reading *Q&A*, when he qualified his description of the main character Ram by describing how his three names represented three different religions.

> **29. William_CT_Q1**
> I'm going to be talking about the main character Ram Mohammed Tom-Thomas – **they guy with names from three different religions** …

These two extracts were excerpted from role reports, in contrast, extract 30 provides an example from the second phase of the reading circle sessions when the participants

responded to the Discussion leaders' question, and which involved spontaneous speech. Continuing with examples from the group reading *Q&A*, extract 30 provides an excerpt of one of Elin's utterances in response to the Discussion leader's question as to why Ram decided to call the police on his employer Colonel Taylor.

30. Elin_CD_Q2

… since the Tayl- **Taylor didn't really like the Indians** or – || he seemed not like them – so maybe that was kind of a revenge on him

In this extract, Elin self-repaired the assertiveness of her narrative retelling, "Taylor didn't really like the Indians" with "or he seemed not to like them". Her self-repair was signalled with "or" followed by a pause and her modification emphasised that this was her interpretation of the character. As this extract exemplifies, the instances during the spontaneous speech mostly comprised clarifications, specifying the details from the novels, and most frequently concerning pronouns, from "he" to "she" or the other way around. Compared to the reading of the role reports, this phase comprised considerably more instances of self-repair of narrative details. Moreover, just as in the previous section on self-repair of form and lexis (section 5.2.1), in a few instances the self-repair of narrative details was mediated by private speech, once in Swedish and nine times in English. Instead of participants searching their linguistic repertoires to retrieve lexis, the participants verbalised the cognitive process of searching their memory of the reading extracts to retrieve specific narrative details. Extract 31 provides another example from *Q&A* when William mid-utterance initiated private speech to ask himself about the circumstances related to Ram's participation on the quiz show *Who will win a billion?*

31. William_CD_Q1

like if he were to go out on – **was it second question? no it was third one** – it was a third question it's not very exciting for the viewers like I said …

In this example, William retrieved the narrative detail and proceeded to share his message. This exemplifies the instances when the participant used private speech to mediate narrative searches, using self-directed speech to prompt themselves to remember narrative details. In doing so, they appeared to verbalise a mental process of self-negotiation, searching, and retrieving narrative details, and thus giving themselves more time to become confident in their claims. Compared to lexical searches with private speech reported above (section 5.2.1.1), there was a difference between in who knew answers to these searches. With lexical searches, only the speaker knew. With narrative searches, all participants knew as they shared the experience of reading the extracts for the reading

circle sessions. How the participants drew on this shared reading experience is described in the section below, which identifies instances of peers repairing speakers' narrative details.

5.2.2.2 Other-repair

The section above identified instances of self-repair of narrative retellings, this section focuses on other-repair, when peers repaired speakers' utterances. The types of other-repair identified were assistance requests, confirmation checks, and counter-claims, and are described and exemplified below. Summarised in table 13 below, there were more instances of other-repair during the collaborative dialogue that followed from the Discussion leaders' questions than during the reading of role reports. This might be explained by the more interactional nature of the collaborative dialogue generated by the Discussion leaders' questions compared to the reading of the reports aloud, an independent act.

Table 13 Other-repair of narrative retellings

No.	Category	Role reports	Collaborative dialogue	Total
16	Assistance requests	2	11	13
17	Confirmation checks	0	24	24
18	Counter-claims	2	8	10
	Total	4	43	47

Category 16 Assistance requests for narrative details

This category identifies instances when the participants prompted their peers for specific narrative details. Extract 32 provides an abridged excerpt of collaborative dialogue with the group reading *Goodnight* when the participants responded to the Discussion leader's question concerning why they thought the main character William "appeared very shy and afraid of new things". When Oliver was making a point about Mister Tom's dog, he made an assistance request for the dog's name.

32. CD_G1

Emil: since Willie arrived to Tom he's appeared very shy and afraid of new things … why is he like that?

Oliver: … his mother t- mother told Will that there were stray dogs *asså* ('that is') – poi- || that dogs were poisoned – yeah and there were a

lot of dogs erm dogs like that in London so he was afraid- he was afraid of the dog erm – Tom owned old- || **I don't remember the name of the dog?**

Wilma: **Sammy**

Oliver: yeah Sammy – erm he was afraid of the dog at the beginning …

In this extract, Wilma offered "Sammy" which Oliver accepted and repeated, suggesting that Oliver recognised the name when he heard it. Assistance requests refer to learners making requests for assistance from their peers or teachers and from the perspective of the interaction approach can be interpreted as representing knowledge gaps (Gass & Mackey, 2020, p.204). Extract 32 above demonstrates how the participants drew on each other's memory of the novels to co-construct meaning and develop their responses to the novels.

Category 17 Confirmation checks to establish shared narrative understanding

This category identifies instances when the participants shared narrative retellings and asked their peers if they agreed with their description of events. In the interaction approach, confirmation checks are defined as expressions used by interlocutors to confirm they have correctly heard or understood their interlocutors' utterances (Gass & Mackey, 2020, p.199). In this study, speakers made confirmation checks by first stating a narrative detail and second prompting their peers with a tag-on request. Extract 33 exemplifies how Elsa and Julia collaborated to summarise plot events across the entire novel *Alaska*. To support Julia's summary of the main character Miles' character development, Elsa referenced a specific scene from the novel – when Miles was duct taped and thrown into a lake. However, she was uncertain about the veracity of her claim and requested confirmation.

33. CD_A5

Julia: oh ups and downs like in every chapter – so sometimes it's like happy life and everything is good but then like small things can happen and th- and then it gets very big – so yeah I would say it was much up and downs

Elsa: yeah, cause in one chapter he, **wasn't he erm – throwed in the lake?**

Julia: yeah, it, think it was in the {Elsa: yeah} second

Elsa: yeah, and that was one and in- the – end of the book Alaska died and then he was sad and – sometimes in some chapters they were like have a normal happy life and so {Julia: yeah}

In response to Elsa's confirmation check, Julia responded affirmatively and shared her understanding of when the scene took place in the chronological order of the chapters. This positive response encouraged Elsa to share another example from the novel to support Julia's interpretation of Miles' character development. In this extract, the two participants worked together to establish a shared understanding of the narrative to use as a basis for their conclusions. Julia and Elsa acted as problem-posers as well as problem-solvers by identifying a question that mattered to their joint meaning making and drew on their respective reading experience to co-construct meaning and establish a shared understanding of the narrative.

Category 18 Peers challenged and repaired speakers' narrative retellings

This category identifies instances when participants challenged peers' narrative retellings with counter-claims, describing how they remembered the narrative differently. This category was inspired by the observation of challenges and counter-challenges in learner talk during problem-solving activities and how they can facilitate accountability and the verbalisation of reasoning (Mercer, 2000, p.98). In this study, these challenges were often shared as interruptions, taking the floor from the first speaker. Two challenges occurred when speakers were reading their role reports and eight while responding to the Discussion leaders' questions. Extract 34 exemplifies the counter-claim that generated the most talk, made by participants in the group reading *Goodnight*. The participants were hypothesising about Mrs Beech's motivations for hiding William from her neighbours when he came to visit her in London, and this prompted a negotiation of whether the neighbours had ever known about William.

34. CD_G3

Oliver: yeah I think erm – sh- || I don't think Willie has a dad so she's trying to keep her children a secret to not feel ashamed of || <u>ashamed</u> about- {Ella: but-}

Ella: [interrupted] **but people already know Willie** – I {Oliver: yeah} mean he – he went school there and he –

Wilma: no he didn't went to s-

Ella: yeah

Elias: he didn't go to school {Wilma: he was}

Ella: [interrupted; raised voice volume] I think he did because they have mentioned that he hadn't many friends and he was bullied and stuff {Elias: yeah}

In response to Oliver's hypothesis that William's mother was ashamed of her children born out of wedlock, Ella counter-challenged with the claim that William "went to school there", so people should know about him already. This claim was in turn counter-challenged by Wilma and Elias who both argued that William had not attended school in London. The brevity and decisiveness of their challenges may be reminiscent of *Goodnight's* previous sessions when they argued extensively that William had never attended school before his evacuation from London to Mister Tom – Wilma and Elias were convinced they were right. Ella responded by evoking more details from the narrative, "he hadn't many friends and he was bullied", providing more evidence for her claim. The excerpt below from the novel demonstrates how William describes his experience of school in London to Mister Tom and supports Ella's retelling.

> 'About this here schoolin', didn't yer teacher help you?'
>
> 'Yeh, but…' He hesitated. ''E didn't like me. The others all called me Sillie Sissie Willie.'
>
> 'What others?'
>
> 'At school.'
>
> 'What about yer friends?'
>
> …
>
> Willie cleared his throat. 'I ain't got no friends.' (Magorian, 1981, pp.38-39)

Nevertheless, as the participants did not have access to the novels during the reading circle session they had to rely on their memory. Ella's evocation of these narrative details generated an extended talk sequence during which the participants negotiated their comprehension of the novel. Although Ella's understanding matched the written page, her peers remained firm in their understanding. Eventually, 18 turns later and demonstrated in extract 35, Ella re-focused the group's attention to her initial challenge of Oliver's argument and suggested a compromise.

35. CD_G3

Ella: no- no probably not but – yeah **the main thing** was {Agnes: yeah} **he wasn't a secret** because {Agnes: no} people knew who he was

Wilma: yeah

Agnes: yeah

Emil: maybe she doesn't want anyone to know erm to know he's there because erm she don't **want him to be evacuated again** and if no one knows he's there then he can't be like || he can't be taken away but I || erm or I don't know

Ella's peers agreed with her that "the main thing" was that William "wasn't a secret" and Emil extended the dialogue by introducing a hypothesis that did not rely on William's former school experiences, but that Mrs Beech potentially did not "want him to be evacuated again". This is an example of interlocutors establishing intersubjectivity by agreeing to disagree to promote communication (Matusov, 1996, p.29). Emil's hypothesis generated another extended sequence of hypotheses-generation, spanning 15 turns, and the participants in this group never raised the question again of whether William had attended school before his evacuation. Even though they did not reach consensus on an understanding that reflected the written page, this episode of story negotiation contained extensive negotiation of the narrative and collective meaning making. The participants compromised and agreed on an interpretation that allowed them to complete the purpose of the reading circles, to continue the session for the duration of their allocated time. Extract 35 above exemplifies how the instances of challenges and repairs of peers' narrative retellings involved regulation of the group's shared understanding of the novels and the premises of their arguments – they posed their own problems, and they solved them themselves.

5.2.3 Section discussion and conclusion

The finding of self- and other-repair of narrative retellings suggest the participants were focused on getting the narrative details right. From a sociocultural perspective, their role scripts and verbalised utterances became artefacts, claims about the novels that could be questioned, corrected, and elaborated on. This facilitated a languaging process of developing their understanding of the novels, with self-directed speech or dialogue that involved their peers, co-constructing collaborative dialogue (Swain & Watanabe, 2019, p.1). Either the participants repaired their verbalised retellings and used private speech to

focus their attention and retrieve more details, or they turned to their peers. By making assistance requests, confirmation checks, and counter-challenges, the participants collaborated to build knowledge and solve the problem, identified by themselves, of establishing a reading comprehension that matched the narrative. Table 14 below summarises the findings of self-and other-repair reported above (tables 8, 11, 12, and 13) to illustrate the distribution of modifications of form, lexis, and narrative retellings. There were considerably more instances of self- than other-repair and self-repairs were more focused on form and lexis than narrative retellings. Instances of other-repairs were almost evenly distributed between lexis and narrative retellings, however there were no instances of other-repair of form.

Table 14 Self- and other-repair of form, lexis, and narrative retellings

Repair type	Form	Lexis	Narrative retellings	Total
Self-repair	226	478	54	758
Other-repair	0	41	47	88
Total	226	519	101	846

As previous conversation analysis of L2 classrooms have demonstrated, identifying the focus of the repairs may provide insights into what the participants perceived to be the communicative purpose. Following a distinction between meaning-and-fluency or task-oriented contexts (Seedhouse, 2004, p.142), the findings reported here suggest the participants were primarily focused on meaning-and-fluency with a secondary task-oriented focus. The frequency of self-repair of form and lexis suggests a focus on individual performance and that the participants perceived it to be important they expressed themselves clearly and accurately. On the other hand, other-repairs were more concerned with lexis and narrative retellings than form. This suggests the participants were more focused on meaning-and-fluency than form-and-accuracy and found it important to verbalise and establish agreement on an understanding of the novels that matched the written page. This is indicative of task-oriented contexts where teachers withdraw to allow learners to work out the task themselves, leading to a focus on removing hindrances for task completion (Seedhouse, 2004, p.153). This suggests that deficiencies in reading comprehension were considered hindrances by the participants and an intention to eliminate them allowed for task completion. The frequent negotiation of narrative retellings thus allowed the participants to establish intersubjectivity, creating a shared

understanding of the novels and uniting the participants in the common goal of regulating their reading comprehension (Thorne & Lantolf, 2007, p.180).

5.3 Chapter discussion and conclusion

This chapter has described and exemplified the findings from two key moments of analytical insights. First, how the identification of an indicative and a semiotic function of the participants' utterances allowed for the understanding to emerge of how the participants talked about the novels in terms of narrative retellings (section 5.1.1) and how they appropriated lexis from the novels and previous utterances to link and develop meaning making (section 5.1.2). Second, how the negative case analysis allowed for the identification of intermittent episodes of talk that deviated from the two main communicative patterns of reading role reports and sharing responses to the Discussion leaders' questions. This resulted in the identification of repairs of the participants' utterances in the form of self- and other-repair of lexis and form (section 5.2.1) and narrative retellings (5.2.2). The analysis of these findings allowed for the understanding to emerge of how the reading circle sessions facilitated languaging and collaborative dialogue and allowed the participants to develop their language and responses to the novels. As this study was completed as a qualitative study that aimed to examine the meaning making processes during the reading circle sessions, there was no analysis of the distribution of findings between participants or reading circle groups. Instead, all reading circle sessions formed the unit of analysis and themes were identified across the data set. This chapter discussion and conclusion summarises and discusses the findings according to the aims of the research questions to provide insights into verbal interactions around literary texts and opportunities for language learning (section 5.3.1) and reader response (5.3.2).

5.3.1 Development of language

This section summarises and discusses how the findings presented in this chapter provide insights into how the reading circles facilitated language development. Framed by the conceptual framework, the analysis generated findings that identified how the participants used language as a tool to mediate their communication (Lantolf, Poehner & Thorne, 2020, p.224), through languaging and collaborative dialogue (Swain & Watanabe, 2019, p.1). This section discusses how the participants' repair of form and lexis, use of Swedish and private speech, and lexis repetition provide insights into the research questions on verbal interactions around literary texts and opportunities for language learning. These findings

are also compared to previous empirical research by identifying how they are situated in, diverge, and extend the existing body of research and theory in sociocultural theory on L2 language development.

Repair of form and lexis

Discussed in the analytical framework (section 4.1.1), previous research on collaborative dialogue concerns activities where interlocutors collaborate to generate a written product or solve language-related tasks (Suzuki & Storch, 2020; Swain & Watanabe, 2019). This study was different in that the participants were collaborating to generate dialogue; their speech was the purpose of their communication as well as their tool. To account for these differences, the analysis of the participants' repair followed Seedhouse's (2004, p.34) definition of how repair involves the treatment of communication breakdowns during interaction. While reading their reports, the participants made numerous form corrections and lexis modifications, adding, and replacing vocabulary items that elaborated and specified the content. Even though their scripts were prepared, the frequency of repairs suggests the participants used the reading of their reports as a final opportunity to improve and polish their presentations. When responding to the Discussion leaders' questions, the participants frequently retraced-and-repaired their utterances, modifying lexis. As discussed above (section 4.1.2.2), analysing learners' repair can provide insights into the communicative and pedagogical purpose of their interaction. In this study, the participants' self-repair primarily focused on form and lexis with a few instances of repair of narrative retellings, whereas the other-repair only focused on lexis and narrative retellings. Further insights into the educational purpose can be generated by comparing the frequency of self- and other-repair to ascertain the participants' preferences. In this study, the participants' repair strategies followed the order or preference identified in previous studies of L2 classroom talk where self-repairs were more preferred than other-repair (Seedhouse, 2004, pp.145-146). This suggests intentional activity and that the participants perceived it important to express themselves accurately and clearly. That they repaired the form and lexis of their own utterances significantly more often than those of their peers could mean that they were more aware of their own language production or perhaps other-repair of form and lexis did not form part of the participants' communicative practices. The repair of narrative retellings is discussed below (section 5.3.2), in relation to the development of the participants' responses to the novels.

As argued above (section 5.2.3), distinguishing between L2 activities that are task-oriented or focus on meaning-and-fluency (Seedhouse, 2004, p.142), the frequency of the focus of the repairs suggests the participants were primarily focused on meaning-and-fluency with a secondary task-oriented focus of establishing shared understanding of the novels. Moreover, as the repair during the reading of the role scripts was primarily concerned with self-repair and the turn-taking order allowed for little spontaneous interaction, this phase of the reading circle sessions can be likened to what has been described as presentational talk. Barnes (2008, p.6) defines presentational talk as speakers focusing on modifying content and language to present a product that is polished for display. In this study, most participants read their role reports from beginning to end without interruptions from others or prompting assistance from their peers. As reported above, the instances of self-initiated and other-initiated other-repair during this phase of the reading circle sessions were very infrequent in comparison. This suggests the participants relied on an established intersubjectivity of shared intentions and understandings, an integral feature of human interaction (The Douglas Fir Group, 2016, p.27). Moreover, the participants acted under the shared cognition that requesting assistance can lead to provision of requested items. Again, this follows the definition of collaborative dialogue, a type of languaging where interlocutors are engaged to develop knowledge and solve problems (Swain & Watanabe, 2019, p.1). The frequency of repairs suggests that when the participants heard their own and their peers' utterances aloud, they noticed aspects they wanted to modify and made the modifications they considered appropriate. This supports SLA research drawing on the hypothesis that interaction in the target language can allow learners to notice and pay attention to linguistic aspects in the input (Schmidt, 2001). It also supports the output hypothesis that production of the target language can facilitate learners noticing and paying attention to linguistic aspects in their output and push them to modify their own language use (Swain, 1995). In this study, not only did the participants initiate collaborative dialogue with their peers, they also languaged with themselves to develop their language and narrative retellings (Swain & Watanabe, 2019, p.1). The findings on other-repair support research on language-related episodes (LREs), an analytical unit discussed above (section 4.1.1) and used to analyse collaborative dialogue, focusing on instances when learners correct or question their own or peers' language use (Swain & Watanabe, 2019, p.3). In sociocultural theory, to notice and attend errors in one own's and other's production assumes self-and other-regulation, two functions associated with higher mental functions (Lantolf, Poehner & Thorne, 2020, p.223). Thus, in this study, considering how the speakers self-regulated their speech but also how they initiated other-repair of their own utterances, and the repair of their peers' utterances suggests high levels of regulation.

Use of Swedish and private speech

This chapter reported how the participants used Swedish to request vocabulary items (section 5.2.1.2) and verbalise private speech (section 5.2.1.1). As described in the methodology chapter (section 3.2.3) and demonstrated by the presented data extracts, the participants' linguistic repertoires were sufficient to prepare the role reports and co-construct dialogue, yet they occasionally used Swedish. Rather than considering these instances as communication breakdowns, they can instead be considered useful opportunities to develop language through communication. This interpretation supports research following the output hypothesis that producing the target language can allow learners to notice linguistic problems and push them to modify their own language use (Swain & Lapkin, 1995). It also follows the position of sociocultural theory which considers the use of L1 in a useful and positive light and that it can mediate and push L2 production forward (Ortega, 2015, p.256). With respect to collaborative dialogue, previous research demonstrates that L1 is a useful tool to mediate problem solving and knowledge building (Swain & Watanabe, 2019, p.5). In this study, most participants reported that Swedish was their L1, however some reported speaking other languages at home or on a regular basis (appendix 2). Considering these plurilingual repertoires, Swedish cannot be considered the L1 of all participants but rather their shared language and the language they used most frequently together. Thus, when the participants made assistance requests for lexis, these were formulated as translation requests from Swedish to English. Their private speech was realised sometimes in English, but mostly in Swedish to maintain the intersubjective nature of the reading circle sessions.

The purpose of their interaction was to speak the target language and knowing their teacher would assess their performance might have made the participants feel anxious. As discussed in the conceptual framework (section 2.1.2), according to sociocultural theory, even the most proficient language learners re-access earlier stages of development to mediate target language production in challenging communicative situations (Lantolf, Thorne & Poehner, 2015, p.209). The speech in Swedish might represent instances when the participants perceived their linguistic repertoires insufficient, causing cognitive overload and a return to earlier stages of self-regulation. The identified findings demonstrate how the participants used Swedish to remove obstacles hindering the completion of the reading circle sessions. This analysis supports findings from previous research located in sociocultural theory (e.g., DiCamilla & Antón, 2012; Swain & Lapkin, 2000) that using L1 in the language classroom mediates collaborative dialogue and

language development. However, it diverges and extends the scope of investigation to consider the plurilingual repertoires of the participants and how some of them reported speaking other languages on a regular basis. As this study demonstrates, the participants used their shared language Swedish as a tool to mediate their communication and maintain intersubjectivity.

Lexis repetition

In all reading circle sessions, participants self-repeated lexis and other-repeated lexis used by their peers to refer to previous utterances (section 5.1.2). This finding provides insights into the identified under-researched research area of how lexis repetition can mediate collaborative dialogue (section 4.1.2.1). This study supports the findings from the one identified study on repetition during collaborative dialogue. DiCamilla and Antón (1997) investigated how pairs of language learners solved language-related problems. The learners used repetition as a linguistic resource to establish a shared understanding of the writing task and maintain intersubjectivity, findings that parallel this study's findings. However, the communicative purpose of the collaborative dialogue differed. In DiCamilla and Antón's (1997) study, the purpose was to co-construct written texts, whereas the participants in this study co-constructed dialogue, thus using language as a tool as well as a product. The product of the reading of role reports and collaborative dialogue were invisible utterances. The participants had to rely on their memory of the novels and previous utterances, their own and their peers'. Described above (section 3.3.2), the reading circle sessions lasted approximately 10-24 minutes and the participants met once a week for five weeks. The lexis repetition within and across sessions, from the novels and previous utterances, facilitated the maintaining of a shared perspective. Moreover, what began as a repetition of lexis from the novels came to represent the meaning the participants made. In doing so, the participants appropriated the lexis for their own meaning making and self-regulated their production in English. With their reuse of lexis from the novels the participants demonstrated their ability to transform material, to create something new. This incorporates Bakhtin's dialogism with a sociocultural perspective on language learning, that utterances always follow one another, responding to the previous and qualifying the latter (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, pp.10-11). The lexis repetition created lexical cohesion between the participants' utterances, reinforcing the interpretation of an intersubjective process of working towards the same goal. In Mercer's (2008, p.51) terms, this lexis became "shared vocabulary". In this study, the repeated lexis represented conceptual artefacts that carried forward meaning from session to session, becoming a

shared resource available to all group members. In addition to extending research on lexis repetition as a tool, as each reading circle group met five times, this finding might also contribute to the research on task repetition to include how shared lexis across sessions facilitated the development of shared meanings (Swain & Watanabe, 2019, p.4).

This section has discussed how three findings provide insights into how the reading circles facilitated language development: repair of lexis and form, use of Swedish and private speech, and lexis repetition. Explained from the sociocultural perspective, the linguistic repertoires of the novels and of the participants' verbalised utterances during the reading circle sessions were offered to be reused as semiotic resources (Kozulin, 2018, p.28). Considered through learning metaphors, discussed above (section 1.2), the findings presented here support arguments against the acquisition metaphor and for the participation metaphor (Kullenberg & Säljö, 2022, pp.545-546). This interpretation constructs development as a result of social interaction and a process of becoming an active participant and user of the target language. How these findings provide answers to the research questions is discussed in the conclusion (section 7.1). The section below focuses on how the findings presented in this chapter provide insights into how the reading circles facilitated development of the participants' responses to the novels.

5.3.2 Development of responses

This section summarises and discusses how the findings presented in this chapter provide insights into how the reading circles facilitated the development of the participants' responses to the novels. Framed by the conceptual framework, the analysis generated an understanding of how the participants talked about the novels using language as a tool to mediate their communication (Lantolf, Poehner & Thorne, 2020, p.224). With the concepts of intertextuality (Bazerman, 2004a), languaging and collaborative dialogue (Swain & Watanabe, 2019, p.1) there is an intersection of theory, linking Vygotsky's sociocultural theory with Bakhtin's dialogism. This section discusses first how the participants intertextually linked their comprehension of the narrative and the meaning they made of it, using their reading comprehension as a conceptual artefact. Second, how the participants used self- and other-repair to regulate their reading comprehension and create a common frame of reference. Third, how they interwove their utterances with narrative retellings and meaning making as well as drew on their peers' narrative retellings to co-construct collaborative dialogue. Together with the shared reading comprehension, this generated validity claims and provided the starting point for deliberative communication (Englund,

2006; 2016). Discussed from the perspective of sociocultural theory, these findings are compared to previous research on readers' responses to literary texts, identifying how they are situated in, diverge, and extend the existing body of research.

Intertextuality between the indicative and semiotic functions

In sociocultural theory, language is understood as a tool that mediates communication and meaning making. In this perspective, language is not a system with definite meanings, but meaning is made as we use language. In Vygotsky's (1987, p.251) words, "thought is restructured as it is transformed into speech". In this study, this view of language allowed for one key moment of analytical insight to emerge that distinguishes it from previous reader response studies – the identification of an indicative and a semiotic function (Säljö, 2014, pp.83-88) of the participants' utterances. This generated the understanding of how the participants' responses to the novels served the dual function of pointing to specific narrative elements and making meaning of these elements. Extending the discussion of how different research fields have approached the reading process and conceptualised constructs such as comprehension and interpretation, this relates to an important difference between this study and reader response studies with readalouds and shared reading of picturebooks where all participants can see the spreads.

In this study, as the participants did not have access to the novels during the reading circle sessions and each reading extract comprised several chapters, they needed to rely on their memory of the reading. By acknowledging this need and identifying an indicative function of the participants' utterances, the analysis acknowledged the specific context of the reading circle sessions. This allowed for the identification of the frequent direct and indirect quotations of the novels in the participants' utterances. In this study referred to as narrative retellings, the finding emerged of how the participants' utterances were interwoven with narrative retellings and meaning making. This facilitated a linguistic analysis of intertextuality which identified how utterances were intertextually linked to the novels and to previous utterances, uttered by the speakers or their peers. As described above (section 5.1.1), these two functions were linguistically marked with discourse markers such as "earlier in the chapter", "as we read for today", or "when [character's name] did…". During the collaborative dialogue, when the participants drew on their peers' retellings, they commonly repeated lexis that represented the referred narrative details. Or, when they elaborated on their peers' narrative retellings, their intertextual links were realised with discourse markers such as "also" or "and" followed by more details

from the narrative. Together, these findings illustrate how the participants verbalised intertextual links (Bazerman, 2004a) between the narratives and their meaning making in the form of paraphrases, verbatim quotes, and select vocabulary items. This lexical cohesion suggests an intersubjective process of working towards the same goal.

Regulated reading comprehension

The finding of narrative retellings was also supported by the negative case analysis that identified instances of repair and how the participants repaired their own and their peers' narrative retellings. Discussed above (section 5.3.1), the frequency of repair suggests the communicative context was primarily concerned with meaning-and-fluency and second, task-oriented. The participants' repair not only focused on form and lexis, as previous research has reported (section 4.1.2.2), but also on narrative retellings. The participants self-repaired narrative details they shared in their own utterances (section 5.2.2.1) and other-repaired each other's utterances (section 5.2.2.2). The other-repair, which focused more on narrative retellings than lexis and form, involved speakers requesting assistance with narrative details and peers correcting speaker's narrative retellings. Together, these findings of frequent narrative retellings, intertextual links to meaning making, and repair of retellings suggests that it was important to the participants to quote the narratives correctly. Even though it was reading comprehension they created, even research on reading assessment cannot agree on how to determine the product of reading literary texts (Alderson, 2000, p.66). As the transactional theory argues, every reading is unique and involves a personal evocation of a work of art as a lived-through event (Rosenblatt, 1978, p.32). Previous reader response studies frequently distinguish between literal and inferential responses, statements that convey the level of interpretive work involved (Arizpe et al., 2014, p.123). In the field of L2 reading assessment, there is a discussion whether literary understanding can be measured (Alderson, 2000, p.66). In this study, deficiencies in reading comprehension were considered hindrances and their resolution was integral for task completion. The frequent negotiation of narrative retellings thus allowed the participants to establish intersubjectivity, creating a shared understanding of the novels and uniting the participants in the common goal of regulating their reading comprehension.

Collaborative dialogue and deliberative communication

This regulation of reading comprehension and the establishment of a shared understanding suggests it was important for the participants to cite the narratives correctly and to first

establish what *happened* in the novels before they could share what they thought it *meant*. The participants became each other's teller of the reading, much like a mediator of picturebooks that instead of reading word-for-word, changes and elaborates the story in their own words to make the reading experience for their listeners more interactive (Sipe, 2008, p.218). From a sociocultural perspective on artefacts and mediation, listening to their peers' retellings seems to have focused the participants' attention on specific narrative elements. According to the transactional theory, each reading of a literary text evokes a new experience and work of art (Rosenblatt, 1995), and listening to their peers' retellings might have generated another evocation of the reading. For example, reminding the participants of details and inspiring them to correct their peers' retellings. If the participants would recognise themselves in this interpretation, the narrative retellings served as cognitive reminders much like Vygotsky's knot (1978, p.51), used as an example to describe how people ascribe meanings to material objects and externalise the process of remembering.

In the shared context of co-constructing the reading circle sessions, each narrative retelling thus became an affordance to stake a claim on what happened in the novels. The frequency with which narrative retellings were used suggests an intention to establish validity of the participants' claims and to provide evidence for the semiotic function of their utterances. This is suggestive of deliberative communication where the starting point is an issue or perspective, which might be challenging to define and requiring deliberation on what is at stake before deliberating on what it means (Englund, 2016, p.68). This interpretation of ESL learner interactions around literary texts as deliberative communication has also been proposed by Thyberg (2006) when sharing emerging findings from her study of high school learners in Sweden reading a postcolonial novel. This is congruent with the concept of collaborative dialogue in sociocultural theory which, as already discussed, seeks to understand how speakers use language as a tool to build knowledge and solve problems together (Swain & Watanabe, 2019, p.1). In this study, the participants' used their own and their peers' narrative retellings as evidence for their meaning making and during the collaborative dialogue, the participants used them as artefacts to mediate their own meaning. This established intertextuality and explicit links between their retellings and meaning making, a finding that is further discussed in the following chapter.

This section has summarised and discussed the findings from the linguistic analysis of the participants' speech during the reading circle sessions from the perspective of how they facilitated development of responses to the novels. First, the participants established

intertextuality between the indicative and the semiotic function of their utterances, establishing clear links between their reading comprehension and meaning making. Second, the participants self- and other-repaired each other's narrative retellings, establishing a shared reading comprehension and frame of reference. Third, this allowed them to co-construct collaborative dialogue and establish the starting point for deliberative communication (Englund, 2006; 2016). Framed by sociocultural theory that language is a tool that mediates communication, these findings provide an explanation for the observation that the participants continuously paraphrased the narratives. This considers the intersubjective nature of the reading circle sessions and demonstrates how the participants collectively worked towards establishing a shared reading comprehension. As the participants did not bring the books to the sessions, they needed to continuously paraphrase the narrative to ensure their peers understood where they were coming from. These findings contribute to the small body of reader response studies framed by sociocultural theory and conclude this chapter on the findings from the linguistic analysis. The following chapter presents the findings from the reader response analysis, a typology of responses that discusses and exemplifies how the participants made meaning of the novels.

Chapter 6 Typology of responses

The previous chapter described how the participants used their linguistic repertoires as a tool to develop their language and responses to the novels. This chapter presents the findings from the iterative reader response analysis, emerging from the key moment of analytical insights discussed above (section 3.4) of the readerly gap (Beauvais, 2015b), the relationship between literary texts, empathy, compassion, and democratic world citizenship through narrative and civic imagining (Nussbaum, 2017), and the distinction between compassion, cognitive and emotional empathy (Bloom, 2018). It also involved the insight that intertextual awareness can facilitate deliberate action and the appropriation of texts, understood in a wider sense, for one's own purposes (Bazerman, 2004a, pp.61-62). By considering conceptualisations as artefacts that mediate human activity, represented by e.g., data analyses, models, and theories (Säljö, 2013, p.99), the analysis involved considering the participants' responses through the study's conceptual framework that language is a tool for communication. This extends a sociocultural view of language to the field of reader response and allowed for the finding to emerge that the participants used intertextuality as a conceptual tool to view the novels through different lenses. Mediated by this understanding of intertextual repertoires, the participants' responses during the reading of their role reports and the collaborative dialogue and across all reading circle groups and sessions were synthesised and a typology of responses was developed. Typology categories and response types were labelled with verbs to describe the action involved and to illustrate how the participants used their intertextual repertoires as lenses to draw logical conclusions about the narratives. This analysis also draws on my close reading of the novels, discussed above (section 3.7), because it allowed for a more in-depth understanding how the participants linked their meaning making to the different novels. The typology is divided into three overarching categories that comprise sub-categories and different response types: identifying the readerly gap (section 6.1), evaluating the novels as works of art (section 6.2), and making links to narratives of life (section 6.3).

6.1 Identifying the readerly gap

This section presents the first main category of the typology of responses and describes how the participants made intertextual links within the narrative to draw conclusions about the characters and the plot. This category was inspired by Nussbaum's (2017, pp.385-386) idea of responding to stories with narrative imagination and to wonder about characters' lives, representing Otherness, by drawing on our limited sensibilities to attribute emotions

and thoughts, yet realising that we can never fully understand the inner lives of other people. Linking this to Beauvais' (2015b, p.6) discussion of the readerly gap provides a conceptualisation of readers' interpretive freedom to be limited to the parameters outlined by the text. This main category identifying the readerly gap was divided into two sub-categories, which in turn identifies different response types. The first, referential responses, describes how the participants drew conclusions about the characters and the plot, while adhering to the readerly gap (section 6.1.1). The second, creative responses (section 6.1.2), describes how the participants pushed the boundaries of the readerly gap and demonstrated creativity in their conclusions.

6.1.1 Referential responses: Stayed within the gap

This section describes how the participants verbalised intertextual links between narrative elements and drew conclusions about the characters and the plot. These responses constitute an intertextual reach that stayed within the novels to establish links between various narrative elements (Bazerman, 2004b, p.89). In doing so, the participants drew on their imagination to make meaning of the readerly gap (Beauvais, 2015b, p.6). In this sub-category, seven response types were identified, summarised in table 15 below. These response types concern the conclusions the participants drew about the narrative arch of the story and how different narrative elements fitted into the characters' journeys.

Table 15 Identifying the readerly gap: Referential responses

No.	Response type
19	Attributed personality traits to characters
20	Attributed goals and motivations to focalized characters
21	Attributed goals and motivations to unfocalized characters
22	Identified character development
23	Predicted narrative development

Category 19 Attributed personality traits to characters

As the label implies, "attributed personality traits to characters", this category identifies how the participants interpreted characters' feelings and personality traits and evidenced their interpretations by sharing narrative retellings that pointed to their interpretations. These responses were frequently shared by Character tracers and extract 36 exemplifies

how Hanna in the group reading *Running* supported her interpretation of the character Innocent, the main character Deo's brother, with narrative retellings.

> **36. Hanna_CT_R3**
>
> even though **he seems to be a little shy** on certain occasions – like when he didn't erm want to take off his clothes because he didn't erm even want his brother to see him – **he still seems to be brave when (it is) it's needed** erm as we can read about on page 102 erm when he takes ouf- a whi- – takes out a whistle – and starts running towards the hyena erm that was attacking Deo to scare it away

In this example, Hanna described how she interpreted Innocent to be both "shy" and "brave when it's needed" and supported her interpretation by paraphrasing two different scenes from the novel. *Running* is narrated by Deo and the reader does not have access to Innocent's thoughts. Instead, Hanna drew on Deo's descriptions of Innocent's actions to make inferences about the character. This means that the readerly gap was limited to Deo's descriptions of his brother (Beauvais, 2015b, p.6). In Hanna's report, the repeated use of the vocabulary item "seems" suggests a tentativeness in her conclusions and could be an indication of this limited view of Innocent. This tentativeness could also indicate the intersubjective nature of the reading circles, as discussed in the previous chapter (section 5.3.1), and that Hanna acknowledged that her peers might have interpreted Innocent differently. This interpretation would mean that the participants' interpretive freedom would be curbed, not only by the readerly gap, but also by their own interpretations. More evidence for this finding is provided in subsequent categories.

Category 20 Attributed goals and motivations to focalized characters

This category concerns instances when the participants linked narrative retellings to interpretations of focalized characters' desires, goals, motivations, and reasons. The term focalized refers to characters to whose thoughts the reader has access through narrative devices such as first-person narrative or an omniscient narrator (Nikolajeva, 2014b, p.91). In this study, conclusions about focalized characters' goals and motivations were frequently shared by Character tracers and questions focusing on characters' motivations was the most frequent question type posed by the Discussion leaders (appendix 12). Extract 37 provides an excerpt from collaborative dialogue with the group reading *Q&A*, prompted by the Discussion leader Emma's question concerning the main character Ram's motivations for trusting Smita, a lawyer and stranger, that offers to support his case against the accusation of cheating on the quiz show *Who will win a billion?*

37. CD_Q1

Emma: why do you think Ram decided to trust Smita?

Emelie: erm well I think **he had no other choice maybe** – because he was in a position when he needed help like stuck in the prison and so on – so yeah

Lilly: erm yeah I think **he was** erm **very desperate** and **he needed help** and – I think **he flipped a coin – too?**

Elin: yeah

William: yeah

Lilly: and **it landed on heads which meant – that he should trust her**

Emma's question generated a sequence of 17 turns and in this excerpt, the participants identified two reasons for trusting Smita, "he needed help" and a toss of his lucky coin indicated he should. The coin tossing is mentioned explicitly in the novel, but the interpretation of his situation to be desperate is of their own making, not the author's. In the novel, Ram's inner thoughts narrate his decision-making process after Smita has brought him from jail to her home:

> "I will not ask when she brought me here, or why. One doesn't question a miracle. … Can I trust her? Time to take a decision. I take out my trusted one-rupee coin. Heads I cooperate with her. Tails I tell her ta-ta. I flip the coin. It is heads." (Swarup, 2009, pp.27-28)

The participants' responses in extract 37 above demonstrate how they made meaning from the readerly gap and how they interpreted Ram's circumstances as making him "desperate" and with "no other choice". They linked narrative retellings to their conclusions about Ram's motivations, yet there is a tentativeness to their claims. Emelie ended her interpretation with a "maybe", suggesting that she was open to other interpretations. Similarly, Lilly was uncertain whether she remembered the narrative correctly with "I think he flipped a coin", adding a tag-on question "too?" in an interrogative tone of voice. Her peers responded affirmatively to her confirmation check, a type of self-repair discussed in the previous chapter (section 5.2.2), and shared narrative understanding was established. Moreover, Lilly reformulated Emelie's response "he had no other choice" with the description that Ram was "very desperate and needed help", thus siding with Emelie in her interpretation. Taken together, the tentativeness, confirmation check, and reformulation, contributed to establishing intersubjectivity between the participants and a

shared understanding of Ram's motivations for trusting Smita. Together, they drew on the implicitness of the narrative to make sense of Ram's circumstances and possibilities for action. As exemplified here, the responses in this category allowed the participants to articulate how the focalized characters' circumstances shaped their decisions and goals.

Category 21 Attributed goals and motivations to unfocalized characters

This category is like the above in that it concerns instances when the participants imagined and hypothesised about characters' goals and motivations for their actions. It is different in that it concerns instances when the participants talked about the struggles of characters whose inner life and thoughts are hidden to the reader, i.e., unfocalized characters (Nikolajeva, 2014b, p.91). Extract 38 provides an excerpt from Emma's report as Character tracer in the group reading *Q&A* when she described and analysed the character Balwant Singh, the main character Ram's neighbour. This character features in only one chapter which tells the story of how Balwant first lied to his neighbours about his war efforts, initially to stop Ram's and his friends' war play, and then commits suicide after a war veteran exposes his deception. In her report, Emma hypothesised about Balwant's desires and motivations.

> **38. Emma_CT_Q3**
> … he lied about that he was a hero in the war against Pakistan 1971 – and made everyone believe that he was a hero – I think he was ashamed that he went home instead of fighting for his country and **wanted to seem brave and strong** – he seems to be a kind person but maybe he is insure- – unsure about himself and want- **wants attention-** <u>attention</u> *ja* ('yes') erm **I don't think he felt good because he took his life** the day after he was revealed – **maybe he was ashamed because he had fooled everyone and couldn't live with that for the rest of his life** –

After retelling the narrative, Emma imagined what might have motivated Balwant to lie about being a war hero. She hypothesised that he "wanted to seem brave and strong" and wanted the attention he got from his neighbours who referred to him as "our hero" (Swarup, 2009, p.216). Her hypothesis that Balwant was ashamed for deserting the army follows how the war veteran talked about him, calling Balwant a "bloody deserter" whose true story is "quite pathetic" (Swarup, 2009, pp.218-219). Moreover, after the revelation of his deception, Balwant stayed in his room and his neighbours found him dead the morning after, because as Emma suggested, "maybe he was ashamed" and could not go on living knowing he had deceived everyone. As demonstrated here, despite not having access to his thoughts, Emma drew on clues in the narrative to imagine Balwant's motivations. As such,

the participants interpreted the hidden contents of the characters' inner worlds and identified their importance as an explanation for their actions (Nussbaum, 2008, p.146). Lastly, Emma's use of "maybe" twice, "I think", and "I don't think" emphasise the subjective and tentativeness nature of her hypothesis, acknowledging that she was imagining the readerly gap and did not have access to Balwant's motivations in his own words.

Category 22 Identified character development

This category concerns instances when the participants identified character development, describing journeys of personal growth or sudden personality changes. The participants linked their conclusions to scenes across reading extracts, pointing to specific actions taken by the characters that challenged their built-up expectations and understandings, and articulated a change in their understanding of the characters. Extract 39 provides an excerpt from Elin's report as Creative connector in the group reading *Q&A* when she explained how the main character Ram changed his behaviour when he came over a large sum of money and how it made her think of him as "a different person".

> **39. Elin_CC_Q3**
>
> erm **when Ram had fifty thousand rupees** … **I felt like he was a different person** – all that money he had gave him confidence and made him feel better about himself – it gave him a future where he could live in a nice home – have-have a family – eat healthy meals and buy nice clothes – **but then all his money was gone and he was back to the old Ram** … he wouldn't be able to (have) do any of those things

In this extract, Elin described how the change in circumstances changed Ram's goals and life possibilities. The sudden increase in money allowed Ram to dream of a different and hopeful future. In the novel, Ram describes how the money changes his circumstances and self-identity:

> "feel the power of all that money seep insidiously into my … heart and brain. The hunger … disappears miraculously … I, too, drift off to sleep, dreaming middle-class dreams of buying a million different things, including a red Ferrari and a beautiful bride" (Swarup, 2009, pp.178-181).

Although Ram does not mention "healthy meals" or "buy nice clothes", Elin's interpretation is plausible as Ram's describes how his hunger disappears with the money, or that it gives him "confidence", as he describes the power of the money taking over him. But, as Elin described, when Ram loses the money, he also loses his dreams and

possibilities. Elin signposted her interpretation with "I felt like", suggesting that the turn of events had surprised her and that she spoke of a spontaneous reaction during the reading event. Other responses in this category shared this hint of surprise and traces of the reading unfolding during the reading circles, indicating an active reading process of linking current with past events and identifying patterns and divergences as the reading progressed. These divergences suggest a conflict between the unfolding of the narrative and the participants' hitherto accumulated understanding of the characters. In other words, this category represents instances when the participants expressed how the narrative challenged them and prompted reformulations of their understandings of the characters, leading to characterisations that were not in absolute terms but portrayed complex characters capable of change. In these instances, the participants articulated how people can surprise us and that we can we can never fully understand other people (Nussbaum, 2017, p.385). Thus, this category refers to instances when the participants encountered unexpected turns of events, i.e., plot twists.

Category 23 Predicted narrative development

This category concerns instances when participants hypothesised how the narrative would unfold, referred to in the literature as plot predictions. This was the fourth most common question type posed by the Discussion leaders. However, the participants made plot predictions in their role reports as well as during the collaborative dialogue, either of their own volition or prompted by the Discussion leaders' questions. Extract 40 provides an example from collaborative dialogue with the group reading *Alaska*, which concerned the characters Alaska's and Miles' relationship, a recurrent focus in this group.

40. CD_A2

Erik: do you think Miles and Alaska's friendship's going to dev- develop or stay the same in the future?

Alice: I don't think that they going to like be together in the future erm – because I think that Alaska just playing with him and just like have fun with him for a moment – and then she will go ba- go back to Jake because I don't think that – they fit together because she's like – she ha- she has much energy energy and erm – she's not like him and I think they don't match each other …

Julia: I don't know because **she like opens up – to M- erm to Miles** – about her like childhood – like when erm – erm the parents wasn't know- erm knowing what her name was going to be and then like they decided that she was going to pick her own name and stuff like that

Alice: yeah but I don't think that is- || if you like tell something that I don't think that – shows that she has feelings for him cause it's like – || **it's a fun story to tell** because it's like fun that she can pick her own name and **I don't think that** {Julia: yeah} **it's depends** {Julia: but what} **on feelings**

Julia: but what I meant was {Alice: erm} like she also spoke about her parents like what they have done and like and that her mom was drinking and smoking

Elsa: she did **open up** for him

This extract demonstrates how the participants interpreted the characters' actions differently – Alice thought that Alaska told Miles stories from her childhood because it was fun, not because she had feelings for him, whereas Julia and Elsa interpreted it as Alaska "opening up to" Miles. However, despite their conflicting interpretations and predictions, they agreed on their narrative retellings and created a shared understanding of Alaska's actions. Drawing on this established intersubjectivity, both Alice and Julia elaborated on their interpretations by explaining why they thought their interpretation and prediction were the most plausible. Elsa tipped the balances in favour of Julia's interpretation, when she agreed that Alaska "did open up for" Miles. As exemplified here, to make predictions, the participants drew on their understanding of the reading, hypothesised how the narrative would unfold, and pointed to the narrative with their retellings to support their hypotheses.

This section has described the sub-category referential responses and demonstrated how the participants verbalised intertextual links between narrative elements to draw conclusions about the characters and plot. Drawing on Nussbaum's (2017, pp.385-386) discussion of narrative imagination, the participants wondered about the characters' desires and intentions and verbalised their understanding of how the characters' circumstances shaped their possibilities for actions, goals, and hopes. Yet, their imagination stayed within the boundaries of the readerly gap (Beauvais, 2015b, p.6), drawing conclusions that were anchored in narrative retellings but shared with a tentativeness, indicating the intersubjective nature of the reading circle sessions and a recognition that other participants might have interpreted the narrative differently. Thus, as discussed in the previous chapter (section 5.1.1), the continuous interweaving of narrative retellings and conclusions demonstrates how it was important for the participants to demonstrate evidence from the novels for their interpretations. This suggests that the reading circles facilitated a heuristic process of making narrative meaning and of providing a space to

verbalise how the novels offered windows into the fictional world of others (Arizpe, Farrell & McAdam, 2013). Described through this study's conceptual framework of how language is a tool that mediates communication, this section has described how the participants' made narrative meaning by verbalising links between narrative elements and drawing, to them, meaningful conclusions. The section below continues by describing how the participants used narrative imagination to wonder about the characters and identifies how they responded creatively and expanded the intertextual reach of their responses.

6.1.2 Creative responses: Moved along the gap's borders

The previous section on referential responses described how the participants used narrative imagination to make narrative meaning of the readerly gap and drew conclusions about how the characters' possibilities for actions, goals, and hopes were shaped by their circumstances. This section on creative responses concerns responses when the participants creatively balanced the borders of the readerly gap. Above, the participants' responses stayed within the borders of the narrative, the information to which the participants had access. Whereas creative responses concern instances when the intertextual reach expanded to involve more of the participants' own narratives of life (Bazerman, 2004b, p.89). Part of narrative imagination involves the realisation that it is impossible to fully understand other people (Nussbaum, 2017, pp.385-386). Although literary texts are more accessible than real people, the readerly gap limits readers' access (Beauvais, 2015b, p.6). As discussed in the literature review (section 2.3.1), reader response theories acknowledge the importance of readers' previous experiences. Summarised in table 16 below, this section illustrates how the participants drew on their imagination to invent narrative details, create prequels and sequels, and make carnivalesque links – all while respecting the readerly gap.

Table 16 Identifying the readerly gap: Creative responses

No.	Response type
24	Invented narrative details
25	Created prequels
26	Created sequels
27	Made carnivalesque links

Category 24 Invented narrative details

This category concerns instances when the participants invented narrative details. However, rather than conflicting with the story, the participants' creations contributed to and elaborated on the plot. In extract 41, Filip as Character tracer in the group reading *Stars* supported his interpretation of how the main character Hazel handled her terminal illness with an invented quote from the novel.

> **41. Filip_CT_S3**
> … she tackles it with a healthy dose of humour which is a part of her personality – and humorous attitude – for instance **the way Hazel sees it dying makes you less afraid of other things – because hey what do you have to lose?** quote from chapter twelve …

Signposting his narrative retelling with "for instance" and "quote from chapter twelve", the alleged reported speech by Hazel, highlighted in bold, is nowhere to be found in the novel. Also, as this formed part of Filip's report, when the turn-taking order did not permit interaction between participants, none of Filip's peers reacted. However, I would agree with Filip that this is something that Hazel could say. In my interpretation of the novel *Stars*, the invented quote does not contradict the written page nor make violence to the character. Instead, I find that the quote honours Hazel's character. From the perspective of the readerly gap, the inventing of narrative details could be interpreted as creative meanderings in the interpretive space generated by the interplay between the gap's boundaries and the details provided by the author (Beauvais, 2015b, p.6). In reader response, the type of responses that augment the narrative are often referred to as taking ownership of the literary text and to position oneself as co-author. Sipe (2008, p.218) identified and labelled this response "teller" to describe a readaloud style used by educators when reading stories for young learners. In his study, Sipe observed a teacher interweaving the author's voice with her own interpolations, expansions, and personalisations. Comparably, in this study, when the participants invented narrative details they enmeshed their voice with the author's, retold an extended version of the novel, and mediated a new reading experience to their peers.

Category 25 Created prequels

This category concerns instances when the participants drew on clues provided in the texts and hypothesised about the characters' circumstances before the start of the novels. To exemplify, an extract from the group reading *Running's* third session is provided below (extract 42). The novel opened with the brothers still living in Gutu, a village in

Zimbabwe, with their mother and grandfather, and Deo, the younger brother of the two, has no memories of their father. For this third session, the brothers have escaped to South Africa and they are intending to get to Johannesburg because, as Deo thinks to himself, "what if, by some miracle, we could find" our father and "everyone talks about going to Jozi: plenty of work, plenty of money" (Williams, 2012, p.127). Extract 42 demonstrates how the Discussion leader Ida's prompt to generate plot predictions led to the participants hypothesising about events that pre-dated the narrative, trying to explain why the brothers' father never returned to them in Zimbabwe.

42. CD_R3

Ida: what do you think will happen to Deo Innocent and Philani in Johannesburg … erm do you think they will find their father or will they end up back in Zimbabwe?

Johanna: I don't think they find their father – but I don't know

Hanna: I don't think they will foun- erm find him because – I mean – he would like visite- erm visit – erm them in Gutu if he – like could I think – erm **maybe he's like kidnapped or – killed** …

Viktor: I assume they find a job there at least {girl: yeah} so they can stay there for a while and – then go searching for their father

Ida: … **maybe he – he had hadn- hadn't enough money to – visit them** in back in Gutu … but it was a long time erm since yeah since Innocent met – his father so **maybe he's dead or caught by – soldiers** or something {Viktor: yeah}

In this extract, the participants shared four different hypotheses that could explain the father's absence: kidnapped, lack of money, dead, or caught by soldiers. In these responses, traces of the brothers' struggles can be identified – Deo and Innocent watched their entire village be killed by soldiers and have managed to get by on very little money. Thus, the participants' hypotheses reflected their understanding of possible risks and threats within the fictional world of the narrative. However, Hanna's hypothesis of a possible kidnapping is of her own making, as kidnapping does not feature in the novel. This reflects how the "possibilities raised by the text" can constrain readers' interpretive freedom (Beauvais, 2015a, p.79) and how readers can choose to venture beyond. This demonstrates how generating hypotheses during the reading of a literary text can be a creative process that involves constructing "possible worlds" and critical analysis of the requirements of these perspectives (Bruner, 1986, p.52). To predict what comes next, one needs to consider what has come before, and when the text does not provide the narrative

details desired by the readers, they are free to use their imagination. As extract 42 above demonstrates, the participants drew on clues in the narrative to generate hypotheses about events that pre-dated the narrative and used these prequels as intertextual tools to inform the meaning they made of current events and to make plot predictions.

Category 26 Created sequels

This category concerns instances when the participants generated hypotheses about events extending beyond the end of the novels. Based on their understanding of the narrative, they created their own sequels. Compared to the previous category of creating prequels, these were much less frequent and concerned primarily the character Carrie in the novel *Goodnight*, a classmate to the main character William. Carrie is a few years older and aspires to continue her studies beyond the local village school, a decision that was considered strange by some of her friends and family members. Parallel to William's story, Carrie embarks on her own journey of gaining access to and starting high school. This is an example of the metafictive device of a story within a story (Pantaleo, 2004, p.219). Extract 43 provides an abridged excerpt of collaborative dialogue prompted by the Discussion leader Agnes' question concerning the conflicting reactions of Carrie's parents. This generated hypotheses on how Carrie's journey would be perceived.

43. CD_G5

Agnes: Carrie mentions that her mom … disliked that Carrie went to high school and studied – her dad on the other hand – had no problem with Carrie wanting higher education – why do you think this is?

Wilma: I think – maybe their mother erm had like a picture of both their || his || her daughters like growing up get married … she would get grandchildren … and maybe like when Carrie started in high school that picture's ruined for her in some way

Ella: I mean erm Ginnie's whole focus is to be a good housewife and get married – erm and Carrie doesn't want that I mean I think – erm later on erm **she will be seen as the modern woman** maybe – cause **she has education and she can work for herself** – {Agnes: yeah} and that got **more common after World War Two** I think

Oliver: I think also Carrie doesn't want to depend on anyone but herself – she doesn't want to run to any man for help

In this extract, Wilma hypothesised that Carrie's decision to continue her studies might have ruined her mother's aspirations for her daughters, Carrie, and Ginnie, to get married and have children of their own. In response to Wilma's utterance, Ella shared a narrative

retelling of how Ginnie wants to get married, and Carrie does not. With the comparison of the two sisters, Ella emphasised how Carrie's desire to continue her education would change her life and suggested that "maybe" in the future, Carrie would be considered "the modern woman". Ella drew this conclusion from her understanding of how women gaining access to education and work "got more common after World War Two", during which the novel takes place. As in the previous category describing how the participants created prequels, to be able to predict what comes next, they needed to understand the current circumstances, both drawing on narrative details as well as the period in which the novel is set. Thus, Ella's hypothesis stayed within the boundaries of the interpretive freedom generated by the narrative (Beauvais, 2015a, p.79) as well as her understanding of history, a type of response further discussed below (section 6.3.3). Moreover, by prefacing their interpretations and arguments with "maybe" and "I think", both Wilma and Ella acknowledged that theirs were not the only plausible hypotheses and invited their peers to elaborate or refute. However, Ella agreed with Wilma and as Oliver's utterance demonstrates, he elaborated by hypothesising that Carrie's motivations were prompted by the belief that studying would change her possibilities for actions. Again, as described above, by understanding the characters' circumstances the participants could better understand how they influence their decision making and goals (Nussbaum, 2008, p.147). As exemplified here, to imagine sequels, the participants drew on their narrative understanding and their understanding of real life, current as well as historical, to generate and evaluate plausible hypotheses.

Category 27 Made carnivalesque links

This category concerns instances when the participants' responses bordered and ventured beyond the limits of the fictional world. As discussed in the analytical framework (section 4.2.2.1), referring to readers' response as "carnivalesque" derives from Bakhtin's (1984, p.12) idea of carnivals where the humour is mocking and deriding and everyone is part of the joke, speakers inviting hearers to laugh with them. In this study, this category identifies improbable intertextual links to other literary texts and popular culture. These responses were shared by one participant only, William in the group reading *Q&A*. Extract 44 provides an abridged excerpt from collaborative dialogue, which opens with the Discussion leader Liam's question about the character Ahmed Khan's motivations for hiring Salim. The first 30 turns are omitted here to show how William's carnivalesque responses eventually led to the teacher involving herself to prompt the participants to return to "the book".

44. CD_Q4

Liam: why did Ahmed Khan pick Salim as a person to take care of the cooking and cleaning – he even told him what he was using illegal bething- betting methods and just being a criminal … without knowing if he would … tell the police?

[30 turns]

William: are we sure that **he is actually Sauron looking for the one ring just killing anyone in- in order to find it** or is he as a guy that just kills in order to keep on betting?

Liam: we don't really know that [someone laughed]

William: exactly

Liam: yeah [laughed]

[general laughter]

William: **maybe he also just happens to be watching the Swedish *Melodifestivalen*** ('national final for the Eurovision Song Contest') **and want a bunch of friends on app like me** [smiley voice]

[general laughter]

Teacher: now let's go back to the book

In this extract, William first shared a carnivalesque response that made an intertextual link to a character from another literary text, Sauron in *The lord of the rings* (Tolkien, 1954). With his deadpan response "we don't really know that", Liam joined the carnivalesque, supposedly pretending that William's hypothesis was plausible. However, the participants' awareness of the absurdity and implausibility of this response is demonstrated by their laughter. William elaborated on the carnivalesque by making an intertextual link to popular culture and the Swedish national final of the *Eurovision Song Contest*, suggesting that Ahmed Khan hired Salim because he wants to add friends on the app created by the organisers of the song contest. By ending his utterance with "like me", William linked this mocking interpretation of Ahmed's motivations to his own desire to convince his peers to download the app and add him as a friend. This was a reference to how William had verbalised this request previously, before the start of *Q&A*'s session, aloud to all his classmates in the classroom. This added to the comical effect and might explain why all the participants in this session responded by laughing. However, the teacher ended the joke by prompting a return to the collaborative dialogue. As extract 44 above exemplifies,

William frequently made jokes or played with language, sometimes leading to his peers laughing, and other times to reminders from his peers and teacher to focus on the collaborative dialogue. In reader responses studies with children of primary school age and picturebook read-alouds, carnivalesque responses took the shape of physical responses and the children used their bodies and voices for playful and performative re-enactments (Sipe, 2008, p.86). In this study, the carnivalesque responses bordered the unallowed for this specific context, mischievously making unrealistic intertextual links to other literary texts and popular culture and suggested by her responses, pushing the boundaries of what the teacher allowed. Discussed below (section 6.3.2), other types of carnivalesque responses were identified which took the shape of provocative language use, e.g., swearwords, to emphatically reject characters' actions.

This section on creative responses has described how the participants used their narrative imagination to balance the boundaries of the readerly gap by creatively inventing narrative details, creating prequels and sequels, and making carnivalesque links. Compared to the previous section on referential responses, the intertextual reach of their responses reached further away from the explicit information on the written page, yet still respected the readerly gap (Bazerman, 2004b, p.89). They made bids for unique contributions to the novels and created their own pieces of art within the constraints of the readerly gap as constructed by the narratives (Beauvais, 2015b, p.6). Conceptualised in terms of the metaphor of mirrors, windows, and doors (Arizpe, Farrell & McAdam, 2013, pp.245-246), the identified creative responses and referential responses demonstrate how the reading circles provided spaces to verbalise literary windows into the worlds of others. The expanded intertextual reach demonstrated in the participants' creative responses suggests a verbalisation of mirrors into the participants' own narratives of lives. By drawing on their life experiences, they connected the present to the past and their imagination set the boundaries for their responses, not the readerly gap. This independence of the reader is often described in the field of reader response as readers engaged in a co-authorship, where the range of readers' responses are limitless (Beauvais, 2015b, p.2). In this study, except for the carnivalesque links when the teacher involved herself to prompt a return "to the book", the participants' responses were not fantastical nor unreasonable. They still adhered to what was plausible in relation to their narrative retellings. This suggests a rejection of an ontological relativism where anything goes, but a realism bound by the readerly gap and the pedagogical aim. This concludes this section on the typology's first main category, identifying the readerly gap. Next, this chapter turns to the second main category of the

typology, evaluating the novels as works of art, describing how the intertextual reach of the participants' responses expanded even further.

6.2 Evaluating the novels as works of art

This section concerns responses when the participants evaluated the novels as works of art and three response types were identified: appraised literary craft, didactic messages, and aesthetic value (table 17 below). These involved respectively a stepping back to view the narrative in comparison to other literary texts, as a source of moral learning, and describing and justifying the aesthetic experience in terms of liking or disliking the novel. Described and exemplified below, this section discusses all three response types.

Table 17 Evaluating the novels as works of art

No.	Response type
28	Appraised literary craft
29	Appraised didactic messages
30	Appraised aesthetic value

Category 28 Appraised literary craft

This category concerns instances when the participants positioned themselves as literary critics and compared the novels to their understanding of literary texts, identifying narrative features they perceived as common or unusual. Responses attributed to this category were few but suggest how the participants' understandings and expectations of literary texts influenced their narrative imagination. Extract 45 provides an excerpt from Emil's report as Literary Wizard when he first read a quote from the novel *Goodnight* from William's point of view, followed by a description of how the turn of events conflicted with his own expectations of literary texts.

45. Emil_LW_G5
… doctor Little looked grave and Aunt Nance had been crying – they didn't need to say anything – he knew Zach was dead – I think this was **the saddest moment** in the entire book – Zach was such an innocent boy who truly didn't deserve to die … it was also **very unexpected** – it's **not common that one of the main characters in books or movies die** – and I thought – Zach would be part of a **happy ending** – but that turned out different and I think it makes this book more unique …

In this utterance, Emil held two positions – both of his own emotional response as well as that of the literary critic. Emil described how he was both saddened and surprised by the development of the narrative and how it did not follow his expectations of literary texts. Much like structural analysis completed by literary critics (Sipe, 2008, pp.97-99), Emil demonstrated that he could step back from the emotional experience it evoked in him, a response further discussed below (section 6.3.1), and consider the literary text critically. Emil's conclusion that the death of such an important character as Zach was for William "makes this book more unique", suggests that the novel challenged Emil's understanding of the purpose of literary texts – to have a "happy ending". With his utterance, Emil appraised the literary craft and concluded that to him, the novel challenged him. For this particular participant, this suggests the novel achieved the purpose of art to challenge conventions and norms (Nussbaum, 2017, p.391).

Category 29 Appraised didactic messages

This category concerns instances when the participants identified, described, and evaluated didactic messages in the novels. These responses only occurred during the collaborative dialogue in the final sessions of the groups reading *Alaska* and *Q&A* in response to questions by the Discussion leaders that prompted the participants to infer a message. Examples from collaborative dialogue from both groups were provided in previous chapters during the discussion of other findings. Extracts from *Q&A* can be found in the discussion of how participants repeated vocabulary from the novels (section 5.1.2.1), which show how the participants repeated the phrase "take revenge" to refer to Ram's motivation to enter the quiz show and that an anti-revenge message is part of the novel's didactic address. An extract from the group reading *Alaska* can be found in the discussion on other-repair (section 5.2.1.2, extract 27), demonstrating how two participants used co-operative completion to construct meaning together. In that instance, Alice and Elsa jointly constructed an utterance in which they stated that the novel communicates a message that "you should not drink when you drive". As these examples from *Q&A* and *Alaska* demonstrate, the participants drew on their interpretation of the novels as a whole and pointed to narrative elements across all reading extracts. They became literary critics that considered the texts as cultural artefacts that can offer life lessons and vicarious experiences. That two Discussion leaders prompted their peers to consider didactic messages and that their peers readily responded suggests they were accustomed to inferring moral lessons from stories. This extends and supports an understanding of literary texts for younger children to contain a didactic intent and purpose (Beauvais, 2015b,

pp.79-81) and findings from reader response studies with younger children reading picturebooks who inferred an ideological purpose (Arizpe et al., 2014, p.155; Arizpe & Styles, 2016, p.34; Sipe, 2008, pp.105-107). On the other hand, this might be an example of how easy it can be to read into literary texts one's own beliefs values and claim them as emerging from the text (Landy, 2008, p.68). Nevertheless, the identified response type suggests that this study's participants displayed a well-established pedagogical approach to infer didactic messages when reading literary texts.

Category 30 Appraised aesthetic value

For this category, aesthetic is taken to refer to the enjoyment of a literary work and how a reading experience can provide the reader with pleasure. Although the instances when the participants articulated their aesthetic experiences were few, these responses mostly occurred in the final sessions with the groups reading *Alaska* and *Stars,* prompted by the Discussion leaders' questions. Most of the responses were positive and expressed an appreciation for the reading experience. However, Filip in *Stars* expressed a more complex response. Extract 46 provides an abridged excerpt from the group's final collaborative dialogue in which Maja, the Discussion leader, prompted her peers to respond to questions concerned with aesthetics.

46. CD_S5

Maja: how did you feel when you read the book? did you find it sad or somehow uplifting? did you like it or not and why?

Filip: yeah I think that the topic of like **kinda unique** because like we got to know Hazel and like just see her perspective of cancer cause now you u- usually hear like people about having like cancer but **you don't know like how it feels like** so – like they kinda expressed that in the book and just showed that like even though you have cancer you can still like live as a normal person – but **I think it's a just a good experience to like know how it might feel like you never know** – but that just it was a good book

Maja: okay what would you rate the book one to ten?

Filip: yeah I would give it like maybe eight out of ten like **the content was really good** and **interesting** but – like personally **I don't like this sort of books** …

In sum, Filip appreciated the learning experience the novel had offered him but would only give it "an eight out of ten" because he "don't like this sort of books". This suggests that even though Filip did not prefer the genre, he could still appreciate learning about Hazel's

life. In his responses, Filip moved beyond categorically resisting literary texts based on preference (Sipe, 2008, p.166), when he argued that cancer as a book topic is “kinda unique”. As a non-cancer patient himself he did not know what living with cancer can be like, but Filip described how reading *Stars* helped him gain an understanding “how it might feel like”. His utterances described the appreciative and positive outcome of a learning experience. This suggests that Filip managed to self-regulate his reading experience by finding pleasure in the learning experience. Filip proceeded by acknowledging his own vulnerability, “like you never know”, and recognising the possibility that he too one day might become as ill as the characters, a response type that is further discussed below (section 6.3.1). In Hazel, Filip saw a mirrored image of a possible self and acknowledged his own’s vulnerability to life’s unknown potentialities (Nussbaum, 2017, p.386). Thus, Filip’s response exemplifies how literary texts can provide the pleasure of understanding how life can be mirrored and encourage the consideration of the meaning of existence (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003, p.25). Moreover, a response like this supports arguments in favour of using literary texts for educational purposes and that it is possible to enjoy the aesthetics of a literary text with a didactic message (Joy, 2019, p.59).

This concludes the section on the second main category, evaluating the novels as works of art. As discussed in the development of the analytical framework (section 4.2.2.2), this category is informed by reader response theories and previous studies. The label was informed by Rosenblatt’s (1995, p.1) concepts of efferent reading, to extract information, and aesthetic reading, the lived-through experience of evoking literary texts as works of art. Viewed through these concepts, the participants’ appraisal of the novels’ literary craft and didactic messages could be readings categorised as leaning towards efferent. In these responses, the participants were not talking about what the texts to meant to them – as they were experiencing the reading event. Instead, they considered the texts as something from which a message or a conclusion could be drawn. Sipe (2008) identified similar responses in his typology and conceptualised them as analytical responses. The third category, appraised aesthetic value, comes closer to the participants’ aesthetic experience, but is still removed from the reading event as the responses reported here were shared in the context of the reading circles. Of the three main categories in the typology, this category represents the fewest number of instances. Moreover, they mostly occurred in the final reading circle sessions and in response to Discussion leaders’ questions. This could be an example of a literacy practice, that after reading a story, it is common to evaluate it, and would follow my own experience as a language learner.

6.3 Making links to narratives of life

The typology's first main category, identifying the readerly gap, described how the participants drew on their narrative retellings to wonder about the characters' feelings and motivations, limited by the interpretive freedom generated by the readerly gap. This section draws on Nussbaum's (2017, p.387) discussion of civic imagination as a response to literary texts that involves the identification of the suffering and unequal treatment of others and an emotional conviction of their urgency and importance. Nussbaum advanced this term to argue that literary texts can foster empathy and democratic world citizenship. However, as discussed in the literature review (section 2.3.3), this is a frequently discussed issue in the fields of literary criticism and reader response. This study does not make any claims on the development of empathy, instead the category label making links to narratives of life was selected because it conveys connotations of democratic citizenship. As this section describes, the participants often responded to the novels by making intertextual links within the narrative and linked these to their own narratives of life, allowing them to describe how they emotionally connected with the text and to position their responses in a wider sociocultural and political context. Drawing on Bloom's (2018, p.17) distinction between cognitive and emotional empathy, the analysis presented here attempts to contribute to the discussion concerning the relationship between empathy and literary texts. In this third and final main category, making links to narratives of life, three sub-categories were identified: compassionate responses (section 6.3.1), value judgements (section 6.3.2), and generalising from characters' struggles (section 6.3.3).

6.3.1 Compassionate responses

This sub-category concerns instances when the participants expressed emotional responses, e.g., how they were "happy", "sad", "touched", or "warmed" by the characters' actions and circumstances. In these responses, the participants articulated intertextual links between the narratives and their own narratives of life, evoking feelings of care, compassion, and concern. These responses were frequent in the reports by Character tracers, Creative connectors, and Literary wizards, and during the collaborative dialogue generated by the Discussion leaders' questions. When the participants described feelings like these, they linked them to narrative retellings and explained the narrative elements that made them feel this way and how their feelings facilitated their meaning making. The participants' responses were diverse, but can be summarised as expressing care, compassion, and

concern for the characters without mirroring their feelings (Bloom, 2018, pp.40-41). Summarised in table 18 below, four response types were identified.

Table 18 Making links to narratives of life: Compassionate responses

No.	Response type
31	Imagined hopeful narrative development
32	Shared memories of comparable experiences
33	Identified shared vulnerabilities
34	Compassionately rejected characters' self-criticism

Category 31 Imagined hopeful narrative development

This category concerns instances when the participants expressed hope for the characters, wishing their struggles would be resolved. It shares characteristics with the response type predicted narrative development described above (section 6.1.1) in that the responses focused on events to come. Yet, it is different in that the former involved making plausible hypotheses based on narrative clues and this category involved wishful statements without necessarily considering their plausibility. Extract 47 demonstrates how Ebba in the group reading *Running* was concerned about the characters Deo's and Innocent's chances of finding a job and their dad in Johannesburg but ended on a hopeful note.

> **47. Ebba_CD_R3**
> I think it will be – it will be hard for them to like get a new job too and find their dad but – as you – say **I hope they will get a job and find their dad**

Ebba drew on her understanding of the narrative and predicted that it would be hard for the characters to achieve their goals, but that she hoped it would turn out as they desired. Hopeful responses such as this were shared mostly by the participants in the groups reading *Goodnight* and *Running* and in their first three sessions when they had read little more than half of the novels. For example, in their third session, the group *Goodnight* hoped that Mister Tom would come and save William from his abusive mother. It is possible the participants were responding to how the author had constructed the narrative arch of story, introducing the conflicts at the beginning of the novel, and building up the suspense on how the narrative would unfold. In their third session, there might have been more possibilities compared to the reading for the fourth session and in the fifth session, when the participants were close to or had finished the novels. The readerly gap was closing down (Beauvais, 2015b, p.6). As extract 47 above demonstrates, in the responses

in this category, the participants expressed concern for the characters and hoped the narrative development would unfold in the characters' best interests. Here, the participants verbalised how they understood that the characters were struggling, cognitive empathy, but did not express sharing their pain, emotional empathy (Bloom, 2018, p.17).

Category 32 Shared memories of comparable experiences

This category concerns instances when the participants identified narrative elements and shared personal memories of comparable experiences. These responses were linguistically realised with different phrases that signposted the personal connection, e.g., "I can connect with", "I can relate to", or "when I was". The participants shared these memories to explain how they made sense of the narrative and how the intertextual link to their narratives of life allowed them to understand the characters' circumstances. Extract 48 demonstrates how Elsa as Creative connector linked a personal memory to a narrative retelling of the novel *Alaska* to describe how she related to and interpreted the characters' feelings.

> **48. Elsa_CC_A4**
> last night Alaska was in a terribly accident … and has passed away that sentence **can I really relate to** because when my grandma passed away – the police said a very similar sense … **I can feel (it to) what they feel** – when someone die in our near – **we all take it different** just like Miles and the Colonel … I didn't understand my grandm- grandma was dead erm for- for real – until a month after he passed away – then all my feelings came in but for my dad everything (came) come directly …

In this example, Elsa described how she recognised what the character the Eagle, the dean of students, said when he told the students at Culver Creek boarding school about Alaska's fatal car accident, and linked this to her memory of the police informing that her grandmother had passed away. Elsa described how she and her father responded differently to the news, as the characters did, "just like Miles and the Colonel", and suggested with the phrase "we all take it different" that different responses to losing loved ones is a shared human experience. As this response exemplifies, the participants shared personal memories to describe how they emotionally connected with the characters' feelings and how this allowed them to understand the narrative. Distinguishing between cognitive and emotional empathy, this is an example of the latter and shows how emotional empathy creates a spotlight that focuses on specific people in specific contexts and allows us to care about them more than others (Bloom, 2018, p.9). Another example of a participant sharing a personal memory, demonstrates how these were sometimes used by the participants to

argue ethical positions. Extract 49 provides an excerpt from collaborative dialogue with the group reading *Stars*, when Sara drew on a personal memory to motivate her position that people who look different should not be treated differently.

49. CD_S3

Anton: … erm Hazel could feel everybody … was **staring at her** – she describes that one of the worst parts about having cancer are the physical evidence of disease and that **it separates her from other people** – if you saw Ha- Hazel … what would your reaction be?

Sara: yeah I mean – you would obvious- see that they're sick but – it's not like I would stand pointing at them or whispering things {Anton: mm} because – **that's just rude** – {Anton: yeah; Maja: yeah} and I know erm – when I – was like nine I broke my arm and **I had a neon pink** w- – **cast**?

Teacher: mm cast

Anton: yeah

Sara: erm that draw a lot of attention {Anton: yeah} – even though it was just temporarily it {Anton: yeah} – felt I kinda weird having **everyone in school staring at me** …

In this collaborative dialogue, Anton as Discussion leader shared a "how would you" question, one of the most frequent question types posed by the Discussion leaders (appendix 12). When Sara imagined herself in the characters' situations, she argued that she would not be pointing or whispering things at people who look different, "because that's just rude". She justified this ethical position with a comparable personal experience of wearing a "neon pink cast" to school and how she felt "everyone in school staring" at her, just like Hazel at the airport with her oxygen tank. Here, the feeling of being separated from other people is "one of the worst parts about having cancer" resonated with Sara. She empathised with Hazel's reaction at the airport, remembering that being stared at for her cast made her feel "kinda weird" and this emotional resonance led her to argue that treating people differently for how they look is wrong. Here, Sara used her empathy for Hazel to spotlight the emotional resonance and used it as moral guide to reject behaviour she perceived as bad and argued for behaviour she perceived as good (Bloom, 2018, p.2). I might venture to argue that readers of this thesis would agree with Sara, however, this study is not concerned with the evaluation of the participants' speech nor the quality of their responses. Instead, of interest for the research questions, is how responses in this category show how the participants narrated their own experiences and were experts of

their own lives. This suggests that the reading circles in this context facilitated an L2 classroom where the participants could define their own identity and learn about the Otherness of the characters and their peers by reading and listening to their life stories (Tornberg, 2004).

Category 33 Identified shared vulnerabilities

Compared to the previous category when the participants shared comparable personal experiences, this category concerns instances when the participants stated they had no comparable personal experiences. Yet, they described the characters' hardships and struggles, identified intertextual links to their own narratives of life, and found commonalities in a shared vulnerability of being human. In these responses, the participants described how they felt fortunate in comparison and acknowledged that one day, the characters' circumstances might befall them too. Extract 50 demonstrates how Anton as Creative connector in the group reading *Stars* described how he could not identify a comparable personal experience to how the characters regularly go to a support group, but that he could relate to the positive feelings from meeting people like himself.

> **50. Anton_CC_S1**
>
> they go to a support group together because they've all had experience of cancer … there they get a chance to talk about their experiences and what they've been through … **I personal- personally haven't been through what they've been through but I can relate to that you want to be around people who have got the same interests or problem as you have** … they understand you in a different way – it doesn't have to be about sad or bad things – it could for example be about sports or other interests … people … that have bad diseases may feel better if they talk … with someone who have some sort of connection – to the disease …

Despite his lack of personal experience of cancer and support groups, Anton identified an aspect of the characters' lives that he could connect with – to meet people with the "same interests and problems". By drawing on his own narrative of life of talking about shared experiences with other people, "sports or other interests", Anton imagined that attending a support group could make the characters "feel better". He bridged the gap between them by identifying a shared human vulnerability – the need to feel social connection. As Anton did here, with these responses, the participants paid homage to the uniqueness of the characters' struggles by verbalising how they had no personal experience. This suggests the participants believed that imagination is not a substitute for real experience (Bloom, 2018, pp.147-148) and that certain experiences one must experience for oneself to really know what they are like. Yet, as exemplified in extract 50 above, the participants tried to

bridge the gap between themselves and the characters by identifying intertextual points of contact in the form of shared experiences and emotions. The participants used their imagination to transcend the differences between themselves and the characters. They positioned themselves as fellow humans and world citizens, with shared desires and hopes. This demonstrates how compassionate responses to literary texts can allow readers to verbalise they are just as vulnerable to human suffering (Nussbaum, 2017, p.386). All while maintaining respect towards the distinctiveness of their own and the characters' experiences, the participants tried to decrease the distance between them through deliberative reasoning (Tornberg, 2004, p.136).

Category 34 Compassionately rejected characters' self-criticism

This category concerns instances when the participants rejected the main characters' self-critical thoughts as an act of compassion. The participants expressed how they thought the characters were too hard on themselves and how acting on these beliefs would lead to self-sabotage. Extract 51 demonstrates how Johanna as Literary wizard in the group reading *Running* first read an excerpt in which Deo scolds himself for losing his brother Innocent, second, and shared an emotional response and argued that Deo should not blame himself.

> **51. Johanna_LW_R4**
> I have really ros- lost Innocent this time … what would my mother think? – how could I have been so careless? – this … **makes me feel sad** because Deo blames himself for not taking care of erm Innocent which is not true – taking care of someone all the time … in such situations – is hard – the fact that Innocent has disappeared several times make me makes me understand that he is very stressed but **Deo should never blame himself** for that because all he wanted was him and his brother to be safe

Johanna described how Deo's thoughts made her "feel sad" because what he is thinking "is not true". But even though the narrative evoked an emotional response, Johanna analysed the situation and identified that it is hard to take care of someone all the time, particularly under the conditions the brothers were experiencing as refugees. Here, Johanna did not share Deo's feelings, emotional empathy, instead she expressed a distinct feeling, compassion (Bloom, 2018, pp.141-142). Just as Deo did, Johanna looked at Innocent's past behaviour and that he had "disappeared several times" before. Although she verbalised that she could understand this made Deo "very stressed", she came to a different conclusion. She deliberated the brothers' actions and status as refugees in light of Deo's responsibilities as a brother, engaging in rational deliberation over a moral issue (Bloom,

2018, p.52). This examplifies responses to literary texts when readers see something the characters cannot and compassionately reject their judgement (Nussbaum, 2017, p.386).

This section has described and exemplified types of responses when the participants responded with care, concern, and compassion to the characters' struggles. Interweaving their utterances with narrative retellings and meaning making, the participants identified intertextual links within the narrative and linked these to their own narratives of life. They verbalised emotional responses and personal memories and drew on these to reduce the distance between themselves and the characters. In terms of the metaphor of mirrors, windows, and doors (Arizpe, Farrell & McAdam, 2013, pp.245-246), the participants juxtaposed what they saw through their windows of the narratives with the reflections in the mirrors. Using deliberative reasoning, they expressed hope for the characters, shared personal memories, identified shared vulnerabilities, and compassionately rejected characters' self-criticism. In doing so, they maintained respect for the characters' experiences while treating their circumstances as problems of values, opinions, and perspectives that can be deliberated on (Tornberg, 2004, p.136).

6.3.2 Value judgements

This sub-category concerns instances when the participants expressed ethical positions and judgements of right or wrong. In these responses, summarised in table 19 below, the participants articulated intertextual links between the narratives and their own narratives of life, evoking personal beliefs and values. This was one of the most frequent responses shared by the participants and as demonstrated by the analysis of the Discussion leaders' questions, also the second most frequent question type posed (appendix 12). Examples of these responses were shared in the previous chapter on appropriation of lexis (section 5.1.2) which described how the participants in the group reading *Q&A* repeated "take revenge" and the participants in the group reading *Running* repeated "judge people" to reject the main characters' actions. Those responses exemplified how the participants rejected the characters' actions using rational deliberation. This section describes how the participants' rejections and support for the characters' actions stemmed from feelings of anger, compassion, and empathy.

Table 19 Making links to narratives of life: Value judgements

No.	Response type
35	Imagined themselves in the characters' situations
36	Supported characters' actions because they empathised with their motivations
37	Rejected characters' actions but empathised with their motivations
38	Carnivalesque rejections of antagonists
39	Rejected characters' actions, but hypothesised about their motivations

Category 35 Imagined themselves in the characters' situations

This category identifies instances when the participants imagined themselves to be in the character's circumstances and described what they would do or feel in their situation. These responses were shared in response to the characters' different misfortunes and struggles and included utterances with "I would". Of the different identified question types posed by the Discussion leaders, "what would you" questions were the third most frequent (appendix 12). Extract 52 provides an abridged excerpt from collaborative dialogue with the group reading *Alaska* when the teacher involved herself, exemplifying one of the few times she prompted responses from her learners. The reading extract for this session describes how Miles blames himself for Alaska's fatal car accident as he did not stop her from driving when he knew she was upset and had been drinking.

52. CD_A4

Teacher: what would you – do? what would you have done in that situation?

Julia: … I would just like ask if I knew they were || if she likes – going to drive I would ask like oh where are you heading and – have you been drinking – erm stuff like that

Elsa: it's so hard to know before {Julia: yeah} because **she didn't feel good** and she was {Julia: mm} **very sad** and just **wanted to get from the school**

Alice: yeah I would like do the same – I would try and stop her erm and if I know he's- || she was drunk I would like try to stop her and do my best – and erm like **she was a really sad person** so maybe Miles did know that something like this could happened or that she could take suicide so maybe it was **better if she talked someone** in – || talked about her feelings because **she seems really lonely** and yeah didn't have someone to talk to

Erik: if I known the out- the outcome of the situat- situation I would probably stop her but if I didn't know the out- outcome erm – erm I

> probably helped her cause **she was crying** and it was morning and it was **probably he just woke up and too tired to argue** cause I would just help her be a good friend – mm

In this extract, three participants described how they would have acted had they been in Miles' situation. Julia would ask Alaska about her intentions and whether she had been drinking, followed by Alice who agreed and elaborated that she would stop her. Erik shared two responses – he would stop her if he knew that letting her leave would lead to her death, but if he was unaware of the consequences, as Miles was, he would help her leave, as Miles did. Elsa stated that "it's hard to know" and recounted how Alaska convinced Miles and the Colonel to help her "get from the school" because "she was very sad". Alice and Erik motivated their arguments with their interpretations of the characters' circumstances and their personal ethical positions. Alice hypothesised that she would stop Alaska because "was a really sad person" and suggested that Miles, as her friend, might have noticed she was not feeling well and could have foreseen that "something like this could happened". In that case, it would have been "better if she talked to someone" because "she seemed really lonely". Erik argued that he would "be a good friend" and help her, as good friends do when their friends are crying. By sharing "I would" utterances the participants assumed agency of the narrative and imagined themselves inside the stories (Sipe, 2008, p.162). When the participants argued for how they would act in Miles' position, they considered their understanding of the characters' circumstances and imagined their different motivations. Imagining ourselves in other people's situations and pretend that their misfortunes might be ours can facilitate compassion (Nussbaum, 2017, p.386). This is exemplified in Alice's concern for Alaska and Erik's compassion for Miles, who "just woke up" and probably was "too tired to argue". As extract 52 above demonstrates, when responding with "I would" utterances, the participants not only imagined themselves in the characters' positions, but they also considered their circumstances and evaluated their options. This can be interpreted as an example of practising deliberative communication, working through the problem posed by the question "what would you do" and considering different perspectives and values (Tornberg, 2004, p.136).

Category 36 Supported characters' actions because they empathised with their motivations

This category concerns instances when the participants supported the characters' actions because they empathised with their motivations. Extract 53 provides an abridged excerpt from collaborative dialogue with the group reading *Running* prompted by the Discussion

leader's question concerning Deo's decision to lie to his brother that the soldiers visiting their village in Zimbabwe had killed their mother and grandfather. Not stated in this extract, but something that underpinned the characters' responses was the narrative detail that Deo took care of his older brother Innocent due to a brain damage from birth, "Innocent may be ten years older than I am, but I always look after him" (Williams, 2012, p.10). Hanna, the Discussion leader, asked the second most common type of question posed by the Discussion leaders (appendix 12) – were the characters' actions or decisions right or wrong?

53. CD_R1

Hanna: do you think Deo did the right thing by lying to Innocent that erm Amai and Grandfa Longdrop didn't have died?

Johanna: … no I don't think so because erm erm he's gonna find out *att* ('that') erm later so – that's not right I don't think

Ida: **I think he did it to protect Innocent** but – erm he have to – to tell him – soon beca- because – he's going to find out anyway

Viktor: yeah I agree with- I agree with Johanna I think erm when they tell him erm later – he will be {girl: mm} – much more upset than he would be if they told him directly

Ebba: erm but I think like in the moment when he was like – || yeah **he was in pain** Innocent he was in pain and had just been beated by the – well erm

girl: soldiers

Ebba: yeah and **I don't think that was the right moment** to like bring up that his grandparent and mother is dead – because then maybe he wouldn't like walk with him he would just sit by the side and – cry

Hanna: yeah I also erm think that it wasn't the right – erm moment to tell him that they- they have died maybe gets like more upset after but erm they maybe are in l- like **a safe place where he can handle the situation**

In this extract, Johanna and Viktor rejected Deo's actions because they hypothesised that Innocent would inevitably learn about the death of their mother and grandfather and not learning this immediately would make him more upset. By using cognitive empathy (Bloom, 2018, p.17), Ida understood Deo's actions, "I think he did it to protect Innocent". Ebba agreed with Ida and elaborated with a narrative retelling that Innocent "was in pain"

because the soldiers had beaten him. This allowed her to generate the hypothesis that Innocent would perhaps become too upset by the news to run away with Deo, arguing that Deo made the right decision to lie because it was not “the right moment”. Hanna ends the collaborative dialogue by agreeing with Ebba, reformulating her argument, and elaborated with a prediction that Deo could tell Innocent when they are in “a safe place where he can handle the situation”. By intertextually linking their understanding of Deo’s and Innocent’s perspectives to their own personal beliefs, the participants passed judgement on Deo’s actions. Extract 53 above exemplifies how participants verbalised opposing views during collaborative dialogue, yet still respected each other’s perspectives (Tornberg, 2004, p.136). Their different conclusions were based on a shared understanding of the narrative, thus establishing intersubjectivity even though they disagreed whether Deo made the right decision. Three of five participants supported Deo’s decision and all three described how they understood his actions. Viewed through the metaphor of mirrors, windows, and doors (Arizpe, Farrell & McAdam, 2013, pp.245-246), their responses illustrate a mirror of the narrative and a connection with the value system upon which the main character acted. This category concerns instances when the participants supported the characters’ decisions because they empathised with their motivations. However, extract 53 above exemplified how the participants held different opinions, for and against the main characters’ decision. The category below describes in more detail instances when the participants rejected characters’ actions.

Category 37 Rejected characters’ actions, but empathised with their motivations

This category concerns instances when the participants rejected characters’ actions yet expressed how they empathised with their motivations and could see why they decided to take such actions. Extract 54 provides an example from collaborative dialogue with the group reading *Stars* prompted by the Discussion leader’s question concerning the characters Augustus’ and Isaac’s actions. First, consider how the main character Hazel’s friend Isaac has eye cancer, a metafictive device of a story within a story (Pantaleo, 2004, p.219), and his girlfriend Monica breaks up with him just before his surgery which would remove his remaining eye. In the reading extract for the fourth session, Augustus and Hazel are shocked to hear that Monica has not contacted Isaac after the surgery and Augustus decides they should egg her car.

54. CD_S4

Lucas: … **was it right** – to egg Isaac's ex-girlfriend's Monica's car because she never called or never said anything to him afterwards his operation?

Anton: … I think that's pretty – like dumb of her like just – just because he goes blind – she's just dumps her erm || him and – doesn't even bother to call and check … **maybe it's not necessary but I can understand what they come** …

Maja: yeah she could erm like – ask him how he was or {Anton: yeah exactly} how he was feeling just like showed like she cares {Anton: yeah} a bit but it's **not the right thing to do but** like you said {Anton: yeah} **I get why** she || he did it

Sara: she probably still cares about him so not reaching out at all probably feels really – || he probably feels betrayed … then **throwing eggs might not be the right way** … **but** … you may jush- || **just wash it off** {Anton: yeah exactly}

Lucas: **I- I agree totally with you** {Anton: yeah} … just because he goes blind doesn't mean that Monica has to – just dump you know

The participants acknowledged there were two victims in this situation – Isaac, who got dumped and ignored, and Monica, whose car got egged. Nevertheless, the participants agreed unanimously that even though the characters' actions were wrong, Monica's actions were even more unethical, and Isaac's anger was understandable. In other words, breaking up with someone because they are undergoing surgery that will make them blind and then not checking in with them afterwards trumps egging their car. No one tried to understand Monica's perspective. This is an example of when we see someone injured by another, and we share the victim's feeling of resentment, this could animate us to injure the offender (Bloom, 2018, p.191). Research on narrative empathy and readers' empathetic responses have demonstrated that authors cannot control readers' empathy (Keen, 2017, p.1291). Nevertheless, there are interesting parallels between the narrative and the participants' empathetic responses with the characters' anger. Both Augustus and Hazel are angry with Monica for not contacting Isaac, and even though Hazel, the focalized main character, did not participate in the egging, she did buy the eggs (Green, 2012, pp.228-229). Just as the characters let their actions be guided by their anger, the participants' ethical standpoint of "it's wrong, but I can understand" suggest their anger guided their judgement of right and wrong (Bloom, 2018, p.5). Compared to the previous section, this category represents responses that involved less deliberative reasoning and verbalisation of opposing views.

Category 38 Carnivalesque rejections of antagonists

This category concerns instances when the participants verbalised particularly strong rejections of the antagonists by using swearwords and emotive language. This occurred in the groups reading *Goodnight* and *Q&A* in response to the characters Mrs Beech and Prem Kumar respectively. These characters functioned as antagonists in relation to the main characters as they stood in their way to happiness and success. Mrs Beech emotionally and physically abused her son William and requested that William should leave Mister Tom and return to her. Prem Kumar, the quiz show host of *Who will win a billion?* is not only actively working against Ram's chances of winning but is also the man that had sexual relations with and physically abused Ram's girlfriend Nita and his former employer Neelima. Extract 55 provides an excerpt from collaborative dialogue with *Q&A* when the participant Lilly emphatically described her reaction.

55. CD_Q5

William: what were your reactions to … that Prem Kumar was actually the man that … ending up beating Nita and the actress girl … what did you think about that?

Lilly: erm **I was very angry** I – I already thought he was [laughed] a **douchebag** but – erm this made me – like him even less [smiley voice]

William: mhm

Lilly: yeah

Here, Lilly explained that she already considered Prem a "douchebag" for how he treated Ram on the quiz show but learning how Prem had also abused the two women made her "angry" and "like him even less". Lilly's laughter before uttering "douchebag" and her subsequent smiley voice suggest that she was acknowledging that her choice of words might be perceived as provocative. This is reminiscent of the carnivalesque where everyone is invited to join in on the festivity and mockery (Bakhtin, 1984, p.7). However, William accepted Lilly's response without any value judgement and none of the other participants responded. In the group reading *Goodnight* however, the participants displayed greater intersubjectivity as four of the six participants uttered emphatic rejections. They called Mrs Beech "crazy", "psycho", "psychopath", and as extract 56 exemplifies, they also thought her behaviour was "fucked up".

56. CD_G3

Emil: she's just a **psycho**

[general laughter]

Oliver: yeah she's just really **crazy**

Ella: yeah I don't know – {Emil: mm} I don't get why- || how you can do that to a child I mean it's so **fucked up** {girl: mm} [inaudible] – Oliver will you summarise the discussion? [smiley voice]

Oliver: yeah [smiley voice] today we listened to everyone's roles and we talked about…

This extract was but one example of the several instances when the group reading *Goodnight* emphatically rejected Mrs Beech and as here, they spoke with smiley voices or laughed, and their peers joined the laughter. This suggests they were aware of the effect these vocabulary items could have on their listeners and the shared laughter indicates they all agreed with each other, establishing intersubjectivity and creating a carnivalesque spirit together (Bakhtin, 1984, p.7). Again and again, session after session, they repeated how they could not understand what would lead someone to take such actions. As Ella said in extract 56 above, "I don't get how you can do that to a child". Their desire to understand was explicit and in a few instances the participants generated hypotheses about Mrs Beech's motivations, described and exemplified in the category below. Yet, as exemplified here, their anger mostly stopped their attempts to try to see Mrs Beech's perspective. For example, in the reading extract for the fourth reading circle session, Mister Tom explains to William that he believes that Mrs Beech is mentally ill (Magorian, 1981, p.278), something which the participants never mentioned. This demonstrates how gut feelings of anger can determine our moral judgements of right and wrong and how anger can distance us from deliberate reasoning (Bloom, 2018, p.209). When the participants reading *Goodnight* and *Q&A* emphatically rejected Prem Kumar and Mrs Beech, they demarked their compassion, identifying who to count and deserving of the same respect as them (Nussbaum, 2008, p.150). The participants' carnivalesque rejections are examples of when emotional empathy for victims can lead to blind anger for the perpetrators.

Category 39 Rejected characters' actions, but generated hypotheses about their motivations

This category concerns instances when participants responded to characters' actions by rejecting them as wrong, but still tried to understand their motivations. Discussed in the

category above, the participants in the group reading *Goodnight* emphatically rejected Mrs Beech's abusive behaviour towards her son, William. With no access to her thoughts, the participants tried in a few instances to make sense of her behaviour and hypothesised about her motivations. Extract 57 provides an abridged excerpt from collaborative dialogue in their first session, in response to when William is evacuated to the countryside and Mrs Beech communicates her demands in a letter to William's host, Mister Tom.

57. CD_G1

Emil: and erm – his mom seems like erm **very strict** too like – because she || it was important for her that he would live like near a church …

Wilma: she's **very re- re- religious** {Oliver: religious; Emil: yeah}

Both participants in this extract drew on Emil's narrative retelling that it was important for Mrs Beech that William would live near a church and suggested that she seems "very strict" and "she's very religious". The next time a participant tried to see Mrs Beech's perspective is Emil's report as Character tracer in the third session. In the reading extract for this session, Mrs Beech requests William to return to her in London because she is ill, and this was the first time the participants met Mrs Beech first hand. Extract 58 provides an excerpt from Emil's report in which he reacted to her treatment of William's little sister.

58. Emil_CT_G3

this week when we really got to meet Ms Beech – she was worse than I thought – she is a complete psycho – the thing I reacted to the most was erm how on page 192 she kept a new-born baby in a wooden box with tape on its mouth – that was she described to keep it quiet – it laid there qua- erm crying and when Willie wanted to pick it up to comfort it – she said no – she's just eh trying to get attention – she must learn a little discipline – a sensible person would never do something like that so why- so **why is she like this**? – it probably depends on how she grew up and was treated by her parents – since it's very **common that children take after their guardians** and people around them

Here, Emil described Mrs Beech as Ms and how he considered her to be "a complete psycho", yet still asked himself "why is she like this?". To consider why people take the actions they do can be an antidote to anger one feels towards them (Nussbaum, 2017, p.390). Emil suggested that her abuse could stem from her childhood experiences and that her parents might have abused her too. Emil justified this hypothesis by drawing on his understanding of how children are influenced by the people around them and that they often "take after their guardians". As these two extracts demonstrate, even though William suffered at the expense of his own mother, the participants tried to humanise Mrs Beech

and acknowledged her weaknesses as a human. The participants tried to make sense of the characters' actions, despite rejecting them, to see if there was any logic to be imagined. This illustrates an attempt to move away from the so called "myth of pure evil", that some people are cruel and evil by nature (Bloom, 2018, p.180). Viewed through the metaphor of mirrors, windows, and doors (Arizpe, Farrell & McAdam, 2013, pp.245-246), this process can be described as the participants realising they could not establish links between what they saw through the window with what they saw in the mirror, and instead attempting to cross the threshold through the door by trying to shift and reposition their perspective. In this perspective, these responses could be described as hints at the taking the initial steps through the door to understand actions that conflict with our own experiences, beliefs, and values. Yet, these instances were few in comparison to the instances when the participants' responses were fuelled by anger.

This section on response types categorised as value judgements has demonstrated how the participants' feelings of anger, compassion, and empathy influenced their judgements of the characters' actions in terms of right or wrong. After referential responses (section 6.1.1), these responses were among the most frequent. The participants used deliberative communication to carefully consider different perspectives, sometimes prioritising the perspective of one character over others. Viewed through the metaphor of mirrors, windows, and doors (Arizpe, Farrell & McAdam, 2013, pp.245-246), this illustrates how the reading of literary texts can involve a confrontation between readers' value systems and those revealed in literary texts. For example, as the responses labelled "carnivalesque rejections" illustrate, anger can influence judgement and hinder rational deliberation of all perspectives involved (Bloom, 2018, p.209). This observation evokes the discussion on whether reading literary texts can foster empathy, discussed above (section 2.3.3), and illustrates a tension between different types of reader responses. On the one hand, empathy can be a source of pleasure when reading literary texts (Bloom, 2018, p.2; Nodelman & Reimer, 2003, p.25) and it would thus be commendable to promote empathic responses if the pedagogical aim is to promote reading for pleasure. On the other hand, as this section illustrates, the participants' anger towards the characters that harmed the main characters sometimes blocked deliberative communication. This finding is further discussed in the chapter discussion (section 6.4), after the final section of response types, describing how the participants generalised from the characters' struggles.

6.3.3 Generalising from the characters' struggles

This category concerns instances when the participants generalised from the characters' struggles to their understandings of unequal and unjust treatment of people. In these responses, the participants articulated intertextual links between the narratives and their own narratives of life, evoking their cultural knowledge. They constructed the novels as realist representations of humanity, and they used the characters' struggles as realistic examples of real-life issues. When verbalised in role reports, these were often accompanied with traces of results from online searches, e.g., sharing facts and figures on child abuse, suicide rates, and gender inequality in the acting business. Summarised in table 20 below, five response types were identified.

Table 20 Making links to narratives of life: Generalising from the characters' struggles

No.	Response type
40	Reframed perspectives
41	Made historical comparisons
42	Made intracultural comparisons
43	Identified structural inequality
44	Made calls for action

Category 40 Reframed perspectives

In a few instances, the participants stated that the novels made them see life from a new and different perspective. They attributed these changes in perception to their understanding of how the characters conceptualised and made sense of their circumstances. In short, the characters' beliefs inspired these participants to reframe their perspectives. The below comment by the character Augustus addressed to Hazel in *Stars* (Green, 2012, p.216) was read by Maja before she shared her response, excerpted in extract 59 below.

> "'Some war', he said dismissively. 'What am I at war with? My cancer. And what is my cancer? My cancer is me. The tumors are made of me. They're made of me as surely as my brain and my heart are made of me. It is a civil war, Hazel Grace, with a predetermined winner'."

This quote is from the scene when Hazel has just learned that Augustus', her best friend and boyfriend, cancer has returned and that he is receiving palliative chemotherapy. Hazel tries to build Augustus up "to prepare for battle" (Green, 2012, p.216), but as Augustus' comment illustrates, he is sceptic of this interpretation of cancer. But Augustus does not

elaborate, and Hazel does not respond. However, extract 59 provides an excerpt of Maja's report as Literary wizard and demonstrates what she learned from Augustus' conceptualisation of cancer as a "civil war".

59. Maja_LW_S4

> I chose this paragraph because **I thought it was an interesting thought and I never heard someone who sees cancer this way** – what he says is very sad but at the same time it's true – what is cancer? – well it is you – it's your body and it's your cells … **I realised that you actually can connect cancer to a civil war** – it sounds pretty weird I know but … it's a war inside your body between you and the cancer between your cells and your cells

Maja first identified an intertextual link between Hazel's intention to encourage Augustus to fight with "you hear people say things like fight cancer". She then described how Augustus' comment made her question this saying and how it allowed her to see cancer in a new way. As described above, the narrative did not interpret Augustus' comment, Maja did. In these types of responses, the participants described how they interpreted the characters' conceptualisations of their circumstances and how this provided them with a different lens on life. Viewed through the metaphor of mirrors, windows, and doors (Arizpe, Farrell & McAdam, 2013, pp.245-246), this illustrates how literary texts can stimulate a reframing of perspectives, symbolised by the opening of doors and crossing thresholds. Using deliberative communication (Tornberg, 2004, p.136), the participants focused on narrative elements, used reason to describe how these elements provided new perspectives, and verbalised attempts to learn from the narrative.

Category 41 Made historical comparisons

This category concerns instances when the participants made comparisons between their own present time and their understanding of the historical period in which the novel was set. These responses were only shared by participants in the group reading *Goodnight* as theirs was the only novel that was set in the past – in England during World War II. When the participants tried to understand the characters' circumstances and actions, they evoked their knowledge of history on several occasions. Extract 60 provides an abridged excerpt from the collaborative dialogue generated by the Discussion leader Oliver's question for his peers why they thought the character Mister Tom was concerned when William received a tetanus jab.

60. G4_CD

Oliver: Why do you think Tom is against vaccine?

Wilma: … cause **this is like in the 40s 30s so like some vaccines were pretty like – new** so like he was **they haven't been tested as much as they have been today** so maybe he was like they could be dangerous {Emil: yeah} …

Ella: … and **it wasn't as common back then either** I think erm like Wilma said it was pretty new {Emil: yeah; Agnes: yeah} so it isn't so weird I think

Agnes: yeah I feel like **it's more common to take vaccine today** {girl: mm} … so I think Tom is used in the old ways so he wants to stick with that

In this extract, Wilma evoked her understanding of the history of vaccines and argued that during the novel's period "some vaccines were pretty like new" and had not "been tested as much". Ella agreed and reformulated Wilma's argument, they were not "as common back then", and Agnes followed suit by stating that she thought vaccines are "more common" in their own present time. This allowed them to draw the conclusion that Mister Tom's concern "isn't so weird", because he thought vaccines "could be dangerous" and that he "wants to stick" with the ways he is used to. This collaborative dialogue demonstrates how during the reading circle sessions the participants only had access to the collective knowledge of the group, but that they tried to make relevant associations to the characters' actions and identify their motivations. As in previous examples of collaborative dialogue, extract 60 above demonstrates how the participants used deliberative communication to generate hypotheses in response to the problems posed by the Discussion leaders. When making these historical comparisons, the participants positioned themselves as children of the future with access to more advanced knowledge and different possibilities than the characters, thus constructing the characters as less enlightened and with limited options in life. Nevertheless, just as the other groups did, the participants reading *Goodnight* still used the reading circle sessions as a platform to exemplify and identify issues in their own present times and made calls for actions, as described in the categories below.

Category 42 Made intracultural comparisons

This category concerns instances when the participants self-ascribed to specific cultures and described how these cultures were different to the cultures they identified in the novels. For example, the participants self-identified as learners, teenagers, or Swedes, and made intracultural comparisons between themselves and the characters. This allowed them to intertextually link their cultural understanding to the narrative. From this comparison,

they took ethical positions and identified injustices or ill-treatment, either in their own culture or in the culture of the novel and argued that the issues deserved more focus from themselves and their fellow citizens. Extract 61 provides an excerpt from Ida's report as Creative connector in the group reading *Running*, when she self-identified as a Swedish citizen and compared the main characters' lives in their Zimbabwean village to "we here up in the North".

> **61. Ida_CC_R1**
> in the village of Gutu everybody **took care of each other as a big family** – for example Innocent probably had an had a disabilities and therefore Deo looked after him as a little brother and the other kids in the village seemed to be like **siblings to each other** – in Sweden – the **welfare system** helps us to take care of people who need extra support – for example easy jobs – and I think that here in Sweden … we are kind of **scared of each other** and sometimes people who have lived erm in the same house for a long time haven't even said hi to each other erm even once – I believe that we here up in the north should be more comfortable with each other and be more friendly – we can for example take a seat beside another person on the bus … maybe you can get a new friend that way

In this excerpt, by using three we-statements to refer to herself as part of the group of citizens of Sweden, Ida self-identified as a Swede and constructed her herself as an active member of the state. Ida positioned herself and other Swedish citizens as different to the villagers in the novel as they "took care of each as a big family" compared to Sweden with an established welfare system designed "to take care of people who need extra support". She included specific examples from the narrative and from Sweden, contrasting how the village children seemed "like siblings to each other" and how neighbours in Sweden do not even say "hi to each other". In this study, when the participants made intracultural comparisons, the values to which they self-ascribed mattered more than the culture. As in extract 61 above, to Ida it was more important to "be more friendly" than to maintain what she considered as part of Swedish identity, to be "kind of scared of each other". Ida demonstrated care and concern for her Swedish community and a feeling of being inspired by the characters' actions in the novel, concluding her report by arguing that "we here up in the north" should make efforts to be friendlier to each other. Further discussed below, this exemplifies the response type – made calls for action. The comparison of select narrative elements with examples from observed behaviour in herself and other Swedish citizens, exemplifies how the participants used deliberative communication to make their case, questioning established practices and values (Tornberg, 2004, p.136). According to reader response research that has observed how readers read from different cultural positions, it is likely that a reader that self-identify with another culture would read the

same text differently (Brooks & Browne, 2012, p.80). Viewed through the metaphor of mirrors, windows, and doors, readers that can identify reflections of themselves in the narrative, connect more easily and respond more positively (Bishop, 1990). The response type described here suggests that there is more for readers to connect to than culture, the perspectives and values displayed by the characters are also important.

Category 43 Identified structural inequality

This category concerns instances when the participants identified structural inequality, i.e., societal structures favouring some people over others. Extract 62 provides an excerpt from Emma's report as Creative connector in the group reading *Q&A* and her response to the suicide of the character Neelima Kumari, a former successful movie actress and for whom Ram worked as a servant.

> **62. Emma_CC_Q4**
> Neelima Kumari … got no more roles anymore erm because she was too old and ugly … she wanted to die young … I can connect this to the world outside – some reasons that pe- – people take their lives is that they are depressed or feel that **they have nothing to live for** … in today's society it **much easier for men to get the main roles when they are older – a German study** shows that – erm the older the main character is erm that it is more likely that the main character is a man – I don't know why it has to be like this but today's society is not equal …

Here, Emma explained the events leading up to Neelima's death, linked them to her understanding of why people choose to commit suicide, and shared findings from "a German study" that supported the fictional Neelima's story of being an older actress that no longer would be hired for any acting jobs. That Emma cited a study and very specific findings that older men are more likely to play main characters than older women together with the fact that online searches have become a ubiquitous strategy to retrieve and verify information, suggests that Emma found the study in an online search. Thus, Emma used Neelima as a realistic example of how real female actresses struggle with structural inequality and suggested that such treatment could make people feel like "they have nothing to live for" and even have fatal consequences. Emma's report followed a discourse structure often used by the participants in their reports as Creative connectors and Literary wizards. First, a brief retelling of the narrative that focused on the characters' struggles, second, a comparison of the fictional world to the real world, and third, sharing their interpretation of the issue and often arguing for an ethical position. This demonstrates careful deliberation and a questioning of established practices and values (Tornberg, 2004,

p.136). Emma ended her report stating that she does not know why this is so but argued that it could be explained from how "today's society is not equal". As Emma did here, the participants used narrative elements as realistic examples of how they, as world citizens, identified structural inequality, e.g., world hunger or unequal access to education, mental health services, or anti-smoking treatment.

Category 44 Made calls for action

This category builds on previous categories in this section of how the participants used different strategies to generalise from the characters' struggles and used these as an opportunity to make calls for action. These responses were particularly frequent in the reports by Creative connectors and Literary wizards. The participants urged themselves, their peers, and fellow citizens of Sweden and the world to act. The issues varied from day-to-day events of Swedes making friends with strangers on the bus, as in extract 61 above, exemplifying category 42 on intercultural comparisons. That was an example of a call for action in a role report, extract 63 below provides an example from collaborative dialogue. In this extract, Sara and Anton in the group reading *Stars* co-constructed a call for action in response to Filip's question as Discussion leader on how society treats people like the main character Hazel.

63. CD_S1

Filip: … if you look from society's point of view are people with diseases treated as everyone else? How would you feel in Hazel's shoes from her society perspective?

Sara: yeah I also feel like it's important to treat **people who's sick** I mean {Anton: like} with respect {Anton: **normal** yeah} of course but also like – {Anton: like **a normal**} a n- {Anton: **person**} – **a perfectly normal person** {Anton: yeah} because otherwise **they would just feel even more different** or even more sick {Anton: exactly} they would just – as Augustus said become their disease {Anton: yeah exactly} instead of being themselves

As Sara incorporated Anton's overlapping speech "normal person" into her utterance and qualified it with "perfectly", extract 63 is an example of co-operative completion and co-construction of meaning (section 5.2.1.2). In their responses, Sara and Anton positioned themselves as "normal" compared to fictional Hazel who is terminally ill with cancer. They intertextually linked Hazel's feelings of being "different" to real people with cancer and ascribed to them to share her feelings. This prompted Sara and Anton to argue that we can help "people who's sick" by treating them with respect and like "a perfectly normal

person". Sara recalled a verbatim direct quote from the novel to support her position, "as Augustus said become their disease instead of being themselves". This suggests Sara argued from a position of care and concern for Hazel's wellbeing, just as Augustus did. Here, Sara followed the narrative which frequently conflicted Hazel's goals with the goals of the other characters. For example, Hazel's desire to spend time with friends and travel abroad versus her parents' worry for her health and safety. Research on narrative empathy suggests that congruence between authors' and readers' compassion and concern can become a motivational force "to move beyond literary response to prosocial action" (Keen, 2017, p.1291). However, in this study, the narratives often contained ambiguity and invited more than one ethical position. For example, in the novel *Alaska*, the main character Miles begins smoking and describes how this is both a positive and negative experience for him, but the participant Erik rejected the behaviour and made a call for action to provide better access to anti-smoking treatments. Nevertheless, the participants' calls for action were always supported by deliberative communication, questioning established practices and suggested solutions to problems the participants identified themselves (Tornberg, 2004, p.136).

This section has identified and described response types when the participants generalised from the characters' struggles by intertextually linking the narrative to their cultural knowledge. This meant constructing the novels as realist representations of humanity and the characters' struggles as realistic examples of real-life issues, evoking the participants' understanding of how people are treated unequally and unfairly. Five response types were identified and exemplified: reframed perspectives, made historical comparisons, made intracultural comparisons, identified structural inequality, and made calls for action. In these response types, the participants drew on cognitive empathy, the understanding of other people's perspectives without sharing their feelings (Bloom, 2018, p.17) to position themselves and the characters as fellow vulnerable human beings. This supports Nussbaum's (2017, p.387) idea of civic imagination to identify the suffering and unequal treatment of others and argue their urgency and importance. The typology's third main category making links to narratives of life identified the three sub-categories of compassionate responses, value judgements, and generalising from the characters' struggles. In the responses identified here, the participants problematised the narrative and identified the characters' struggles as problems to respond to and suggested solutions for in their role reports and during the collaborative dialogue. In this study, the participants shared responses to the novels that verbalised how they empathised with or rejected the characters' actions and decisions and articulated links to ethical standpoints. Viewed

through the metaphor of mirrors, windows, and doors (Arizpe, Farrell & McAdam, 2013, pp.245-246), this illustrates how literary texts can invite a dialogic reading process where readers' and texts' beliefs and values are confronted with each other. This is congruent with deliberative communication in educational contexts where learners pose and solve problems without the involvement of their teacher (Tornberg, 2004). This concludes the description of responses identified as making links to narratives of life and this chapter ends with a chapter discussion and conclusion.

6.4 Chapter discussion and conclusion

This chapter has described and exemplified the typology of responses that emerged from the reader response analysis of how the participants talked about the novels. Described in the previous chapter, this analysis followed the distinction the participants made between their narrative retellings and meaning making. As this study aims to understand the participants' meaning making processes across the data set, patterns were identified across all reading circle sessions. The analysis of these patterns was framed by sociocultural theory, this study's conceptual framework, and how language is used as a tool for communication. This generated the emerging understanding of how the identified different response types could be conceptualised as conceptual tools, allowing the participants to respond to the novels by either identifying intertextuality within the narrative or between themselves and the narrative. In other words, intertextuality was used as a tool by the participants to create meaning and the constructed typology represent how they drew on their intertextual repertoires. To provide insights into the research question on how the reading circles facilitated the development of responses to literary texts, this chapter discussion and conclusion focuses on two findings. First (section 6.4.1), how the typology facilitated insights into the participants' responses, including how my close reading of the novels can further illuminate the meaning making processes involved in the participants' responses. Second (section 6.4.2), how the participants' collaborative dialogue generated deliberative communication, in which different beliefs, perspectives, and values were advanced and evaluated against each other (Englund, 2006; 2016). Taken together, these findings suggest the reading circles facilitated spaces where the participants could develop their responses to the novels and practise deliberative democracy, respecting, and upholding the right to different views and perspectives.

6.4.1 Insights into the participants' meaning making processes

This section discusses how the typology of responses facilitated the emergence of insights into the participants' responses. This chapter has demonstrated how the participants drew on their intertextual repertoires to construct different types of responses to the narratives. The typology was divided into three main categories. First, identifying the readerly gap was inspired by Nussbaum's (2017, pp.385-386) idea of narrative imagination which involves the attribution of emotions and thoughts to try to understand other people, yet realising it is an impossible task to overcome Otherness. Second, evaluating the novels as works of art involved the participants appraising the novels as objects and evaluating their quality in terms of literary craft, didactic messages, and aesthetic value. Third, making links to narratives of life was inspired by Nussbaum's (2017, p.387) idea of civic imagination, involving the development of an understanding of how others suffer and are treated unequally and an emotional conviction of their urgency and importance. These three categories are discussed using the metaphor of mirrors, windows, and doors (Arizpe, Farrell & McAdam, 2013, pp.245-246), to provide more insights into the participants' meaning making processes.

Summarising participants' responses

Using their narrative imagination, the participants identified the readerly gap by linking different narrative elements to construct referential responses (section 6.1.1) and they drew on their imagination to construct to creative responses (section 6.1.2). Through this wondering about the characters, they involved themselves actively in the reading process and tried to reduce the Otherness and the distance between themselves and the characters. When constructing referential responses, the participants identified intertextual coherence between narrative elements to construct meaning around such aspects as characters' goals and development. In these responses, the participants closely followed the parameters outlined by the readerly gap (Beauvais, 2015b). When constructing creative responses, the participants ventured beyond the written page to e.g., generate hypotheses about what happened before the start of the novels or what would happen after they ended. Still adhering to the gap's parameters, the participants made use of the interpretive space created by the omission of details and creatively imagined how to fill these empty spaces (Beauvais, 2015b). Together with the narrative retellings that pointed to specific places in the narrative, their narrative imagination communicated how they made meaning of these elements. Viewed through the metaphor of mirrors, windows, and doors (Arizpe, Farrell & McAdam, 2013, pp.245-246), the responses categorised as identifying the readerly gap

illustrate the participants' verbalisation of windows of what they saw in the narrative. Compared to the teacher's instructions (appendix 1), demonstrate that the participants followed the prompts on identifying "main highlights" and "characters traits" in the reading extracts. However, the variation with which the participants made meaning of the readerly gap suggests they also followed the teacher's prompts on focusing on what they found "funny, interesting, or puzzling". Moreover, their interpretations and conclusions were shared with some tentativeness. This indicates the awareness of the readerly gap and that they were generating hypotheses about details the authors had omitted. Also, it might indicate the intersubjective nature of the reading circle sessions and used as an acknowledgement that their peers might think differently. This interpretation is further discussed below (section 6.4.2) in relation to the concept of deliberative communication.

When making links to their narratives of life, the third main category, the participants drew on their civic imagination to verbalise links between the narrative and their narratives of life in terms of compassionate responses (section 6.3.1), value judgements (section 6.3.2), and generalising from the characters' struggles to wider sociocultural and political issues (section 6.3.3). Germane to civic imagination is the verbalisation of how characters suffer from unequal treatment and an emotional conviction for an urgent resolution (Nussbaum, 2017, p.387). Following the arch of the stories, the participants mainly prioritised the desires and plights of the main characters and rooted for their intentions and goals. However, although the main characters' goals and desires moved the narrative arch of the stories forward, the participants sometimes ignored them and turned the spotlight to secondary characters to wonder about their motivations. A few times, they even rejected the main characters' actions, when these were positioned by the narrative as the cause of conflicts, controversies, or contradictions in the characters' behaviour and motives (e.g., data extracts in section 5.1.2.2). This supports research in psychology that shows it is easier to connect and empathise with life experiences that are like our own (Mallan, 2013, p.105). The responses shared by the participants suggest they not only responded to elements when the characters' experiences mirrored their own, but also when the characters' decisions implied shared beliefs and values or when the antagonists were just as evil and unjust as the participants expected them to be. Compared to identifying the readerly gap, the responses categorised as making links to narratives of life contained less traces of tentativeness. Instead, these responses were frequently framed as assertions of the participants' beliefs and values. This indicates the participants adopted value positions and made moral claims, suggesting they were engaged in deliberative communication (Englund, 2006; 2016), further discussed below (section 6.4.2).

As discussed here, the typology of responses demonstrates how the participants used different lenses to make meaning of the readerly gap and identify intertextuality within the narrative. It also demonstrates how they identified intertextuality between the narrative and their own narratives of life. This allowed the participants to verbalise how they made meaning of the characters' desires and struggles and how they positioned themselves in relation to these. This brings to mind the central idea in sociocultural theory that emotion and cognition are inseparable and that our social environment is always refracted through our personal psychology (Lantolf & Swain, 2019). This idea is explored and discussed in the section below, comparing my close reading of the novels (section 3.7) to the participants' responses.

Exploring the second most frequent responses – value judgements

By constructing the typology of responses, insights emerged into the participants' evaluation of the characters' actions in terms of right or wrong. As discussed above (section 6.3.2), these responses were the second most frequent and played into all response types identified as making links to narratives of life. Framed by sociocultural theory, the study's conceptual framework, this provides further insights into how the participants' meaning making was refracted through the their personal psychologies (Lantolf & Swain, 2019).

When expressing care, compassion, and concern for the characters, they participants could do so because the characters' actions and feelings mirrored their own. For example, when the participants compassionately rejected characters' self-criticism (category 34), they argued from a position of relating to the characters' feelings. This is an example of how compassion is different from emotional empathy, to express care and concern for other people compared to sharing their feelings (Bloom, 2018, p.141). From the perspective of reader response, this can involve a process of reducing Otherness to sameness and of failing to recognise the uniqueness of the concrete other's situation in the attempt to identify connections (Mallan, 2013, p.105). This also applied when the main characters' experiences were very different to the participants', they could still relate to the beliefs and values underpinning the characters' decisions. For example, discussed above (category 36), the participants in the group reading *Running* had never been in a situation like the main character Deo whose family was murdered by government soldiers. Yet, they could draw on cognitive empathy to discuss whether Deo made the right decision to not tell his brother about it and argue that he did so to protect him. This example demonstrates how the

participants' responses towards the characters drew on their compassion, however, there were instances when the participants' responses implied anger and moral judgement.

Another example of how the participants' responses were refracted through the their personal psychologies (Lantolf & Swain, 2019) is how they sometimes responded with anger and bewilderment. These responses were shared as rejections of secondary characters' evil actions toward the main characters and of not understanding the characters' motivations. These responses communicated strong opinions, even when they were shared with laughter and smiley voices in the carnivalesque rejections of antagonists (category 38). For example, this concerned the characters Mrs Beech, William's abusive mother in the novel *Goodnight*, and Prem Kumar, the corrupt quiz show host in *Q&A* who physically assaulted two women that were important to Ram. The novel *Q&A* shared no clues about Kumar's motivations, whereas *Goodnight* described that Mrs Beech was very religious, a Mr Beech was never mentioned, and Mister Tom described her as ill. This might explain why the participants reading *Q&A* did not hypothesise about Kumar's motivations, whereas one participant in the group reading *Goodnight* shared a few hypotheses about Mrs Beech, discussed above (category 39). These two examples describe instances when the participants explicitly expressed anger, however there were several instances when the participants rejected characters' actions and used reason to support their perspective. For example, in response to Mai Maria, a human trafficker in *Running*, or the classmates that duct taped Miles in *Alaska* and threw him into a lake. In response to these actions, the participants used deliberative reasoning to argue that the former involved taking advantage of people in vulnerable positions and the latter as an indication of bullying behaviour.

Comparing these very different responses, angry or reasoned rejections, raises the question of why using literary texts with language learners when they can lead to such disparate responses? As discussed in the literature review (section 2.3.3), there are voices for the potential of literary texts to foster empathy (e.g., Nussbaum, 2017) and against (e.g., Landy, 2008). From the perspective of moral philosophy, sole reliance on empathy or other gut feelings such as anger and guilt can without rational deliberation become poor moral guides (Bloom, 2018, p.87). This study makes no claims on identifying development of empathy, instead it aims to provide insights into how the participants used their verbalised emotional responses to direct their moral. Moreover, it also shows how the reading process, as all experiences according to sociocultural theory, is refracted through the interconnectedness of emotion and cognition (Lantolf & Swain, 2019). As this chapter has

demonstrated, the participants in this study identified intertextuality between the narrative and their own narratives of life and during the collaborative dialogue, they verbalised and evaluated different perspectives on the shared reading. This suggests, extending the argument introduced above, that they were practising deliberative communication (Englund, 2006; 2016), the topic of the section below.

6.4.2 Collaborative dialogue as deliberative communication

This section elaborates on the finding that the participants co-constructed collaborative dialogue when they other-repaired narrative retellings and collectively generated dialogue in response to the Discussion leaders' questions. In sociocultural theory, collaborative dialogue involves two or more people languaging together to solve problems and generate new knowledge (Swain & Watanabe, 2019, p.1). The product of the participants' collaborative dialogue was the negotiated reading comprehension of the novels and the sharing of different interpretations and perspectives, verbalising intertextuality. As identified in this chapter by the typology of responses, the languaging processes involved the sharing of different views and perspectives, elaborating, counter-arguing, and reformulating previously stated meaning. This is reminiscent of deliberative communication, an aspect of deliberative democracy where communication is key to rational exploration of different views and perspectives. Deliberative communication is defined as (1) shared understandings or temporary agreement for the purpose of deliberation, (2) learning to listen with respect and tolerance to interlocutors' arguments, (3) the deliberation of problems with the purpose of allowing different and opposing perspectives to emerge, (4) the questioning of established practices and power structures and (5) scope for communication without teacher control (Englund, 2016, p.62). This section discusses how the findings presented in this chapter and in the previous suggest the participants were practising deliberative communication as part of a democracy-creating educational context.

(1) Shared understandings

How the participants' collaborative dialogue complied with the first criterion, shared understandings, was discussed above (section 5.3.2) in how they regulated their reading comprehension and established a shared frame of reference. As discussed in the previous chapter (section 5.1), when the participants talked about the novels, their utterances comprised an interweaving of retellings and meaning making and they used each other's narrative retellings as artefacts to develop their own responses. The Discussion leaders

framed their questions based on how they made meaning of the narrative and the issues, conflicts, and controversies they identified. The analysis of their questions (appendix 12) identified different question types that mirrored the constructed typology of responses. Thus, the meaning the Discussion leaders made of the narrative set the boundaries for the co-construction of meaning during the collaborative dialogue, in addition to the boundaries established by the readerly gap. This followed the teacher's instructions on the turn-taking order (appendix 1) and only in a few instances did peers to the Discussion leaders initiate other paths of inquiry during the collaborative dialogue. Finally, the shared patterns across the role reports and the Discussion leaders' questions suggest that the participants were acting from a shared understanding of ground rules (Edwards & Mercer, 2012) of how to complete the reading circles. In sociocultural theory, by identifying the communicative rules valued by the participants of communicative activities provide insights to what is considered successful participation by the participants (Säljö, 2014, p.209). By establishing consensus and shared frames of reference for how to the complete the reading circle sessions the participants linked knowledge generation with solidarity (Englund, 2016, p.62).

(2) Learning to listen

The second criterion, learning to listen with respect and tolerance, was realised by how the participants managed the turn-taking order and repeated lexis. As discussed above (section 5.1.1.1), during the reading of the role reports, the participants took turns and there was no dialogue around the content. Their reports had been carefully prepared and contained elaborate deliberative argumentation for different interpretations and conclusions of the narratives. On the other hand, when responding to the Discussion leaders' questions, the collaborative dialogue was framed by the questions and the participants self-selected to speak at least once. If a participant opted to stay silent, someone prompted them, either a peer, the Discussion leader, or the teacher. A few times the participants verbalised they had nothing to add, but this strategy mostly generated responses. The number of times each participant shared a response varied. A few reading circle sessions were ended by the Discussion leader when each participant had shared one response each. However, in most sessions the collaborative dialogue developed without prompting and participants made several turns, and even interrupted each other. During collaborative dialogue, the participants counter-argued, elaborated on, and reformulated their peers' utterances. This meant using the narrative retellings and the meaning making in previous utterances as artefacts to extend one own's meaning. As demonstrated by the frequent lexis repetition

(section 5.1.2), the participants listened to each other, and appropriated items used by their peers for their own purposes. This suggests a transactional listening process, much like reading literary texts, involving the shared effort of creating dialogue, unique for that communicative situation (Englund, 2016, p.71). This conceptualisation of listening is similar to Freire's (2021, p.100) understanding of how dialogical problem-posing education becomes an act of liberation through dialogue where interlocutors not only teach each other but also learn from each other. However, the extent to which different participants spoke differed and not all characters' perspectives were deliberated upon. This means that some voices, including characters and participants, were not heard.

(3) Respectful deliberation and problem-solving

The third criterion, respectful deliberation and problem-solving, was realised by how the participants continuously verbalised intertextual links within the narrative and between the narrative and their own narratives of life. In doing so, they treated the role reports and the collaborative dialogue as conflicts, controversies, or contradictions to be deliberated upon. They identified a problem, e.g., by selecting a quote from the narrative as Literary wizards and arguing for why they had chosen this quote, i.e., articulating an intertextual link to their own narratives of life, and described how this was meaningful to them. Or, as Discussion leaders, sharing a narrative retelling, posed as a problem to be deliberated upon by all attending participants. This provides additional support for the finding that the dialogue generated by the Discission leaders' questions can be considered collaborative dialogue that promotes problem-solving and knowledge building (Swain & Watanabe, 2019, p.1). This suggests the reading circles facilitated careful negotiation between the participants, respectfully allowing opposing views to emerge. However, as discussed above (section 6.3.1), their evaluation of the characters' actions drew on their value base of what they considered as morally right or wrong behaviour. To make these assertions, the participants drew on their emotional responses to the characters' actions, responding with anger, compassion, or cognitive empathy. In most instances, this facilitated an understanding of different characters' perspectives. However, when it came to characters that hurt the main characters, the participants' anger prompted them to reject their actions emphatically or rationally. Only in a few instances did participants try to understand what motivated these characters. This suggests that the participants were developing their abilities to participate in deliberative communication (Englund, 2016, p.62). On the other hand, from a reader response perspective, empathy can be a source of pleasure when reading literary texts (Bloom, 2018, p.2; Nodelman & Reimer, 2003, p.25). This tension is

discussed in the thesis conclusion in relation to how this thesis contributes to the discussion on the role of educators and mediators of literary texts (section 7.2).

(4) Question established practices

The fourth criterion, the questioning of established practices was realised by the third main category, making links to narratives of life. This category concerns responses that identified the characters' struggles and argued their importance and urgency. Most of the responses shared by the participants in this category concerned the actions of individual characters. Discussed above (section 6.4.1), this mostly led to discussions about right, wrong, good, or bad of the individual actions of specific characters. The sub-category generalising from the characters' struggles identified how the participants intertextually linked the identified narrative elements to their own narratives of life, evoking their cultural knowledge. For example, this was realised as response types, e.g., "rejected characters' actions" when these concerned characters in positions of power, "identified structural inequality", and "made calls for action". In these responses, the participants moved between the narrative and their understanding of how the characters' struggles were similar to issues they perceived in real life. The participants positioned themselves as Other and different to the characters, e.g., learners, Swedes, world citizens, people without cancer, or people that do not have to starve because they have sufficient finances to buy food. This allowed them to problematise the narrative and describe how the characters' circumstances shaped their possibilities for action and how their possibilities in turn were shaped by our culture and present time. In deliberative communication in educational contexts, even teachers' voices can be questioned as it is integral to leave "space for pluralism" (Englund, 2016, p.66). Much like the readerly gap of literary texts, this allows readers and listeners to transactionally engage with the text and the speaker. However, in this study, the teacher did not, except for a few instances, involve herself in the collaborative dialogue. From the perspective of deliberative communication in educational contexts, the teacher's judgement is vital to its realisation (Englund, 2016, p.67), discussed in the section below.

(5) Teacher control

The final criterion of no teacher control might be considered partially fulfilled. As exemplified in this chapter and the previous, the teacher involved herself only on a few occasions to provide language and to prompt responses from the participants reading *Alaska* by problematising the narrative. Instead, as described above (section 3.2.3), the

teacher's role was essential in how she set up the reading circle project by selecting the YA novels, creating the reading circle groups, and providing written instructions (appendix 1). Moreover, as described above (section 3.2.1), this was the third time she completed the reading circles with this group of learners, demonstrating the level of mutual trust between herself and the learners to undertake the task with respect and tolerance (Englund, 2016, p.71). Moreover, this repetition of the reading circles might explain how the responses identified by the typology of responses demonstrate more diversity than the written instructions which primarily prompted the participants to focus on narrative elements they considered important and meaningful. For example, Summarisers were prompted to identify "main highlights", Creative connectors to find connections "to your own life", and Literary wizards to identify quotes they found "interesting, funny, or puzzling" (appendix 1). As this chapter demonstrates, the participants translated these instructions into selecting and sharing narrative retellings and identifying and verbalising intertextual links within the narrative and between the narrative and themselves. Moreover, during the collaborative dialogue, the participants decided which aspects of their languaging process to elaborate on. This suggests that to the participants, by deciding themselves which narrative elements to focus on and verbalising intertextuality, these elements were of consequence and meaningful to them (van Lier, 2004b, p.82). However, as identified above, the participants sometimes ignored the perspectives of the characters that hurt the main characters. To achieve deliberative communication, teachers' judgement is essential to determine the suitability of their specific context to initiate, prompt, extend, or bring the activity to an end (Englund, 2016, p.67). Thus, in the context of the reading circles, this might qualify as moments when a teacher could assist the participants to make more nuanced judgements.

This chapter discussion and conclusion has summarised the findings from the reader response analysis of the participants' speech during the reading circle sessions and discussed how they facilitated insights into the participants' meaning making processes (section 6.4.1) and to the extent the collaborative dialogue demonstrated characteristics of deliberative communication (section 6.4.2). Thanks to the key moment of analytical insights that intertextual awareness can facilitate purposeful action and text appropriation (Bazerman, 2004a, pp.61-62), an intersection of sociocultural theory and intertextuality was identified. Moreover, it follows a view on language that meaning is created when language is used purposefully in specific contexts (Swain & Watanabe, 2019, p.1). This allowed for the conceptualisation of the different response types as describing how the participants drew on their intertextual repertoires. This allowed for an understanding to emerge of how the participants used intertextuality as a conceptual tool when talking about

the novels in terms of identifying links between narrative elements and links between the narrative and their own narratives of life. In other words, the participants made meaning of the narrative in the form of drawing conclusions about the characters' desires and motivations and how these influenced their actions as well as making associations to their own lives in terms of personal memories, emotional responses, and cultural knowledge. This exemplifies the understanding in sociocultural theory of how emotion and cognition are inseparable and how all experiences are refracted through our personal psychology (Lantolf & Swain, 2019).

Moreover, the languaging processes involved during the collaborative dialogue, e.g., other-repair and the elaborating, counter-arguing, and reformulating of previously shared meaning, facilitated the sharing and evaluation of different perspectives and views. Considering these findings from the perspective of the potential of the language classroom as a space for learners to practise democracy, the idea of construing dialogue as deliberative communication becomes relevant (Tornberg, 2004). An evaluation of the collaborative dialogue identified in this study using the definition of deliberative communication (Englund, 2006; 2016), suggests that the participants were involved in a process of developing moral reasoning and rational deliberation. They regulated their own reading comprehension and established a shared frame of reference; the languaging process of co-constructing meaning and their appropriation of lexis suggest they were involved in a transactional listening process; they problematised the narratives and used moral argumentation to reject or support the characters' actions, while still leaving space for pluralism of perspectives; and the teacher created the space that facilitated the realisation of the reading circle sessions and the collaborative dialogue. However, some learners were more active than others, and some character perspectives were ignored, particularly when the characters' actions hurt the main characters. Nevertheless, teachers make the judgement of when to end or extend the deliberative communication, ensuring it follows democratic values and bearing in mind the long-term goals of developing rational deliberation (Englund, 2016, p.72).

Chapter 7 Conclusion

The preceding two chapters presented and discussed the findings from the linguistic and reader response analyses. This chapter concludes the thesis and answers the research questions (section 7.1), outlines contributions to the field (section 7.2), evaluates limitations of the research and suggests future research directions (section 7.3), provides final researcher reflections (section 7.4), and ends with concluding remarks (section 7.5).

7.1 Answers to the research questions

Drawing on the findings presented and discussed in chapters 5 and 6, this section provides answers to the research questions.

1. How do the reading circles facilitate verbal interactions around literary texts that could allow for opportunities for learning English as a Second Language?

With sociocultural theory and the concepts of appropriation and intertextuality as this study's conceptual framework, the analysis focused on understanding how the participants used language as a tool to mediate their communication. Moreover, the iterative data analysis and emerging findings prompted an incorporation of concepts and findings from previous research on learner talk, spontaneous conversation, and linguistic analysis of intertextuality. This generated two main findings, how the participants used intertextuality and repair as tools. First, the participants interwove their utterances with intertextual links to the novels by sharing narrative retellings and the meaning they made of these, e.g., associations, interpretations, and conclusions. These retellings involved direct and indirect quotations of the novels and appropriating lexis from the written page or uttered by their peers for their own purposes and meaning making. This lexis repetition facilitated the establishing of shared agreement of what happened in the novels as well as shared interpretations of what these events meant for the characters. Second, the participants repaired their own and their peers' utterances, focusing on form, lexis, and narrative retellings. Most frequently, they self-repaired their own utterances, making changes to their role scripts as they read them aloud and reformulating themselves during the collaborative dialogue generated by the Discussion leaders' questions. The second most frequent repair type concerned narrative details and involved self-repair, peer challenges, and assistance requests. This contributed to the establishing of intersubjectivity, allowing the participants to agree, and occasionally disagree, on a shared understanding of what the

novels were about. When responding to the Discussion leaders' questions, the participants drew on each other's utterances to mediate their own responses, by repeating lexis, but also by responding to each other's narrative retellings. During this latter phase of the reading circle sessions, the participants' interactions suggest an implicit understanding that everything that was said aloud had been offered for the joint effort of co-constructing dialogue. The lexis repetition, negotiation of narrative retellings, and drawing on each other's narrative retellings to share their own meaning indicate these represented established communicative practices for this specific group of learners. To summarise, the participants used each other's utterances as artefacts to mediate their own language production and used collaborative dialogue to build knowledge and solve the shared problem of co-constructing verbal interaction around the literary texts. In this specific context, the reading circle sessions provided opportunities for learning English as a Second Language in terms of learners attending to their language carefully, listening actively to their peers and repeating lexis, and regulating their reading comprehension by negotiating narrative retellings.

2. How do the reading circles facilitate opportunities for the development of responses to literary texts?

Framed by the conceptual framework, sociocultural theory and intertextuality, the reader response analysis focused on understanding how the emerging finding of the participants' emotional responses influenced their meaning making. Drawing on and extending findings from reader response studies with younger children and picturebooks, this emerging finding prompted an incorporation of theories from the scholarly discussion on whether literary texts can foster empathy and moral edification and allowed for the construction of a typology of responses. This typology identified three main categories, ordered from most to least frequent: identifying the readerly gap, making links to narratives of life, and evaluating the novels as works of art. The first category described how the participants stayed within the gap, referential responses, or moved along its border, creative responses. These responses illustrate how the participants were mainly concerned with understanding the characters' circumstances and motivations for their actions, followed by speculating how the story might have unfolded had it e.g., been longer or started at an earlier point in the characters' lives. The second most frequent category, making links to narratives of life, described how the participants' beliefs and values framed their responses as compassionate, value judgements, or generalisations of the characters' struggles to their understanding of unequal and unjust treatment of real people. The responses in the third,

and least frequent category, evaluating the novels as works of art, were primarily shared in the final session when the participants had finished the novels and summarised their reading experience as either appraising the literary craft, didactic messages, or aesthetic value. When combining the findings from the linguistic and reader response analyses an understanding emerged of how the reading circles provided a space for deliberative communication, integral for developing deliberative democracy (Englund, 2006; 2016). Evaluating the participants' interaction through five criteria, they established shared understandings, how they elaborated on each other's meaning demonstrates they were listening actively to each other, they treated the characters' struggles as conflicts, controversies, or contradictions to be deliberated upon and respectfully deliberated on the characters' struggles by linking them to their own narratives of life, they questioned established social practices when they generalised from the characters' struggles and argued for their importance and urgent resolution. The final criterion, teacher control, could be considered partially fulfilled. In some instances, the participants focused on expressing their anger for the characters that hurt the main characters. However, to use deliberative communication would have involved a critical evaluation of their assumptions and perhaps allowed the participants to interrogate these characters' motivations. In these situations, the teacher could have involved herself more to help the students make more nuanced judgements. In sum, in this specific context, the reading circles involved a communicative practice of aiming to understand the premise of the characters' actions and to evaluate them from the position of their beliefs and values. This involved a process of posing the narrative as a problem and to collaboratively solve the problem, thus creating a space for deliberative communication and to practice democracy. This supports multicultural pedagogical approaches with a social justice aim (Sleeter & Grant, 2010, pp.210-212), where pedagogical activities that facilitate critical thought and assessment of conflicting claims can allow learners to enact democracy.

7.2 Contributions to the field

The above section provided answers to the research questions. This section identifies and describes how this study offers theoretical contributions for SLA theory and language teaching, foregrounding reading circles as a pedagogical approach for language development (section 7.2.1), and pedagogical implications for L2 learning and reader response in L2 educational contexts (section 7.2.2).

7.2.1 Theoretical contributions

Summarising the answers to the research questions above demonstrates how the reading circles provided the learners with unique opportunities for meaningful interaction in the target language. The provided data extracts show how the learners were engaged in collaborative dialogue, identifying, and solving problems they found integral to their interaction. The problems they solved were linguistic as well as content-related, repairing form, lexis, and narrative retellings in their own and peers' utterances, and responding to the Discussion leaders' questions, problematising the narrative from different perspectives and establishing shared understandings of what happened in novels and discussing what this meant. This focus on meaning provided the learners with motivation and opportunities for meaningful output which is integral for language learning (Swain, 2000) and supports arguments in SLA research that language learning is more than input processing and producing accurate linguistic output but instead involves learners holistically (e.g., Kramsch, 1995; van Lier, 2000).

This is related to the discussion of learning metaphors above (section 1.2) by providing support for dialogic metaphors of learning arguing that learners are authors of their own creative meaning making (Kullenberg & Säljö, 2022, p.552). When learners use the target language, they are in control and can stretch themselves to modify their language to address communicative goals (Swain, 2000, p.99). In this perspective, learners are considered speakers in their own right that contribute with unique meanings to the multi-voiced contexts of classrooms. Learning a second language is more than learning fixed messages, as the acquisition metaphor stipulates, and learning the social practices of already fluent speakers, as argued by the participation metaphor. Instead, this study's findings illustrate a sociocultural perspective on how language is a tool for communication that can facilitate dialogue between the Self and Others and allow for the development of a voice in the target language (van Lier, 2004b, p.82). The participants created their own affordances for language learning through frequent repair of form, lexis, and narrative retellings, regulating their own reading comprehension and exercising their personal expressivity. In other words, they used linguistic resources to avoid communication breakdowns and to modify their target language use. This exemplifies how meaningful language output involves learners noticing a gap between what they can say in the target language and what they want to say and how they address this gap by pushing themselves to modify their language use (Swain, 2000, pp.99-100). This contributes to SLA research drawing on sociocultural theory and the concepts of languaging and collaborative dialogue,

identifying mediational means used by learners to keep the interaction going, all while engaged in the act of speaking. The participants used lexis repetition to establish intersubjectivity and mediate their own utterances and they self-repaired utterances, verbalising their intent with private speech and using Swedish as a mediational mean. This follows the position of taking account of learners' multilingual repertoires in empirical research to explore the potential of multilingualism for L2 learning (Ortega, 2019, p.24). Moreover, this study contributes to SLA research with its interdisciplinary analytical framework, drawing on findings from studies across different methodological approaches, e.g., conversation and corpus analysis, to better understand learner repair.

Implications for language teaching involve providing space and time for learner-led communicative activities that include identifying personal connections and responses to literary texts and a shared responsibility to solve communication breakdowns and extend the interaction. In this study, the participants interpreted the reading circle roles as prompts to problematise the narrative, generating collaborative dialogue and a plethora of response types. The most frequently shared responses concerned referential responses, when the participants aimed to establish the readerly gap, and value judgements, when the participants evaluated the characters' actions as right or wrong. A possible implication from these observations could be that instead of emphasising learners' linguistic repertoires as the guiding principle for text selection, texts could be chosen based on the indeterminacy and the ethical conundrums they offer. If there is room to speculate beyond the written page and to question the characters' decisions, perhaps learners are more motivated to engage with the texts. Also, this study's rich results demonstrate how the learners took responsibility for their own learning and for co-constructing dialogue. This focus on meaning prompted the participants' frequent self- and other-repair to modify their linguistic output, indicating that self- and other-regulating efforts were valued more highly by the participants than producing accurate target language on the first attempt. This suggests that in educational settings where repair is not considered a deficiency in the learners' linguistic repertoires, it can offer a useful tool for interacting in the target language. Together, the linguistic and reader response analyses provided an analytical lens that demonstrates how reading circles can provide a pedagogical approach for language development with implications for SLA theory and language teaching, involving learners holistically and emphasising how learning languages is more than learning grammar and vocabulary.

This study contributes to the field of reader response by providing a typology of responses for adolescent learners reading YA novels. As outlined in the literature review (section 2.3), most previous models and typologies of responses have focused on children's responses to picturebooks, and few have been constructed in relation to adolescents and adults. Moreover, the typology offered here was framed by sociocultural theory and a research aim to generate insights into how the participants used language as a tool. This draws on the understanding of intertextuality as a literacy skill and that awareness of how to identify intertextuality and how to make use of it can be developed (Bazerman, 2004a; 2004b). The typology is thus envisioned as a representation of different conceptual tools the participants used to make meaning of the narrative. For example, it differentiated between narrative retellings and responses, acknowledging the intersubjective nature of interaction. The reading circles sessions analysed in this study represented the third time the participants completed a reading circle cycle and the role descriptions, which shaped the sessions and their interactions, had remained the same. As the analysis synthesised findings across groups and sessions, the typology emerged as a representation of all the participants' responses, regardless of the novel they read or in which session the response was uttered. Together, this suggests that the participants had established communitive practices for how to complete the reading circles and context-specific literacy. In this context, the participants had learned what types of responses were considered appropriate means of making meaning. Furthermore, the finding of how the participants' collaborative dialogue and responses to the YA novels compare to deliberative communication, suggests reading circles can facilitate spaces to practise and enact democracy. Although the participants' interactions did not fully meet the criteria for deliberative communication, their collaborative dialogue demonstrated potential and learning in progress. This finding supports theories of critical multiliteracies and previous findings from reader response studies, discussed in the literature review regarding the current discussion on the role of empathy in the field of reader response (section 2.3.3).

7.2.2 Pedagogical implications

This section draws on the insights generated from this study and presents suggestions for practice and what language teachers might want to focus on when implementing reading circles with their learners. These implications concern how the reading circle roles provided structure but hindered interaction, the affordances of counter-challenges, and how teachers can implement the typology as a conceptual tool to prompt learners' meaning making.

The roles provided continuity, predictability, and structure, aspects that are important to consider in L2 classrooms where learners might feel anxious and uncomfortable to communicate in the target language. The role rota delegates responsibility and ensures that all learners complete all roles once. The four roles Summariser, Character tracer, Creative connector, and Literary wizard provided a space where all learners could share extended reports and in-depth reflections on their reading. However, except when responding to the Discussion leaders' questions, these four roles did not invite interaction and the meaning they made was not elaborated on – unless participants made explicit references to them or repeated lexis during the collaborative dialogue. As discussed in the literature review (section 2.2.2), reading circles with roles are often based on Daniels' (2002, pp.13-15) and colleagues' work and drawing on their extensive experience, Daniels suggest flexibility and to not use the roles as rigidly. I concur and would recommend teachers to use roles when they feel their learners would profit from this structure. For example, either to start the reading circle cycle without the roles and introduce them later. Or to use them in the beginning and allowing learners to abandon them after a while, either during the reading circle cycle or after they have completed one or a few cycles of the reading circles. In this study, the duration of the reading circle sessions varied greatly between the groups, from 60:18 to 106:54 minutes. More flexibility with the roles might have influenced this variance and generated more collaborative dialogue and deliberative communication.

Another suggestion for facilitating more interaction would be to encourage teachers to involve themselves and mediate more often. While still retaining the outlined goal of learner-led reading circle sessions, I would suggest this involvement occurs in response to the learners' progression in co-constructing collaborative dialogue and deliberative communication. As discussed in the literature review, this would support arguments made by other scholars of L2 learning (section 2.2.1) and reader response (2.3.2) that the role of mediators is vital in facilitating interactions around literary texts. For example, to prompt more knowledge building and respectful sharing of and listening to different perspectives, teachers could point to the value of counter-challenges. This is important in a time where information, disinformation, and opinions abound and there are different approaches to evaluate claims. We need to challenge ourselves to participate in critical dialogue, aware that it might lead to disagreement and learn how to deal with this respectfully (Säljö, Flensner & Larsson, 2021). As the framework for deliberative communication outlines, this is a learning process where the teacher's role as mediator and role model is integral (Englund, 2006; 2016). For example, in this study, the participants frequently shared direct and indirect quotations of the novels and their repair often concerned narrative retellings.

As they did not have access to the novels during the sessions, they needed to establish a shared understanding of what happened in the novels before they could share their claims. This suggests that it is important for teachers when planning their lessons to allow time for learners to achieve this shared understanding, particularly for L2 learners whose linguistic repertoires limit their reading comprehension. In addition, the category "invented narrative details" (section 6.1.2), involved departures from the novel that were unacknowledged by their peers. Teachers could pinpoint learners to the benefits of challenging each other's retellings. It is not only useful for regulating reading comprehension, but also facilitates more meaning making and allows learners to practice democracy, establishing intersubjectivity of shared understandings or agreeing to disagree.

A final suggestion for facilitating interaction also involves facilitating responses to literary texts. The constructed typology of responses could be implemented as a conceptual tool to prompt meaning making. The categories were labelled with verbs to describe the action involved. Many of these categories could easily be transformed into prompts, i.e., imperatives, and provide instructions for how to respond to literary texts. For example, the category created prequels could be transformed to "create a prequel describing what you think happened before the start of novel". These prompts would be useful for teachers to use during reading circle sessions when their learners would benefit from mediation. This could also be useful with learners who find the roles challenging to prepare. I can imagine this would work well for the responses in the sub-categories referential responses, creative responses, evaluating the novels as works of art, and generalising from the characters' struggles. However, for the sub-categories compassionate responses or value judgements, I would suggest a different approach. The responses identified in these two categories can be placed along a continuum of aligning oneself with or rejecting characters. To understand reading literary texts from this perspective would be useful as discussion prompts with learners to generate awareness of how we make meaning is always shaped by our beliefs and values. This would follow the aim of critical pedagogies which attempt to empower learners to criticise assumptions, ideologies, and power structures.

This section has put forth implications for pedagogy which can be summarised as more flexibility regarding the use of reading circle roles, encourage counter-challenges to facilitate more collaborative dialogue and deliberative communication, and to implement the typology of responses as a conceptual tool to prompt more meaning and facilitate dialogue around how beliefs and values shape our meaning making.

7.3 Limitations and future research directions

This section identifies limitations of the study and suggests directions for future research, including developing the findings by synthesising identified categories, undertaking research with teachers and learners to improve their teaching and assessment practices, and facilitating interdisciplinary knowledge exchange between different fields interested in reading circles.

A future direction could be to develop the typology by applying it to analyses of learner talk in other contexts reading other texts. This would be particularly interesting considering the discussion whether literary texts can foster empathy and intercultural competence as these are among the main motivations for using literary texts with language learners. This approach could generate more insights into how learners position themselves in terms of their beliefs and values. Moreover, the dual perspective of analysing the same data from two perspectives, linguistic and reader response, proved valuable in that it allowed for distinguishing the two communicative functions, to establish what happened in the novels and to talk about what happened. By focusing on the purpose of the participants' utterances and the material affect they intended to achieve, this approach provides a different perspective from interpreting readers' responses as either literal or interpretive. However, there are a few limitations to the typology that could hinder this application to future research as well as pedagogy. It was suggested above (section 7.2.2) that teachers could use the typology to guide implementation of reading circles in their specific contexts. Summarised in appendix 11, the typology comprises an extensive number of categories and their labels are long, which might make it inaccessible at first glance. To facilitate future research and pedagogical implementation, I would suggest that the typology is developed further by synthesising categories and creating visual models to illustrate the findings. More interpretive work would be useful as well as the application of the typology in another research study.

One future research direction to achieve this could be through Participatory Action Research (PAR) which aims to empower practioners and involves collaboration between researchers and participants in defining research aims, identifying methods of data collection and analysis, and implementing findings in the participants' practice (Schwandt, 2015, p.229). A PAR study could draw on the impetus for the 2022 Swedish curriculum reform to ensure fair assessment, discussed above (section 3.2.1), and how this study's participating teacher took notes during the reading circle sessions to underpin discussions

with her colleague to improve their assessment practices. This could involve returning to the research site to invite the English and Swedish teachers to use this study's findings to facilitate knowledge exchange between the two subjects, research into their own practice, and development of their teaching and assessment practices. This would adhere to the requirement for teachers in Sweden to establish consensus on how assessment material can be analysed and evaluated (Skolverket, 2018b, p.2; 2022d, p.2) and relate to how the Swedish curriculum balances transnational influences of fostering multidimensional and transversal competences and domestic discourse of using subject knowledge as the organising principle (Nordin & Sundberg, 2021). To apply this study's findings, this research could draw on the growing body of empirical research that demonstrates how formative and summative assessment rubrics have positive effects on learner self-regulation (Panadero & Jonsson, 2020, p.1).

Tables 21 and 22 below represent initial steps towards developing rubrics from this study's findings and, at this stage, lack a scoring strategy and quality levels of learner performance (Panadero & Jonsson, 2020, p.2). Table 21, labelled developing the verbal interaction, represents the findings presented in chapter 5 and table 22, labelled introducing new perspectives on literary texts, represents the findings presented in chapter 6. Comprising three columns each, the third column contains the identified categories (appendix 11) and the second contains prompts that can be used to focus learners' attention on how they can self- and other-regulate their performance. The second and third columns are in turn structured around the first columns that identify how the categories represent different conceptual tools learners can use to improve their language use and extend the interaction by drawing on each other's linguistic repertoires and introducing new perspectives to the collaborative dialogue. Aimed at learners directly, the first column in table 21 identifies three communicative purposes: how can you improve your own performance, how can you help your peers with their performance, and how can you contribute to the collaborative dialogue. Table 22 represents a development of the typology, further discussed below, and the first column identifies five categories of responses, slightly modified to address this development: referential responses, creative responses, evaluating the novels as works of art here relabelled as responding to the novels as works of art, compassionate responses and value judgements merged into one category, and generalising from the characters' struggles.

Table 21 Developing the verbal interaction

Communicative purposes	Prompts	Categories
How can you improve your own performance?		
Lexis repetition	Establish and maintain shared meaning	1 Repeated lexis from the novels and maintained meaning 2 Repeated lexis from the novels and imbued personal meaning 5 Repeating lexis from the novels 6 Repeating lexis that represented the meaning the participants made of the narratives
Self-initiated self-repair of form, lexis, and narrative retellings	Self-regulate language use and narrative retellings	7 Self-repaired form 8 Added lexis that elaborated on meaning 9 Replaced lexis to modify meaning 15 Self-repair of narrative retellings
Private speech	Language with yourself to retrieve items from memory and to invite your peers into your thought processes	10 How private speech mediated self-repair of form and meaning 11 How private speech mediated lexical searches
Self-initiated other-repair of lexis and narrative retellings	Request peer assistance	12 Assistance requests for lexis 16 Assistance requests for narrative details 17 Confirmation checks to establish shared narrative understanding
How can you help your peers with their performance?		
Other-initiated other-repair of lexis and narrative retellings	Provide peer assistance	13 Recasts of lexis 14 Co-operative completion of utterances 18 Peers challenged and repaired speakers' narrative retellings
How can you contribute to the collaborative dialogue?		
Provide evidence for your interpretations and remind peers of narrative details	Share narrative retellings	3 Interweaving narrative retellings and meaning making during role reports
Provide evidence for your interpretations and introduce new perspectives	Share narrative retellings and elaborate on, reformulate, or counter-challenge peers' narrative retellings	4 Interweaving narrative retellings and meaning making when responding to the Discussion leaders' questions

Table 22 Introducing new perspectives on literary texts

Typology of responses	Prompts	Response types
Referential responses	Describe the characters' circumstances and motivations	19 Attributed personality traits to characters 20-21 Attributed goals and motivations to characters 22 Identified character development 23 Predicted narrative development
Creative responses	Draw on your understanding of the characters' circumstances and motivations and imagine details not mentioned in the text	24 Invented narrative details 25 Created prequels 26 Created sequels
Responding to the novels as works of art	Are there similarities or differences to other works of art? Does the text challenge, inspire, surprise, or teach you something new?	27 Made carnivalesque links 28 Appraised literary craft 29 Appraised didactic messages 30 Appraised aesthetic value 40 Reframed perspectives 44 Made calls for action
Compassionate responses and value judgements	Have you been in similar situations as the characters? How did you act and why? Would you do the same as the characters or differently? Do you think their actions are right or wrong? Even if you think their actions are wrong, can you identify their motivations?	31 Imagined hopeful narrative development 32 Shared memories of comparable experiences 33 Identified shared vulnerabilities 34 Compassionately rejected characters' self-criticism 35 Imagined themselves in the characters' situations 36 Supported characters' actions because they empathised with their motivations 37 Rejected characters' actions, but empathised with their motivations 38 Carnivalesque rejections of antagonists 39 Rejected characters' actions, but generated hypotheses about their motivations
Generalising from the characters' struggles	How would you say that the literary text represents your understanding of humanity and life, today or historically, in your vicinity or further away?	41 Made historical comparisons 42 Made intracultural comparisons 43 Identified structural inequality

The construction of table 22 allowed my interpretation of the typology's hierarchal organisation to develop. As discussed above (section 2.3.2), this illustrates the challenge of categorising readers' responses and how categories can be overlapping. Here, the response types are re-ordered into a more developed interpretation of how they represent different conceptual tools, describing how the participants identified intertextual links between narrative elements and between their own narratives of life and the novels by considering the texts from different perspectives. In sum, three main modifications were made. First, to encourage learners to turn their attention to all characters, no distinction is made between responses that concern focalized or unfocalized characters. Second, three response types were moved from other sub-categories to responding to the novels as works of art. This concerns the response type made carnivalesque links, formerly categorised as a creative response, and reframed perspectives and made calls for action, formerly categorised as generalising from the characters' struggles. This move follows the often-argued purpose of art to challenge, inspire, and stimulate new perspectives (e.g., Nussbaum, 2017, p.391), as these three response types describe how the participants verbalised links to other works of art and how the novels inspired them to think differently or propose action, Third, the sub-categories compassionate responses and value judgements were merged to illustrate how these can be interpreted to exist on a continuum of rejecting or aligning oneself with the characters. Extending the discussion above (section 7.2.2), the participants' responses could be interpreted as an emotional or rational movement of drawing the Self nearer or further away from Others, depending on how they agreed or disagreed with the characters' actions and motivations. This interpretation resulted in prompts that can be used to focus the learners' attention on how their beliefs and values contrast with those they identify in the texts and how this can influence how they respond.

With the aim to improve their assessment and teaching practices, tables 21 and 22 can be used to initiate discussions between English and Swedish teachers on how to develop them into rubrics with a scoring strategy and quality levels of learner performance. Prompts can be used to stimulate reflection, e.g., drawing on your teaching experience, how would you add to, relabel, reorder, or merge the different categories and response types; how can you help learners who are less participative; how can you better scaffold the learners' interaction; and how can you adapt and improve your teaching material e.g., handouts, role descriptions, or text selection. Learners could be invited to use the tables for peer- and self-assessment and together with their teachers, draw on their experiences to identify other strategies to extend the interaction and respond to literary texts. This would follow current arguments in the scholarly discussion that research with children should be more

participatory, and that children's voices should be heard (Deszcz-Tryhubczak, 2016; Hart, 2008). For example, this study focused on an entire group of learners, when instead inviting only a few learners to share their experiences could have yielded more insights into the challenges involved in completing the reading circles. Or instead of taking a non-interventional approach that followed the English and Swedish teachers' practice to select the texts, this study could have involved the learners in the text selection. Furthermore, a limitation of this study was how it did not include a critical content analysis of the novels. This followed my decision to begin the research with an exploratory focus and to not view the learners' responses through my interpretations of the novels. However, it means that the study did not aim to understand the assumptions and values communicated in the texts. In a future PAR study, English and Swedish teachers could be introduced to critical content analysis and encouraged to implement this approach to inform and develop their text selections as well as invite their learners to this process. To conclude, several directions for a future PAR study can be identified, indicating the potentials for how this study's findings could be used to improve teachers' assessment and teaching practices when implementing reading circles.

A final suggestion for a future research direction involves developing the connections between various research fields interested in reading circles to facilitate interdisciplinary knowledge exchange. Discussed above (section 1.1), the reading circles were referred to as *bokcirklar* ('book circles') by this study's participants, reflecting the Swedish tradition of participating in reading communities. Also, a recent trend was noted in Swedish popular media and research in information studies and bibliotherapy of using the term more flexibly, e.g., *att bokcirkla* ('to book circle') or *bokcirklande* ('bookcircling'), suggesting that in the Swedish context, this is a helpful term. This differs from the literature on L2 learning and teaching, frequently referencing Daniels (2002) for literature circles with roles, and reader response, referencing Chambers (1985; 2011) for book talks. A translation of the latter, *boksamtal* ('book talk'), is used in Swedish research on L1 Swedish learning and teaching (e.g., Eriksson Barajas, 2012). Despite these terminological differences, there is a shared aim to promote reading for pleasure and provide spaces for people to come together to learn from literary texts and each other. In Chambers' (1985, p.140) words, book talk is interaction that motivates "exploration beyond our familiar boundaries". To include *bokcirklande* ('bookcircling') among the various labels used across disciplines to describe small-group discussions around literary texts could facilitate knowledge exchange and introduce new research directions and perspectives that could further these interdisciplinary shared aims.

The future research directions identified here attempt to draw on this study's limitations to develop the findings further, apply them to practice, and promote interdisciplinary collaboration. These suggestions resonate with current transnational curricular aims of understanding learning not as subject-bound, but as multidimensional and transversal competences that are transferrable across subjects. This also resonates with the above discussion (section 7.2.1) on language learning as more than grammar and vocabulary acquisition and on reading circles as a holistic pedagogical approach for language development.

7.4 Researcher reflections

Undertaking this PhD study has been the most educative, challenging, and rewarding learning experience of my life. Not only have I been able to research my passions, language learning and literary texts in the language classroom, but I have also developed as a person and as an early career researcher. From this journey, two experiences stand out. First, developing academic pride and humility, and second, what being a researcher means to me.

When offering advice on how to write a thesis, Eco (2015) advocates the development of academic humility and pride. Academic humility is defined as the coming to the insight "that anyone can teach us something" (Eco, 2015, p.143) and academic pride describes a style of writing that conveys that the writer is "the authority on what has been said by the other authorities" (Eco, 2015, p.184). When I started the PhD programme, I had nine years of teaching experience and a well-developed teacher identity. I felt confident in the language classroom and in designing course syllabi. I was eager to undertake a larger research project and to research one of my favourite pedagogical activities – reading circles. I did not realise how challenging this would be. The non-stop reading of the literature, the research methods courses, the academic conferences and workshops, and the regular supervisions created challenging and critical spaces where I learned to reflexively criticise my work and develop as an independent researcher. By taking the myriad of decisions necessary to design the research, developing the conceptual and analytical frameworks, interpreting the data, and identifying research contributions, I learned to defend my decisions, but also to be open to other interpretations. This journey has allowed me to understand that theories provide us with different glasses to see the world and that the words we use reveal our positionalities and theories. This is particularly relevant for language researchers as language is both our research focus and tool, making objective

observations impossible (Bagga-Gupta, 2004, p.28). These insights allowed me to challenge my own self-criticality which had become my worst enemy during the writing. I was continuously assuming that others knew better and always trying to find a source to support my claims. Now that I have finished writing the thesis, I understand that academic humility and pride are not goals to achieve, but mottos to live by.

The second learning experience elaborates on the above and concerns how this research project has allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of why L2 education and deliberate choices in the language classroom matter. The data analysis provided a privileged learning experience as I have never before been able to study learner language as closely. Although the findings were synthesised across the group of learners, the analysis allowed me to appreciate the subtleties, the individual differences, and the amazing opportunities for learning and meaning making that a language classroom can generate. It was my intent that this wonder for learner agency has shone through my findings. Knowing more than one language is a reality for many people and the potentials for meaning making are endless. These experiences have allowed me to develop as an early career researcher and construct a solid foundation from where to continue my research. Nicely summarised in the label researcher, I end these researcher reflections by focusing on how it comprises the word searcher. This suggests an individual open to discovery who critically questions the status quo (Bagga-Gupta, 2004, pp.27-28; Phipps, 2021, p.169). I look forward to reflecting retrospectively on the research process as I am sure this will generate more insights and allow me to identify how to take my research forward.

7.5 Concluding remarks

This section concludes this thesis and represents the end point for this research project. The findings and insights generated from this study are not intended to generalise nor offer absolute truths. Instead, my aspiration is that the thesis offers a window into how this specific group of learners completed the reading circles and how this pedagogical approach generated affordances for language learning and responding to literary texts. It might provide a mirror for readers to see their own understandings and practices reflected and even open a door to change. This contribution to “other people’s beginnings” constitute one of the main purposes of social research (Gibson & Brown, 2009, p.211) and I look forward to learning about the forms it might take when recontextualised and transferred to other contexts.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Reading circles: Instructions for learners

Book Circle

Reading assignments

During class we will meet in the book circle outside the classroom. During the book circle, try to present your reading assignment as professionally as possible. **The presentation of your assignment should not exceed three minutes.** Your work will be graded on how well you've do the following criteria:

- The presentation of your assignment
- Your participation in the discussion

Book Circle roles

Discussion leader
Prepare **three questions** based on the content of this week's reading. You will lead the discussion during the book circle, addressing your fellow students by name and thanking them for their participation. We finish the discussion with your questions. Try to write questions that you find interesting and that would inspire a discussion. Avoid "yes and no" questions.

Summarizer
Prepare a brief summary of this week's reading. You present your summary after the discussion leader has welcomed everyone to the book circle. The summary should cover the key events and main highlights of this week's reading assignment.

Character tracer
Choose a character and list some character traits the person has shown in this week's reading, e.g. "I think this person is very caring because he really tries to make Liz feel better. He even bakes her a cake, even though he hates spending time in the kitchen." Always motivate your arguments.

Creative connector
Find connections between the novel and the world outside. Try to connect what you've read to your own life, things you've seen, heard or experienced.

Literary wizard
Find two or three different paragraphs in this week's reading that you think are interesting, funny or puzzling. Read the paragraphs out loud to your classmates and share your thoughts on why you've chosen these paragraphs.

Book circle manuscript

You may change the phrases, but not the content nor the order of events.

- ★ Hi and welcome to this week's book circle. Let's begin by listening to the summary prepared by the summarizer.

The summarizer presents his/her summary.

- ★ Thank you! What are your thoughts on the summary, did it summarize well this week's reading?

The group answers the question.

- ★ Thank you. Let's move on to our character tracer.

The character tracer presents his/her analysis of a character of his/her choosing.

- ★ Thank you! Next up is our creative connector. Please tell us your analysis.

The creative connector presents his/her analysis of this week's reading.

- ★ Thank you! Our final presentation for today will be from our literary wizard. Which two paragraphs have you chosen to analyze?

The literary wizard presents his/her analysis of two paragraphs of his/her choosing.

- ★ Thank you. We've now reached the final part of today's book circle. The discussion. I've prepared two questions. The first one is… The second question is…. Thank you all for today's book circle.

During the discussion it is of outmost importance that everyone contributes: it's everyone's responsibility to keep the discussion going by asking questions, encouraging each other and trying to find a flow in the conversation.
The discussion leader encourages everyone to contribute, especially the more quiet ones.

Reading extracts for each reading circle session

Goodnight Mister Tom	**1** p. 1-67 chapters 1-5	**2** p. 68-130 chapters 6-9	**3** p. 131-201 chapters 10-15	**4** p. 202-285 chapters 16-18	**5** p. 286-358 chapters 19-23
Discussion leader	Emil	Elias	Ella	Oliver	Agnes
Summariser	Wilma	Emil	Elias	Ella	Oliver
Character tracer	Agnes	Wilma	Emil	Elias	Ella
Creative connector	Oliver	Agnes	Wilma	Emil	Elias
Literary Wizard	Ella	Oliver	Agnes	Wilma	Emil
Discussion summariser	Elias	Ella	Oliver	Agnes	Wilma

Looking for Alaska	**1** p. 9-57	**2** p. 57-113	**3** p. 114-161	**4** p. 165-217	**5** p. 218-263
Discussion leader	Elsa	Erik	Julia	Josefine	Alice
Summariser	Alice	Elsa	Erik	Julia	Josefine
Character tracer	Josefine	Alice	Elsa	Erik	Julia
Creative connector	Julia	Josefine	Alice	Elsa	Erik
Literary Wizard	Erik	Julia	Josefine	Alba	Elsa

Q&A	**1** p. 11-89	**2** p. 90-152	**3** p. 153-222	**4** p. 223-272	**5** p. 273-361
Discussion leader	Emma	Emelie	Lilly	Liam	William
Summariser	Elin	Emma	Emelie	Lilly	Liam
Character tracer	William	Elin	Emma	Emelie	Lilly
Creative connector	Liam	William	Elin	Emma	Emelie
Literary Wizard	Lilly	Liam	William	Elin	Emma
Discussion summariser	Emelie	Lilly	Liam	William	Elin

Now it the time for running	**1** p. 3-44	**2** p. 45-92	**3** p. 93-127	**4** p. 128-169	**5** p. 173-228
Discussion leader	Hanna	Ebba	Ida	Viktor	Johanna
Summariser	Johanna	Hanna	Ebba	Ida	Viktor
Character tracer	Viktor	Johanna	Hanna	Ebba	Ida
Creative connector	Ida	Viktor	Johanna	Hanna	Ebba
Literary Wizard	Ebba	Ida	Viktor	Johanna	Hanna

The fault in our stars	**1** p. 3-63 Ch 1-4	**2** p. 64-128 Ch 5-8	**3** p. 129-208 Ch 9-12	**4** p. 209-260 Ch 13-20	**5** p. 261-313 Ch 21-the end
Discussion leader	Filip	Sara	Anton	Lucas	Maja
Summariser	Maja	Filip	Sara	Anton	Lucas
Character tracer	Lucas	Maja	Filip	Sara	Anton
Creative connector	Anton	Lucas	Maja	Filip	Sara
Literary Wizard	Sara	Anton	Lucas	Maja	Filip

Appendix 2 Participant profiles

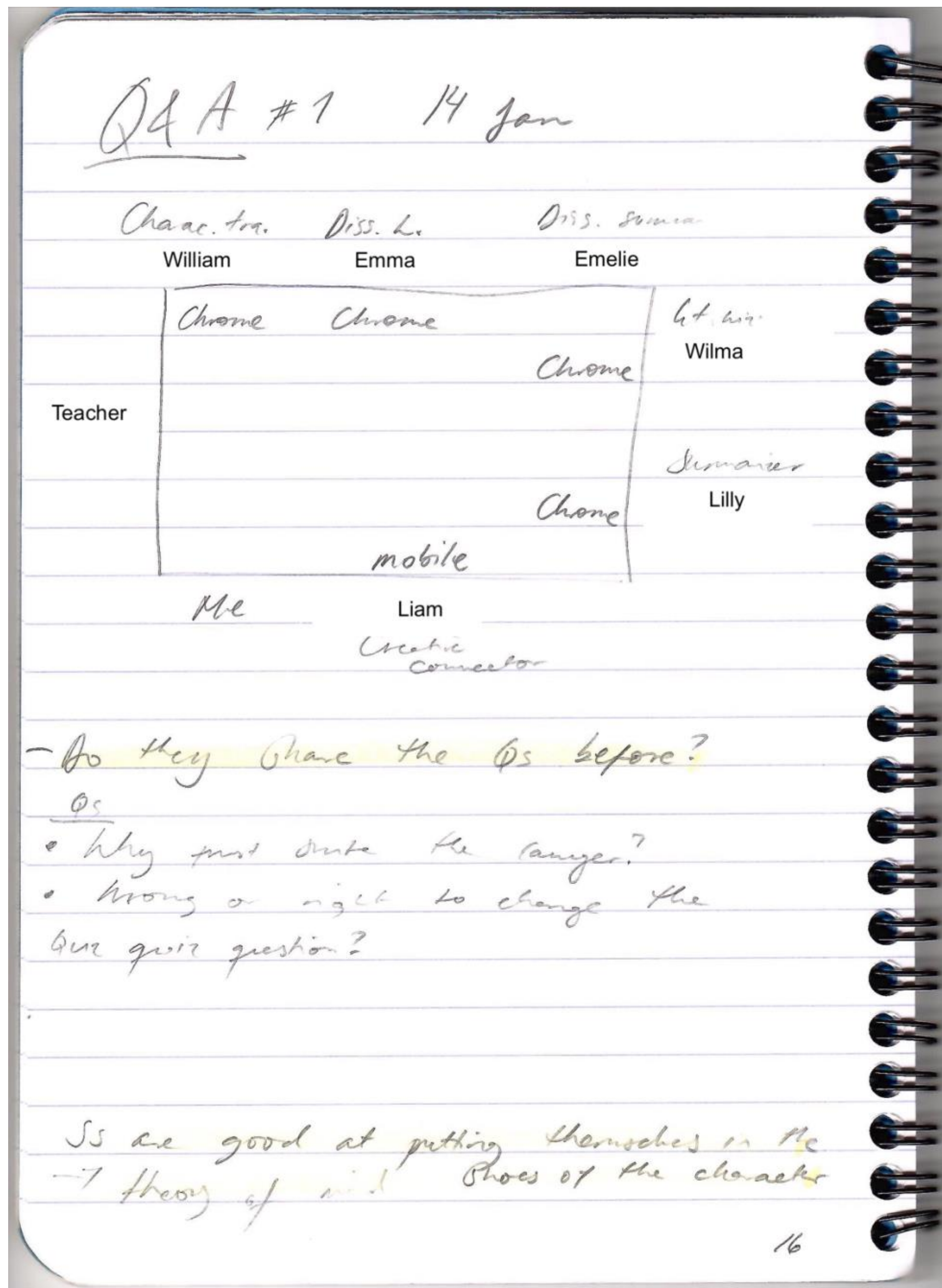
Table 23 lists the participants' self-reported linguistic repertoires and estimations of how much they read of the novels.

Table 23 Participant profiles

#	Home languages	School languages	Other languages	Read
1	Swedish	English, French		50%
2	Swedish	English, German		100%
3	Swedish	English, Spanish		80%
4	Swedish	English, Spanish		100%
5	Swedish	English, French	German	100%
6	Swedish	English, German		33%
7	Swedish	English, Spanish		100%
8	Swedish	English, German		100%
9	Swedish	English		85-90%
10	Swedish	English, Spanish		100%
11	Swedish	English	Danish, Norwegian	10%
12	Swedish	English, Spanish		100%
13	Swedish	English, French	Norwegian	90%
14	Swedish	English, French	Danish, Norwegian	95%
15	Swedish	English, German		100%
16	Swedish	English, German		100%
17	Swedish	English, Spanish		100%
18	Swedish	English, Spanish		100%
19	Swedish	English, French		100%
20	Swedish	English, Spanish		100%
21	Czech, Swedish	English	Norwegian, Spanish	90%
22	English, Shilha (Morocco)	English, French		100%
23	N/A	English, N/A	N/A	N/A
24	Polish	English, Polish Spanish		100%
25	Polish, Swedish	English, Spanish		100%
26	Spanish, Swedish	English		75%
27	Spanish, Swedish	English, French		100%

Appendix 3 Fieldwork journal: Sample entry

Entry from *Q&A*'s first reading circle session.

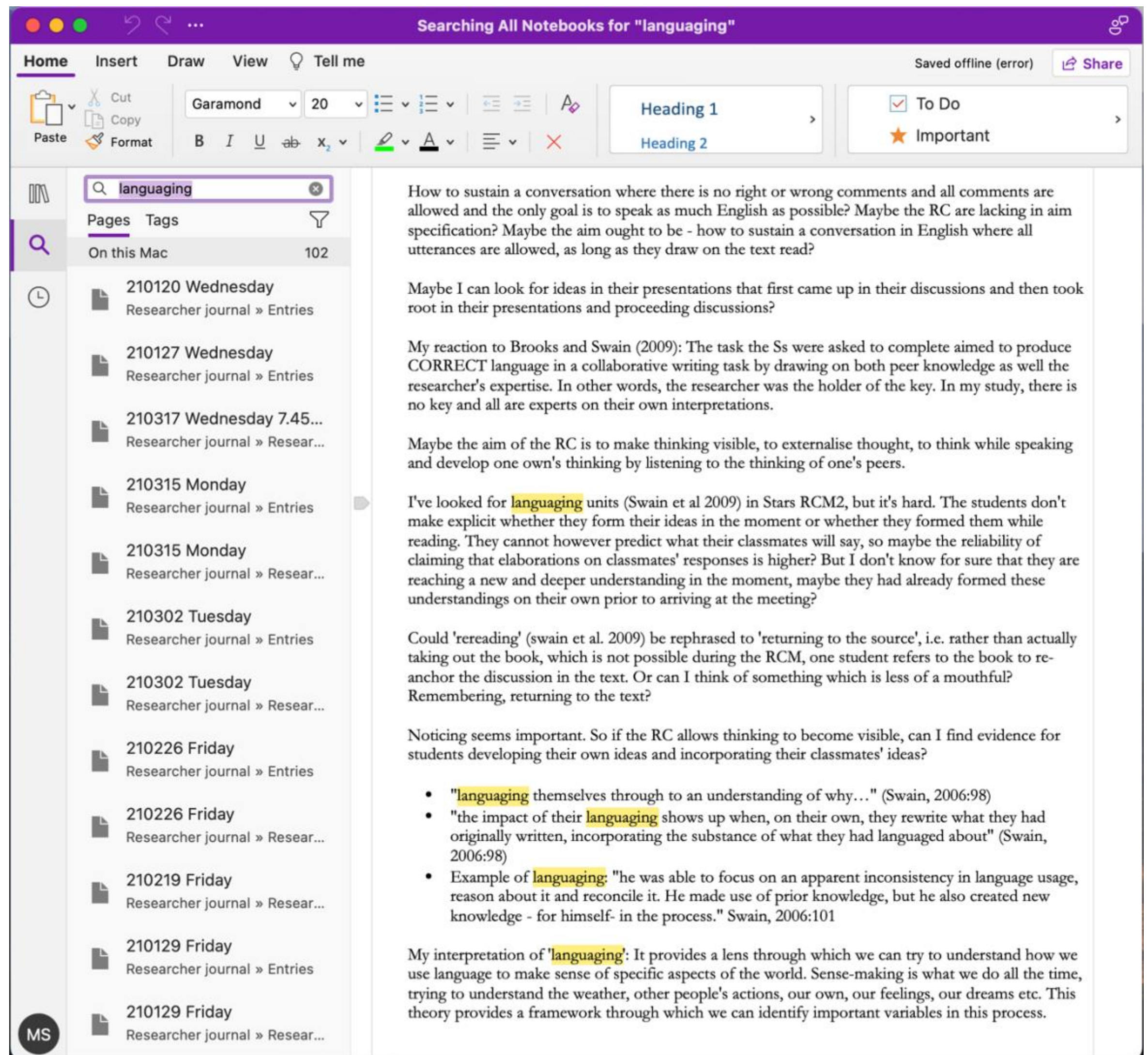


Appendix 4 Transcription system

Symbol	Description
{ }	Curly brackets mark overlapping speech.
[ ]	Square brackets indicate comments that clarify contextual meaning. For example, referent-marking, e.g., he [William], or non-verbal communication, e.g., [general laughter].
…	Three full stops indicate mid-utterance omissions of data from data extracts. However, in most instances, material that was analytically irrelevant for the category in question was omitted from the beginning or end of data extracts.
-	Short dashes mark abrupt cut-off speech, e.g., “foun-” indicating that the final consonant in “found” was not pronounced.
–	Long dashes mark major intonation breaks and unfilled pauses considered significant.
||	Double vertical lines mark the onset of self-repair during collaborative dialogue.
Erm	The letters “erm” indicate filled pauses.
Mhm	The letters “mhm” indicate humming in agreement.
<u>Mhm</u>	Underlined items mark emphasised speech.
Mhm	Bold face marks parts of utterances highlighted for analysis.
Mhm	Utterances in italics mark speech in Swedish. These are followed by translations into English, marked by single quotation marks and enclosed by parentheses, e.g., *ja* (‘yes’).
?	Question marks mark the end of question statements, indicated lexically and/or prosodically by the participants.
( )	Utterances enclosed in parentheses mark modified items in the participants’ role scripts, e.g., omitted items or modification of form.

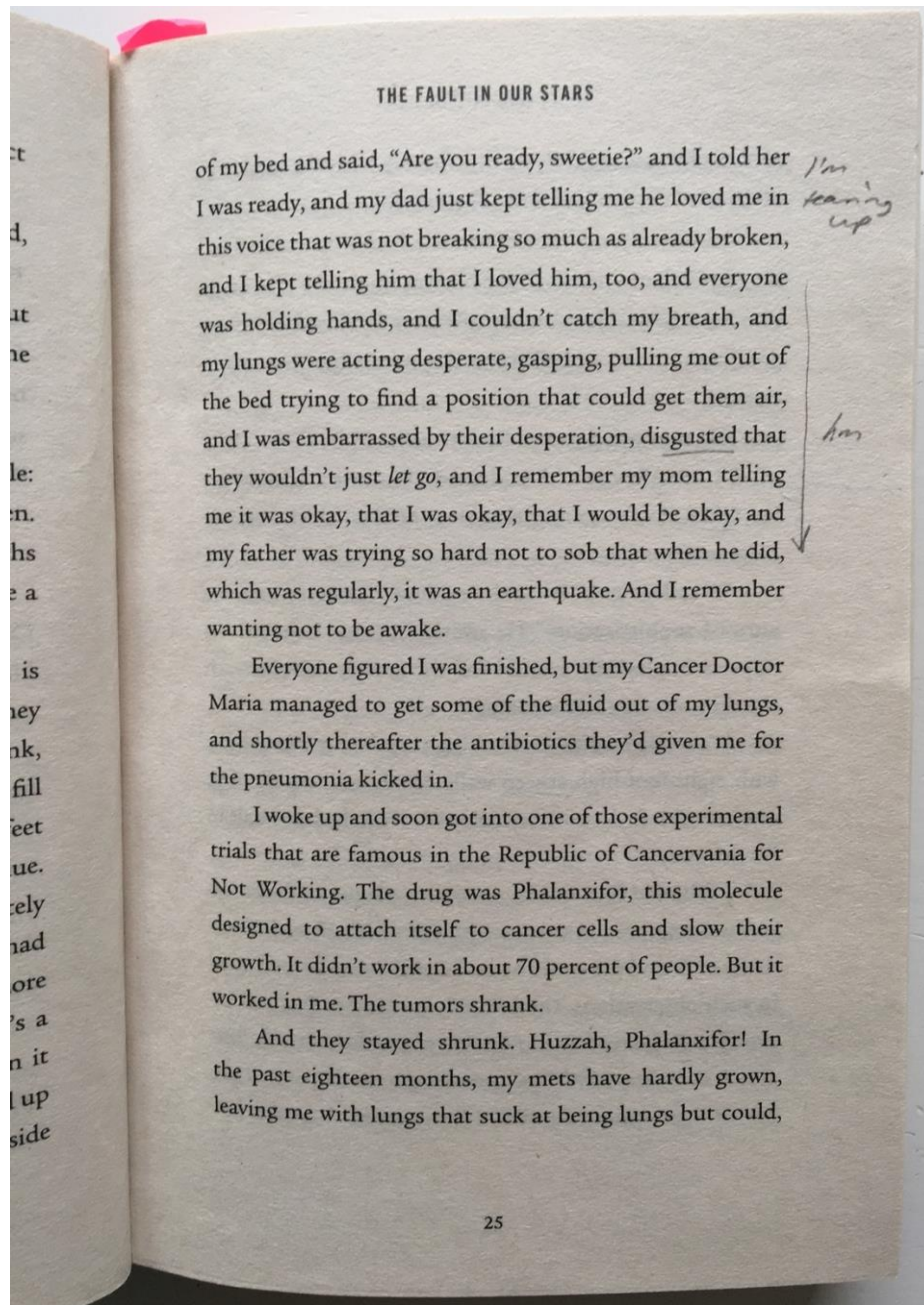
Appendix 5 Researcher journal: Sample entry

An example of an entry from my researcher journal in OneNote. The search function allowed me to retrieve one of the first reflective notes I made after learning about the concept of languaging.



Appendix 6 Recording my responses to the YA novels

An example of how I wrote notes in the margins of my personal copies of the YA novels to note down my responses while reading at the same pace as the learners.



of my bed and said, "Are you ready, sweetie?" and I told her I was ready, and my dad just kept telling me he loved me in this voice that was not breaking so much as already broken, and I kept telling him that I loved him, too, and everyone was holding hands, and I couldn't catch my breath, and my lungs were acting desperate, gasping, pulling me out of the bed trying to find a position that could get them air, and I was embarrassed by their desperation, disgusted that they wouldn't just *let go*, and I remember my mom telling me it was okay, that I was okay, that I would be okay, and my father was trying so hard not to sob that when he did, which was regularly, it was an earthquake. And I remember wanting not to be awake.

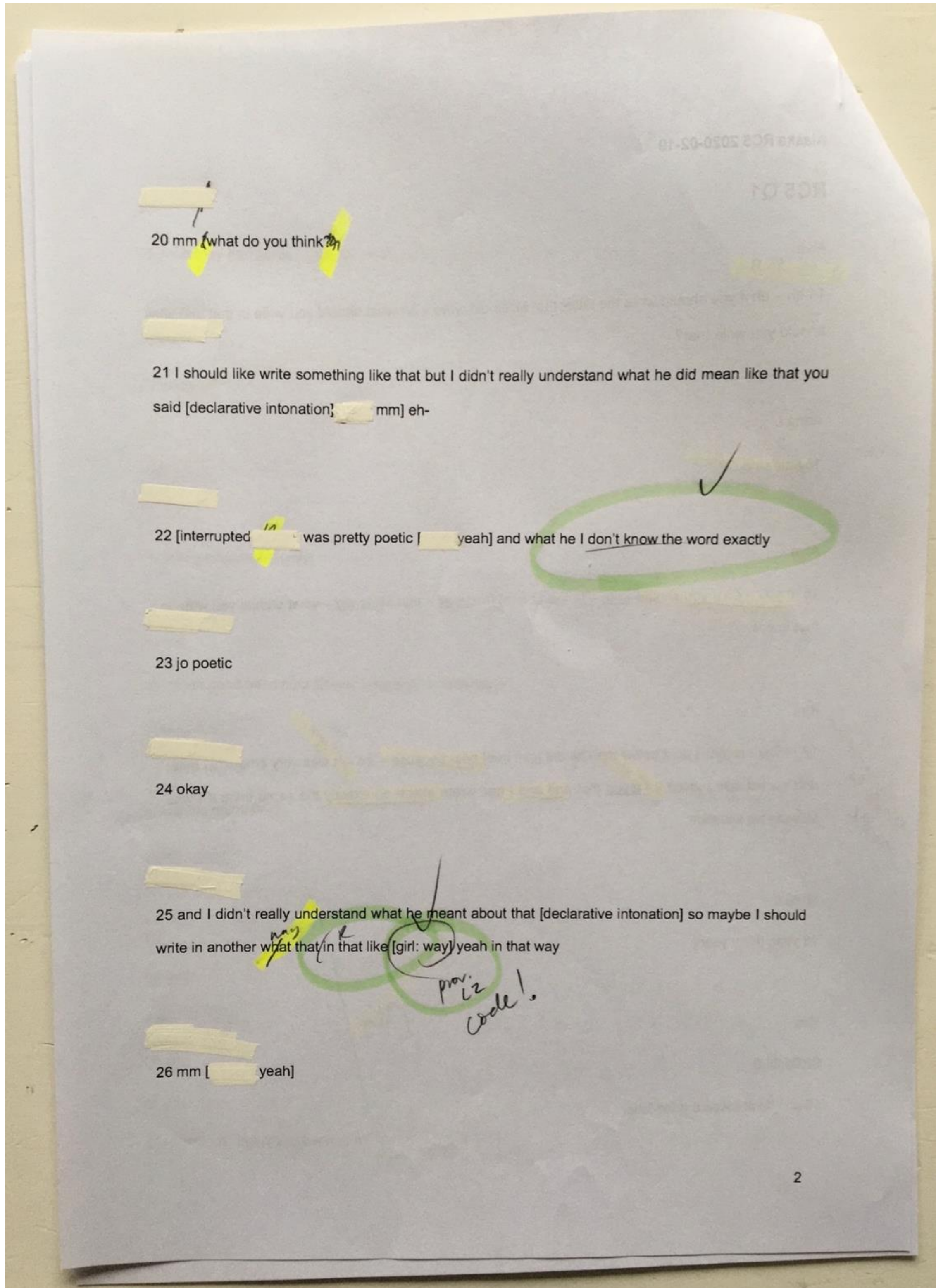
Everyone figured I was finished, but my Cancer Doctor Maria managed to get some of the fluid out of my lungs, and shortly thereafter the antibiotics they'd given me for the pneumonia kicked in.

I woke up and soon got into one of those experimental trials that are famous in the Republic of Cancervania for Not Working. The drug was Phalanxifor, this molecule designed to attach itself to cancer cells and slow their growth. It didn't work in about 70 percent of people. But it worked in me. The tumors shrank.

And they stayed shrunk. Huzzah, Phalanxifor! In the past eighteen months, my mets have hardly grown, leaving me with lungs that suck at being lungs but could,

Appendix 7 Manual coding of printed copies of transcripts

An example of how I supplemented coding in NVivo with manual coding of printed copies of transcripts.



20 mm [what do you think?]

21 I should like write something like that but I didn't really understand what he did mean like that you said [declarative intonation] mm] eh-

22 [interrupted was pretty poetic [yeah] and what he I don't know the word exactly

23 jo poetic

24 okay

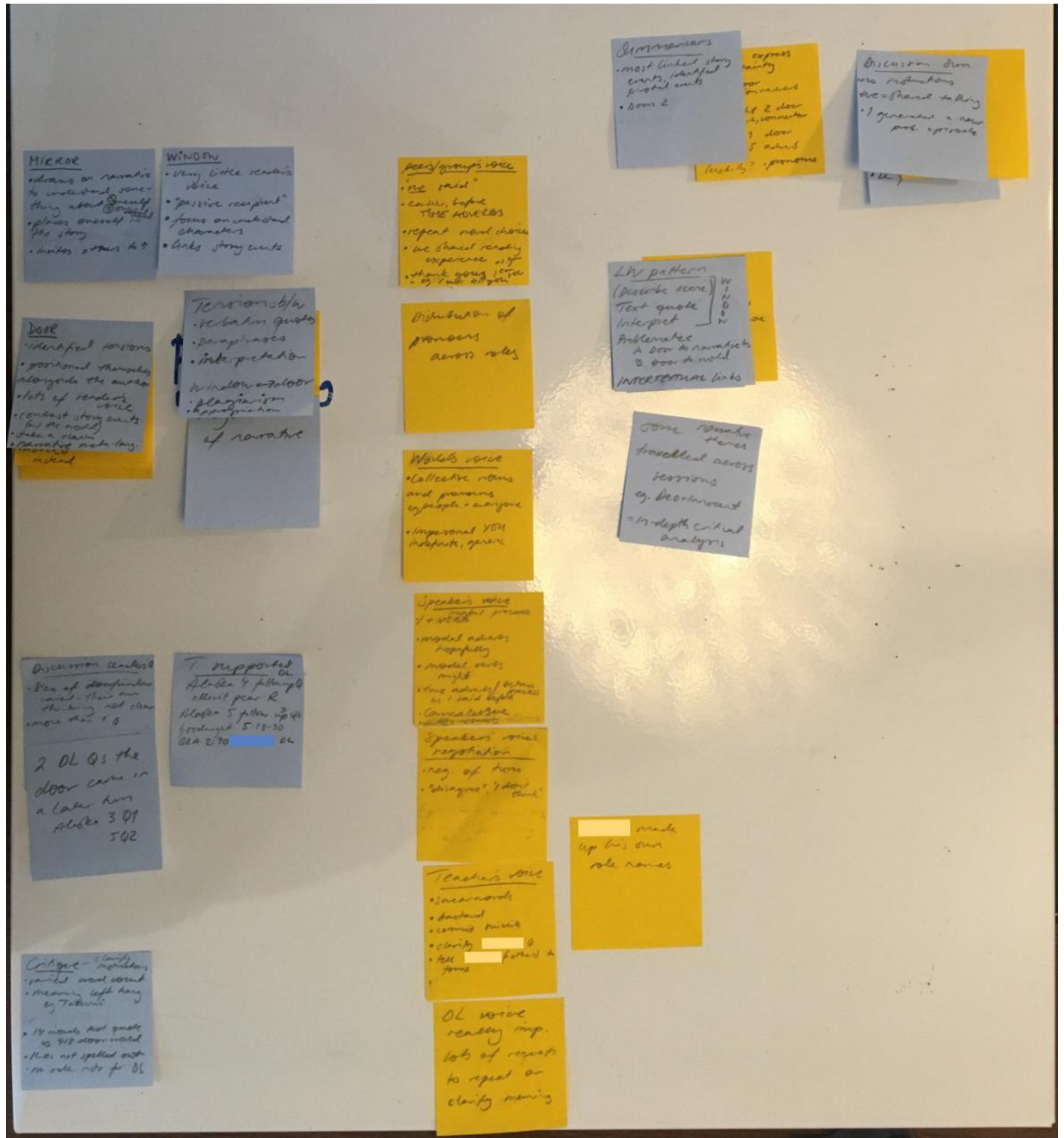
25 and I didn't really understand what he meant about that [declarative intonation] so maybe I should write in another what that in that like [girl: way] yeah in that way

26 mm [yeah]

2

Appendix 8 Manual handling of codes

An example of how I supplemented coding in NVivo by writing codes on small post-its and re-arranging them on a small portable whiteboard.



Appendix 9 Coding in NVivo

Below follows two screenshots of my NVivo project "linguistic analysis". The first screenshot demonstrates how the reading circle sessions were transcribed as separate documents and provides a sample transcript. The second screenshot demonstrates part of the emerging coding hierarchy used for the linguistic analysis and exemplifies coded data at the code "narrative searches". As described above (section 3.4), the final stage of the analysis occurred during the writing up of the thesis. This means that the transcription system and the coding hierarchy demonstrated here represent earlier stages of the analysis. These screenshots also illustrate how the emerging findings were synthesised across all data sources, i.e., all reading circle sessions with all reading circle groups. This allowed for the triangulation of data sources to ensure that my interpretations held across the entire data set (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.305).

Linguistic analysis

Home Create Data Analyze Query Explore Layout View

DATA
Files
File Classifications
Externals

CODES
Nodes

CASES
Cases
Case Classifications

NOTES
Memos
Annotations
Memo Links

SEARCH
Queries
Query Results
Node Matrices
Sets

MAPS
Maps

OPEN ITEMS
Self-negotiated narrative det...

Name	Files	References
1 Dysfluencies across pres-expl	0	0
Filled pauses - eh, ehm, uhm	25	1 312
Interruptions	17	77
Repeats	25	656
2 Dysfluencies pres talk incl DL Q	0	0
Corrected grammar in script	23	136
Lexical item - modified	24	343
Misread - read again	25	207
Narrative detail	11	11
3 Dysfluencies - expl talk excl DL Q	0	0
Abandoned and started anew	17	44
Abandoned incomplete utterance	15	26
Completed each other's utterances	10	15
Self-negotiated narrative details	5	8
Speaker retraced and repaired	25	354
4 Pres talk incl DL Q	0	0
Other reg - peer corrected narrative detail	2	2
Self reg - peer req narrative detail	1	2
Spontaneous speech	0	0
5 Expl talk excl DL	0	0
Other-regulation	7	17
Repeated and elaborated prev utterances	20	34
Self-regulation - peer requests	21	63
How Swedish was used	0	0
--L1 Ss Swedish students	25	179
L1 access laptop	3	4
L1 interactions with T	7	14
L1 self-regulate peer requests	8	12
L1 self-regulate private speech	19	49
L1-L2 disclaimers	15	23
L1-L2 interpersonal	5	6
L2 self-regulate private speech	12	17
Negotiated turn-taking	15	25
Translanguaging expl talk only	10	12
Utterance launches + finishes	13	30
Language limited comprehension	3	4
Narrative details across pres-expl	0	0
To use - potentially	0	0

1 item selected

Files\\Goodnight RC3 200127
1 reference coded, 0.72% coverage

Reference 1: 0.72% coverage

and it feels like if a girl wants to do something like Carrie? [interrogative] <RR> I think she- <RR> her name was [declarative intonation]

Files\\Goodnight RC4 200203
1 reference coded, 0.54% coverage

Reference 1: 0.54% coverage

this is like in the 40s? [interrogative] <RR> 30s [declarative]

Files\\Q&A RC1 200114
1 reference coded, 0.98% coverage

Reference 1: 0.98% coverage

– <RR> was it second question [interrogative intonation] <RR> no it was third one [declarative intonation] – it was a third question [declarative intonation]

Files\\Q&A RC2 200120
2 references coded, 2.74% coverage

Reference 1: 1.45% coverage

motivation for the main character was country – before [extended the vowel 'o', thinking intonation] – <RR> I don't know what it was but essentially [declarative intonation] – the main character's best friend was a commie spy and for hi- <RR> and for the main character – he was that he prioritised his country over his relationship with him

Reference 2: 1.29% coverage

30 yeah but he [boy: and-] had earlier in the book eh – decided to not call the police for example – at the Sethji? [interrogative] <RR> I think eh – <RR> he didn't call the police //men// – they did illegal stuff there and now he decided to do that – so I don't really understand why he did it right now but maybe –

Files\\Q&A RC4 200203

CODES › Nodes › 3 Dysfluencies - expl talk excl DL Q › Self-negotiated narrative details

Appendix 10 Initial categories

This list represents the initial 86 categories before collating, relabelling, and re-organising.

Linguistic analysis

Dysfluencies

- Filled pauses
- Repeats

Self-initiated self-repair while reading role reports

- Misread script and repaired by starting anew
- Corrected form
- Lexis added that initiated role presentation
- Lexis added that ended role presentation
- Lexis added that elaborated on content
- Lexis omitted
- Lexis replaced
- Narrative detail: Added
- Narrative detail: Corrected

Self-initiated self-repair during collaborative dialogue

- Abandoned incomplete utterances
- Abandoned and started anew
- Retraced and repaired
- Retraced-and-repaired: Modified form
- Retraced and repaired: Replaced lexis
- Retraced and repaired: Added qualifying lexis
- Retraced and repaired: Clarified narrative detail
- Retraced and repaired: Modified meaning

Self-initiated other-repair

- Clarification requests of discussion questions
- Repetition requests of discussion questions
- Confirmation checks to establish shared narrative understanding
- Assistance request: Narrative inferences
- Assistance requests: Lexis
- Other-initiated other-repair
- Interrupted and took the floor
- Co-construction of meaning

Recasts: Provision of language

Recasts: Teacher provided language

Hearers repaired speakers' text reference

How Swedish mediated social speech in English

Inform peers about laptop issues

Negotiated turn-taking

Signalled lost train of thought

Discourse markers as tags to end turn

Discourse markers to initiate turn

Medial position

Private speech mediating repair

Self-repair of form and meaning with private speech in Swedish

Self-repair of form and meaning with private speech in English

Lexical searches with private speech in Swedish

Lexical searches with private speech in English

Narrative searches

Signalled memory retrieval of narrative detail

Intersection of linguistic and reader response analyses

Retellings of the narrative

Linguistic markers of the indicative function

Page references

Reported characters' speech

Reported the narrator's voice

Shared reading experience

Interweavement of the narrative arch

Characters' intrinsic motivation explained their actions

External motivation prompted characters' actions

Identified change in characters' behaviours to establish continuity, coherence, and development

Identified inconsistencies in characters' behaviour

Departures from the novels

Unacknowledged departures while reading role reports

Unacknowledged departures during

Interweaving narrative retellings and meaning making during role reports

Interweaving narrative retellings and meaning making during collaborative dialogue

Omitting narrative details, yet drawing plausible conclusions

The appropriation of lexis

Construction of individual meaning while reading role reports

Used lexis from the novel and maintained author's meaning

Used lexis from the novels and integrated personal meaning

Construction of shared meaning during collaborative dialogue

Used by the author to represent specific narrative elements

Constituted the meaning the participants made

Reader response analysis

Narrative imagination

Literary heuristics

Attributed personality traits to characters

Attributed goals and motivations to focalized characters

Attributed goals and motivations to unfocalized characters

Identified character development

Changed perception of the characters

Predicted narrative development

Invented narrative details

Invented narrative details

Appraised literary craft

Appraised didactic messages

Creative heuristics

Appraised aesthetic value

Made life realisations

Created prequels

Created sequels

Carnivalesque intertextual links

Civic imagination

Care, concern, compassion

Imagined hopeful narrative development

Shared memories of comparable experiences

Connected with characters despite no comparable personal experience

Identified their vulnerability as human beings

Compassionately rejected characters' self-criticism

Good, bad, right, or wrong

Rejected characters' actions, but empathised with their motivations

Rejected characters' actions, but generated hypotheses about their motivations

Carnivalesque rejections of antagonists

Imagined themselves in the characters' situations

Generalised from characters' struggles

Made historical comparisons

Identified structural inequality

Made intracultural comparisons

Made calls for action

Appendix 11 Final categories

This list represents the final 44 categories with their assigned category numbers.

Linguistic analysis

Linguistic analysis of intertextuality

Interweaving narrative retellings with meaning making

Reading the role reports

1 Repeated lexis from the novels and maintained meaning

2 Repeated lexis from the novels and imbued personal meaning

3 Interweaving narrative retellings and meaning making during role reports

Responding to the Discussion leaders' questions

4 Interweaving narrative retellings and meaning making when responding to the Discussion leaders' questions

Appropriating lexis to co-construct meaning

5 Repeating lexis from the novels

6 Repeating lexis that represented the meaning the participants made of the narratives

Repairing form, lexis, and narrative retellings

Repairing form and lexis

Self-initiated self-repair of form and lexis

7 Self-repaired form

8 Added lexis that elaborated on meaning

9 Replaced lexis to modify meaning

10 How private speech mediated self-repair of form and meaning

11 How private speech mediated lexical searches

Other repair of lexis

12 Assistance requests for lexis

13 Recasts of lexis

14 Co-operative completion of utterances

Repairing narrative retellings

15 Self-repair of narrative retellings

16 Assistance requests for narrative details

17 Confirmation checks to establish shared narrative understanding

18 Peers challenged and repaired speakers' narrative retellings

Reader response analysis

Identifying the readerly gap

Referential responses: Stayed within the gap

19 Attributed personality traits to characters

20 Attributed goals and motivations to focalized characters

21 Attributed goals and motivations to unfocalized characters

22 Identified character development

23 Predicted narrative development

Creative responses: Moved along the gap's borders

24 Invented narrative details

25 Created prequels

26 Created sequels

27 Made carnivalesque links

Evaluating the novels as works of art

28 Appraised literary craft

29 Appraised didactic messages

30 Appraised aesthetic value

Making links to narratives of life

Compassionate responses

31 Imagined hopeful narrative development

32 Shared memories of comparable experiences

33 Identified shared vulnerabilities

34 Compassionately rejected characters' self-criticism

Value judgements

35 Imagined themselves in the characters' situations

36 Supported characters' actions because they empathised with their motivations

37 Rejected characters' actions, but empathised with their motivations

38 Carnivalesque rejections of antagonists

39 Rejected characters' actions, but generated hypotheses about their motivations

Generalising from the characters' struggles

40 Reframed perspectives

41 Made historical comparisons

42 Made intracultural comparisons

43 Identified structural inequality

44 Made calls for action

Appendix 12 Analysis of Discussion leaders' questions

The Discussion leaders' questions were analysed using the categories from the typology of responses presented in chapter 6. Table 24 below summaries the analysis with number of instances per question type, followed by descriptions and data examples.

Table 24 Analysis of the Discussion leaders' questions

Category and question type	Total
Identifying the readerly gap	
Characters' motivations	15
Characters' feelings	3
Plot predictions	7
Readerly gap	5
Subtotal	30
Evaluating the novels as works of art	
Didactic messages	2
Aesthetic experience	3
Subtotal	5
Making links to narratives of life	
Value judgements	12
What would you do/feel	8
Generalising from the characters' struggles	3
Subtotal	23
Total	58

Identifying the readerly gap

The question types below follow the definition as described above for the typology's first main category, identifying the readerly gap (section 6.1), and concern the characters' motivations and feelings, didactic messages, aesthetic experience, plot parameters, and plot predictions.

Characters' motivations

This question type was the most frequent in this category and concerned both focalized and unfocalized characters. Extract 66 provides an example which focused on the premise of the novel *Alaska* and the focalized main character Miles.

> **64. Elsa_DL_A1**
> … why did erm Miles choose to go – to go to a school in Alabama and not tried to find a school in Florida there his family – is- – what do you- what do you think?

Characters' feelings

This question type only concerned unfocalized characters, including main as well as secondary characters.

> **65. Anton_DL_S3**
> when Augustus tells Hazel that he's in love with her … she couldn't tell Augustus back … how do you think Augustus felt when Hazel didn't answer?

Plot predictions

This question type prompted the participants to look ahead and predict narrative development. Extract 66 exemplifies how a question concerned both plot prediction as well as plot parameters; the participants responded to both.

> **66. Elias_DL_G2**
> we found out that Willie can draw really well – what do you think is the reason that he can draw that well and how will it affect his future?

Readerly gap

This question type generated responses that interrogated the premise of the characters' actions, creating a space for creative responses.

> **67. Liam_DL_Q4**
> how does Ahmed know – erm exactly what's gonna happen in the cricket matches? – is there something rigged about the sport? – maybe the players get paid by the illegal site – to do sp- erm specific things in the match so the – erm like the better who bets on the – on the game can win

Evaluating the novels as works of art

The question types below follow the definition as described above for the typology's second main category, evaluating the novels as works of art (section 6.2), and concern appraising didactic messages and aesthetic experience.

Didactic messages

This question type prompted the participants to infer ideological intent and didactic messages.

> **68. Alice_DL_A5**
> what message do you think this book have?

Aesthetic experience

This question type prompted the participants to identify their reactions to the reading and generated responses in which the participants explained their aesthetic experience.

> **69. Maja_DL_S5**
> how did you feel when you read the book? did you find it sad or somehow uplifting? did you like it or not and why?

Making links to narratives of life

The question types below follow the definition as described above for the typology's third main category, making links to narratives of life (section 6.3), and aimed to elicit judgements of right or wrong, invite the participants to imagine what they would do or feel in the characters' circumstances, and generalise from the characters' struggles to the real world.

Value judgements

This was most frequent question type in this category and after characters' motivations, the second most frequent of all question types.

70. Hanna_DL_R1

do you think Deo did the right thing by lying to Innocent that erm Amai and Grandpa Longdrop didn't have died?

What would you do/feel

After the question types concerning characters' motivations and the participants' value judgements, this was the third most frequent question type. These questions invited the participants to imagine themselves in the characters' circumstances and how they would do or feel.

71. Oliver_DL_G4

what would you do in Willie's situation – when Tom kidnapped hi- kidnapped him – would you be glad and follow or would you stay with your mother?

Generalising from the characters' struggles

These questions invited the participants to consider narrative elements as examples of real-life. Extract 72 demonstrates how Johanna interpreted Deo's decision to start sniffing glue as motivated by the grief and guilt he felt over his brother's death and how she identified an intertextual link to her understanding of how depression in real-life can lead to drug abuse.

72. Johanna_DL_R5

as we all know Deo started to sniff glue – do you think people start to do things like drugs when they feel sad or depressed?

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