

**Grade 12 English Second Language Learners' Attitudes Towards Studying *Macbeth* and
Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories at a South African Township School.**

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DECLARATION

I, Siphosethu Pretty Nhlapho, declare that

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Abstract

This study explored the attitudes of Grade 12 English Second Language (ESL) learners toward studying *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* in a South African township high school. Employing a qualitative, interpretive case study methodology, the research investigated how learners' perspectives influence their engagement with these prescribed texts. Drawing on Motivation Theory and Sociocultural Theory, the study examined key factors such as language accessibility, cultural relevance, learner confidence, and Educator influence. Data were generated through semi-structured questionnaires with an art-based element, individual interviews, and a reflective diary, with thematic analysis employed to identify patterns and trends. Findings indicated that while *Changes* resonated with learners due to its cultural familiarity and accessible language, *Macbeth* presented significant challenges owing to its archaic language and perceived lack of relevance. The study underscored the need for pedagogic strategies that bridge linguistic and cultural gaps, ensuring that prescribed literary texts foster meaningful engagement and academic success. This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on literature instruction in ESL contexts and offers insights that prioritise learner motivation and inclusivity.

Key Terms: English Second Language, Learners' attitudes, Studying, South African, Township School

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Literature is crucial in shaping learners' linguistic, cognitive, and cultural development, particularly in English Second Language (ESL) classrooms, where prescribed texts form the foundation of curriculum-based engagement. However, the study of *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* in South African township schools presents complex challenges, including linguistic barriers, cultural dissonance, and varying levels of learner engagement. This study critically examined the attitudes of Grade 12 ESL learners towards these two prescribed texts, shedding light on the factors that shape their perspectives and their subsequent engagement with the material.

Guided by Motivation Theory and Sociocultural Theory, this research explored the interplay between learner motivation, cultural context, and instructional strategies. Using a qualitative case study approach, data was generated through semi-structured questionnaires, individual interviews, and a reflective diary to capture learners' authentic perspectives. Thematic analysis was employed to identify key trends, including language accessibility, cultural relevance, learner confidence, and the role of Educator intervention.

This study aimed to deepen my understanding of how learners' attitudes influence their academic engagement with prescribed texts and how their experiences with these works shape their learning journey. The findings may offer valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and curriculum designers, advocating for literature instruction that is both pedagogically sound and culturally responsive.

1.2 Focus and Purpose

This study explored the attitudes of Grade 12 English Second Language (ESL) learners towards studying two specific literary works, namely the drama *Macbeth* and the anthology of short stories called *Changes* in a Township High School in Kwa-Zulu Natal Province. By exploring the attitudes of these learners towards these works, the study aimed to identify any factors that may influence their attitudes towards these texts and explore the reasons for harbouring these attitudes towards the two texts. Furthermore, the study sought to investigate how, as an educator, I respond to these attitudes.

1.3 Rationale and Motivation for the Study

The rationale for this study stems from my personal experiences of having taught *Macbeth* and *Changes* to ESL learners in Grade 12 for five years in a township high school. Over the years, I have observed a

distinct difference in how learners respond to these texts. A significant number of learners express a negative attitude towards Macbeth. Many of my learners have complained about the difficulty of the Elizabethan English vocabulary. They feel intimidated by it and express fear of failing in assessments of this set work. Mureriwa (2018) also observed that Shakespearean literature is intimidating mainly due to its archaic Elizabethan English. English is foreign to many ESL learners who feel disassociated from the works. Mureriwa (2018) further states that educators, too, have challenges developing effective teaching methods to help change learners' perceptions and make them enjoy and appreciate Shakespeare's works.

In contrast, most learners exhibit a more positive attitude towards Changes, particularly because five of the eight prescribed short stories are set in African and South African contexts. These stories often explore culturally and socially relevant themes, making them more relatable and engaging for African learners. However, while the overall trend suggests a preference for Changes over Macbeth, individual responses may vary. This study, therefore, seeks to systematically explore and document learners' attitudes toward these texts, moving beyond my preliminary observations to gain a deeper understanding of the reasons behind their perceptions. The findings may contribute to strategies for enhancing engagement with literature in ESL classrooms.

1.4 Background of the study

The Department of Basic Education (2011) Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAPS) document states that the main reason for reading literature in the classroom is to develop in learners a sensitivity to a unique use of language that is more refined, literary, figurative, symbolic, and deeply meaningful than much of what else they may read. It further emphasises that teaching literature is never easy but impossible without personal, thoughtful, and honest interpretations and comments from the learners. They will not have learned much unless they learn how to understand a literary text independently. The CAPS document further highlights that educators must choose a text type and a topic that will interest learners, as little or no learning can be achieved if learners are not engaged and motivated. For the educators to know what type of texts or topics interest the learners, the learners themselves need to be involved in finding out their attitudes towards the prescribed texts to ensure that the texts align with their interests. However, the texts are prescribed by the Department of Basic Education and the Heads of Department for the subject at school level and not selected by the educators. Knowing the learners' interests and attitudes will aid in selecting future texts/topics that are in tune with their interests and enhance positive attitudes while decreasing existing negative attitudes. Finally, in a two-week cycle, the following time allocation for the different language skills is suggested in the CAPS document: Listening

and Speaking 1 hour, which is 10% of the allocated 4.5 hours per week. Reading and Viewing is allocated 4 hours (45%), Writing and Presenting is allocated 3 hours (35%), and Language Structures and Conventions is also allocated 1 hour (10%). The time allocation for reading and viewing holds the highest percentage of all the four skills, thus highlighting the importance of exploring the learners' attitudes to ensure that the process of reading and viewing is as productive and engaging as possible for learners to fully grasp and comprehend the prescribed literature and all that it has to offer.

This study's primary objective was to explore township learners' attitudes towards their reading of the two specific literary works, namely the classic Shakespearean play '*Macbeth*' and '*Changes*,' a contemporary collection comprising short stories from multiple countries, primarily African countries and South Africa. The aim was to explore the attitudes of Grade 12 ESL learners towards reading these two texts. The study also aimed to discover how the learners' attitudes influence their reading and learning of '*Macbeth*' and '*Changes*,' why Grade 12 ESL learners have the attitudes they harbour towards reading these two prescribed texts and finally, to explore how I can respond to Grade 12 ESL learners' attitudes toward studying *Macbeth* and *Changes*.

Researchers have emphasised the need to consider learners' cultural and linguistic backgrounds when teaching literature in the ESL context, as many ESL learners come from diverse cultural backgrounds and may not be familiar with the cultural and historical contexts of some of the prescribed texts (Mureriwa, 2018). Baaqeel (2020) notes that literature allows ESL learners to engage with language and culture in a way that goes beyond mechanical learning, encouraging them to connect with texts through personal interests and attitudes. Aydin (2013) and Hernandez et al. (2021) argue that the cultural unfamiliarity of canonical texts like Shakespeare can create significant barriers to comprehension, while Boubekeur (2021) highlights the value of culturally appropriate texts in promoting engagement and intercultural competence. Thus, adopting a culturally responsive approach that considers learners' cultural backgrounds and experiences is necessary when selecting and teaching texts. The study focused on attitudes and factors influencing learners' attitudes, such as learners' beliefs and feelings towards the two literary works. It enquired about whether learners' attitudes are shaped by the way they are taught, whether their attitudes are imbibed through the prejudices of other learners or their educators or whether learners' attitudes are shaped by their personal experiences of engaging with these texts or similar texts they might have been exposed to, and finally how I respond to my learners' attitudes towards studying *Macbeth* and *Changes*.

Given that learners at this school have already exhibited two distinct attitudes, it becomes crucial to delve into their perspectives on the prescribed texts. As the Department of Basic Education (2011) Curriculum

and Assessment Policy outlines, each school selects two genres from the provided options: Novels, Short Stories, Drama, and Poetry. For the Grade 12 learners in the research site, the chosen texts are the Drama 'Macbeth' and eight short stories from the Short Story anthology titled 'Changes'. Consequently, the primary focus of this study was inherently centred on these two literary works.

1.5 Location and Context

The Township High School ESL Context

The term 'township' in the South African context, according to Mthembu and Pillay (2021), points to undeveloped, racially segregated areas that were reserved for Black, Indian and Coloured peoples during the apartheid era. Furthermore, Mogorosi (2022) states that townships are characterised by socio-economic issues, such as poverty, which are generally caused by people not being able to find jobs, and factors such as the lack of infrastructure, health and housing issues, and poor recreational and transport facilities are typically considered when describing a township. Lebesa (2015) further states that in the South African context, black township schools are characterised by a shortage of educators, dilapidated school buildings, a continuous shortage of textbooks and generally poor facilities. The reasons behind the aforementioned challenges are based on the history of the township context, which Lebesa (2015) briefly highlights in their study, that historically, "black" (i.e., African townships) were regarded as the worst of all compared to the other groups mentioned above due to the lack of infrastructure and the prevalence of market-related social issues such as the low income and poor living conditions of members of the community. The township of uMlazi situated in KwaZulu Natal, as the site of this study, is no different, as it mirrors the broader South African township context outlined in the above literature.

In discussing the challenges faced in ESL townships in South Africa, Nqoma, Francis, and Foncha (2017) shed light on critical findings from a study conducted in two ESL schools within the East London district. The schools, situated in economically disadvantaged areas grapple with high levels of poverty, unemployment, and crime and are heavily dependent on government support due to parents' financial constraints, leading to an inability to afford school fees or provide additional financial assistance. These schools also grapple with inadequate libraries stocked with outdated books. One major challenge identified pertains to the lack of parental support. The study's data revealed a significant number of learners who struggled to complete homework, projects, and assigned tasks, indicating a dearth of support from parents for both educators and learners alike.

Language proficiency emerges as another considerable obstacle. Learners face diverse challenges related to the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) during their daily school activities. These challenges encompass difficulties comprehending lessons, note-taking, participating in classroom discussions, and extracting information from books—the struggle to understand English lessons results in diminished participation and limited proficiency in the language. Furthermore, the limited exposure to English in their immediate environment further constrains their ability to use it as a means of communication. In response to these barriers, educators frequently resort to code-switching—alternating between English and the learners’ mother tongue during instruction—to aid comprehension. While this strategy can enhance understanding, it may also lead to inconsistencies in language development if not used strategically. The scarcity of educational resources further exacerbates the challenges faced in these ESL township schools. Inadequate provision of stationery and textbooks hampers the teaching and learning process, while a lack of diverse reading materials beyond prescribed textbooks limits the successful implementation of the English First Additional Language (EFAL) curriculum. These constraints collectively hinder the comprehensive development of English language skills among learners in these environments (Nqoma, Francis, & Foncha, 2017).

According to a study conducted by Chaka (2015), teaching reading skills in township high schools in South Africa is often ineffective as they usually serve learners from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds with unique educational challenges and limited access to resources and language barriers. Moreover, Chaka (2015) mentions that some scholars express the view that inadequate English academic literacy and feeble English reading comprehension prevalent in schools is a challenge faced globally. For example, in Britain, Rankin (2013) notes that the year 2008 was designated as a National Year of Reading due to the substandard reading proficiency exhibited by some English learners. In South Africa, measures to address the low literacy levels were already taken before the announcement of the results of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) in 2016. The recent PIRLS report of 2021 revealed very low-performance levels in South African learners’ ability to read for meaning as they turn 10. At 288 score points, South Africa performed significantly below the PIRLS centre point of 500. Singapore (587) was the highest-performing country. These results confirmed that learning losses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic are severe across South Africa as the average PIRLS score dropped from 320 in 2016 to 288 in 2021, a drop of 32 points on the scale. These results are a stark reminder of South Africa's challenges in addressing low literacy levels. The decline from 2016 underscores the need for continued efforts to improve literacy rates, including exploring the learners’ attitudes towards studying literature to understand their perspectives (PIRLS, 2021).

Following the release of the PIRLS report, a comprehensive National Reading Survey was conducted, resulting in a report authored by Polzer-Ngwato, Shilakoe, Morse, and Huston (2023). This report delineates the outcomes of the South African National Reading Survey, a crucial component of the broader National Reading Barometer project. The National Reading Barometer project integrates survey findings and secondary data to characterise the national reading landscape. The National Reading Survey is a nationally representative survey targeting adults aged 16 and above. It is designed to provide a detailed profile of adults' reading habits, preferences, and contextual factors. The survey encompasses inquiries about adult reading practices with children, digital reading habits, utilisation of libraries, and language preferences. The overarching objectives of this survey encompass two main areas. Firstly, the study sought to explore the diverse reading cultures within South African adults, thereby offering insights into the various reading practices prevalent in the region. Secondly, it aspired to explore the motivations and attitudes underlying reading behaviours. This includes understanding why individuals choose to read or abstain from reading, particularly concerning reading with children, and investigating the sentiments associated with reading.

The findings derived from the survey unearthed several noteworthy insights. South Africans generally exhibit a proclivity for reading; however, there is a noticeable deficiency in sustained engagement with lengthy written texts. Although there is an increasing trend in adults reading with children, underscored by recognition of its importance, there remains a shortage of children's literature. The digital reading domain is on the ascent, but disparities in access persist, and a preference for traditional print materials endures. South African readers manifest a multilingual inclination, expressing a desire to engage with literature in African languages, yet the availability of such texts is limited. Libraries remain significant but are not equally accessible to all citizens, and borrowing books is less prevalent.

Despite the multifaceted reading landscape, there has been a discernible enhancement in positive attitudes towards reading since 2016, though this transformation has not precipitated significant alterations in reading practices. Access to reading materials is improving; however, many households still possess a paucity of books, with religious materials being the most commonly available category. Reading for leisure remains popular, with approximately 48% of adults engaging in frequent reading. Furthermore, reading for communication is the most prevalent form of reading. The survey reveals an increase in adults reading with children, although the scarcity of time and access to children's books presents a formidable obstacle. Digital reading is on the rise, while printed materials maintain their popularity. Notably, access to libraries exhibits disparities, with those in greater need of such resources

having the least access. Nevertheless, despite various challenges, libraries remain the preferred source of free reading materials for most of the population. (Polzer-Ngwato, Shilakoe, Morse, & Huston, 2023).

The insights from the National Reading Survey are relevant to this study in various ways. They emphasise the need to consider South African learners' reading habits and preferences when studying their attitudes toward specific literary works. The findings also underscore potential challenges related to reading materials and linguistic diversity, which may impact the educational experiences of English Second Language Learners in South African township schools. Understanding the broader reading landscape can help educators and researchers tailor their approaches to make literature more engaging and accessible to learners.

As a final point, Abadiano and Turner (2010) state that when children and young adolescent readers make connections between their own experiences and prior knowledge and those they come to experience and learn in stories, novels, or nonfiction—these allow them to not only relate meaningfully to the text but more importantly, help them to understand and to make sense of their own lives. Such is the power of literature. Thus, it is critical to involve the learner in the process of learning to read, giving them autonomy and an opportunity to be active decision-makers (Olifant et al., 2019).

1.6 Objectives

The objectives of this study were:

1. To explore the attitudes of Grade 12 ESL learners towards studying the drama *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* in a Township High School context.
2. To discover how Grade 12 ESL learners' attitudes influence their studying of the drama *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* in a Township High School context.
3. To find out why Grade 12 ESL learners have the attitudes they harbour towards studying the drama *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* in a Township High School context.
4. To explore how I can respond to Grade 12 ESL learners' attitudes toward studying *Macbeth* and *Changes*.

1.7 Critical Research Questions

1. What are the attitudes of Grade 12 ESL learners towards studying the drama *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* in a Township High School context?

2. How do these attitudes influence their studying of the drama *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*?
3. Why do Grade 12 ESL learners have the kind of attitudes they have towards studying the drama *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*?
4. How can I respond to Grade 12 ESL learners' attitudes toward studying *Macbeth* and *Changes*?

1.8 Key Concepts and Theoretical Perspectives

This study explored the attitudes of Grade 12 English Second Language (ESL) learners toward studying *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* in a South African township high school. The research investigated how learners' perceptions of these prescribed texts influence their engagement, comprehension, and overall literary experience. The key concepts underpinning this study include learner attitudes, language accessibility, cultural relevance, pedagogical strategies, and learner motivation. These concepts are central to understanding the factors shaping learners' responses to literature and their ability to engage meaningfully with literary genres. Learner attitudes refer to students' cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dispositions toward specific literary works. Wood and Wood (1993) conceptualise attitude as a relatively enduring assessment of an object or idea, consisting of three components: cognitive (beliefs), affective (feelings), and behavioural (actions or intentions). These attitudes in a literature classroom are shaped by learners' prior experiences, the teaching methods employed, and their perceptions of a text's relevance or difficulty. Language accessibility, another key concept in this study, relates to how easily learners can understand a literary text's linguistic structures and vocabulary. As noted by Mureriwa (2018), texts such as *Macbeth*, written in Elizabethan English, often intimidate ESL learners due to unfamiliar and archaic language, resulting in fear and disengagement. In contrast, learners respond more positively to *Changes* which features more accessible language aligned with their level of proficiency.

Cultural relevance is the extent to which learners can relate to the themes, characters, and settings presented in a literary text. Scholars such as Baaqeel (2020) and Kromhout and Scheckle (2021) argue that literature becomes more engaging when learners can make personal or cultural connections with the material, leading to deeper emotional and intellectual involvement. Texts like *Changes*, which include African and South African contexts, offer learners opportunities to see their identities and experiences reflected in the curriculum, whereas *Macbeth* may feel distant and disconnected. Pedagogical strategies, meanwhile, encompass the instructional methods educators use to scaffold understanding and support

learner engagement with texts. These include multimodal approaches, contextual explanation, and in many ESL classrooms, code-switching between English and the learners' mother tongue to aid comprehension (Nqoma, Francis, & Foncha, 2017). While helpful, these strategies must be used purposefully to avoid reinforcing translation dependence and promote independent interpretation.

Finally, learner motivation refers to the internal and external drivers influencing students' willingness to engage with literature. Drawing on Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination Theory—referenced in this study's theoretical framework—motivation can be intrinsic (driven by interest or enjoyment) or extrinsic (influenced by grades, praise, or teacher expectations). Baaqeel (2020) notes that a positive attitude and strong motivation enhance participation and improve performance in ESL contexts, while negative emotions can lead to disengagement and reduced comprehension. Collectively, these five concepts—learner attitudes, language accessibility, cultural relevance, pedagogical strategies, and learner motivation—interact to shape learners' literature experiences. Understanding their interplay offers valuable insights for designing more inclusive, responsive, and effective literature instruction in South African township ESL classrooms.

The study is framed within Motivation Theory and Sociocultural Theory, providing a lens for interpreting learners' attitudes and engagement with prescribed literature. Motivation Theory, as conceptualized by scholars such as Deci and Ryan (1985), explores intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in learning contexts. The study examined how learners' motivation is influenced by factors such as the perceived difficulty of *Macbeth*, the relatability of *Changes*, and the role of Educator support in fostering interest and engagement. The theory helps explain why learners resist complex, linguistically challenging texts while responding positively to literature that aligns with their experiences.

Sociocultural Theory, rooted in the work of Vygotsky (1978), emphasises the role of social interactions, cultural background, and contextual influences in learning. This perspective is particularly relevant in the township high school setting, where learners' exposure to literature is shaped by their linguistic environment, educational resources, and social experiences. The study applies this theory to analyse how cultural familiarity with *Changes* enhances learner engagement, whereas *Macbeth's* historical and linguistic distance creates barriers to comprehension. The theory also highlights the importance of Educator mediation, peer discussions, and collaborative learning in bridging these gaps and making literature more accessible to ESL learners.

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, this study comprehensively explains how learners interact with prescribed literary texts and what strategies can foster more positive attitudes and deeper

engagement. The findings contribute to the ongoing discourse on ESL literature pedagogy and offer insights into how curriculum design and teaching methodologies can be adapted to better support learners in township high schools.

1.9 Delimitations

The delimitations of this study define its scope and boundaries to ensure clarity and manageability. This research is limited to Grade 12 English Second Language (ESL) learners in a township high school in uMlazi, KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa. Specifically, the study focussed on the class I teach in this school, as the learners' experiences and attitudes are directly observable in my teaching context. The school was selected due to its unique socio-economic and educational context, which aligns with the research objectives. It was also selected because I am a Educator at this school and was thus convenient. The study examined two prescribed literary texts: *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare and the short story anthology *Changes*. Other prescribed texts, such as novels, poetry, or additional plays, are excluded from the scope of this research. Geographically, the study is confined to this school, and the findings may not necessarily be generalisable to schools in urban or rural areas or other townships in South Africa. Furthermore, the research explores learners' attitudes toward the two prescribed texts, including factors influencing these attitudes, such as cultural and linguistic relevance, personal experiences, and teaching methods. Broader topics, such as the overall effectiveness of literature education in ESL contexts or learners' attitudes toward other forms of literature, are beyond the scope of this study.

1.10 Conclusion and Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis is structured to comprehensively explore the attitudes of Grade 12 English Second Language (ESL) learners toward studying *Macbeth* and the short story anthology *Changes*. Each chapter builds on the previous one to create a coherent narrative, ensuring clarity and focus on the research objectives. The structure of the thesis is as follows:

1.10.1 Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduces the study by outlining its background, purpose, and rationale. It identifies the research problem, objectives, and questions guiding the investigation. The significance of the study is

highlighted, emphasising its potential to inform literature teaching in ESL classrooms. The chapter also includes the delimitations and defines the study's scope.

1.10.2 Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reviews relevant literature and theoretical frameworks related to the study. It explores previous research on learners' attitudes toward prescribed literature in ESL contexts, focusing on cultural and linguistic factors that shape these attitudes. Additionally, the chapter discusses pedagogical challenges and strategies for teaching Shakespearean drama and Short Story Anthologies, particularly the texts *Macbeth* and *Changes*. The gaps in the literature are identified, establishing the need for this study.

1.10.3 Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter describes the research design, methodology, and methods used in the study. It explains the qualitative data collection and analysis approach, including questionnaires, individual interviews, and reflective teaching practices. The chapter details the research setting, focusing on the township high school where I teach, and highlights the selection of my Grade 12 class as the sample. Ethical considerations and strategies to ensure the validity and reliability of the study are also addressed.

1.10.4 Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents the findings from the study and interprets them concerning the research questions and theoretical framework. It analyses the learners' attitudes toward *Macbeth* and *Changes* and identifies factors influencing these attitudes, such as cultural relevance, linguistic accessibility, and teaching methods. My responses as an educator to these attitudes are also explored, along with the impact of these responses on the learners' engagement and interaction with the texts.

1.10.5 Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

The final chapter concludes the study by summarising the key findings and drawing conclusions based on the research objectives. It discusses the implications of the findings for teaching literature in ESL classrooms, particularly in township schools. Practical recommendations are provided for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers to improve learner engagement with prescribed literature. The chapter also identifies areas for future research, emphasising the importance of addressing learners' attitudes and their role in enhancing literature education.

The chapter that follows: Review of Literature and Theoretical Framework, examines previous research related to the study and explores the theoretical frameworks underpinning this study, Sociocultural Theory and Motivation Theory.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Review of Literature

2.1.1 Introduction

Bertram and Christiansen (2017) define a literature review as a discussion of the important research previously done in the field being researched. Echoing this sentiment, Cohen and Manion, (2018) emphasise, that a literature review serves several crucial functions in research, especially when embedded in a dissertation. It safeguards against merely recycling existing material, ensuring that the research contributes novel insights. Credibility and legitimacy are established as the literature review demonstrates the researcher's thorough familiarity with up-to-date key issues, theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, and substantive problems within the field of study. By elucidating key concepts and their meanings, the review serves to clarify terminology and issues central to my research.

Cohen and Manion (2018) state that the literature review acts as a springboard to the study, pinpointing gaps in the research field and justifying the need for the research. It identifies where new ground needs to be broken and outlines how this research will achieve this. Notably, the literature review reflects the researcher's critical judgment on prior research, offering insights and issues that may pave the way for new theoretical, conceptual, methodological, and substantive contributions to the field. In setting the context for the research, the literature review establishes key issues that will be addressed. In the case of this study, which delved into ESL learners' attitudes towards studying *Macbeth* and the Short Story Anthology, *Changes*, in a South African Township High School, the literature review seeks to explore existing research both globally and within the South African context. This comprehensive review aims to identify common trends and contribute to the broader understanding of ESL learners' attitudes towards prescribed literary works *Macbeth* and the Short Story Anthology *Changes*.

This literature review will meticulously examine seven specific subtopics to provide an in-depth understanding of various dimensions of learner attitudes in studying literature. The first subtopic, Learner Attitudes Towards Studying Literature, will scrutinise learners' general perceptions and inclinations when engaging with literary works, encompassing their preferences, challenges, and motivations in the broader context of studying literature. The second subtopic, ESL Learner Attitudes Towards Studying Shakespeare, will delve into the specific realm of English Second Language (ESL) learners' attitudes towards the works of Shakespeare. This exploration will consider the unique challenges and insights

emerging when ESL learners engage with Shakespearean plays' intricate language and cultural nuances. Thirdly, *Shakespeare vs. Cultural Relevance in ESL Contexts* will investigate the interplay between studying Shakespeare and the cultural relevance perceived by ESL learners. This involves examining whether Shakespearean works resonate with ESL learners in terms of cultural context and how this impacts their attitudes and engagement with the material.

The fourth subtopic, *Studying Anthologies of Short Stories*, will explore learners' attitudes towards short story anthologies. This section will investigate how ESL learners respond to and engage with short stories in ESL contexts internationally and locally, and the attitudes they harbour towards studying short stories. The fifth subtopic, *Language Accessibility*, will examine how the linguistic complexity of prescribed texts, such as archaic vocabulary or unfamiliar syntactic structures, affects ESL learners' comprehension and willingness to engage. In contrast, this section will also highlight the role of simplified and familiar language in supporting positive learning experiences and reducing reading anxiety. The sixth subtopic, *Pedagogical Strategies*, will explore how instructional methods—such as code-switching, scaffolding, collaborative learning, and multimodal approaches—either support or hinder learners' engagement with literature. Finally, the seventh subtopic, *Learner Motivation*, will consider the internal and external factors that drive learners' interest, perseverance, and enthusiasm for reading literature, particularly in relation to how culturally relevant, accessible, and engaging texts are selected and taught.

By thoroughly examining existing literature globally and within South Africa, the study aims to identify prevalent trends related to ESL learners' attitudes towards studying literature. This exploration intends to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding ESL learners' perceptions of and interactions with prescribed literary materials in diverse cultural and educational contexts. As the literature review unfolds, it will lay the groundwork for the subsequent investigation by delineating key issues to be addressed. By providing a comprehensive foundation, this review will contextualise the study within existing scholarship and justify the need for this research, thereby establishing the significance and relevance of this inquiry into ESL learners' attitudes toward specific literary works.

2.1.2 Learner Attitudes Towards Studying Literature

The term "literature", according to Baaqeel (2020), can be defined in various ways, but generally, it refers to any written work characterised by purpose, creativity, imagination, and artistic expression. Literary creations encompass a range of forms, such as short stories, novels, drama, and poetry, all serving as mediums to articulate a character's aspirations, emotions, thoughts, and reflections on life. Literature is

a thoughtful fusion of words and images to convey ideas, sentiments, and emotions pertaining to a character's environment and the diverse facets of human experiences. It possesses five key qualities: offering understanding and enjoyment, representing aesthetic values, beauty, or truth, utilising oral or written language for communication, exploring the abstraction of human life and experiences and finally, being crafted by an individual or a collective (Baaqeel, 2020, pg. 39).

Baaqeel, (2020), further notes that literary works offer valuable resources for ESL learners, enhancing their proficiency in both language and culture. Additionally, literature serves as supplementary material, supporting other tools for learning English and deepening learners' comprehension of the language and its origins. The incorporation of diverse backgrounds and knowledge through short stories, drama, and novels has the potential to enhance learners' skills in interpreting discourse within various cultural and social contexts. Furthermore, literary texts empower learners to move beyond a mechanical approach to learning English as a Second Language, encouraging them to embrace attributes that align with their personal interests, cultures, and attitudes.

Wood and Wood, (1993) conceptualised attitude as a relatively enduring assessment of an individual, object, circumstance, or matter. Their model posits three fundamental components of attitude: cognitive, affective, or emotional, and behavioural dimensions. The cognitive aspect encompasses one's thoughts and convictions regarding the object of attitude. Essentially, this facet reflects an individual's knowledge, held with differing degrees of certainty, about the veracity, desirability, or ethical standing of the subject. The emotional component, alternatively termed affective, encapsulates an individual's sentiments towards the object of attitude. This emotional facet is triggered under appropriate circumstances, generating varying degrees of affect centred around the object of concern. The third facet of attitude, the behavioural component, is concerned with an individual's predisposition to act in relation to the attitudinal object. Termed as such due to the response nature of beliefs, this component dictates varied predispositions that must culminate in observable actions when appropriately activated. (Wood & Wood, 1993) further note that attitude could be used to predict, control, and modify human actions towards an object, issue, situation, or abstract entity.

According to Olufemi, (2012), the acquisition and development of attitudes have been explored in research, revealing diverse mechanisms through which individuals form their beliefs. Among the earliest influencers in attitude formation are parents, whose impact is later complemented by the influences of peers and the media. Additionally, several modes of attitude formation have been identified, including Classical Conditioning, where behaviours and attitudes are associated with moral evaluations (e.g., valuing truthfulness and condemning theft). Operant Conditioning, characterised by rewards or

punishments linked to behaviour and attitudes, is another influential factor (e.g., receiving praise for honesty or facing consequences for theft). Cognitive Appraisals contribute to attitude formation by evaluating logical arguments. Observational Learning involves acquiring attitudes through the observation of peer behaviour and media influences. Furthermore, attitudes can be shaped through Persuasion, wherein parental and peer influence play crucial roles in moulding individual perspectives. This comprehensive understanding of attitude formation mechanisms underscores the multifaceted nature of this cognitive process (Olufemi, 2012, pg. 64).

Reading attitude is explained by Annamalai and Muniandy (2013) as the feeling that an individual harbours about reading, which can be positive or negative, resulting in the learner either persisting with or desisting from a reading situation. Research on attitudes toward reading literature suggests that learners' perceptions can significantly influence their reading experiences and academic outcomes. Some of the studies include the works of Alfauzan and Hussain (2016) which support the notion that positive attitudes have been linked to higher reading comprehension, improved critical thinking skills, and increased motivation to engage with literary works. Similarly, negative attitudes can lead to disengagement, reduced comprehension, and limited exploration of different genres, as emphasised by Olifant et al (2019), with the statement, "A positive attitude fosters a positive reading attitude, whereas a negative attitude fosters a negative reading attitude among learners." (Olifant et al, 2019). To underscore this point, Baaqeel (2020), observes that attitude influences the level of commitment, with ESL learners displaying passive responses to English lessons typically performing more poorly than actively engaged learners. A positive attitude not only enhances commitment but also contributes to increased class participation.

According to Ghazali, (2008), an attitude comprises cognitive, affective, and conative elements, encompassing beliefs, emotional responses, and behavioural inclinations linked to the subject of the attitude. It embodies an evaluative dimension, reflecting a predisposition and inclination to respond positively or negatively to a given entity. Essentially, it characterises an individual's thoughts and actions. Nevertheless, attitudes are dynamic and can be transformed by pinpointing and rectifying the origins of negative attitudes. To underscore this perspective, Olufemi, (2012) discusses The Learning Theory within the context of their discussion of diverse attitude theories. According to Olufemi, The Learning Theory suggests that attitudes are flexible and can be shaped or altered through different learning processes. Classical conditioning, operant conditioning, and observational learning are prominent mechanisms in this theoretical framework. Classical conditioning, for instance, involves the establishment of emotional components within attitudes. For instance, a clothing company strategically pairs a sweater with an attractive model on a billboard, eliciting a pleasant emotional response and fostering a positive attitude

towards both the sweater and the brand. Operant conditioning operates on the principle of reinforcement, wherein the expression of an attitude that receives positive responses tends to be strengthened, while negative responses weaken the corresponding attitude. Observational learning, in turn, suggests that individuals adopt attitudes by observing others exhibiting them and witnessing reinforcement for expressing those attitudes. In summary, the Learning Theory elucidates how attitudes can be shaped and modified through the intricate interplay of classical conditioning, operant conditioning, and observational learning processes.

Olifant et al. (2019) emphasise the pivotal role literature plays in shaping learners' attitudes toward reading and their overall engagement with the subject. Recognising the importance of understanding these attitudes, particularly towards specific literary works, is paramount, as it provides valuable insights into learners' preferences, motivations, and challenges (Olifant et al., 2019). In the research conducted by Olifant et al. (2019), where they investigated the reading habits, attitudes, and motivation of Grades 8–10 EFAL learners through the perceptive lens of EFAL educators from two high schools in Tshwane, South Africa, the researchers reported that all the educators communicated that learners had a negative attitude towards reading, accompanied by what one Educator (Participant) referred to as learners' 'reluctance to read'. The following interview extracts support the above:

'Children are generally reluctant to read. But I think the problem is they don't get a chance to read what they like.' Educator I1, Male, Grade 9. (Olifant et al, 2019, pg.6)

'Sjoe, the minute they hear reading, ... they feel bored already. And they moan, and they complain. So [laughs] ... with the attitude I think, they feel negative about it.' Educator I2, Female, Grade 9 (Olifant et al, 2019, pg. 6)

The collected responses indicate that the educators' interpretations of the problem are predominantly grounded in their subjective perceptions derived from observation. This is a disadvantage because the study did not include the learners. Therefore, the viewpoints of the learners, regarded as the predominant source, are not disclosed. The study was therefore unable to ascertain the underlying factors contributing to negative attitudes, and subsequently develop strategies to effectively address the learners' preferences. Hence, the primary objective of this research study is to provide learners with a platform for self-expression, elucidating the underlying reasons behind their attitudes towards the prescribed texts.

In their study, Kromhout and Scheckle, (2021) convey that at one end of the education continuum is the recognition that success in early-grade literacy is an important foundation for academic progress and enjoyment. So early grade literacy has been the focus of considerable research which often positions our young learners as deficient. At the other end of the education continuum, there is little qualitative research

that explores matric learners' literacies and in particular their responses to literary texts. Matric learners talking about their responses to literature also provides an example of how literature can be meaningful for learners something that testing does not explore thus it is with the same sentiment that this study chooses to focus on grade 12 learners' attitudes towards their prescribed literature. In addition to the above view, Kromhout and Scheckle, (2021) further note that it is also valuable to see another side of literacy: what learners might do with texts beyond the requirements of passing exams, how learners talk about what they have read and how the literature they have read at school informs their personal and academic lives. Although CAPS purports to encourage an appreciation for literature, assessing learners via an examination seems to mitigate this.

A crucial statement is further made by Kromhout and Scheckle, (2021), that reading literature that excites the imagination prompts learners to reflect on themselves as human beings as they shuttle back and forth between literature and life, thus, their knowledge of themselves and the world expands. As the readers enter the fictional world and journey together with the characters, they experience a vicarious world, understand the choices made, and develop empathy. When readers identify with a character's actions and understand the character's perspectives it can result in reducing prejudice and accepting diversity. The value of literary reading lies in the accretions of experiences and the power of the text to linger and motivate re-reading and further reading (Kromhout & Scheckle, 2021). This notion supports the importance of promoting and cultivating positive attitudes towards reading prescribed texts, thus highlighting the importance of this study's focus on exploring learners' attitudes.

In the exploration of Grade 12 English Second Language (ESL) learners' attitudes towards studying "*Macbeth*" and "*Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*" in a South African Township School, several research gaps emerge within the existing literature. While the discussed literature provides valuable insights into the general significance of literature and attitudes toward reading, a specific gap lies in the lack of focused attention on ESL learners' attitudes toward studying prescribed texts in a South African context. The literature extensively addresses the multifaceted nature of attitudes, encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions. It highlights the factors influencing attitude formation, such as parental influence, peers, and various learning processes. However, the existing research falls short of directly addressing ESL learners' attitudes towards the specific prescribed texts of "*Macbeth*" and "*Changes*" in the South African Township School setting.

The studies by Olifant et al. (2019) and Kromhout and Scheckle (2021) provide valuable insights into learners' attitudes toward reading literature in general, but they lack a specific focus on ESL learners and prescribed texts in the Grade 12 context. The research conducted by Olifant et al. (2019) identifies

negative attitudes toward reading among learners but does not delve into the specific factors contributing to negative attitudes towards the prescribed texts "*Macbeth*" and "*Changes*." Additionally, the study relies solely on educators' perceptions, overlooking the crucial perspective of the learners themselves. This gap emphasises the need for a study that directly engages with ESL learners, allowing them to express their views and elucidate the underlying reasons behind their attitudes towards the prescribed texts.

Furthermore, the study by Kromhout and Scheckle (2021) touches upon the importance of literary reading in expanding learners' knowledge of themselves and the world. However, the focus remains on literature in general, and the study does not specifically address the attitudes of Grade 12 ESL learners towards the prescribed texts in a South African Township School. The discussion of literature as a tool for self-reflection, empathy development, and the reduction of prejudice underscores the importance of understanding ESL learners' attitudes towards the prescribed texts "*Macbeth*" and "*Changes*" in a South African context.

In essence, the research gaps identified revolve around the absence of targeted investigations into ESL learners' attitudes towards the specific prescribed texts in Grade 12 English Second Language classrooms in South African Township Schools. To address these gaps, future research should actively involve ESL learners, exploring their perceptions, challenges, and motivations for studying "*Macbeth*" and "*Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*" to develop effective strategies that cater to their unique educational needs and preferences.

2.1.3 ESL Learner Attitudes Towards Studying Shakespeare

The global inclusion of Shakespeare in secondary school curricula reflects his long-standing reputation as a central figure in the English literary canon. According to a global study reported by Sutton (2016), approximately 50% of learners worldwide study Shakespeare at school, and 65% of countries officially include him as a named author in their curricula. Countries where Shakespeare's works are widely taught range from Australia and India to South Africa, the UK, and Vietnam (RSC Education, 2011). This widespread inclusion suggests an enduring institutional reverence for Shakespeare despite mounting debates over his relevance in contemporary, culturally diverse classrooms.

However, learner attitudes toward studying Shakespeare often reveal a different picture—one marked by frustration, disconnection, and disengagement. In a report published by the Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research at the University of Warwick, Sutton (2016) presents findings from surveys conducted among 15–16-year-old students in the UK. The results indicate that only a small minority of learners find Shakespeare enjoyable or personally meaningful. Less than one-fifth of

respondents (18%) reported enjoying his works, while nearly half found them dull or difficult to understand. Additionally, only 35% believed that studying Shakespeare was important, and a mere 17% felt that it helped them gain insight into themselves or others (Strand & Galloway, 2010).

These statistics suggest a significant disconnect between the institutional value placed on Shakespeare and learners' actual experiences of engaging with his texts. While the study focused on learners in the UK, the findings have clear implications for ESL contexts in South Africa. If native English-speaking students experience difficulty connecting with Shakespeare, these challenges are likely amplified for second-language learners who may struggle not only with the language but also with the foreign cultural and historical references embedded in the plays.

This gap between curriculum and learner experience is particularly relevant to the present study, which explores how Grade 12 ESL learners in a South African township context perceive *Macbeth*. Understanding learners' attitudes is crucial in determining whether canonical texts like Shakespeare support or hinder the development of language proficiency, cultural identity, and literary appreciation in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms.

Rather than merely reporting low engagement, it becomes essential to investigate the underlying causes. These may include the linguistic inaccessibility of Shakespearean English, the perceived lack of cultural relevance, and the teaching methods used to deliver the material. The persistence of negative attitudes despite curricular mandates raises important pedagogical questions about how such texts can be taught meaningfully—or whether alternative texts may better serve ESL learners in developing both language competence and critical literacy.

In his study, Min (2023) states that within the ESL context, Shakespearean language poses a formidable barrier for ESL learners and even for native English speakers. Proficiency in the intricate vocabulary and complex syntax of Shakespearean English is a prerequisite for meaningful engagement with his works. The contextual aspect of Shakespeare's plays presents another substantial hurdle that hinders learners and educators from embracing Shakespearean texts in ESL classrooms. This challenge is particularly pronounced in the Chinese educational context, where learners often have prior exposure to Chinese adaptations of Shakespearean plays. Many high school learners in China are already familiar with Chinese versions of Shakespearean classics, such as *The Merchant of Venice*, and have a good grasp of the storyline in *Romeo and Juliet*. Some can even perform a Chinese rendition of Hamlet's famous soliloquy. This familiarity with Shakespearean characters and plots can deter Chinese learners from delving into the original Shakespearean English texts. Combining this familiarity with the challenging language further dampens their curiosity and enjoyment when reading Shakespeare. The familiarity of

Chinese learners with adaptations and translations of Shakespearean plays in their language can create a sense of detachment from the original texts and foster negative attitudes toward studying his works.

These insights collectively suggest that while Shakespeare remains a significant presence in education globally, ESL learners, in particular, encounter distinct challenges that affect their attitudes toward reading Shakespeare. The linguistic complexity and the presence of alternative adaptations contribute to a nuanced landscape of attitudes and perceptions among ESL learners. As such, further explorations into the specific challenges ESL learners face and potential strategies to enhance their engagement with Shakespearean texts are warranted to address these issues within the ESL educational context. Despite this, as much as there are challenges around the study of Shakespeares' works, there is research that contains possible solutions to the challenges and presents perspectives that could promote positive attitudes towards the great bard's works within the ESL context. In a study by Harvey, Deuel, and Marlatt (2020), a preservice educator and two educators created multimodal Shakespeare learning stations in a grade 8 classroom with virtual reality headsets, augmented reality-capable smartphones, tablets, computers, and print-based texts. The purpose was to understand better how incorporating learners' multimodal literacies could support their learning about complex texts and canonical authors during an introductory Shakespeare unit. In their research, Harvey, Deuel, and Marlatt (2020) found that learners expressed interest in learning about Shakespeare due to incorporating multimodal literacies, utilising collaborative learning stations, and introducing new approaches to a traditionally print-centric, lecture-driven subject. The section in question discusses how learners reacted to multimodal learning stations with a high level of engagement that was both immersive and collaborative, aligning with contemporary learning methods. The first key finding was that virtual reality (VR) enabled learners to immerse themselves entirely in the content. The second observation revealed that implementing learning stations facilitated increased collaboration among learners when studying Shakespeare. Lastly, the researchers noted that learners were enthusiastic about participating because the classroom's modalities resonated with their literary interests. Then again, inequality of access to technology is an obvious limitation in this study, particularly in offering a multimodal curriculum and instruction model. Due to numerous factors, such as socioeconomics, curricular standardisation, and lack of training, many schools cannot offer the devices and approaches showcased in this research. Reflecting contemporary meaning-making becomes problematic if technology is unavailable (Harvey, Deuel, & Marlatt, 2020, p. 566). However, even without VR headsets or Windows computers, Harvey et al. (2020) note that their learners could access all the resources used in the study with their smartphones.

The attitudes of ESL learners towards reading Shakespeare are influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including linguistic barriers, familiarity with adaptations, and the pedagogical approaches

employed. As discussed in this literature review, the findings from various studies highlight the challenges ESL learners face in engaging with Shakespearean texts and their often negative perceptions of Shakespeare's works. However, there is hope in innovative approaches, such as multimodal learning stations, as demonstrated by Harvey, Deuel, and Marlatt (2020), which can ignite interest and enthusiasm among ESL learners.

These insights emphasise the need for continued research and developing strategies tailored to the ESL educational context. By addressing the unique challenges ESL learners face and leveraging modern teaching methods, educators can work towards fostering more positive attitudes towards Shakespeare's timeless literary works. While technology access issues remain a concern, the potential benefits of creative and engaging pedagogical methods provide a promising avenue for enhancing ESL learners' appreciation of Shakespearean literature. Ultimately, the study of Shakespeare should be accessible and enjoyable for all, regardless of linguistic background, and ongoing efforts should be directed toward achieving this goal within the ESL educational setting.

The discussion on Grade 12 English Second Language Learners' Attitudes Towards Studying *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* at a South African Township School reveals specific research gaps when considering ESL learners' attitudes toward studying Shakespeare. While existing studies, such as those presented by Sutton (2016) and Strand and Galloway (2010), provide a global perspective on the prevalence of Shakespearean education, they do not explicitly address the experiences of ESL learners in South African Township Schools. Furthermore, Min's (2023) study, focused on the Chinese educational context, highlights specific challenges ESL learners face, particularly regarding linguistic barriers and familiarity with adaptations. However, there is a distinct lack of research examining the attitudes of South African ESL learners towards studying Shakespeare, leaving a gap in understanding the contextual factors that may influence their perceptions. Additionally, the literature review touches upon innovative approaches, such as multimodal learning stations, as demonstrated by Harvey, Deuel, and Marlatt (2020). While this study showcases the potential benefits of these approaches, it does not explore their applicability or effectiveness within South African Township Schools, leaving a gap in knowledge regarding the feasibility and impact of such strategies in this specific educational context. Addressing these research gaps is crucial for developing contextually relevant strategies to enhance ESL learners' attitudes towards Shakespearean literature in South African Township Schools.

2.1.4 Shakespeare vs Cultural Relevance in ESL Contexts

The linguistic and cultural challenges posed by canonical texts like Shakespeare remain a persistent concern in English Second Language (ESL) education. Aydin (2013) highlights how learners often struggle to connect with Shakespearean plays due to unfamiliar vocabulary, complex sentence structures, and culturally distant historical contexts. These linguistic barriers frequently lead to disengagement, negatively shaping learners' attitudes toward reading dramatic works.

Scholars like Hernandez et al. (2021) advocate for integrating cultural instruction alongside language teaching in response to such difficulties. They argue that language and culture are inseparable and that understanding the sociocultural framework in which a language operates enriches learners' comprehension and communicative competence. This perspective is particularly relevant in literature education, where meaning is often embedded in the values, customs, and beliefs reflected in the text. Teaching literature in a vacuum, divorced from its cultural underpinnings, can render accessible language opaque to learners unfamiliar with the context.

However, while cultural immersion is beneficial, there is a growing consensus that curriculum designers and educators should critically examine whose culture is being prioritised. Hernandez et al. (2021) and Yang (2014) highlight the benefits of incorporating culture into language instruction. However, they do not directly address the implications of centring Western cultural norms in post-colonial classrooms. In South Africa's diverse township schools, learners often find little resonance between their lived experiences and the values represented in texts like *Macbeth*. As such, prescribing culturally relevant texts that reflect learners' social realities may provide more meaningful opportunities for literary engagement. This approach supports language development and cultivates critical, reflective attitudes toward reading.

The historical legacy of English literary studies in colonial education further complicates the matter. Sutton (2016) observes that Shakespeare's canonical status was used to instil Western values and "civilise" colonial subjects, positioning his work as the epitome of "Englishness." While this historical framing may no longer define literature instruction explicitly, its echoes persist in the expectations placed on learners to admire, memorise, and interpret Shakespearean texts—often without space to question their cultural relevance or accessibility.

In light of this, contemporary pedagogical approaches must evolve. Rather than discarding Shakespeare altogether, the challenge lies in recontextualising his works through inclusive and critical teaching methods. This means drawing parallels between the plays' themes and learners' sociopolitical realities,

fostering open discussion about colonial legacies, and acknowledging alternative ways of reading and interpreting texts.

Several scholars advocate incorporating authentic, culturally appropriate texts to complement or challenge canonical works. Boubekour (2021) and Hariri (2022) argue that such texts promote intercultural competence and empower learners to examine their cultural values and identities through literature. Literature reflecting learners' realities fosters emotional resonance and deeper comprehension, promoting positive attitudes toward reading and language learning.

The utilisation of language-appropriate texts that are relevant to learners' cultures has been found to foster greater engagement and motivation. Research by Sutton (2016) suggests that learners exhibit higher levels of interest and enjoyment when exposed to texts that reflect their cultural background. This positive emotional response may result in positive attitudes towards reading prescribed texts.

In her research, Pillay (2021) focused on how pre-service educators engaged with Shakespeare's play 'The Tempest' to address both prescribed curricular imperatives and obligations of resisting knowledge. They considered 'The Tempest' an ideal choice due to its storyline and themes. The play revolves around Prospero, who arrives on an island and establishes himself as the ruler. Prospero encounters Caliban and learns about the island from him, which enslaves Caliban. Various sub-plots are also present in the play. While engaging with the play as a text for study, it was considered a pedagogical concern, given that these students were aspiring educators of English tasked with teaching language and literature in secondary schools. This concern arose from the challenge of balancing *The Tempest's* prescribed curricular role with its historical and ideological implications. However, they were aware of the students' resistance to studying Shakespeare, perceiving him as a symbol of colonialism, and the students' belief that more representative authors could replace Shakespeare. In both cases, the students' concerns were acknowledged. It was, however, recognised that learners would eventually need to teach Shakespearean texts in their English classrooms once they become qualified educators. The researcher shared their deep appreciation for Shakespeare's works, as well as the works of many other writers. However, they emphasised the importance of contextualising the text within a specific historical and political space. They aimed to teach learners how to appropriately teach Shakespearean texts rather than discard them and critically examine these texts instead of being dominated by them. The researcher wanted learners to understand that meanings in texts are fluid and result from the interaction between readers and texts, with readers' values and background influencing their interpretations of a text. This pedagogical approach is valuable in promoting favourable dispositions within English as a Second Language (ESL) instructional settings. Its implementation within the training of prospective educators can yield advantageous

outcomes in cultivating positive attitudes among learners engaged in studying Shakespearean literature within the ESL setting. This context is characterised by a substantial disconnect between the cultural backgrounds of ESL learners and the cultural nuances inherent in Shakespearean works, thereby necessitating efforts to bridge the chasm between Shakespearean literature and its cultural relevance.

Bloom and Bates (2021) highlight that recent research in South Africa and globally underscores the complexities of the decolonisation process, particularly in educational institutions. They argue that the departure of colonial administrators did not erase the deeply embedded global hierarchies left behind. These hierarchies persist in various aspects of society, including sexuality, gender, spirituality, knowledge systems, economics, politics, language, and race. Drawing on Aníbal Quijano's concept of the "colonial power matrix," they assert that these structures cannot be dismantled through decolonisation efforts alone (Bloom & Bates, 2021, p. 9).

In the context of South Africa's higher education system, Mqgwashu (2016) contends that post-colonial policies failed to incorporate local philosophies of education and knowledge generation. Instead, the focus was on increasing the number of indigenous populations receiving colonial education, neglecting restoring pride, confidence, and dignity to local traditional lifestyles, identities, and knowledge systems. Mqgwashu (2016) asserts that this approach continues to marginalise diverse student populations by overlooking their unique forms of knowledge, including language, traditional lifestyles, and identities, perpetuating a sense of unworthiness among learners and educators alike.

Relating these issues to the present study, the discussion of decolonisation and post-colonial policies is crucial to understanding the cultural tensions embedded in the South African secondary school curriculum, especially for ESL learners in township schools. The inclusion of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* as a prescribed text reflects not only historical allegiance to a colonial literary canon but also the persistent neglect of culturally relevant and linguistically accessible materials. While replacing Shakespeare with African authors might appear to be a solution, Bloom and Bates (2021) caution that decolonisation cannot be reduced to content substitution. Instead, a pedagogy of decoloniality requires a shift in how texts—canonical or otherwise—are taught. For this reason, *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*, which includes diverse African voices, represents an important counterpoint to Shakespeare and enables learners to connect more readily with literature.

The relevance of this decolonial and post-colonial discourse to the study lies in how it helps frame the learners' attitudes toward *Macbeth* and *Changes* as shaped not only by literary preferences but also by historical, linguistic, and cultural forces. The study seeks to examine whether learners' attitudes towards these texts are influenced by perceived cultural disconnection, language complexity, and the symbolic

legacy of colonial education. By doing so, it aims to investigate how pedagogical approaches can either perpetuate or dismantle these colonial structures in the teaching of literature. The goal is not simply to question the inclusion of Shakespeare, but to examine how he is taught, how learners respond, and how a shift toward inclusive, critically informed pedagogy could foster deeper engagement and motivation in ESL contexts.

Thus, this discussion highlights the importance of contextualising the debate around Shakespeare and decolonisation within the lived experiences of South African township learners. It underscores the need for literature instruction that validates local identities, encourages critical thought, and supports learners in engaging meaningfully with diverse literary voices. Ultimately, the issues raised here are central to the research's objective of exploring Grade 12 ESL learners' attitudes toward *Macbeth* and *Changes* in a post-colonial educational landscape still grappling with the legacies of colonial knowledge hierarchies.

The debate over Shakespeare's cultural relevance in ESL contexts raises important questions about the effectiveness of traditional approaches to teaching English literature. While some argue that Shakespeare's works may be seen as imposing foreign cultural values and ideals upon learners, others propose a more inclusive and relatable approach by selecting culturally relevant materials situated within learners' own societal and contextual frameworks. As the discussion has indicated, incorporating culturally appropriate texts into ESL instruction can enhance language acquisition, promote a deeper understanding of literary works, and foster positive attitudes toward reading literature. This approach aligns with the goal of language proficiency and acknowledges the importance of cultural sensitivity and intercultural competence. The pedagogical approach of contextualising texts and encouraging critical examination rather than discarding them, as suggested by Pillay (2021), can be valuable in ESL instructional settings as it can contribute to bridging the gap between the cultural backgrounds of ESL learners and the cultural nuances inherent in Shakespearean works, ultimately promoting a more meaningful and engaging learning experience.

The above discussion reveals several research gaps that warrant further exploration. Firstly, while Aydin (2013) and Hernandez et al. (2021) touch upon the challenges ESL learners face in understanding and connecting with Shakespearean plays due to unfamiliar vocabulary, syntax, and historical context, there is a lack of specific focus on the attitudes of Grade 12 English Second Language (ESL) learners towards studying "*Macbeth*" and the anthology "*Changes*" in a South African Township School. The discussion broadly addresses the potential cultural clash experienced by ESL learners. However, it lacks an in-depth exploration of the specific cultural backgrounds and attitudes of Grade 12 ESL learners towards these prescribed literary works.

Secondly, the cultural relevance of Shakespearean works within ESL contexts is questioned, with references to the historical association of Shakespeare with acculturation and colonial imposition (Sutton, 2016). However, the discussion does not explicitly examine how ESL learners in the South African context perceive and engage with Shakespeare's "*Macbeth*." A research gap emerges concerning the effectiveness of teaching Shakespeare in South African Township Schools, considering ESL learners' diverse cultural backgrounds and literary traditions. Furthermore, the discussion introduces the concept of decolonisation in education and its relevance to including Shakespeare in the curriculum. Bloom and Bates (2021) and Mgqwashu (2016) emphasise the lingering hierarchies of colonial legacies in education. However, the specific impact of such legacies on Grade 12 ESL learners' attitudes towards studying "*Macbeth*" and "*Changes*" is not explicitly explored. The gap lies in understanding how the colonial legacy might contribute to feelings of unworthiness among ESL learners and whether a shift in pedagogy beyond text selection is needed to address these challenges.

In conclusion, the research identifies the need for a more focused investigation into the attitudes of Grade 12 ESL learners in South African Township Schools towards studying literature. This includes a nuanced exploration of their cultural backgrounds, perceptions of cultural relevance, and the impact of colonial legacies on their attitudes towards the prescribed literary works. Bridging these gaps will contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in ESL literature education in the specified context.

2.1.5 Studying Anthologies of Short Stories

According to Kartikaningtyas (2015), short stories are characterised by their brevity, singular focus, and limited characterisation, making them ideal for reading in one sitting. This format offers significant pedagogical value in ESL contexts, where learners benefit from manageable plots and clear narrative arcs. In the case of *Changes*, these features reduce cognitive load, enabling learners to grasp themes and vocabulary without the burden of extended text complexity. Therefore, it seems to be the most suitable genre to help learners enhance the four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Kartikaningtyas, 2015. Pg. 3). According to Abuzahra and Farrah (2015), Utilising short stories in the ESL classroom presents learners with unique opportunities for educational, intellectual, cultural, and linguistic growth. Short stories can also enhance language skills, inspire learners, and raise cultural awareness and tolerance. Abuzahra and Farrah (2015) also note that short stories serve as powerful engines and motivating sources, aiding learners in consolidating and practising the language, including

grammar and diction. Stories' enjoyable and motivating nature can foster positive attitudes toward the foreign language and enrich learners' learning experiences. Furthermore, stories make language learning enjoyable, help develop favourable attitudes and enhance the learning experience. Abuzahra and Farrah (2015) further contend that exposing learners to literature not only introduces memorable syntactical and lexical elements but also stimulates them to make predictions and inferences and conclude the actions, behaviours of characters, and outcomes of literary works.

Anthologies of short stories, such as *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*, offer a diverse range of literary voices, genres, and themes. Research conducted by Ceylan (2016) suggests that exposure to varied short stories can enhance learners' reading experiences by fostering empathy, promoting cultural understanding, and developing critical thinking skills. On the contrary, Ceylan (2016) notes that challenges may arise when learners encounter stories that differ significantly from their cultural backgrounds or when the anthology lacks relevance to their lives, potentially influencing their attitudes towards reading the anthology. Abuzahra and Farrah (2015) note a similar challenge in that through their observations and experience in the field of English language teaching, an insufficient number of language instructors use short stories in their teaching practices because some educators decline to teach short stories because they believe that short stories may include linguistic difficulty or cultural complexity or both. However, Kartikaningtyas (2015) states that in their research, most educators prefer to use short stories in the ESL contexts because short stories are interesting to use both as materials for self-enjoyment and as components in language skills classes. In short stories, the learners can learn not only about language but also the culture of others from the story itself. Moreover, cultural content in reading texts in ESL learning interacts with the learners' background knowledge, and texts with familiar cultures seem easier to understand than unfamiliar ones (Kartikaningtyas, 2015).

In their study, Kurdi and Nizam (2022) further emphasise the previous discussion that engaging with short stories imparts learners' language skills and provides valuable insights into cultural variations. These narratives offer a window into different people and nations' beliefs, lifestyles, and diverse ways of existence. Literary works serve as practical tools for foreign language learners, enhancing their comprehension of the language and the associated culture. Learners develop a heightened awareness of the language's richness and distinctive features by analysing dialogue in various social and cultural contexts. Delving into literary works enables learners to perceive the world from alternative perspectives, gaining insights into different value systems and ways of life. This exploration allows them to recognise that societies beyond their own possess unique social, economic, historical, and cultural dimensions, fostering a broad understanding of the world.

Ceylan (2016) supports this view, highlighting several educational benefits of short stories in ESL contexts. These include promoting learner autonomy, facilitating comprehension through brevity, and encouraging critical thinking. Importantly, short stories are authentic materials that motivate learners to read by reflecting real-life themes and accessible language. Rather than simply decoding vocabulary, learners engage with characters, settings, and moral dilemmas—thereby developing empathy and insight. This immersive process allows learners to navigate surface-level meaning and deeper symbolic layers of text.

When carefully selected, short stories can help learners feel more confident and “seen,” especially when themes reflect familiar social issues such as inequality, family dynamics, or resilience. These benefits were reflected in the present study, where learners described the stories in *Changes* as “real,” “easy to follow,” and “similar to what we see every day.” Such comments highlight the value of culturally and linguistically aligned material in promoting positive attitudes toward literature in the ESL classroom.

Ultimately, as both Kurdi and Nizam (2022) and Ceylan (2016) suggest, short stories are effective linguistic tools and act as bridges between worlds—helping learners connect their lived experiences to broader global and literary frameworks. For ESL learners navigating both language acquisition and cultural validation, this makes the short story genre an invaluable pedagogical asset.

In their research, Abuzahra and Farrah (2015) also highlight the significance of employing and choosing short stories, emphasising several key advantages. Firstly, short stories offer authentic material that aligns with learners' preferences, interests, and tastes during reading and discussion activities. This authenticity, rooted in real-life experiences, aligns with the communicative approaches' emphasis on exposure to genuine materials and extensive reading. Literary texts, as authentic language in context, allow learners to directly engage with language resources, promoting active interaction and comprehension. As authentic and unaltered, short stories facilitate exposure to various linguistic approaches, communicative functions, and meanings, enhancing learners' sensitivity and competence in the target language. Additionally, the exposure to language intended for native speakers in literature provides valuable content for foreign language courses, serving as motivational and communicative material. Secondly, literary texts enhance language skills through intensive and extensive reading approaches. Abuzahra and Farrah (2015) further outline benefits such as a rich context that makes lexical and syntactical items more memorable, the development of inference-making abilities, and the deduction of meaning from context. Exposure to short stories aids vocabulary acquisition and encourages learners to infer meaning. With its extensive and subtle vocabulary usage, complex syntax, and discourse presentation, literature becomes an ideal environment for language skill development within a social

context. Lastly, short stories enrich cultural enrichment by deepening learners' understanding of native cultures. The genre allows learners to explore cultural aspects, identifying similarities and differences between their culture and those portrayed in the stories. Short stories play a crucial role in personal growth and reflection, fostering intellectual development and encouraging learners to reflect on life through literature. Thus, literary genres simultaneously promote intellectual development and personal growth (Abuzahra & Farrah, 2015, p. 14). Finally, Violetta-Irene (2015) notes that reading literature effectively contributes to the growth of learners and helps establish stronger relationships with their surroundings. The quality of literary texts and the instructor's experience and understanding are essential factors influencing learners' personal growth. Encouraging individual growth requires the selection of texts that stimulate learners' creativity and allow them to respond with their ideas and imagination.

In the study conducted by Pardede (2021), the focus is on exploring the reasons for incorporating short stories into ESL classrooms. The findings reveal two main subthemes within this theme: the reasons for using short stories as a literature genre in ESL classrooms and the suitability of short stories as the primary literary genre for ESL instruction. Pardede (2021) states that short stories, considered an art form using language as its medium, offer infinite linguistic benefits for language learners. They are seen as a powerful tool for developing overall language skills because they provide authentic contexts for processing new language. As narratives written initially for native speakers, short stories serve as authentic materials, exposing EFL learners to rich and genuine language, thereby enhancing their language appreciation and sensitivity.

Beyond linguistic benefits, Pardede (2021) further notes that short stories serve as cultural conduits, transmitting values, principles, and societal norms. Using native and local short stories allows learners to gain essential cultural insights, fostering intercultural awareness. Additionally, short stories contribute to personal and emotional growth by presenting virtuous behaviours for imitation and offering insights into characters' struggles and conflicts, encouraging learners to reflect on their own lives and promoting personal development. Cognitively, short stories play a crucial role in developing learning strategies. Reading or listening to stories prompts learners to predict, guess, and relate the narrative to external references, fostering essential cognitive and learning skills. Short stories also entertain and promote critical thinking by requiring learners to reflect, infer, analyse, and synthesise the information presented in the stories.

The reviewed studies highlight short stories' unique features that make them particularly suitable for ESL classrooms, including simplicity, practicality, short length, and various subject matters, themes, and styles. Short stories are praised for their practicality, using simple daily expressions, and providing

opportunities for conversation and grammatical practices. Their shorter length compared to novels allows for comprehensive coverage in one or two class sessions, and the diverse range of subject matters caters to learners' varied needs, interests, and proficiency levels. Thus, researching the learners' attitudes towards studying the short story anthology "*Changes*" in a Township ESL context is crucial to ensure that the learners are getting the most out of the benefits of reading this genre whilst also validating the existing perceptions of reading short stories that have been discussed in this section. Understanding the learners' attitudes can contribute towards tailoring teaching methods to better suit the learners within this context and possibly assist in identifying any barriers or hesitations towards studying short stories.

While the discussion extensively covers the benefits of short stories, notable research gaps warrant further investigation. First and foremost, the literature emphasises the positive aspects of using short stories in ESL classrooms, highlighting benefits such as linguistic development, cultural understanding, and personal growth. However, there is limited exploration of potential challenges or negative attitudes that learners may harbour toward studying short stories, especially within the specific cultural context of a South African Township School. Additionally, the literature acknowledges that challenges may arise when learners encounter stories significantly different from their cultural backgrounds, impacting their attitudes toward reading the anthology. However, there is a need for a more in-depth analysis of the specific cultural elements that might cause reluctance or resistance among ESL learners in the South African Township context. Understanding these cultural nuances is crucial for tailoring teaching methods effectively and addressing potential barriers to engagement.

Furthermore, the studies focus on the benefits of short stories, with limited attention to the anthology *Changes*. It is essential to explore how learners perceive this anthology, considering its content, themes, and cultural relevance. Investigating whether *Changes* aligns with learners' cultural background in a South African Township School can provide valuable insights into the anthology's effectiveness in fostering positive attitudes and engagement. Another research gap lies in the exploration of educator perspectives. While the literature briefly mentions that some educators may decline to teach short stories due to perceived linguistic difficulty or cultural complexity, there is a need for a more comprehensive understanding of instructors' attitudes and practices regarding the use of anthologies like *Changes*. Exploring educators' perspectives can illuminate potential challenges in implementing such materials and offer insights into practical strategies for overcoming barriers.

In summary, the existing literature provides a strong foundation for understanding the benefits of studying anthologies of short stories in ESL contexts, specifically within South African Township Schools. However, to ensure a comprehensive view, future research should explore potential challenges, cultural

considerations, learner perceptions of specific anthologies, and educators' perspectives in implementing these materials. Addressing these research gaps will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of ESL learners' attitudes toward studying short story anthologies in this unique educational context.

2.1.6 Language Accessibility

Language accessibility significantly affects how learners engage with and comprehend literary texts, particularly in ESL classrooms. For many ESL learners, literary engagement is hindered not by a lack of interest but by difficulty navigating complex vocabulary, unfamiliar syntactic structures, or archaic language, such as that found in Shakespearean works (Mureriwa, 2018). In South Africa, where learners often speak English as a second or third language, texts like *Macbeth* present notable linguistic barriers. These include not only Shakespeare's poetic form and dated lexicon but also the learners' limited exposure to English in everyday life, which further complicates comprehension and fluency (Nqoma, Francis, & Foncha, 2017).

Kartikaningtyas (2015) notes that when learners cannot access the language of the text, their ability to engage meaningfully with its content and themes is significantly compromised. This supports the argument that accessible texts—such as *Changes*, which feature familiar narrative structures and contemporary language—are more likely to yield positive attitudes and academic success in ESL contexts. Furthermore, research by Cummins (2000) highlights the importance of both Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) in developing literacy. Many township learners may have strong conversational English (BICS) but lack the academic vocabulary required to engage with literature (CALP) critically.

Research also shows that providing linguistic scaffolding—such as glossaries, simplified summaries, and contextual explanations—can significantly improve learners' ability to decode and comprehend texts (Alvermann & Phelps, 2013). When learners perceive a text as too difficult, they often disengage, negatively impacting reading comprehension, class participation, and assessment outcomes. Therefore, language accessibility is not merely a matter of vocabulary but a cornerstone of equitable and inclusive literature education.

2.1.7 Pedagogical Strategies

Educators' teaching methods and strategies are pivotal in shaping learners' responses to literature, especially in linguistically diverse ESL classrooms. Effective pedagogical strategies can bridge the gap between learners and complex texts, transforming perceived obstacles into opportunities for

engagement. Nqoma, Francis, and Foncha (2017) highlight that in many township schools, educators often rely on code-switching to support comprehension, alternating between English and learners' home languages to ensure understanding. While this can be a practical short-term solution, it may also risk reducing learners' exposure to sustained academic English if overused.

Harvey, Deuel, and Marlatt (2020) argue for incorporating multimodal literacies—including visual, audio, and digital elements—into the literature classroom. Their study found that integrating virtual reality and collaborative learning stations increased learner interest and participation in Shakespeare units. Although access to technology remains limited in many South African township schools, their findings suggest that creative, learner-centred teaching methods can mitigate the negative attitudes associated with canonical texts.

Further, Vygotsky's (1978) notion of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) underscores the importance of scaffolded learning and peer collaboration, which are vital in literature education. Instructional strategies, including group reading, role-playing, visual storytelling, and guided questioning, have improved learner comprehension and engagement (Fisher & Frey, 2014). These strategies can make even unfamiliar or linguistically challenging texts more accessible, providing learners with the support and autonomy to form their interpretations. Therefore, pedagogical choices are not neutral; they can either reinforce or disrupt barriers to engagement with literature.

2.1.8 Learner Motivation

Motivation is a core determinant of how and whether learners engage with literary texts. In ESL contexts, motivation is influenced by internal and external factors, including learners' confidence in their abilities, interest in the text, relevance of the content, and the learning environment (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Baaqeel (2020) notes that learners with positive attitudes toward reading tend to show higher engagement, participation, and performance levels, while those with negative perceptions often withdraw or perform poorly.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan (1985), distinguishes between intrinsic motivation, where learners engage in an activity for its inherent enjoyment, and extrinsic motivation, where external rewards or consequences drive behaviour. In literature classrooms, intrinsic motivation can be cultivated when texts are culturally relevant, linguistically accessible, and taught through engaging pedagogical approaches (Gambrell, 2011). Learners are more likely to invest effort in reading when they find the content meaningful or resonates with their lived experiences (Kromhout & Scheckle, 2021).

Additionally, Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) emphasise the importance of motivational strategies such as choice, goal-setting, and feedback. When learners are given some autonomy in interpreting texts or selecting reading material, they demonstrate higher levels of persistence and comprehension. This is particularly relevant in contexts like South Africa, where learners may feel disconnected from traditionally prescribed texts. Thus, fostering learner motivation is not merely a supplementary goal but foundational to successful literature instruction in ESL contexts.

2.1.9 Conclusion

The seven subtopics delineated—Learner Attitudes Towards Studying Literature, ESL Learner Attitudes Towards Studying Shakespeare, Shakespeare vs. Cultural Relevance in ESL Contexts, Studying Anthologies of Short Stories, Language Accessibility, Pedagogical Strategies, and Learner Motivation—have collectively provided a comprehensive overview of the diverse factors that shape ESL learners' engagement with prescribed literary texts. As emphasised by Cohen and Manion (2018), the literature review functions not merely as a summary of prior scholarship but as a critical foundation that establishes the researcher's familiarity with relevant theoretical and methodological discourses while identifying key gaps in the field.

The discussion on learner attitudes established that literature is a dynamic and effective medium that elicits cognitive, emotional, and behavioural responses (Wood & Wood, 1993). These attitudes are not static but are influenced by learners' prior experiences and how literature is presented in the classroom. The review of ESL learners' attitudes towards studying Shakespeare, supported by Mureriwa (2018) and Min (2023), revealed that Shakespearean texts pose unique linguistic and cultural challenges, requiring deliberate teaching strategies to make them accessible and relevant. The section on Shakespeare vs. cultural relevance illuminated the tension between traditional Western literary canons and the lived experiences of African learners, thus reinforcing the argument for culturally responsive teaching (Sutton, 2016; Dyches, 2017).

The subtopic on short story anthologies, particularly *Changes*, underscored the benefits of using brief, diverse narratives that reflect learners' sociocultural contexts. Scholars such as Ceylan (2016) and Abuzahra and Farrah (2015) have argued that short stories can simultaneously improve language proficiency and promote intercultural understanding. The newly added section on Language Accessibility highlighted the importance of linguistic comprehensibility in enabling meaningful literary engagement,

particularly when learners face the double burden of mastering English as both a medium of instruction and a vehicle for literary expression (Cummins, 2000; Alvermann & Phelps, 2013).

The section on Pedagogical Strategies further revealed that teaching methods play a pivotal role in mitigating or reinforcing barriers to literature learning. When used appropriately, approaches such as code-switching, visual scaffolding, and learner-centred strategies can transform learner attitudes and comprehension levels (Nqoma, Francis, & Foncha, 2017; Harvey, Deuel, & Marlatt, 2020). Lastly, the discussion on Learner Motivation, informed by Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination Theory and further supported by Gambrell (2011), affirmed that intrinsic and extrinsic motivators are essential for sustained engagement with literary texts. When learners are confident, see the relevance of texts, and feel supported in their efforts, they are more likely to adopt positive attitudes and persevere through academic challenges.

Despite these insights, the literature review revealed notable gaps, particularly regarding the lived experiences and specific attitudes of Grade 12 ESL learners in South African township schools. While studies by Olifant et al. (2019) and Kromhout and Scheckle (2021) offered valuable context, they did not explicitly focus on prescribed texts such as *Macbeth* and *Changes*, nor did they include learners' voices in a way that foregrounds their interpretations and emotional responses.

This literature review lays a strong conceptual foundation for the current study by identifying established trends and underexplored areas within literature education for ESL learners. It underscores the importance of investigating how cultural relevance, language accessibility, teaching strategies, and motivation influence learners' attitudes. The study, therefore, seeks to respond to these gaps by exploring and interpreting the perspectives of Grade 12 ESL learners toward *Macbeth* and *Changes* in a South African township context. In doing so, it aims to contribute to developing more inclusive and contextually relevant literature pedagogy that reflects learners' identities and promotes deeper engagement with literary texts.

2.2 Theoretical framework

According to Bertram and Christiansen (2017), a theoretical framework is a conceptual structure or set of principles that provide a foundation for understanding and analysing a particular phenomenon. According to Creswell (2014), a theoretical framework provides the conceptual basis for understanding phenomena within a particular field of study, guiding research questions, hypotheses, and the interpretation of findings. Babbie (2016) states that a theoretical framework consists of interconnected concepts, definitions, and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables to explain and predict outcomes. Lastly, Corbin and Strauss (2014) state that a theoretical framework serves as a lens through which researchers interpret data and make sense of their findings, offering a coherent structure for organising and synthesising knowledge in a particular domain. This study draws on the intersection of Motivation Theory and Sociocultural Theory to investigate Grade 12 English Second Language Learners' attitudes towards studying *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* at a South African township school.

2.2.1 Motivation Theory:

As defined by Klein et al. (1999), motivation is the process that initiates, guides, and maintains goal-oriented behaviours. The energising force drives individuals to pursue their needs, desires, and goals (Maslow, 1943). Motivation is a multifaceted construct encompassing various cognitive, emotional, and social factors (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Other scholars have also provided definitions of Motivation: Steers and Porter (1991) define it as why people do things. Pintrich (1999) describes it as the forces that initiate, guide, and maintain goal-directed behaviour. Finally, Locke and Latham (2002) define motivation as the willingness to exert effort to achieve a goal.

According to Petri and Govern (2004), motivation theory refers to the concept we use when we describe the forces acting on or within an organism to initiate or direct behaviour. We also use the concept of motivation to explain differences in the intensity of behaviour. More intense behaviours are considered to result from higher levels of motivation. Additionally, we often use the concept of motivation to indicate the persistence of behaviour. A highly motivated behaviour will often be persistent even though the intensity of the behaviour may be low. (Petri & Govern, 2004, pg. 16). Several motivation theories offer unique insights into the complex psychological processes that govern human motivation. The following are some of the most influential motivation theories explained briefly:

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Abraham Maslow's theory posits that human beings have different types of needs, ranging from basic physiological needs to self-actualisation needs. According to Maslow (1943), people are motivated to fulfil their basic needs before moving on to higher-level needs.

Maslow's theory suggests that learners' ability to engage with literature, including *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*, may be influenced by their fulfilment of basic needs. In township high schools, where learners often face socio-economic challenges, issues such as lack of resources and psychological distress, may impact their academic motivation and attitudes toward prescribed texts. However, while Maslow's theory provides a broad psychological perspective on human motivation, it does not directly address the specific sociocultural and pedagogical factors influencing ESL learners' engagement with literature. In contrast, this study focuses more on how learners' attitudes are shaped by language accessibility, cultural relevance, educator influence, and motivation, elements better explained by Sociocultural and other Motivation Theories. Therefore, while Maslow's theory may provide a contextual backdrop to understanding broader challenges faced by learners, it is not central to the core analysis of attitudes toward literature in your study.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Frederick Herzberg's theory suggests that motivation is influenced by two factors: hygiene factors (salary, benefits, working conditions) and motivator factors (recognition, growth opportunities, sense of achievement). (Herzberg, 1959). In a township school setting, hygiene factors such as school resources, classroom conditions, and access to learning materials may impact learners' attitudes toward studying *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*. A lack of books, overcrowded classrooms, and poor infrastructure could contribute to negative attitudes, such as inadequate working conditions, leading to dissatisfaction in Herzberg's model.

However, this study primarily focuses on intrinsic motivational factors related to literature engagement, which aligns more with Herzberg's motivator factors. For example, learners may develop a positive attitude toward *Changes* because they find cultural relevance and personal meaning in the stories, leading to a sense of achievement and interest. In contrast, *Macbeth* may not provide the same sense of recognition or relevance, potentially reducing motivation.

McClelland's Acquired Needs Theory

David McClelland's theory proposes that individuals have three types of needs: the need for achievement, the need for affiliation, and the need for power. (McClelland, 1965). The theory's focus on the need for achievement, affiliation, and power can provide insight into how learners' personal motivations might shape their engagement with literature. Learners with a strong need for achievement may approach both texts with determination, striving to overcome challenges such as Shakespeare's complex language because they see mastering the material as an academic milestone. The need for affiliation may influence learners' attitudes based on peer perceptions; if their classmates struggle with *Macbeth* or enjoy *Changes* due to cultural familiarity, their engagement with these texts may be shaped by group influence. Similarly, the need for power may be reflected in learners who take leadership roles in class discussions or derive confidence from mastering difficult material, potentially influencing how they interact with the prescribed texts. While McClelland's theory helps explain individual motivation, it does not fully account for the broader educational and sociocultural factors shaping ESL learners' attitudes. Elements such as the linguistic accessibility of *Macbeth*, the cultural relatability of *Changes*, and the role of educators in scaffolding learning are more effectively analysed using Motivation Theory and Sociocultural Theory. Therefore, while McClelland's theory offers an additional perspective on individual learner motivation, it is not a primary theoretical framework for this study.

Self-Determination Theory

Edward Deci and Richard Ryan's theory emphasises the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering intrinsic motivation. (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is highly relevant to this study as it provides a strong framework for understanding the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of Grade 12 ESL learners when engaging with prescribed literary texts. The theory emphasises three key psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness, all influencing learners' attitudes toward studying *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*.

Autonomy, or the ability to make choices and have control over one's learning, plays a significant role in how learners engage with literature. When learners feel that they have agency in their learning, such as discussing texts in ways that relate to their experiences, they are more likely to develop a positive attitude toward reading. This may explain why learners respond favourably to *Changes*, as its cultural familiarity allows them to feel more personally connected to the stories. In contrast, *Macbeth* may feel imposed upon them, leading to disengagement due to a lack of perceived relevance or choice.

Competence, or the feeling of mastery and effectiveness in a task, also shapes learners' attitudes. The complex language and unfamiliar historical context of *Macbeth* can make learners feel incompetent, resulting in frustration and negative attitudes. On the other hand, *Changes* is written in accessible English and reflects relatable themes, making learners feel more confident and capable, thus fostering a more positive engagement with the text.

Relatedness, which refers to the need to feel connected to others, further influences motivation. If learners see *Changes* as reflective of their social and cultural experiences, they may feel a sense of belonging and validation, enhancing motivation. In contrast, if *Macbeth* feels distant and disconnected from their lived reality, they may struggle to form meaningful connections with the text, reducing their intrinsic motivation to engage with it.

Given that SDT highlights how motivation is deeply tied to learners' experiences, perceptions, and the contextual relevance of learning materials, this theory aligns well with the focus of this study. Unlike broader psychological theories such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs or McClelland's Acquired Needs Theory, SDT directly addresses how pedagogical strategies and curriculum choices impact learner engagement. Therefore, Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory is highly applicable to this study, as it explains why ESL learners may engage differently with *Macbeth* and *Changes* based on their perceptions of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Goal-Setting Theory

Edwin Locke's theory states that specific, challenging, and attainable goals enhance motivation and performance (Locke & Latham, 2002). Locke and Latham's Goal-Setting Theory is relevant to this study, particularly in understanding how specific academic goals influence Grade 12 ESL learners' attitudes toward studying *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*. According to this theory, learners are more motivated when they have clear, challenging, and attainable goals, which enhance their focus and persistence. In literature studies, setting well-defined learning objectives, such as understanding Shakespearean language, analysing themes, or improving essay-writing skills, can impact learners' engagement with prescribed texts.

If learners view studying *Macbeth* as an overwhelming or unattainable task because of its complex language and historical context, they may feel discouraged and disengaged. Learners may struggle to find motivation without structured support and achievable sub-goals, such as decoding Shakespearean language through scaffolded instruction or using modern translations. Conversely, *Changes* may be

perceived as a more manageable text, as its cultural relevance and accessible language allow learners to set and achieve realistic academic goals, fostering greater motivation and engagement.

Moreover, the Goal-Setting Theory highlights the importance of feedback and self-efficacy in maintaining motivation. Learners who receive constructive feedback acknowledging their progress are more likely to stay motivated despite challenges. Educators play a crucial role in helping learners develop goal-oriented strategies that make both texts more approachable and meaningful.

Expectancy Theory

Victor Vroom's theory suggests that motivation is based on the expectation of outcomes, the value of those outcomes, and the belief in one's ability to achieve them. (Vroom, 1964). Vroom's Expectancy Theory is moderately relevant to this study, as it provides insight into how Grade 12 ESL learners' expectations, perceived abilities, and the value they place on studying *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* influence their motivation. According to Vroom (1964), motivation is determined by three key factors: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence, each of which can shape learners' attitudes toward their prescribed texts.

Expectancy, or the belief in one's ability to succeed, is crucial in how learners approach *Macbeth*. Suppose learners perceive the text as too difficult due to its complex language and historical context. In that case, they may develop low expectancy, believing that no matter how much effort they put in, they will struggle to understand it. This could result in disengagement and negative attitudes. In contrast, *Changes*, with its accessible language and culturally familiar themes, may boost learners' confidence, making them feel that their efforts will lead to success.

Instrumentality, which refers to the perception that success in a task will lead to desirable outcomes, also affects learners' motivation. If learners believe that mastering *Macbeth* will improve their academic performance, enhance their writing skills, or help them pass their exams, they may be more willing to put in the effort despite its challenges. However, they may lack motivation if they do not see a clear link between engaging with *Macbeth* and achieving their academic or personal goals. On the other hand, *Changes* may be more directly beneficial, as it allows learners to engage with relatable themes and develop analytical skills without the added difficulty of Shakespearean language.

Valence, or the personal value of an outcome, further shapes learners' engagement with literature. Suppose learners see *Macbeth* as a text that lacks relevance to their lived experiences or future aspirations. In that case, they may place a low value on studying it, leading to reluctance or resistance.

However, *Changes* may hold higher valence for many learners because its themes and cultural contexts resonate with their realities, making it more engaging and meaningful.

Reinforcement Theory

B.F. Skinner's theory posits that behaviour is shaped by its consequences, such as rewards or punishments. (Skinner, 1969). B.F. Skinner's Reinforcement Theory is somewhat relevant to this study, as it provides insight into how external rewards and consequences shape Grade 12 ESL learners' attitudes toward studying *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*. According to this theory, behaviour is influenced by positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, and punishment, all of which can impact learners' motivation and engagement with literature.

Positive reinforcement, such as praise, good grades, or educator recognition, can encourage learners to engage more actively with challenging texts like *Macbeth*. Learners who receive encouragement and rewards for progressing in understanding Shakespearean language may develop a more positive attitude toward the text. Similarly, if learners are praised for their insightful interpretations of *Changes*, their motivation to engage with the anthology may increase.

Negative reinforcement, which involves the removal of an undesirable condition to encourage a behaviour, can also play a role. For example, suppose learners are given additional support, such as simplified summaries or guided discussions, to help them overcome their struggles with *Macbeth*. In that case, they may feel less anxious and more inclined to engage with the text.

Punishment, on the other hand, may lead to disengagement. Suppose learners are criticised, penalised, or made to feel inadequate for struggling with Shakespearean language. In that case, they may develop a negative attitude toward *Macbeth*, reinforcing the belief that it is too difficult or irrelevant. Similarly, learners may become disinterested in engaging with the text if their perspectives on *Changes* are not valued.

While Reinforcement Theory helps explain how external rewards and consequences influence learners' engagement with literature, it does not fully address the intrinsic motivation, cultural relevance, and cognitive factors that shape their attitudes. The linguistic difficulty of *Macbeth*, the relatability of *Changes*, and the role of learner autonomy, competence, and social interaction are better explained through Self-Determination Theory, Motivation Theory, and Sociocultural Theory. Therefore, while Reinforcement Theory provides a useful supplementary perspective on how external reinforcement can shape learner behaviour, it cannot be a central theoretical framework for this study.

These motivation theories offer valuable insights into the complex factors that drive human behaviour and motivation.

Motivation Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding Grade 12 English Second Language Learners' attitudes towards studying *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*. According to Deci and Ryan (2000), motivation is crucial in determining learners' engagement and achievement in academic tasks. Intrinsic motivation, driven by interest, enjoyment, and a desire for learning, is a key predictor of learners' attitudes towards studying these texts.

Moreover, Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs suggests that learners' basic needs, such as safety, belonging, and esteem, must be met before they can become motivated to learn. In the context of this study, learners' motivation to engage with *Macbeth* and *Changes* will likely be influenced by their need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy refers to the need for control and agency over one's learning, competence refers to the need for effectiveness and mastery, and relatedness refers to the need for connection and belonging (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Furthermore, Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) posits that learners' motivation can be categorised into three types: amotivation, extrinsic motivation, and intrinsic motivation. Amotivation refers to a lack of motivation, extrinsic motivation is driven by external factors such as grades and recognition, and intrinsic motivation is driven by interest and enjoyment. In this study, learners' attitudes towards studying *Macbeth* and *Changes* will likely be influenced by their level of intrinsic motivation, with learners more intrinsically motivated exhibiting a more positive attitude towards studying these texts. Goal-Setting Theory (Locke & Latham, 2002) suggests that specific, challenging, and attainable goals enhance motivation and performance. In the context of this study, learners' goals and expectations for studying *Macbeth* and *Changes* will likely impact their motivation and engagement. Learners who set specific and challenging goals for themselves will be more motivated to engage with the texts and achieve their goals. Thus, Motivation Theory provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing Grade 12 English Second Language Learners' attitudes towards studying *Macbeth* and *Changes*. By understanding the role of intrinsic motivation, autonomy, competence, and relatedness, as well as goal setting, this study aims to provide insights into how to promote learners' motivation and engagement with these texts.

2.2.2 Sociocultural Theory:

The socio-cultural theory was developed by Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) in his writings, which placed education between an individual and culture (Panhwar et al., 2016). Moreover, Vygotsky theorised and

empirically explored that development is initiated by social and cultural influences and interactions, which lead to higher and deeper mental development and functions (Panhwar et al., 2016). This means that Vygotsky did not ignore the internal aspects of development. His ideas purport that learning relies equally on the outside sociocultural forces and the inner stimuli.

Furthermore, Panhwar et al. (2016) state:

The interaction of cultures in language learning and acquisition from the socio-cultural perspective situates the central dimension of learning about affective concerns such as inspiration, subjective, intersubjective relationships, and participants' motives. In addition, the socio-cultural theory is, in several ways, more at a vantage point to provide an all-inclusive analysis of the cognitive process involved in language learning than mentalist approaches that highlight universal rather than context-based and situated qualities of learning. (Panhwar et al, 2016).

According to Scott and Palincsar (2013), Sociocultural theory explains how an individual's mental functioning relates to cultural, institutional, and historical context. Hence, the sociocultural perspective focuses on participation in social interactions and culturally organised activities in influencing psychological development. Sociocultural theory posits that learning is a social and cultural activity in a specific context. This theory emphasises the importance of the socio-cultural context in shaping the learning experiences of second language learners. The sociocultural context includes factors such as the community, the school, the family, and the larger cultural environment (Panhwar et al., 2016).

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory provides a valuable framework for exploring Grade 12 ESL learners' attitudes towards studying '*Macbeth*' and '*Changes*'. According to Vygotsky (1978), learners acquire knowledge and attitudes through social interactions within their cultural context. In this study, sociocultural theory could help illuminate how these ESL learners' attitudes towards these literary works are shaped by the cultural beliefs and attitudes modelled by their community, peers and educators. By considering the sociocultural factors influencing their perceptions, more profound insights can be gained into learner's personal experiences.

One cannot discuss Lev Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory without highlighting the key constructs that constitute the theory. Firstly, there is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky (1978) proposed that learning occurs within the "Zone of Proximal Development," which is the gap between what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance and support from a more knowledgeable person. Vygotsky emphasised the importance of social interaction and collaborative

learning in the ZPD, where a more capable individual (such as an educator or a peer) provides scaffolding to help the learner move from their current level of understanding to a higher level.

Secondly, there is the concept of Social Interaction, which Vygotsky believed plays a vital role in cognitive development. He argued that children acquire new knowledge and skills through interactions with more knowledgeable others, such as parents, educators, or peers. Language is crucial in this process, as it allows individuals to internalise external knowledge and transform it into their mental representations (Vygotsky, 1978).

Thirdly, Vygotsky (1978) also emphasised the influence of cultural tools, including physical artefacts like books and computers and symbolic systems such as language, writing, and numbers. These tools are not just external aids but become internalised as cognitive tools. They shape how individuals think and solve problems, mediating their interactions with the world. The fourth construct is Scaffolding. Scaffolding refers to the support provided by a more knowledgeable individual to help a learner accomplish a task or solve a problem. The support is gradually reduced as the learner becomes more capable, enabling them to take on increasing levels of responsibility and independence (Vygotsky, 1978). Moreover, Vygotsky observed that children often engage in private speech, talking aloud to themselves during problem-solving tasks. He argued that this self-directed speech is a tool for organising thoughts, planning actions, and regulating behaviour. Over time, private speech becomes internalised as inner speech, an internal dialogue that guides thinking.

Additionally, Vygotsky (1978) further emphasises the role of social interaction in cognitive development within the Sociocultural theory through the following constructs: Internalisation, Regulation, More Knowledgeable Other, and Mediation. Vygotsky (1978) defines Internalization as the process through which individuals acquire knowledge and skills by internalising external experiences, such as language, cultural norms, and social practices. It transforms external information into internal mental processes that guide behaviour and thinking. Moreover, Regulation, in the context of sociocultural theory, refers to the ability of individuals to regulate their actions, thoughts, and emotions. Social interactions influence this capacity and gradually develop as individuals learn to control their behaviour based on social norms and expectations. Furthermore, Vygotsky (1978) defines the More Knowledgeable Other as someone with more knowledge or expertise in a particular domain than the learner. This person plays a crucial role in scaffolding the learner's development by providing guidance, support, and information to help the learner advance their understanding. Finally, Vygotsky (1978) explains that Mediation refers to the tools, symbols, or cultural artefacts that facilitate learning and problem-solving. Language is a primary mediator,

as it helps individuals communicate, understand, and interact with the world. Other forms of mediation can include diagrams, technology, and cultural practices.

Therefore, Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how social interaction, culture, and language shape cognitive development. It emphasises the importance of collaborative learning, scaffolding, and cultural tools in educational contexts, highlighting the dynamic relationship between individuals and their sociocultural environment. Thus, having briefly discussed the key constructs of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, this study will only focus on the Zone of Proximal Development, Scaffolding, Internalisation, and Mediation as they are more relevant to the study in explaining learners' attitudes.

2.2.2.1 Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Vygotsky (1978) introduced the concept of the ZPD, which refers to the gap between a person's current level of development and their potential level of development with the assistance of a more knowledgeable other (MKO). The MKO can be an educator, a peer, or even a parent with a better understanding or higher skill level in a particular area. Earlier in this research, it was mentioned that learners seem to harbour negative attitudes towards studying the drama *Macbeth* due to the challenging cognitive demands that may be beyond their current capabilities (outside their ZPD). This may lead to frustration, disengagement, and negative attitudes towards studying the text if learners are not provided appropriate support. On the other hand, incorporating Vygotsky's ZPD by providing learners with appropriate support makes them more likely to develop positive attitudes as they experience bridging the gap between their current abilities or knowledge and the demands of set work. This approach acknowledges that learners have growth potential and can achieve higher levels of understanding with the proper scaffolding and instructional strategies, thus contributing to the attitudes learners will embrace.

Addressing the research questions, the attitudes of Grade 12 ESL learners toward '*Macbeth*' and '*Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*' in a Township High School context can be shaped by their perceived distance from their ZPD. The negative attitudes observed may be a manifestation of the cognitive challenges exceeding their current developmental levels. Consequently, these attitudes are likely to influence how learners approach the study of these texts, potentially leading to disengagement or a reluctance to invest in the material. Delving deeper into the third research question, understanding why Grade 12 ESL learners hold specific attitudes toward studying '*Macbeth*' and '*Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*' necessitates exploring the factors contributing to the perceived cognitive demands. It may involve investigating the learners' prior experiences, exposure to relevant literature, or the instructional methods employed in the educational context. Unravelling these elements can shed light on

the roots of learners' attitudes, providing valuable insights for educators seeking to bridge the gap between current capabilities and coursework demands through targeted support and scaffolding. The connection between Vygotsky's ZPD and the research questions underscores the significance of aligning instructional approaches with learners' developmental potential to cultivate positive attitudes and facilitate meaningful engagement with the studied texts.

2.2.2.2 Scaffolding

Spadafora (2020) defines scaffolding as a process in which more competent people provide a temporary framework that supports the learners thinking at a higher level than they could manage independently. Vygotsky (1978) highlights the importance of scaffolding, which temporarily supports learners within their ZPD. This support can be through guidance, feedback, or modelling. Scaffolding aims to help learners acquire new skills or knowledge and eventually become independent in performing those tasks.

Township High Schools often cater to learners from diverse cultural backgrounds. The implementation of scaffolding can assist ESL learners in making connections between the texts and their own experiences, cultural contexts, and socio-economic backgrounds. Educators can provide cultural background information, facilitate discussions, and encourage learners to relate the themes and characters to their lives. This approach can foster a deeper appreciation and engagement with the texts, which in turn play a part in influencing their attitudes towards reading '*Macbeth*' and '*Changes*'. Literature reflecting the learners' experiences and cultural contexts can be particularly valuable in fostering positive attitudes towards reading. However, by employing scaffolding in this manner, learners can acquire the capacity to effectively engage with diverse textual genres and cultivate a receptive attitude towards varied cultural contexts, thereby avoiding the formation of negative attitudes towards reading that may arise from perceived irrelevance to their cultural background or context.

Scaffolding can explain learners' attitudes in that if educators provide structured support and guidance when studying complex literary texts like "*Macbeth*," it can positively influence learners' attitudes. Educators can help break down the content into manageable chunks, offer explanations, and create a safe space for learners to ask questions without fear of judgment. This support can make the material less intimidating and more accessible. Scaffolding often involves gradually transferring responsibility from the educator to the learner. As learners gain confidence and competence, educators can reduce their level of support, encouraging learners to become more independent in their learning. This shift can boost learners' self-esteem and attitudes toward their capabilities. Vygotsky's scaffolding theory emphasises the role of support; thus, if applied effectively in the context of Grade 12 English Second Language learners, it can lead to improved attitudes by making the content of their prescribed texts more accessible,

fostering a sense of achievement, and creating a supportive learning environment which will aid in cultivating positive attitudes.

In relation to the research questions, scaffolding emerges as a valuable tool that can influence and shape the attitudes of Grade 12 ESL learners toward studying "*Macbeth*" and "*Changes*." By providing the necessary support and guidance, scaffolding can contribute to a more positive learning experience, making the prescribed texts more relatable and accessible for learners with diverse cultural backgrounds. Understanding the role of scaffolding in influencing attitudes also prompts consideration of why certain attitudes exist and how the teaching methodologies might shape them.

2.2.2.3 Internalisation

Vygotsky (1978) states that internalisation is the understanding of the cognitive development of an individual, which is circled in two planes: social and psychological. In the social plane, the individual develops in the company of a parent, mentor, or educator, and then he or she becomes independent. Furthermore, in the book 'Mind in Society' Vygotsky (1978) describes the internalisation process in terms of three transformations: (a) An operation that initially represents an external activity is reconstructed internally. Of particular importance to the development of higher mental processes is the transformation of sign-using activity, the history and characteristics of which are illustrated by the development of practical intelligence, voluntary attention, and memory. In studying literature like *Macbeth* and *Changes*, the transformation of external activities into internal ones can be seen as learners initially engaging with the text as an external, unfamiliar activity. As they progress in their studies, they internalise the processes of literary analysis, interpretation, and critical thinking. This internalisation of sign-using activity, such as understanding symbolism or character development, is crucial for developing higher mental processes related to literary analysis. (b) an interpersonal process is transformed into an intrapersonal one. Every function in individual cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level and later, on the individual level, first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the learner (intrapsychological). Vygotsky's idea that functions in cultural development appear both on the social and individual levels is relevant. Initially, learners may engage in group discussions, peer interactions, and classroom activities when studying these texts, which is the social level (inter-psychological). As they internalise their understanding and responses to the literature, this becomes an intrapersonal process (intrapsychological). This transformation from social to individual comprehension reflects Vygotsky's concept of internalisation. (c) The internalisation of cultural forms of behaviour involves the reconstruction of psychological activity based on sign operations. The internalisation of socially rooted and historically developed activities is the distinguishing feature of human psychology. The barest outline of this process

is known (Vygotsky, 1978, pp. 57-58). Internalising culturally rooted behaviours and activities is a fundamental aspect of human psychology. When English Second Language Learners study literature like *Macbeth* and *Changes*, they internalise culturally significant forms of expression and communication. The process involves reconstructing their psychological activity based on sign operations like language comprehension, literary analysis, and cultural interpretation. However, Vygotsky's statement also acknowledges that our understanding of this process is still incomplete, suggesting that there is more to explore in how these learners internalise and make sense of complex literary works. In summary, Vygotsky's internalisation theory can provide a framework for understanding how Grade 12 English Second Language Learners engage with and internalise the study of literature in a township high school. It highlights the importance of social interactions, the transformation from external to internal processes, and the cultural significance of these activities in their psychological development.

Pathan and Mamon (2018) define internalisation as the process of learning from social to individual, explaining that the learner first undergoes the process of problem-solving activities in the company of others and ultimately tends to perform the tasks independently.

Vygotsky's concept of internalization is relevant to the study of Grade 12 ESL learners' attitudes towards reading the drama *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* because it emphasises how social interactions and cultural context influence cognitive development. In this case study of a Township High School, understanding how learners internalise cultural norms, values, and language through interactions with peers and educators can shed light on their attitudes towards reading these literary works. The internalisation process can help explain how learners' prior experiences and socio-cultural background shape their approach to and engagement with the texts, providing valuable insights for educators to design effective teaching strategies and support their learning.

In addressing the research questions, the attitudes of Grade 12 ESL learners toward studying *Macbeth* and *Changes* in a Township High School context are intricately linked to Vygotsky's concept of internalization. As learners navigate the external landscape of these literary works, they should undergo a transformative process, evolving from social interactions and group discussions to intrapersonal comprehension. Vygotsky's perspective underscores the significance of this transformation, emphasizing the role of social interactions in shaping individual understanding.

The influence of these attitudes on studying *Macbeth* and *Changes* is evident in the shift from external engagement to internal comprehension. Learners, initially exposed to these texts through social interactions and classroom activities, internalize their understanding and responses, embodying Vygotsky's idea of the transition from interpsychological to intrapsychological processes. This

transformation highlights the dynamic interplay between external influences and internalization, showcasing how attitudes shape learning.

Exploring the reasons behind Grade 12 ESL learners' attitudes toward studying *Macbeth* and *Changes*, Vygotsky's emphasis on internalising culturally rooted behaviours comes into play. The learners are not merely engaging with literary content but internalizing culturally significant forms of expression and communication. The reconstruction of psychological activity based on sign operations, such as language comprehension and cultural interpretation, aligns with Vygotsky's theory. However, the acknowledgement that our understanding of this process is incomplete suggests a need for further exploration into how these learners internalise and make sense of complex literary works.

2.2.2.4 Mediation

According to Vygotsky, (1978), Mediation is the representation of tools. Mediation is referred as the use of tools and these tools are adopted by an individual to resolve a problem or achieve the target. So, language is considered the most significant of the tools. The idea of mediation is treated in different words by Pathan and Mamon (2018), as they describe mediation as the part in the development of an individual played by a more knowledgeable other in their life. Thus, language learning is deemed a mediated Second Language Acquisition process.

Therefore, Vygotsky's theory of mediation will be useful to this study because it emphasises the role of social interactions and cultural context in shaping individual learning experiences. The theory suggests that learners' understanding and attitudes towards reading can be influenced by interactions with more knowledgeable individuals, such as educators or peers, and the cultural environment they are exposed to. By considering mediation in this context, the study can explore how social and cultural factors impact these learners' engagement with the texts and their attitudes towards reading, providing valuable insights for effective ESL teaching strategies in the specific setting of a township high school.

Concerning this study that focuses on ESL learners' attitudes towards studying *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* at a South African Township School, Kromhout and Scheckle (2021) state that a sociocultural understanding involves a closer look at the meaning and meaningfulness of prescribed texts for these learners outside of the classroom. Talking about texts provides a space to think together and develop an understanding from the cumulative knowledge shared in a collaborative enterprise. The social context and the relationship between users contribute to the meaning making. Suppose learners have not had broad exposure to books and stories. In that case, they need many opportunities to engage with books and require socialisation to make sense of literary meaning and

values. This socialisation frequently occurs through talk, often at a socio-cognitive level in classrooms (Kromhout & Scheckle, 2021). This study recognises that individuals' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours are shaped by their interactions with the social and cultural context in which they are embedded (Panhwar, 2016), hence the decision to underpin this study with the sociocultural theory. By employing the sociocultural theory as one of the theoretical frameworks, the study aims to explore the socio-cultural factors that influence the attitudes of these specific learners towards reading their prescribed texts. It seeks to understand how the social interactions, cultural context, and language use within the school environment and outside the school shape the learners' engagement with and perceptions of these literary texts.

The intersection of Motivation and Sociocultural Theory provides a comprehensive understanding of the complex factors influencing learners' attitudes towards studying *Macbeth* and *Changes*. Learners' motivation and engagement will be influenced by the sociocultural context of the township school, with cultural and social factors impacting their attitudes towards studying the texts. The educator's role as a more knowledgeable person will be crucial in scaffolding learners' understanding and motivating them to engage with the texts. Furthermore, the texts will serve as cultural tools, providing learners with new perspectives and ways of thinking about their experiences and the world around them.

In conclusion, this theoretical framework provides a nuanced understanding of the complex factors influencing Grade 12 English Second Language Learners' attitudes towards studying *Macbeth* and *Changes* at a South African township school. By drawing on both Motivation Theory and Sociocultural Theory, this study aims to comprehensively understand the interplay between learners' motivation, cultural backgrounds, and social contexts in shaping their attitudes towards studying these texts. The following chapter will outline the research methodology used to investigate Grade 12 English Second Language (ESL) learners' attitudes toward studying *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* in a South African Township High School.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology used to explore Grade 12 English Second Language (ESL) learners' attitudes toward studying *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* at a South African township high school. The study sought to achieve three primary objectives: to explore learners' attitudes toward the drama *Macbeth* and the short story anthology *Changes*, to examine how these attitudes influence their studying of the texts, and to understand the reasons behind these attitudes. The study was guided by four research questions to address these objectives: What are the learners' attitudes toward the prescribed texts? How do these attitudes impact their engagement with the texts? Why do learners have these attitudes? How can I respond to Grade 12 ESL learners' attitudes toward studying *Macbeth* and *Changes*?

The qualitative research approach adopted for this study is rooted in the interpretive paradigm, emphasising an in-depth understanding of the participants' lived experiences and perspectives. The research design was a case study focusing on a single Grade 12 ESL class to gain a detailed and contextual understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. A purposive and convenience sampling technique was used to select the participants, ensuring relevance and feasibility. Data generation methods included semi-structured questionnaires, unstructured interviews, and my reflective diary, each chosen for its ability to capture rich and nuanced insights into learners' attitudes and experiences.

The thematic analysis process was employed to identify and interpret patterns in the data, aligning with the study's objectives and research questions. Additionally, the measures taken to ensure the credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability of the research findings are outlined, alongside the ethical considerations that guided the study's execution. Together, these methodological choices establish a robust framework for addressing the research objectives and answering the questions posed by the study.

3.2. Research Approach

When conducting research, a researcher must choose an approach best suited for the kind of study they wish to undertake, depending on the type of data they will be working with; it can be a Qualitative, Quantitative or Mixed Method Approach. Qualitative Data, according to Bertram and Christiansen (2017),

refers to data that can either be textual (e.g., Transcripts of interviews or documents) or visual (e.g., Video recordings of classroom lessons, photographs, etc.). Furthermore, Hammersley (2013) defines qualitative research as: “a form of social inquiry that tends to adopt a flexible and data-driven research design, to use relatively unstructured data, to emphasise the essential role of subjectivity in the research process, to study several naturally occurring cases in detail, and to use verbal rather than statistical forms of approach” (Hammersley, 2013, p. 12). Cohen and Manion (2017) state that qualitative research is characterised by a loosely defined group of designs that elicit verbal, aural, observational, tactile, gustatory, and olfactory information from a range of sources, including audio, film, documents, and pictures, that it draws strongly on direct experience and meanings. Cohen and Manion (2017) further state that qualitative research provides an in-depth, intricate, and detailed understanding of meanings, actions, and non-observable as well as observable phenomena, attitudes, intentions, and behaviours. On the other hand, Quantitative research, according to Cohen and Manion (2018), focuses on collecting numerical data and conducting statistical analyses to test hypotheses and quantify relationships between variables. This approach utilises structured surveys, experiments, and other standardised methods to obtain data that can be measured objectively. The data is analysed using statistical tools to draw conclusions and generalise about a population.

The critical difference between the two approaches lies in the data generated and the analysis methods. Qualitative research generates rich, descriptive data that allows for in-depth exploration of the research question. In contrast, quantitative research provides numerical data that enables researchers to quantify relationships and draw statistically supported conclusions. Each approach has its strengths and weaknesses, and researchers often choose one over the other based on their research objectives and the nature of the phenomenon being studied (Cohen & Manion, 2018).

This study was conducted using a qualitative research approach since it involves exploring participants' perspectives, opinions, and experiences to gain a deeper understanding of the topic. The qualitative research approach involved questionnaires, interviews, and a reflective diary I wrote as the researcher detailing my observations to generate data from Grade 12 ESL learners in a township high school setting. Open-ended questions were included to encourage participants to share their thoughts freely about their attitudes toward reading the drama *Macbeth* and the short story anthology *Changes*. The study also considered factors like cultural background, language proficiency, and previous exposure to literature to understand how these aspects impact the learners' attitudes toward the assigned texts.

The qualitative research approach provided valuable insights into how Grade 12 ESL learners in the township high school context perceive and engage with the drama *Macbeth* and the anthology of Short Stories, allowing for a more in-depth analysis of their attitudes towards these literary works.

3.3. Research Paradigm: Interpretive Paradigm

According to Bertram and Christiansen (2017), a Research Paradigm represents a worldview that defines what is acceptable to research and how this should be done. This study utilised the Interpretive Paradigm. Bertram and Christiansen (2017) state that within the interpretive paradigm, researchers do not aim to predict what people will do but rather to describe and understand how people make sense of their worlds and how they make meaning of their particular actions. Similarly, Cohen and Manion (2018) assert that within the interpretive paradigm, researchers begin with individuals and set out to understand their interpretations of the world around them. Indeed, they use approaches such as 'verstehen' ('understanding') and hermeneutics (uncovering and interpreting meanings) to try to see the social world through the eyes of the participants rather than as an outsider.

The interpretive paradigm proved suitable for this study because it aligned with the research objectives of exploring the attitudes of Grade 12 ESL learners towards reading *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*. This study was not concerned with predicting the attitudes of Grade 12 ESL learners towards the mentioned literary works; instead, it aimed to delve deeper into the learners' thought processes and understand their attitudes and the reasons behind such. Interpretivism provides a framework that acknowledges the complexity of human experiences and emphasises the significance of context, culture, and individual perspectives. By embracing this paradigm, the study went beyond surface-level observations, explored the deeper meanings and motivations behind the learners' attitudes, and discovered valuable insights.

3.4. Research Design: Case Study

According to Cohen and Manion (2018), arriving at a single case study definition is elusive and unnecessary. Bertram and Christiansen (2017) provide a succinct definition:

A case study is a systematic and in-depth study of one case in its context where the case may be a person (such as an educator, a learner, a principal, or a parent), a group of people (such as a family or a class of learners), a school, a community, or an organisation. Case studies aim to describe what it is like to be in any particular situation, so they are generally descriptive; however, they can also be used to generate claims for further verification. The researcher aims to capture the reality of the participants' lived experiences and thoughts about a particular situation. (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017, p. 22)

This study focused on one class in a particular context of Grade 12 ESL learners' attitudes towards reading the drama *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* in a Township High School. The rationale for this investigation stemmed from the observation over the years that my learners consistently exhibited contrasting attitudes towards these two texts. Specifically, there was a recurring negative disposition towards *Macbeth*, marked by expressions of difficulty with the Elizabethan English vocabulary and apprehension about assessment outcomes. Conversely, a positive attitude was consistently displayed towards the Short Stories, particularly those grounded in an African and South African context, addressing culturally and socially relevant themes. This initial observation sparked my interest in further exploring and obtaining direct insights from the learners to corroborate and understand the reasons behind these divergent attitudes. To capture the nuances of these attitudes, I recorded my observations in a reflective journal, documenting my observations of learners' responses and my attempts to address their challenges and enhance their engagement with the texts. These diary entries were a critical tool to track learners' evolving attitudes systematically, highlight recurring themes, and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching strategies. Thus, the case study approach was appropriate, as it allowed for an explicit and detailed examination of the specific context, individuals, and factors influencing the learners' attitudes, offering a comprehensive understanding of their experiences with these literary works in the educational setting. The study employed a descriptive case study design to provide narrative accounts, capturing the intricacies of the learners' lived experiences in studying these prescribed literature texts and contributing rich qualitative data to analyse the topic in depth.

3.5. Research Study Sampling

The research focused on Grade 12 ESL learners' attitudes towards reading the drama *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* in a Township High School and used purposive and convenience sampling techniques. Purposive Sampling involves selecting participants based on specific characteristics, such as their status as English second language learners in a township high school. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2017), in purposive sampling, the researcher targets a specific group, knowing that the group does not represent the broader population; it simply represents itself. Convenience Sampling, according to Bertram and Christiansen (2017), means choosing a sample that is easy for the researcher to reach; this sampling technique is relevant for my study because the study location is my workplace, and the sample is a Grade 12 class I teach. Thus, I was able to conduct my research at my convenience. The sample of this study consists of 44 learners from one Grade 12 class. The reasons for choosing this specific sample relate to the following factors:

3.5.1. *Relevance to Research Objectives*

This sample was instrumental in achieving all four research objectives by providing a focused and accessible group of Grade 12 ESL learners in a Township High School context. First, it enabled me to explore the learners' attitudes toward studying *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*. Being their educator allowed me to observe and engage directly with their perspectives on these texts. Second, the sample revealed how these attitudes influenced their engagement with the material, including their level of interest, participation, and interpretation of the works. Third, the choice of this sample allowed me to investigate why these learners harboured particular attitudes toward the texts. Factors such as cultural relevance, linguistic challenges, and their broader educational experiences emerged as key influences on their perspectives. Finally, by working closely with this group, I could explore practical and responsive strategies to address their attitudes, helping to foster a more engaging and supportive learning environment. In this way, the sample was relevant and essential to comprehensively understanding the research objectives.

3.5.2. *Variability in Perspectives*

Choosing learners from a single class allowed for diverse perspectives and experiences. Learners within the class have different attitudes towards studying the drama *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* due to varying levels of engagement, motivation, and previous exposure to similar texts. By including learners from the same class, the study gained insights into how various factors impact attitudes towards studying the drama *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*.

3.5.3. *Feasibility and Manageability*

Purposive sampling with 44 learners from one Grade 12 class was a manageable sample size, allowing in-depth data generation and analysis. It was feasible to conduct a detailed case study with this sample size. It ensured that the study thoroughly explored the participants' attitudes toward the drama *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* through a questionnaire, the initial data-generating tool utilised by the 44 learners (Cohen & Manion, 2018). From the original sample of 44 learners, eight were selected for individual interviews to gain deeper insights. These participants volunteered after I invited learners to participate. Initially, ten learners volunteered; however, two withdrew at the last minute. I did not seek replacements, as this could have posed ethical concerns

given my dual role as their educator and researcher. Allowing learners to self-select ensured the voluntary nature of their participation and minimised the potential for coercion.

The decision to conduct individual interviews with eight participants offered several advantages. Individual interviews allowed for a comprehensive examination of each participant's attitudes toward studying *Macbeth* and *Changes*. This method facilitated nuanced discussions, enabling participants to articulate their views more freely. The one-on-one setting reduced potential hesitations or influences from peers, fostering an environment where learners could express their thoughts openly. Participants demonstrated eagerness to engage, which enriched the data by allowing for clarification and elaboration of their responses. This openness provided more profound insights into the factors influencing their attitudes. Individual interviews with a smaller group were manageable and allowed for detailed transcription and analysis. The focused nature of the interviews aligned with the study's objective of exploring learners' attitudes thoroughly.

The combination of purposive and convenience sampling ensured that the study's objectives were met while maintaining feasibility and ethical integrity. Including 44 learners for the initial questionnaire and the subsequent in-depth interviews with 8 participants allowed the study to comprehensively understand Grade 12 ESL learners' attitudes toward *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*. This approach provided rich, contextually relevant data aligned with the research's focus on a township high school setting.

3.6 Methods of Data Generation

A comprehensive approach was employed for data generation to achieve the study's objectives. This section outlines the various methods utilised to generate relevant data on the attitudes of Grade 12 ESL learners towards the Drama '*Macbeth*' and the anthology of Short Stories '*Changes*'. This study utilised a Questionnaire that included an Arts-Based element, Interviews, and my Reflective Diary to generate data.

3.6.1 Questionnaire

According to Cohen and Manion (2018), questionnaires offer the benefits of standardised and open responses to various topics from a large sample or population. They can be cheap, reliable, valid, quick, and easy to complete. Moreover, Bertram and Christiansen (2017) define a questionnaire as

a list of participants' answers. Questionnaires can contain either closed-ended or open-ended questions, and this study utilised the semi-structured questionnaire (see Appendix D) that included open-ended questions, including an arts-based question. This questionnaire allowed participants to answer in their own words without being limited to predefined categories or options, such as structured questionnaires that contain standardised close-ended questions. The data for this study was generated from one Grade 12 class, consisting of 44 learners in total. Given the group size, employing a questionnaire helped facilitate extensive data generation. Conducting individual interviews for each participant would have been impractical regarding time constraints, making a questionnaire a convenient alternative.

The questionnaire was administered during the first week of the fourth term. This timing avoided disrupting the learners' regular academic schedule as the term got busier. At this stage, the learners had engaged with the two prescribed texts. The primary aim of the questionnaire was to capture learners' experiences, attitudes, and thoughts pertaining to the texts, particularly following their mid-year and trial examinations. This data directly addresses the research questions: "What are the attitudes of Grade 12 ESL learners toward studying the drama *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* in a Township High School context?" "How do these attitudes influence their studying of the drama *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*?" and "Why do Grade 12 ESL learners have the kind of attitudes they have towards studying the drama *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* in a Township High School context?". By administering the questionnaire towards the end of the academic year, the study sought to comprehensively encapsulate the learners' sentiments, expectations, and experiences, laying the groundwork for an in-depth analysis of their attitudes.

The study incorporated a dual data generation approach involving questionnaires and visual narratives to fully explore the Grade 12 ESL learners' attitudes towards the drama *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*. While questionnaires offer the advantages of standardised responses, cost-effectiveness, and efficient data collection from a sizable sample, the study recognised the limitations of solely relying on written responses to capture the nuanced nature of learners' experiences. Thus, the questionnaire incorporated an arts-based method of generating data. Acknowledging the significance of Narrative Inquiry, the study drew inspiration from Kitchen (2009) and Clandinin & Huber (2010), emphasising the importance of understanding how individuals make meaning from their experiences through narratives. Narrative Inquiry is "how people make meaning from experience" (Kitchen, 2009, p. 37) and understand these experiences through narratives (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). Thus, to enrich the exploration of the participants' attitudes,

the study encouraged them to visually depict their initial thoughts and feelings about studying the prescribed texts, aligning with the principles of Narrative Inquiry. According to Moris and Paris (2022), Arts-based research (ABR) is a participatory research practice that connects embodied visual literacy to more traditional academic research practices in higher education through which any art form/s is used to generate, interpret, or communicate research knowledge. Moris and Paris (2022) further note that through ABR, researchers can' elicit, process, and share understandings and experiences that are not readily or fully accessed through more traditional fieldwork approaches. ABR researchers need to work through the arts in both process and product to expand knowledge about daily life and individual lived experiences and to communicate research findings democratically to a broad audience (Moris & Paris, 2022, p. 100). Scholars such as Mitchell (2018) and Cohen and Miller (2018) support the legitimacy of using images in research and assert that visual methodologies provide innovative and generative means for participants to reflect upon and express their experiences. Botsis and Bradbury (2018) further highlight the value of visual-narrative methodology in understanding learners' lived experiences, particularly in the context of language and subject positioning in South Africa.

The semi-structured questionnaire employed in this study allowed participants the flexibility to articulate their thoughts in their own words. To explore the emotional dimensions of their initial reactions towards studying *Macbeth* and Short Stories, the questionnaire included a unique prompt encouraging the participants to "Visually express your initial feelings and thoughts upon learning that you would be studying the drama *Macbeth* and the short story anthology *Changes*. Feel free to use drawing, pasting pictures from magazines or creating a collage, etc., to represent your feelings for both genres visually". This approach aligns with the premise that artistic expressions can yield valuable insights into participants' experiences. (CohenMiller, 2018). This combined approach aimed to capture rich qualitative data, offering an understanding of the learners' attitudes and experiences with the prescribed texts.

3.6.2 Interviews

According to Bertram and Christiansen (2017), an interview is a good data collection tool for finding out what a person knows (knowledge and information), what a person likes or dislikes (values and preferences), and what a person thinks (attitudes and beliefs). This study utilised an unstructured interview, which, according to Bertram and Christiansen (2017), allows the respondents to answer in a way they would like to and speak freely about the given topic or question posed. Since this study aimed to explore the learners' attitudes, the interview questions were targeted at generating data that

will illuminate the main research objectives and possibly answer the main research questions of this study. Moreover, Bertram and Christiansen (2017) state that interviewing allows the researcher to ask probing and clarifying questions and discuss the participants' understanding. This study interviewed eight learners selected from the original sample of 44 learners who completed the questionnaire (see Appendix E). These eight participants were chosen through volunteering after I asked my learners to volunteer for the individual interviews. Initially, ten learners volunteered, but two withdrew at the last minute. I did not seek replacements for the learners as the other participants had not expressed interest in volunteering. Additionally, I did not wish to persist and risk creating an ethical issue where, as their educator, I might misuse my power to influence their participation in a strictly voluntary study. The sampling was thus random, as the learners self-selected by volunteering, and no predetermined criterion or selection process was applied.

Conducting individual interviews with these eight participants offered numerous practical and methodological advantages. Individual interviews allowed for a more in-depth exploration of each participant's attitudes toward studying the drama *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* in a Township High School context. The one-on-one interviews provided a platform for learners to articulate their views more comprehensively, fostering a nuanced understanding of their attitudes (Cohen & Manion, 2018). Individual interviews also allowed participants to express themselves freely without potential hesitations or influences from others. Furthermore, the participants demonstrated eagerness to express themselves and readily engaged in the process, allowing me to probe further for clarity and elaboration in their responses. This openness and willingness to engage enriched the data, offering deeper insights into the factors influencing their attitudes toward the prescribed texts. This was particularly important when delving into personal attitudes and experiences related to literature study.

Practical considerations, such as ease of transcription and analysis, further supported the decision to opt for individual interviews with a smaller sample size. Transcribing and analysing data from smaller sizes is typically less time-consuming and resource intensive. The focused nature of individual interviews allowed for a more detailed examination of each participant's responses, facilitating a detailed analysis of the attitudes influencing the studying of *Macbeth* and *Changes*. In essence, the decision to conduct individual interviews with initially ten and then eight participants aligned with the research objectives, providing a practical and efficient means of exploring, confirming, probing, and extending the attitudes of Grade 12 ESL learners in a Township High School context towards the selected literary works.

The interviews were conducted on Saturday, the 12th of October, one week after the questionnaires were administered. This timing was strategic, allowing the learners to reflect on the questionnaire questions and better understand what to expect during the interview. The interviews as a tool provided answers to the research question, “Why do Grade 12 ESL learners have the kind of attitudes they have toward studying the drama *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* in a Township High School context?”. Conducting the interviews at this juncture allowed for more accurate and reflective responses, as participants could articulate their thoughts and experiences while the material was still fresh in their minds. The research questions aimed to understand the attitudes of Grade 12 ESL learners in a specific context – a Township High School; therefore, this approach captured the learners’ attitudes and provided insights grounded in their actual learning experiences, making the data more contextually relevant. Combining individual interviews and a targeted selection process facilitated a deeper understanding of learners’ experiences and attitudes, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of their engagement with the texts.

3.6.3 Reflective Diary

A Reflective Diary, also known as a Reflective Journal, according to Alt, Raichel, and Naamati-Schneider (2022), is a data generation tool used in research to record and reflect on experiences, observations, and thoughts over some time. It is a personalised and flexible tool that allows researchers to document their experiences, insights, and reflections in a narrative and unstructured manner. Using a reflective diary, researchers can capture their thoughts, feelings, and observations in real-time, providing a rich account of their experiences and the studied phenomena (Alt et al., 2022).

As conceptualised by Schön (1983) and elaborated by Farrell (2024), reflective practice is essential in understanding and improving professional practice, particularly in education. Schön emphasises two critical aspects of reflection: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Reflection-in-action refers to the ability to think and adapt during teaching or problem-solving. It is an immediate, intuitive process that allows practitioners to respond to situations in real-time, often drawing on tacit knowledge. On the other hand, reflection-on-action occurs after the event, providing an opportunity to analyse what transpired, identify patterns, and consider alternative strategies for future situations. Together, these reflective processes help practitioners navigate the complexities of their work environments.

Farrell (2024) builds on Schön’s ideas by introducing a holistic framework for reflective practice. This framework invites practitioners to examine their professional roles across five interconnected levels:

philosophy, principles, theory, practice, and beyond practice. This layered approach addresses the cognitive and technical aspects of reflection and incorporates emotional, moral, and social dimensions. For example, reflection on philosophy explores the foundational values and beliefs that guide an individual's professional behaviour. Reflection on principles examines assumptions and maxims that inform teaching decisions. These stages deepen self-awareness, prompting practitioners to question not just what they do but why they do it.

A significant advantage of reflective practice is its capacity to bridge theory and practice. By actively engaging with their experiences, practitioners can articulate implicit knowledge, critically evaluate their methods, and align their actions with broader educational theories. The reflective practice transforms routine actions into deliberate and purposeful behaviour, enhancing personal growth and professional effectiveness. It encourages educators to remain open to learning, adapt to changing circumstances, and challenge existing norms.

Furthermore, reflective practice fosters a culture of continuous improvement. It allows practitioners to approach challenges with curiosity and creativity rather than relying solely on prescriptive solutions. This adaptability is crucial in complex and dynamic fields such as education, where problems are rarely straightforward. As Schön (1983) notes, reflective practitioners construct and redefine problems through iterative processes, framing them in ways that allow for meaningful intervention.

Another notable contribution of reflective practice is its emphasis on ethical and social accountability. By reflecting, practitioners become more attuned to the broader implications of their actions, including the power dynamics and cultural contexts that shape their interactions. Farrell's (2024) notion of reflecting "beyond practice" is especially pertinent in this regard, as it encourages professionals to consider how their work impacts their learners, communities, and societal structures.

Tools such as reflective journals play a vital role in facilitating this practice. Journals provide a safe space for documenting thoughts, analysing experiences, and exploring emotions. They act as a mirror and a lens, enabling practitioners to look inward for self-awareness and outward for insights into their professional environments. Writing in a reflective journal can also be a discovery process, revealing patterns, biases, and assumptions that might otherwise go unnoticed.

The significance of reflective practice lies in its transformative potential. It equips practitioners with the skills to handle immediate challenges and cultivates a mindset of lifelong learning and critical inquiry. By fostering deeper connections between personal values, professional actions, and societal needs, reflective practice contributes to developing more thoughtful, adaptable, and impactful educators and researchers.

In this study, the reflective diary was a tool to document and critically reflect on my initial perceptions of learners' attitudes toward studying *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* (see Appendix F) and will also answer the fourth research question: How can I respond to Grade 12 ESL learners' attitudes toward studying *Macbeth* and *Changes*? It allowed me to analyse how I initially responded to these perceived attitudes and how my responses evolved once I understood their actual attitudes through the study. This reflective process provided insights into the alignment between my instructional strategies and the learners' engagement. For instance, while revisiting figures of speech to support the study of *Macbeth* and short stories, I noted initial resistance from learners who perceived the task as repetitive. However, targeted activities, such as contextual examples and interactive discussions, gradually enhanced their interest and comprehension, particularly with concepts like dramatic irony. Similarly, during the close reading of *Macbeth*, learners displayed enthusiasm when engaging in role-playing activities and multimedia approaches, such as watching adapted scenes and participating in a game-show-style quiz. These methods fostered active participation and deeper connections to the text.

The reflective entries further highlighted the value of integrating English FAL Paper 2 (Literature) and Paper 3 (Creative Writing) lessons. Tasks like essay writing and letter drafting, based on thematic elements of the prescribed texts, allowed learners to express their interpretations creatively.

The data analysis chapter (Chapter 4) will include these reflections, providing additional insights and contributing raw, authentic data to the study. Each entry allowed me to delve deeper into my pedagogical strategies and their impact on learner engagement. Reflecting on my observations, I aimed to identify patterns that could inform future teaching strategies. This perspective highlighted the evolution of the learners' attitudes and provided a platform for my growth as an educator, emphasising the reciprocal relationship between teaching and learning. In the subsequent chapters, I analyse these insights to draw meaningful conclusions about my learners' overall attitudes and experiences.

3.7 Data Analysis

According to Bertram and Christiansen (2017), analysis means a close or systematic study, or the separation of a whole into its parts, for the purpose of study. This study's data was generated using questionnaires, which included an arts-based component, interviews, and a reflective journal. The data analysis process used an inductive approach, which, according to Bertram and Christiansen

(2017), works from specific observations to broader generalisations and theories. As aforementioned, this study was conducted within the Interpretive Paradigm. The research approach involved Qualitative Analysis and Inductive reasoning, which are employed to address "how" or "why" questions related to social phenomena. As described by Bertram and Christiansen (2014), the analysis process consists of comprehending the collected data and subsequently interpreting it. Thus, this study utilised thematic analysis, which, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), is the method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It organises and describes your data in rich detail. However, it also often goes further than this and interprets various aspects of the research topic. Furthermore, Ibrahim (2020) defines thematic analysis as a comprehensive process researchers use to establish various cross-references between the data and arrive at interrelated themes.

This data analysis method was helpful in this study since thematic analysis focuses on identifying and interpreting patterns or themes within qualitative data. This study is interested in understanding the attitudes of Grade 12 ESL learners towards reading the prescribed texts. Hence, it used thematic analysis to systematically identify and analyse the themes emerging from the learners' responses, which helped gain a deeper understanding of their attitudes. Lorelli (2017) states that thematic analysis is a flexible approach that can be applied to various research questions and data types. It allows researchers to adapt the process according to the specific context and research objectives (Lorelli, 2017). This study was conducted in a township high school and involved a specific group of 44 learners. The thematic analysis allowed this research to tailor the analysis to the unique characteristics of this setting. Braun and Clarke (2006) proposed a six-phase approach to conducting thematic analysis, which involves familiarisation, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, defining themes, and writing the report. The six phases are briefly explained as follows:

Phase 1: Familiarisation with the Data

I began by immersing myself in the data collected from semi-structured questionnaires, individual interviews, and my reflective diary. This step involved reading and re-reading the transcripts and entries to identify recurring ideas and emotional undertones. For example, as I reviewed responses, I noted the learners' struggles with Shakespearean language, their enthusiasm for African short stories, and the pivotal role of educator influence. I also used this phase to document my immediate observations, such as learners' adverse reactions to *Macbeth's* language versus their appreciation

for the relatable themes in *Changes*. These reflections helped me gain a comprehensive understanding of the content.

Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

During this phase, I systematically coded the data by highlighting segments that represented specific attitudes or challenges. For instance, comments on the difficulty of Shakespearean language were coded under "Language Accessibility," while responses about creative classroom activities were labelled "Educator Influence and Pedagogy." I ensured that coding was applied consistently across all data sources. I used my reflective diary to cross-reference learners' attitudes and behaviours observed in class with their expressed views in interviews and questionnaires.

Phase 3: Searching for Themes

Once the initial codes were established, I collated them into broader categories to identify patterns and connections. Themes such as "Cultural Relevance," "Learner Confidence," and "Enjoyment in Reading" emerged from this process. For example, codes related to learners' ability to connect with the settings and characters in *Changes* were grouped under "Cultural Relevance." In contrast, codes reflecting their engagement with interactive teaching methods were categorised under "Educator Influence and Pedagogy." I compared these themes against the research objectives to ensure alignment and identified sub-themes to capture more nuanced insights, such as "Positive Engagement with Short Stories."

Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

At this stage, I revisited the potential themes to ensure they accurately represented the data. Some initial themes, such as "Peer Influence," were refined to include both positive and negative dimensions, while others, like "Barriers to Language Comprehension," were merged with broader themes like "Language Accessibility." To confirm the validity of each theme, I reviewed the coded extracts and the dataset as a whole, checking for coherence and consistency. Themes that appeared redundant or lacked sufficient evidence were discarded.

Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

Once finalised, I defined and named the themes to reflect their essence. For example, "Language Accessibility" encapsulates learners' struggles and strategies with Shakespearean English and the more straightforward language of African short stories. Sub-themes such as "Archaic Language Challenges" and "Cultural Relatability" provided deeper layers of analysis. I drafted concise descriptions for each theme, ensuring they encapsulated the findings clearly and aligned with the study's objectives.

Phase 6: Writing the Report

In the final phase, I integrated the themes into a cohesive narrative, using quotes from learners and observations from my reflective diary to support the analysis. For example, the theme "Cultural Relevance" was enriched by learners' comments on their ability to relate to the short stories in *Changes* and my diary entry about their enthusiasm during class discussions on culturally familiar texts. Each theme was linked to relevant literature to contextualise the findings. I included visual data representations, such as tables and graphs, to illustrate the distribution of learner responses across themes.

I tailored Braun and Clarke's framework to my context throughout the process. My reflective diary uniquely triangulated the data, offering insights into learners' in-class behaviours that complemented the interviews and questionnaires. The final themes, such as "Educator Influence and Pedagogy," "Cultural Relevance," and "Language Accessibility," are based on their relevance to the research questions and their ability to encapsulate key findings. While some sub-themes were retained for their nuanced insights, others were merged or excluded based on their alignment with the study's objectives. This iterative process ensured rigorous analysis and reflected the learners' experiences.

Chapter 4 discusses these themes in detail, drawing connections between the learners' attitudes, challenges, and the pedagogical strategies that shaped their engagement. Following these six phases enabled the study to conduct a rigorous and systematic thematic analysis that provided valuable insights into the qualitative data analysed in this study. Moreover, thematic analysis enabled detailed data exploration, allowing the study to uncover rich insights. The study delved into the underlying reasons, motivations, and perspectives that shaped their responses by identifying recurring themes in the learners' attitudes. This depth of analysis was crucial in understanding the complexities of the learners' experiences and attitudes towards the chosen texts.

3.8. Ensuring the Trustworthiness of the Research

Trustworthiness in qualitative research refers to the criteria used to assess the quality and rigour of a study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). While validity and reliability are traditionally associated with quantitative research, qualitative studies rely on trustworthiness criteria to ensure credibility and rigour (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The key criteria considered in this qualitative study were credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, as proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). These criteria are essential in demonstrating to the researcher and the audience that the findings are reliable, valid, and deserving of attention (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

To strengthen trustworthiness, this study employed member checking, allowing participants to verify the accuracy and authenticity of the data interpretations. This method aligned the participants' intended meanings and the researcher's interpretations. The thematic analysis undertaken in this study adhered to the standards of trustworthiness by systematically addressing each of the criteria, ensuring a robust and transparent approach to data analysis.

3.8.1. Credibility

Credibility relates to the congruence between participants' views and the researcher's representation of those views. (Tobin & Begley, 2004). This study strengthened credibility through prolonged engagement, triangulation, persistent observation, and member checking, as recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Triangulation in this study involved using multiple data collection methods, such as questionnaires, interviews, and a reflective diary, to validate findings and enhance their authenticity (Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, & Sechrest, 1966).

To ensure the credibility of my study, I prioritised accurately representing the participants' perspectives. I established trust by clearly explaining the study's purpose and maintaining open and transparent communication throughout the research process. I meticulously documented and analysed participants' insights, ensuring that my interpretations faithfully reflected their experiences and attitudes toward studying *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*.

Member checking was particularly critical in aligning participants' intended meanings with the researcher's interpretations. This process allowed participants to review and confirm the accuracy of the transcribed data and emerging themes, ensuring alignment with their perspectives. Additionally, transparent communication and maintaining trust throughout the research process supported credibility.

3.8.2. Dependability

Dependability ensures that the research process is systematic, logical, and replicable. (Shenton, 2004). This study meticulously documented all stages, including data collection, analysis, and interpretation, creating a comprehensive audit trail. (Koch, 1994). Reflexive journals and detailed methodological records were maintained to enable cross-referencing and ensure consistency as Suggested (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). Peer debriefing was employed to confirm that the process was logical and transparent.

The structured presentation of findings, with clear subsections and headings, facilitates understanding and replication, ensuring that another researcher in a similar context could achieve comparable results. (Shenton, 2004).

3.8.3. Transferability

Transferability addresses the generalisability of findings to other contexts (Nowell et al., 2017). While qualitative research findings are often context-specific, this study supported transferability by providing thick descriptions of the research context, participants' backgrounds, and methodological choices (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

These rich, detailed accounts allow readers and future researchers to evaluate the applicability of the findings to their specific settings, as Korstjens and Moser (2018) confirm. Transferability is judged case-by-case, enabling other researchers to draw parallels between this study and similar contexts (Tobin & Begley, 2004).

3.8.4. Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the objectivity and impartiality of research findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This study ensured confirmability by grounding interpretations in the collected data, free from researcher bias or fabrication. Following Koch (1994), all methodological decisions were justified and documented, enabling readers to assess the rationale behind the research design.

To reinforce confirmability, the study maintained a reflective journal and will retain all raw data and records for five years, allowing for verification of the findings. This practice aligns with Guba and Lincoln's (1989) assertion that confirmability is contingent on achieving credibility, dependability, and transferability. I maintained objectivity throughout the research to establish confirmability by documenting my decisions and reflecting on potential biases. I ensured that the findings were derived from the data collected rather than personal assumptions or preferences, thus aligning with the principle of impartiality.

3.9. Ethical Issues

Research ethics are focused on what is morally and legally acceptable and permissible. (Bickman & Rog, 2009). Brooks, te Riele, & Maguire, (2014) advocate for educational researchers to consider certain ethical principles before, during, and after the study has been conducted. This study was guided by the ethical principles of respect, dignity, and ensuring no harm identified by (Howe & Moses, 1999) and the principles of access, participant autonomy, anonymity, confidentiality, non-maleficence, and beneficence.

3.9.1. Permission to Conduct Research

Gatekeeper permission was secured from the school's Principal, ensuring compliance with institutional regulations (see Appendix B: Gatekeeper Letter). Singh and Wassenaar (2016) describe a gatekeeper as an individual who allows access to a privately owned organisation or institution, such as an administrator, school principal, or managing director. I obtained ethical clearance for my study from the University of KwaZulu Natal's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee on the 16th of September 2024, under protocol reference number HSSREC/00007494/2024 (see Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Letter). The HSSREC board ensures that every study conducted by either staff or learners at the university is conducted in a way that safeguards the rights, safety, and dignity of the participants.

3.9.2. Participant Autonomy

Participant autonomy relates to the informed consent principle, which supports the participant's right to freedom and self-determination (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, recruiting the participants commenced immediately after obtaining the ethical clearance letter. I ensured participant autonomy by informing learners and their parents or legal guardians about the study's purpose, procedures, and potential implications (see Appendix C: Informed Consent Letter). I emphasised that participation was entirely voluntary and that participants could withdraw at any stage without any consequences. Consent was obtained from all learners and their parents or guardians after receiving full approval to conduct the research. The letter included a declaration page for participants to indicate their willingness to participate and, should they consent, their signature was required.

3.9.3. Participants' Anonymity and Confidentiality

Participants' anonymity and confidentiality were rigorously protected throughout the research process. I safeguarded their identities by using pseudonyms and securely storing all data. I treated all information shared by participants with the utmost sensitivity to foster a secure environment for honest and open responses. Confidentiality assurance was emphasised to the participants in writing and

verbally before, during and after all the data collection phases (see Appendix C: Informed Consent Letter).

3.9.4. Non-Maleficence and Beneficence

The principle of non-maleficence (do no harm) and beneficence (beneficial and positive research outcome) stipulate that ethical research must ensure that the “benefits outweigh the potential for harm” (Murphy & Dingwall, 2001, p. 340). Research should not inflict physical pain on participants, nor should it damage participants psychologically, personally, emotionally, or professionally (Oliver, 2003). In adherence to the principle of non-maleficence, I designed the study to avoid any harm to participants. I ensured all data were handled responsibly to protect participants from potential adverse consequences. Moreover, the study aimed to contribute positively by shedding light on learners’ attitudes toward the prescribed literature, which could inform future educational practices. These ethical measures reflected my commitment to upholding the highest ethical standards while respecting all participants’ rights, well-being, and privacy.

3.9. Conclusion

This chapter provided a detailed overview of the research methodology employed to investigate Grade 12 ESL learners’ attitudes toward studying *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* at a township high school. By adopting a qualitative, interpretive case study approach, the study ensured a comprehensive exploration of the participants’ attitudes, the influence of these attitudes on their engagement with the texts, and the underlying reasons for their perspectives. Using multiple data generation methods, including questionnaires, interviews, and a reflective diary, allowed for a triangulated and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

The rigorous thematic analysis framework ensured that the findings are systematically grounded in the data, while the measures to ensure trustworthiness enhanced the reliability and validity of the research. Ethical considerations, such as securing informed consent and safeguarding participant confidentiality, underscored the commitment to conducting the study with integrity. This methodology chapter sets the stage for the subsequent analysis and discussion of findings, providing the tools and structure necessary to answer the study’s research questions and meet its objectives effectively.

The chapter that follows presents a detailed discussion and analysis of the data generated through the aforementioned methods to answer the study’s research questions: What are the learners’ attitudes toward the prescribed texts? How do these attitudes impact their engagement with the texts? Why do learners have these attitudes? How do I respond to Grade 12 ESL learners’ attitudes toward studying *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*? The findings are organised thematically, providing

insight into learners' attitudes and implications for engagement with the texts, thereby comprehensively addressing the research questions.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter outlined the research methodology detailing the qualitative approach employed to explore Grade 12 ESL learners' attitudes toward *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*. This approach used semi-structured questionnaires that included an Arts-Based element, individual interviews, and a reflective diary to generate data. The interpretive paradigm guided the study, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the learners' perspectives within their educational and cultural contexts. The methodology also highlighted the importance of thematic analysis for examining the collected data, emphasising the process of identifying and interpreting key patterns and themes.

This chapter presents a detailed discussion and analysis of the data generated through the aforementioned methods to answer the Research Questions: What are the learners' attitudes toward the prescribed texts? How do these attitudes impact their engagement with the texts? Why do learners have these attitudes? How do I respond to Grade 12 ESL learners' attitudes toward studying *Macbeth* and *Changes*?

The findings are organised thematically to answer the research questions and provide insight into the learners' attitudes. Key themes identified include Language Accessibility, Cultural Relevance, Learner Confidence, Peer Influence, Educator Influence and Pedagogy, and Enjoyment in Reading. These themes provide a framework for understanding the challenges and preferences that shape learners' engagement with the prescribed texts, offering valuable implications for teaching practices and curriculum development.

4.2 Data Analysis Process

According to Bertram and Christiansen (2017), analysis means a close or systematic study, or the separation of a whole into its parts, for the purpose of study. This study's data were generated using questionnaires, interviews, and my reflective journal. The data analysis process used an inductive approach, which, according to Bertram and Christiansen (2017), works from specific observations to broader generalisations and theories. As described by Bertram and Christiansen (2014), the analysis process consists of comprehending the collected data and subsequently interpreting it. I utilised thematic analysis, which, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), is the method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns that become the themes within data. It organises and describes data set in rich detail. However, it also often goes further than this and interprets various aspects of the research topic.

Furthermore, Ibrahim (2020) defines thematic analysis as a comprehensive process researchers use to establish various cross-references between the data to arrive at interrelated themes.

Thematic data analysis was helpful in this study because it focuses on identifying and interpreting patterns or themes within qualitative data. Lorelli (2017) states that thematic analysis is a flexible approach that can be applied to various research questions and data types. It allows researchers to adapt the process according to the specific context and research objectives (Lorelli, 2017). This study was conducted in a township high school and involved 44 Grade 12 learners. The thematic analysis allowed this research to tailor the analysis to the unique characteristics of this setting. As discussed in my methodology chapter, Braun and Clarke (2006) proposed a six-phase approach to conducting thematic analysis, which involves familiarisation, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, defining themes, and writing the report. I approached my analysis systematically by reviewing all my data sets and integrating them into my analysis and discussion rather than analysing question by question. This approach aligned with Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework for thematic analysis as outlined in chapter 3.

4.2.1 Summary of Findings

To commence my data analysis and discussion, the following table and bar graph visually represent the distribution of learner responses across themes, demonstrating critical areas of positive and negative attitudes toward *Macbeth* and *Changes*.

Summary of Learner Attitudes by Theme			
Theme	Positive Responses (%)	Negative Responses (%)	Neutral Responses (%)
Language Accessibility (<i>Macbeth</i>)	10	85	5
Language Accessibility (<i>Changes</i>)	80	10	10
Cultural Relevance (<i>Macbeth</i>)	15	75	10
Cultural Relevance (<i>Changes</i>)	70	15	15
Preference for Local Literature	85	5	10
Preference for Historical and Social Issues	75	15	10
Interest in Moral/Social Lessons	65	20	15
Complexity of Foreign Settings	10	85	5
Preference for South African Authors	90	5	5

Table 1: Summary of Learner Attitudes by Theme

SUMMARY OF LEARNER ATTITUDES BY THEME

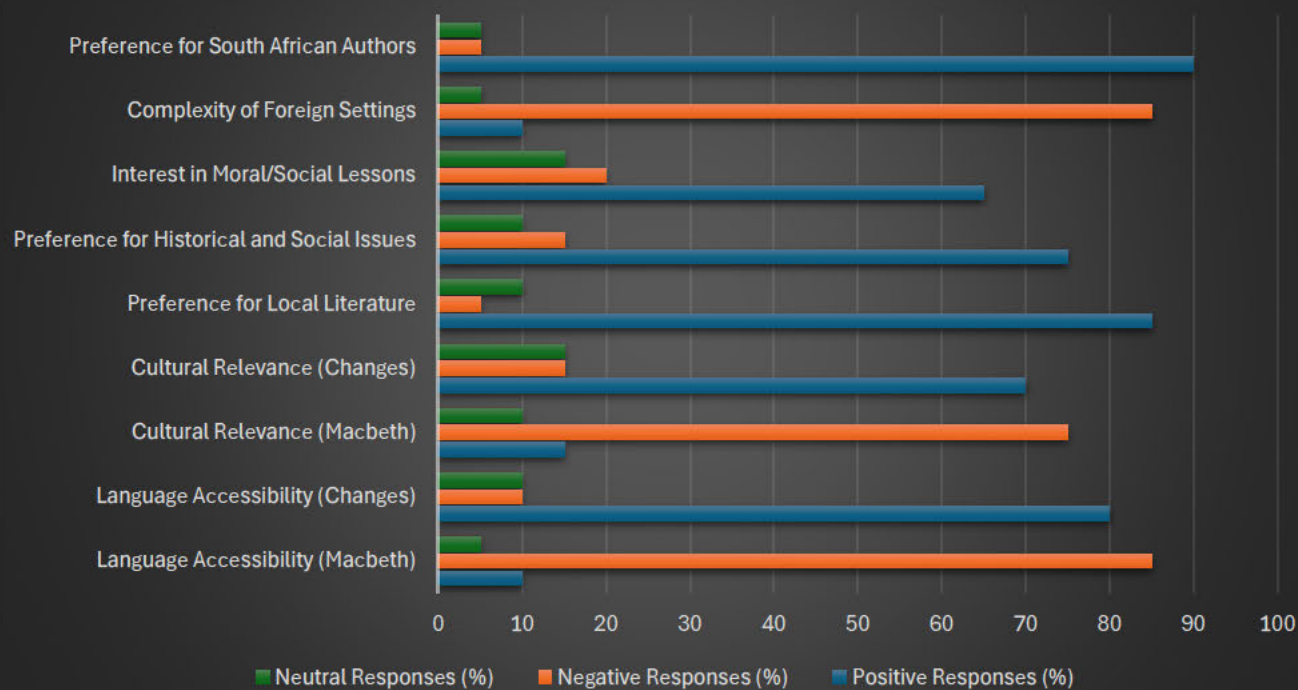


Table 2: Bar Graph Representation of Learner Attitudes by Theme

The findings of this study highlight several key insights into learners' attitudes toward the prescribed texts. A significant 85% of learners perceive *Macbeth* as linguistically challenging, while *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* is more accessible, with 80% expressing positive responses. Regarding cultural relevance, *Changes* resonate more strongly, with 70% of learners finding it culturally relatable compared to only 15% for *Macbeth*. This preference extends to locally relevant literature authored by South Africans, with 85% and 90% of learners, respectively, favouring these aspects. Additionally, 75% of learners appreciate literature that explores South African historical and social issues, as these themes align closely with their lived experiences. However, *Macbeth's* foreign setting poses a significant barrier, with 85% of learners reporting difficulty relating to its context. These findings underscore the importance of accessible, culturally relevant, and locally grounded literature in fostering engagement and understanding among learners.

The following section provides a detailed analysis and discussion of these findings according to each theme, with additional subthemes allowing for a deeper exploration of various perspectives. The main themes that are addressed include Language Accessibility, Cultural Relevance, Learner Confidence, Peer Influence and Expectations, Educator Influence and Pedagogy, Enjoyment in Reading, Academic

Motivation, Genre Familiarity and Relatability, and Preference for Locally Relevant Literature in the Grade 12 ESL Curriculum.

4.3 Discussion of Findings According to Themes

4.3.1 Language Accessibility in Studying *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*

The theme of Language Accessibility in Reading *Macbeth* and *Changes* explores the varying challenges Grade 12 ESL learners face in understanding and engaging with *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*. This discussion highlights how language complexity, cultural relevance, and educator support affect learners' experiences and attitudes toward each text. This theme was evident in the questionnaires and interviews.

4.3.1.1. Challenges with Language Complexity in *Macbeth*

A significant number of learners, 36 out of 44 participants, identified Shakespeare's *Macbeth* as particularly challenging due to its archaic language, complex vocabulary, and use of figurative language. Participant 32 commented: "*Macbeth* is more challenging to read because they use difficult words and are difficult to understand." Similarly, Participant 29 noted: "It has difficult words or languages that some of them are hard to understand." Participant 43 explained: "*Macbeth* is written in English that I've never been exposed to," underscoring the alienation caused by unfamiliar linguistic structures. These observations highlight how Shakespeare's syntax and vocabulary create barriers for learners accustomed to modern English, corroborating Min's (2023) findings that Shakespearean English can frustrate and disengage ESL learners.

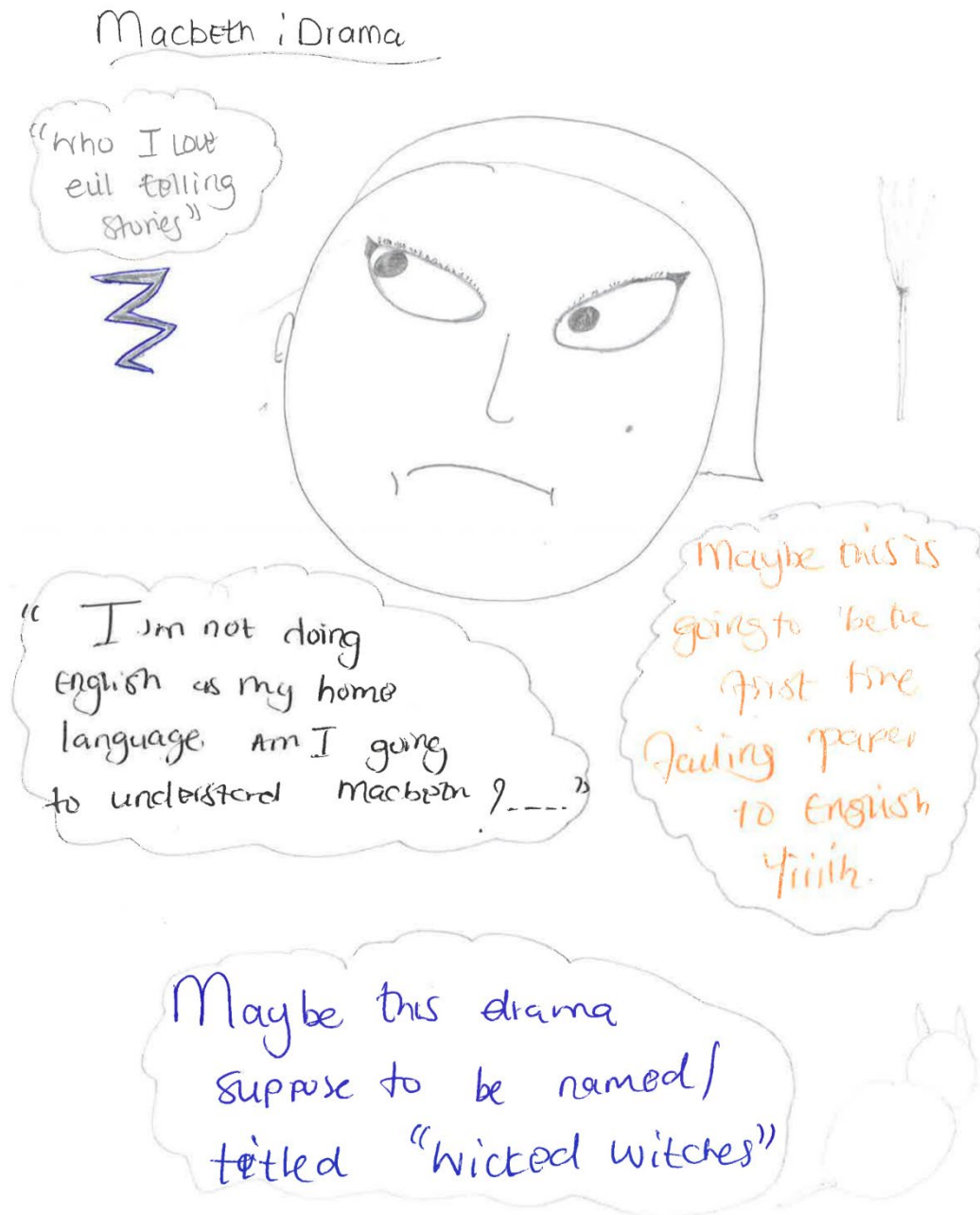
The challenge of language complexity was consistently reflected in responses from both the interviews and questionnaires, with many learners expressing their struggles using terms such as "confusing," "outdated," and "hard to understand." For example, Participant 3 stated: "I'm not interested... The English they use is complicated to understand," Participant 5 remarked: "It is written in old English which is not easy to read... It confuses my brain when reading it." Some participants wished for supplementary resources to aid their comprehension of *Macbeth*. 10 participants highlighted the challenges of archaic language and the need for tools to make the text more accessible. Participant 32 suggested having "a *Macbeth* dictionary that would explain the tough words," reflecting the challenges of archaic language and the need for additional support to make the text more accessible. This desire for supportive resources

aligns with the findings of Min (2023), who emphasises the importance of providing glossaries or simplified versions to help ESL learners navigate challenging texts.

Similarly, Participant 30 remarked that they "wish that the writer of *Macbeth* should have used simple English so that everyone... will be able to understand the drama." This comment highlights the accessibility issues ESL learners face, who may feel that *Macbeth*'s language complexity inhibits their understanding. This aligns with the perspective of Ghazali (2008), who found that linguistic difficulty can hinder engagement and motivation, underscoring the need for materials that bridge the gap between Shakespearean and modern English.

To further explore this theme, the following participant's drawing depicts a face with a bored expression (mouth facing down, rolling eyes) and thought bubbles reading, "I am not doing English as my home language, am I going to understand *Macbeth*?" and "Maybe this is going to be the first time failing Paper 2 English yiiiiiii", visually conveys their apprehension and negative anticipation regarding the complexity of the language in *Macbeth*. This image directly aligns with the overarching theme of "Challenges with Language Complexity in *Macbeth*." It reflects the learner's emotional response to studying a linguistically

demanding text in a second language. The visual representation validates and extends the findings from the semi-structured questionnaires and interviews, highlighting learners' concerns about the difficulty of understanding Shakespeare's archaic language and its impact on their confidence in succeeding in



English Paper 2.

Figure 1: Participant 25 image of frustration with the complex language used in *Macbeth*

The image emphasises how learners make meaning of their experiences with *Macbeth*. Kitchen (2009) posits that narratives are fundamental to understanding lived experiences, while Clandinin and Huber (2010) stress the importance of exploring meaning-making through such personal expressions. The

drawing further illustrates Moris and Paris' (2022) assertion that ABR facilitates the elicitation and sharing of experiences that might not be fully accessible through traditional fieldwork. Here, the participant's artistic expression adds depth to the verbal responses by providing a candid and immediate reflection of feelings, concerns, and insecurities.

Moreover, the drawing aligns with ABR's participatory nature, as Mitchell (2018) and Cohen and Miller (2018) described. It allows the participant to creatively and democratically communicate their perspective, making their experiences accessible to the researcher and a broader audience. The visual methodology employed here effectively highlights the learner's anxiety about *Macbeth*, underscoring the complexity of engaging with Shakespeare's language as an ESL learner.

4.3.1.2. *Dependence on Translation and Educator Support for Macbeth*

Understanding *Macbeth* often requires extensive educator support and time-consuming translation, as confirmed by 34 out of 44 participants in interviews and questionnaires. Participant 23 explained: "Each time I read it, I have to translate the English," describing the process as "demanding." Similarly, Participant 2 stated: "I cannot read it on my own without the educator having to explain it in detail to me." This sentiment was echoed by Participant 33, who noted needing "repeated Educator explanations" to grasp the material. Words like "difficult," "confusing," and "reliance on the Educator" frequently appeared in learners' descriptions of their experiences.

This reliance on translation and educator intervention reflects broader challenges learners face in resource-limited environments, as Nqoma, Francis, and Foncha (2017) argued. In township schools, where additional language acquisition resources may be scarce, educator-led scaffolding becomes critical in bridging comprehension gaps. The overwhelming dependence on educator support also suggests that *Macbeth*'s linguistic demands may exceed the independent learning capabilities of many learners, requiring significant instructional time to ensure understanding.

Educator support is crucial in bridging language gaps, especially in challenging texts like *Macbeth*. Learners frequently noted their reliance on educators for assistance, particularly with *Macbeth*. Participant 5 remarked on the need for "my educator's assistance to understand," a dependency reflective of broader challenges in township schools where limited language resources hinder independent learning. Kurdi and Nizam (2022) argue that this reliance on educator support may decrease learners' confidence and engagement over time, as the problematic language of *Macbeth* undermines their sense of autonomy. In contrast, the accessible language of *Changes* allowed for more self-directed learning, with some participants using personal strategies, such as a dictionary, as seen in Participant 3's

response. This aligns with Pardede's (2021) findings that short stories can promote autonomy and motivation due to their more straightforward structure and language.

4.3.1.3. Pronunciation Challenges and Anxiety in *Macbeth*

In addition to vocabulary and syntax, 28 participants highlighted struggles with pronunciation in *Macbeth*, which often led to anxiety and hesitation. For instance, Participant 40 stated: "*Macbeth* was hard and confusing...you are lost and scared that some words you will pronounce wrong." This fear of mispronunciation was reinforced by other participants who described the language as "intimidating," "scary," and "stressful." Participants 33, 8, and 6 also reported feelings of inadequacy tied to the fear of making errors in front of peers, emphasising the emotional toll of language barriers.

These anxieties align with Wood and Wood's (1993) findings on the emotional dimensions of language challenges, highlighting how fears of incorrect pronunciation can disrupt fluency and diminish learners' confidence. Such barriers necessitate supportive and nonjudgmental teaching strategies to help learners navigate challenging vocabulary without additional stress. Creating an environment where learners feel safe to experiment with pronunciation can mitigate the psychological burden and encourage greater engagement with the text.

Learners also cited figurative language in *Macbeth* as an additional source of difficulty, with 4 out of 12 participants from the questionnaires and interviews highlighting this issue. Participant 4 described *Macbeth* as "more challenging to read...because it has more complicated figures of speech," underscoring how these classical literary devices confuse learners unfamiliar with such elements. Similarly, Participant 8 stated, "The figures of speech confuse me. I don't even know when to find them," revealing a lack of familiarity with identifying and interpreting these expressions. Participant 43 added, "When they use metaphors or similes in *Macbeth*, it makes me feel like I'm lost because I don't know what they mean." This complexity can overwhelm learners, particularly those without the higher-order thinking skills to analyse such language effectively.

Bloom and Bates (2021) highlight that understanding figurative language demands a contextual grasp of its meaning, a skill that is particularly challenging for ESL learners without adequate guidance. The learners' responses confirm this need for instructional support to help them navigate and appreciate these complexities.

4.3.1.4. Language Accessibility in *Changes*

The findings from the interviews and questionnaires indicate that the anthology *Changes* is widely regarded as more accessible and less intimidating than *Macbeth*. Although not all participants explicitly compared the two texts, 80% of respondents (35 out of 44) expressed a more positive attitude toward *Changes*, particularly highlighting its straightforward language, relatability, and potential to improve English skills. Several participants directly commented on the accessibility of *Changes*. Participant 5 shared: "I do think being taught *Changes* can improve my English language skills because when I read stories, I come across bombastic words which the educator explains to me. Sometimes, I use a dictionary, which improves my language skills." Similarly, Participant 8 said: "I'm extremely interested because they are easily understandable, and I relate with other stories. It can improve my English skills because I love Short Stories, which are easily understandable." These reflections demonstrate that learners see *Changes* as a tool to enhance their vocabulary and confidence in language use.

The relatability of short stories in *Changes* also emerged as a critical factor in its accessibility. Participant 8 elaborated: "The stories are about things that happen always in our lives and in the community," citing specific examples such as *Triumph*, which features a high school learner living in informal settlements, and *Rejection*, which discusses polygamy, a topic some participants recognised within their cultural context. This alignment with learners' lived experiences likely fosters their engagement and understanding.

In contrast to *Macbeth*, which was often described as complex and alienating, the more straightforward structure and relatable language of *Changes* were frequently emphasized. Participant 4 noted that short stories are "more literal," while *Macbeth* features "complicated figures of speech." Participant 19 remarked, "I am very confident because the language used in *Changes* is the same language I have been learning for all my school years. I believe there is not much difference in it."

The accessible language and cultural relevance of *Changes* resonate with Abuzahra and Farrah's (2015) findings, which suggest that relatable language and culturally aligned content improve ESL learners' comprehension and foster positive attitudes toward their studies. Participant responses affirm this, with 80% of learners agreeing that *Changes* is relatable, accessible, and supportive of their English language development.

Participant 27's drawing features numerous smiley emojis, some with hearts in their eyes, love-struck emojis, and heart emojis, reflecting an overwhelmingly positive emotional response to reading the short story anthology. This visual representation is accompanied by words such as "excited," "enjoyable," and "make me be positive," as well as the participant's written description: "I was really excited because short stories are easy to read and some of them are relative and it improves my English language skills, and they're enjoyable and understandable."



Figure 2: Participant 27 expressed excitement about reading the short story anthology *Changes*.

The participant's drawing underscores enthusiasm for studying the short stories, reflecting the theme of "Positive Engagement with Short Stories in *Changes*." This image highlights the contrasting experience of learners when engaging with short stories, as opposed to the challenges associated with the language complexity of *Macbeth*. The positive emojis and the participant's explicit statements about the relatability,

ease of reading, and skill-building aspects of short stories reveal their perception of this literary form as accessible, enjoyable, and practical. This aligns with Cohen and Miller's (2018) argument that visual methodologies offer innovative ways for participants to reflect on and express their experiences. Here, the participant's artwork communicates their sense of empowerment and positivity, highlighting the short stories' contribution to their English language development and overall enjoyment of literature.

The participant's written statement reinforces their drawing, offering insights into why they feel positive about the anthology. The relatability and clarity of the stories are key factors in their excitement, as these aspects make the text accessible and meaningful to them. This aligns with Cohen and Miller's (2018) findings that artistic expressions often reveal dimensions of participant experiences that verbal methods may only partially capture.

4.3.1.5. Attitudinal Resistance Toward *Macbeth*

Participants expressed significant frustration and resistance when studying *Macbeth*, with 5 respondents from the questionnaires and interviews explicitly citing the language as the primary barrier. Participant 3 stated, "I am not interested in studying *Macbeth* because...the English they use bores me to death," while Participant 5 noted that the language "is not easy to read, and...will only confuse my brain." Participant 8 further emphasised this disconnect: "It cannot improve my English skills because...I have never heard someone using 'thou,' 'shall,' and 'tis' when speaking or writing." Participant 43 echoed similar feelings, explaining, "*Macbeth* is written in English that I've never been exposed to the English is hard to understand what is said or what is happening when you read for the first time." These sentiments align with Min's (2023) findings that the Shakespearean language creates accessibility issues for ESL learners, often contributing to feelings of alienation and frustration.

The strong language learners used, such as "bores me to death" and "confuse my brain," reveals the deep emotional resistance to engaging with *Macbeth*, mainly due to its perceived irrelevance to their linguistic and cultural experiences. These responses align with Min's (2023) findings that the archaic language of Shakespeare can alienate ESL learners, further discouraging them from engaging with the text. These insights prompted me to reflect on my teaching strategies and explore ways to make *Macbeth* more accessible and relevant to my learners.

Reflective Diary Entry (February 20, 2024)

During my extra study period, I observed that learners became disengaged when struggling with the text's complex language. For example, when reading aloud, many learners sighed audibly or expressed frustration, saying, "Why can't they just write it in normal English?" I realised this resistance stems not just from the complexity of the language but from their perception that it is irrelevant to their lives and language learning goals. To address this, I frequently paused the reading to provide modern translations or explanations, which helped alleviate some of their frustration.

Figure 3: Reflective Diary Entry (20 February 2024)

Reflecting on these findings, it becomes clear that I recognise that learners' resistance to *Macbeth* stems from linguistic challenges and a lack of perceived relevance to their real-world experiences. While I have made efforts to support learners, such as providing modern translations and breaking down scenes during class discussions, these interventions were not enough to address their resistance fully. Thus, I tried the following strategy:

Reflective Diary Entry (April 29, 2024)

Today, I embarked on a new strategy by combining the teaching of Paper 2 (Literature) and Paper 3 (Creative Writing) in a single lesson... For *Macbeth*, the topics included an argumentative essay: "The Relevance of *Macbeth* in Modern Times, Should Learners Continue Studying This Drama? Is it Still Relevant to Today's Youth?" Learners were encouraged to explore their opinions on whether *Macbeth* should remain part of the curriculum. This task prompted lively discussions, with some learners arguing that its themes of ambition and power are timeless, while others felt that the archaic language made it inaccessible and outdated.

Figure 4: Reflective Diary Entry (29 April 2024)

Through this activity, I observed that learners were more engaged when voicing their opinions about the text. Those who initially resisted *Macbeth* participated actively, as they appreciated the platform to express their frustrations and propose alternative perspectives.

This strategy reinforced the importance of creating spaces where learners can critically engage with prescribed texts. Moving forward, I plan to expand these opportunities by incorporating structured debates or panel discussions where learners defend their opinions about the relevance of *Macbeth*. Such activities validate their perspectives, encourage critical thinking, and deepen their understanding of the text's themes and implications.

While learners' resistance underscores the challenges of studying Shakespeare, it also highlights the potential for meaningful engagement when their voices are heard and their perspectives are valued. This intervention demonstrates that fostering a sense of agency can transform frustration into critical exploration and appreciation.

4.3.1.6. *Cultural Disconnect in Macbeth*

In addition to linguistic challenges, from the questionnaires and interviews, 33 participants articulated feelings of alienation stemming from the text's cultural unfamiliarity. Participant 35 articulated a sense of alienation: "The English of *Macbeth* is...in difficult levels...because I'm not familiar with such English." Bloom and Bates (2021) argue that the colonial legacy of teaching Shakespeare, often embedded with "Englishness," can feel exclusionary for ESL learners who may not connect with the cultural or historical context. Participant 35 added that *Macbeth* is more suited for "candidates in multiracial schools that study English as a Home Language," illustrating how learners perceive the text outside their cultural or linguistic reality. Participant 43 suggested that "schools and educators should explore ancient English before attempting to read *Macbeth*," recommending that background knowledge of Shakespearean English could improve comprehension. 8 participants echoed this sentiment, noting that understanding the historical and linguistic context of the text would make it more approachable. This comment reflects the value of scaffolding, where providing historical and linguistic context helps learners build a foundation before tackling complex texts. Harvey, Deuel, and Marlatt (2020) found that when educators introduce a text by discussing its historical and linguistic background, it can enhance learners' understanding and reduce the initial intimidation associated with older language. Integrating lessons on Shakespearean English and the Elizabethan era before reading *Macbeth* could make the language and cultural references more relatable, allowing learners to approach the play with greater familiarity and confidence.

Dyches (2017) also highlights this perception, arguing that curricula focusing on canonical British literature often lack "mirrors" for learners to see their experiences reflected, instead offering "windows" into foreign cultural narratives. These findings align with Participant 8's observation, "*Macbeth* does not relate to our lives or what we see. It feels like it's written for someone else." Amazingly, my learners addressed this finding earlier in the year when they creatively engaged with the play through a self-initiated project, and I commented on this in my reflective diary as indicated below.

Reflective Diary Entry (March 3, 2024):

Today, something extraordinary happened that left me proud and inspired. One of my learners sent me a direct message on Instagram. It contained a short video clip of her and four classmates acting out Act 1, Scene 1 of *Macbeth*. They were performing the witches' famous spell, "Fair is foul, and foul is fair," with passion and creativity. Their use of sound effects, an eerie blend of witches' laughter, thunder, and lightning, made it even more remarkable. Over the holidays, they decided to go even further. They made more videos, wearing costumes and acting out scenes in different locations within their communities. This wasn't just a simple classroom activity; it became a creative project that connected them to the play on a deeper level.

Figure 5: Reflective Diary Entry (3 March 2024)

This creative project was transformative. By adapting *Macbeth* to their environments, these learners could connect with the text in meaningful and relevant ways. The use of local settings, costumes, and sound effects enabled them to see the play through the lens of their own experiences. This activity helped them overcome the cultural disconnect and demonstrated their ability to reinterpret Shakespeare's work in a way that resonated with their lives.

Reflecting on this initiative by learners, I realise that such creative opportunities are vital to addressing learners' cultural disconnect. While the videos were learner-driven, I now see the value in incorporating similar initiatives as part of my teaching strategy. For example, I could encourage more structured creative projects, such as having learners rewrite and perform scenes in modern or culturally relevant contexts. Discussions around the parallels between *Macbeth*'s themes and local stories could further bridge the cultural gap.

Although this intervention was effective, there is still room for more intentional efforts. For instance, I could integrate comparative studies, pairing *Macbeth* with African or South African texts that explore similar themes, such as ambition or power struggles. This would provide learners with "mirrors" alongside the "windows" offered by Shakespeare, creating a more balanced and inclusive curriculum.

Ultimately, the cultural disconnect in *Macbeth* presents an opportunity for creative teaching and learner engagement. By fostering activities that allow learners to reinterpret the text within their contexts, I can help them see its relevance and value, transforming their sense of alienation into ownership and connection.

4.3.1.7. Implications for Curriculum Design

The findings of this study highlight the need for educators to employ supportive strategies and a balanced curriculum that combines accessible texts with more complex works. In the case of challenging texts like *Macbeth*, learners often experience significant barriers due to the archaic language and cultural disconnection. To help alleviate these challenges, educators might consider using modernised resources, translation aids, and contextual explanations to support learner's understanding and engagement.

Reflecting on my teaching practices, I have attempted to make *Macbeth* more accessible for my learners, addressing linguistic and cultural challenges. For instance, when revisiting the play during the fourth term, I took my learners to the media centre for a revision session. We watched videos summarising the play, with illustrations and a narrated voice explaining each act's key events, themes, and quotes. The learners brought their exercise books to take notes and followed along with the drama text. The change in an environment energised them, and they found the multimedia format refreshing and effective in helping them understand the content. This I had gathered from their enthusiastic reactions about leaving the classroom and their feedback, which included comments like, "We should have done this sooner," as they felt it gave them greater clarity. I also noted this in my reflective diary as seen below.

4th Term Reflection – Revising *Macbeth*

The change of environment energised them; they were excited to be outside the classroom and found the videos a refreshing and straightforward way to review the content. The combination of visuals, narration, and sound helped them grasp the important themes and moments in the play. Seeing how much they enjoyed this method was advantageous, as they had only been exposed to reading the text and our class notes throughout the year.

Figure 6: Reflective Diary (4th Term Revision Sessions)

This approach aligns with Bloom and Bates (2021), who suggest that incorporating diverse and relatable materials—such as multimedia resources—can make challenging texts more accessible and engaging for learners. By integrating these modern tools into my teaching, I have witnessed learners connect more deeply with *Macbeth*'s themes and characters, making the play feel more relevant to their experiences. This strategy helped learners understand the play's narrative and allowed them to engage with the content interactively and creatively.

In addition to the videos, I introduced the movie adaptation of *Macbeth*, focusing on crucial scenes like the opening battle, King Duncan's murder, Banquo's ghost at the banquet, and Lady *Macbeth*'s persuasion of *Macbeth*. I paused the movie at crucial moments to ask learners to refer to their books,

encouraging them to follow along with the text as it was being acted out. The learners responded enthusiastically to this method, as it provided them with a vivid understanding of the drama that reading alone had not offered. This multi-modal approach allowed them to visualize the scenes, making the play more engaging and accessible.

4th Term Reflection – Revising *Macbeth*

As the revision sessions continued, I decided to show them the movie adaptation of *Macbeth*, focusing only on the key scenes. The learners loved this approach; it gave them a more vivid understanding of the drama and a chance to connect the visual elements with the text. They were enthusiastic and engaged, and I could see that this multi-media approach was helping them internalize the play in a way that reading alone hadn't.

Figure 7: 4th Term Revision (*Macbeth*)

I also created a *Macbeth* Game Show Quiz to engage learners in a fun, interactive way (APPENDIX A). This quiz included multiple-choice, true-or-false, and lightning-round questions, prompting learners to think critically while competing with their peers. The quiz helped learners test their knowledge and recall details of the play but also provided a sense of enjoyment and accomplishment. I knew this because their eagerness to participate was palpable. Learners were practically fighting to be the one to answer next, with some shouting answers without waiting for their turn or to be called on. The beautiful chaos of it all demonstrated their engagement and excitement. When they got answers right, their shouts of "Yeeeeesss!!!" and celebratory high-fives with their peers showcased their sense of accomplishment. Witnessing this lively scene was both funny and deeply fulfilling, as it was evident that they were thoroughly enjoying the experience while reinforcing their understanding of the play. This interactive strategy helped break the monotony of traditional revision and motivated learners to participate actively.

Incorporating these multimedia elements—videos, movie adaptations, and interactive quizzes—helped make *Macbeth* more accessible, turning what was once a challenging and distant text into a lively, engaging experience. As highlighted earlier, this was evident in how they responded in class. This approach allowed learners to deepen their understanding of the play and built their confidence and enthusiasm for engaging with literature. Learners enjoyed these activities, and their participation and engagement noticeably increased during these sessions.

However, while this approach successfully engages learners, there is room for further improvement. The feedback from the learners indicates that these multimedia strategies were effective, but more personalised connections to their cultural and linguistic backgrounds can still be integrated. This aligns

with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasises that learning is a social and cultural activity deeply influenced by context. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) concept suggests that learners achieve higher levels of understanding when supported by more knowledgeable others through scaffolding. These multimedia tools, paired with educator guidance, acted as scaffolding, helping learners navigate the complex language and themes of *Macbeth*.

Moreover, the interactions and collaborative efforts during these activities reflect the importance of social interaction in cognitive development, another key aspect of Sociocultural Theory. The learners' enthusiastic participation, peer encouragement, and mutual celebration of achievements highlight the role of social dynamics in shaping positive attitudes and deepening understanding.

Incorporating cultural tools like language, visual aids, and discussions further reinforced their ability to internalize the content. Vygotsky's emphasis on mediation underscores the value of these multimedia elements, as they served as tools to bridge the gap between the learners' prior knowledge and the demands of the text, making the learning experience more meaningful and engaging.

To fully leverage the potential of Sociocultural Theory, future strategies could include designing activities that are more directly connected to the learners' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, providing opportunities for them to see themselves reflected in the learning material. For example, I could further build on this by asking learners to reinterpret scenes in a context more familiar to them or relate the themes of *Macbeth* to contemporary issues they encounter daily. Introducing more culturally relatable materials could help make the play even more accessible, offering learners a more inclusive experience that bridges the gap between Shakespeare's work and their own lives.

Ultimately, the study of *Macbeth* in this context underscores the value of balancing complex texts with more accessible ones. By introducing a complementary text like *Changes*, which is more relatable, educators can provide learners with an entry point into literary analysis that gradually builds the skills and confidence needed to approach more challenging works. This balanced approach fosters an inclusive learning environment where learners feel supported as they develop the critical skills to analyse complex literature.

Incorporating these strategies, I can continue to support my learners in overcoming the linguistic and cultural barriers they face, enabling them to enjoy and appreciate literature more meaningfully.

4.3.2 Cultural Relevance in Studying *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*

The theme of cultural relevance underscores the connection between learners' identities, lived experiences, and the literature they study. This analysis highlights how participants' responses reflect a preference for texts that resonate with their cultural and personal backgrounds, contrasting sharply with their perceptions of the prescribed texts *Macbeth* and *Changes*.

4.3.2.1. Preference for South African and African Literature

One of the questions in the Questionnaire provided participants with images of book covers and summaries of the different books and they were asked, "Which of these books would you prefer to read as part of your Grade 12 English curriculum if you were to choose new prescribed books to replace *Macbeth* and *Changes*, which would you choose and why?". Out of 44 participants, 36 preferred texts rooted in African contexts, suggesting that culturally relevant materials would enhance engagement and understanding. Participant 32, for example, favoured '*Spud*' and '*Young Blood*' for their South African settings and relatable narratives. The familiarity with these stories, as Participant 32 mentions, comes from their shared setting in the Township of Umlazi located in Durban, offering learners a direct reflection of their environment. This response aligns with the findings by Boubekur (2021), who argues that culturally relevant texts foster intercultural competence and enhance engagement by presenting narratives that reflect learners' social and cultural realities.

Similarly, Participant 25 strongly preferred '*My Children My Africa*' and '*No Sweetness Here*,' explaining that the works "explore identity, culture, value, and beliefs." This response underscores the idea that learners find meaning in the literature that mirrors their historical and cultural heritage. Dyches (2017) emphasised that curricula dominated by British literature could alienate learners by lacking culturally familiar "mirrors" that reflect their identities and experiences. In this context, *Macbeth*, as a foreign text "that took place overseas," appears less relevant, failing to connect with learners' immediate contexts and perspectives on African heritage and identity.

4.3.2.2. Value of Self-Reflection and Historical Context

Three participants emphasised the importance of self-reflection and historical awareness in literature. For instance, participant 25 noted that '*My Children My Africa*' could facilitate "self-reflection" and provide an "opportunity to learn about my history." This connection to personal and historical identity through literature resonates with Kromhout and Scheckle's (2021) perspective that texts should enable learners

to see their own lives reflected in the stories they read. Participant 23 also noted a similar value in Trevor Noah's *'Born a Crime,'* which discusses apartheid from a mixed-race perspective, allowing learners to engage with their country's history through relatable storytelling.

This sense of historical resonance aligns with the work of Bloom and Bates (2021), who argue that a decolonial approach in education should prioritise texts that empower learners by reflecting their cultural and historical contexts. When participants see their experiences reflected in texts like *'Born a Crime'* or *'My Children My Africa,'* they can feel pride and relevance, reinforcing positive attitudes toward literature and enhancing their educational experience.

4.3.2.3. *Engaging Narratives and Relatable Themes*

Seven participants preferred relatable themes in African literature, especially those reflecting everyday struggles, humour, and moral lessons. Participant 23 described Trevor Noah's *Born a Crime* as "entertaining and fun" because "Trevor uses humour to speak about his tragedies," making the story engaging and accessible. This response supports research by Ceylan (2016), who found that relatable narratives promote learner engagement by connecting with familiar themes. Participants appreciated how Trevor Noah's story entertained and reflected on race, identity, and humour in challenging situations, which would enhance their enjoyment and understanding.

Furthermore, Participant 32 noted that *'Spud,'* focusing on "teenage boys who get into troubles at their boarding school," speaks to issues relevant to learners' age and social context. By contrast, *Macbeth,* with its themes of ambition and betrayal set in an unfamiliar context, fails to resonate as strongly. The research by Olifant et al. (2019) highlights that when learners' reading materials align with their lived experiences, they are more motivated to engage and learn, underscoring the need for literature that reflects learners' backgrounds and interests.

4.3.2.4. *Preserving African Heritage through Storytelling*

Four participants also indicated that African literature plays a role in preserving cultural heritage. Participant 43, for example, preferred *'No Sweetness Here,'* noting that "the collection of stories by Ama Ata Aidoo explores different African challenges" and "keeps the tradition of African storytelling alive." This highlights how African literature can foster a sense of cultural pride and continuity. This view is supported by Kartikaningtyas (2015), who notes that storytelling in familiar cultural contexts encourages learners to value their heritage while engaging with the language and lessons embedded in such narratives.

The emphasis on African storytelling also aligns with the study by Hernandez et al. (2021), which advocates for language education incorporating cultural knowledge and linguistic instruction. Learners can enhance their language skills by studying African stories while engaging with culturally significant narratives, deepening their appreciation for language and heritage.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory further underscores the importance of such practices. According to this theory, learning is a social and cultural activity, and the use of culturally relevant materials, like African literature, can serve as powerful tools for mediation and internalization. Vygotsky (1978) highlights that cultural tools, including stories, not only facilitate learning but also help learners connect their prior experiences and cultural backgrounds to new knowledge. This connection enhances their understanding and fosters a deeper appreciation for their heritage. Additionally, Vygotsky's concept of the ZPD supports the idea that learners can achieve greater cognitive growth when guided through culturally meaningful content. For example, engaging with African stories through classroom discussions and collaborative activities allows learners to internalize cultural values while developing critical thinking and language skills.

As Kromhout and Scheckle (2021) suggest, texts that reflect learners' own experiences and cultural contexts provide opportunities for shared meaning-making. In this case, African storytelling becomes a medium through which learners can navigate their cultural identities while fostering a sense of pride in their heritage. The process of social interaction and scaffolded learning enables learners to connect with the themes, characters, and lessons embedded in African narratives, enriching both their cognitive and cultural development.

This interplay between language and culture highlights the dual role of African literature in preserving heritage and promoting linguistic and cognitive growth, making it an indispensable tool in educational settings.

4.3.3 Learner Confidence in Studying *Macbeth* vs. *Changes*

The theme of learner confidence in understanding prescribed texts reveals contrasting attitudes between *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*. This analysis explores how linguistic familiarity, educator support, and text accessibility shape learners' confidence levels, influencing their engagement and motivation in studying these texts.

4.3.3.1. Mixed Confidence Levels with *Macbeth's* Archaic Language

Participants exhibited mixed confidence levels regarding their comprehension of *Macbeth*, primarily due to the complex, archaic language. Out of 45 participants, 37 expressed low confidence in their ability to understand *Macbeth*, with some describing the text as challenging to translate into modern English. For example, Participant 23, stated, "I am not confident because it is hard to translate to modern English... the English used in *Macbeth*... is confusing to my generation." This aligns with findings by Min (2023), which indicate that the Shakespearean language poses challenges for ESL learners, often diminishing their confidence and engagement with the material.

However, 5 participants reported higher confidence levels, finding ways to connect with the text linguistically or contextually. Some learners, like Participant 25, found a level of familiarity with the language due to its similarity with the language of the Bible, which they felt increased their comprehension and confidence. Participant 25 noted feeling "confident and optimistic because [the] language of *Macbeth* is familiar with a language used in a Bible/Holy Book." This response illustrates that, for some learners, familiarity with similar linguistic structures can serve as a bridge to understanding Shakespearean English, reinforcing research by Bloom and Bates (2021) that culturally and linguistically familiar references can help learners feel more grounded and engaged in challenging texts. As stated in my reflective diary, the following approach ensured my learners were not overwhelmed by the unfamiliarity.

Reflective Diary Entry: February 20, 2024

During my extra lessons we have managed to complete Act 1-3 of *Macbeth*, the lessons are interactive, and learner centred, learners take turns reading the different characters, they are always keen to read and often fight over reading some characters lol. In between our reading we stop, and I allow them to ask questions and I explain, making sure that they understand what is going on, especially since they read the Shakespearean English, they get confused a lot so we have to stop and discuss for clarity. I find that when learners read the drama aloud, they seem to understand the story line, however, the reading pace tends to be slow as they get stuck on some words and I help them pronounce them, they would laugh at weird sounding words and ask what is going on or what does this statement mean? Then only when I explain do they get it and we move on, they would even make a loud "ooooow" sound indicating that they understand.

Figure 8: Reflective Diary Entry, 20 February 2024

To further emphasise the mixed confidence feelings that are expressed by participants, Participant 23's drawing depicts a face divided into two halves, representing contrasting emotions. On the left side, the

face smiles with a speech bubble reading "The Legendary William Shakespeare," reflecting admiration for the literary significance of Shakespeare's work. On the right side, the face appears sad with a speech bubble stating, "The language is challenging to read," conveying frustration with the complexity of Shakespeare's language. The caption below the image, "I have missed (mixed) feelings towards Macbeth," encapsulates the learner's ambivalent emotions.



Figure 9: Participant 23 Expressed Mixed Feelings Towards Macbeth.

The two contrasting halves of the face reflect the learner's internal conflict. The admiration for *Macbeth* as a work by "The Legendary William Shakespeare" underscores the cultural and literary value that learners associate with the play. This positive emotion is counterbalanced by the frustration expressed on the other side, where the learner highlights the linguistic challenge of engaging with Shakespeare's complex and archaic language. This dual perspective is echoed in the above findings from the semi-structured questionnaires, where learners frequently expressed both respect for Shakespeare's reputation and anxiety over the accessibility of his work.

4.3.3.2. *The Role of Educator Support in Boosting Confidence*

Educator support emerged as a critical factor in building learner confidence with *Macbeth*. Participant 20 mentioned feeling "confident... because our educator tries to make it easy for us to read and pronounce the words," emphasising the importance of educator intervention in navigating complex language. This response highlights that learners' confidence can be bolstered by instructional scaffolding, which, as noted by Nqoma, Francis, and Foncha (2017), is particularly essential in township schools where resources may be limited, and language proficiency is a significant challenge.

Participant 19, despite expressing low confidence, similarly noted reliance on their educator's ability, saying, "I trust my educator's ability to make me understand the language." This reflects the importance of educator-led support in mitigating language-related barriers, reinforcing findings by Olifant et al. (2019) that practical guidance can positively influence learners' attitudes toward challenging material. Educator support appears essential in fostering a sense of progress and capability among learners, helping them navigate unfamiliar linguistic structures.

4.3.3.3. *Low Confidence and Frustration with Language Complexity*

Conversely, some learners struggled with *Macbeth* due to its "outdated" and "challenging vocabulary," as Participant 4 noted, expressing that "even the pages that simplify the English are hard to comprehend." This perception of inaccessibility discourages some learners, as Participant 22 shared: "I am not that much confident... I end up discouraged on understanding the *Macbeth* drama." This sense of frustration highlights the affective component of attitude formation, as Wood and Wood (1993) noted, where repeated difficulties can lead to negative feelings and a decline in self-assurance.

Participants like Participant 6 echoed this sentiment, describing the language as "too much for my liking and extremely difficult." Such responses underline the potential for disengagement when learners face persistent obstacles in comprehension, especially without sufficient support. This highlights the need for adapted materials or approaches that present Shakespearean language in ways that accommodate learners' proficiency levels and reduce intimidation.

4.3.3.4. *High Confidence and Familiarity with Changes*

In contrast to *Macbeth*, *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* inspired confidence among 35 participants, largely due to the familiar language and themes. Participant 43 stated, "It is easier to read and understand the language of Short Stories in *Changes* because I'm familiar with the type of English,"

while Participant 19 expressed confidence because the language in *Changes* is "the same language I have been learning for all my school years." This sense of linguistic continuity supports findings by Abuzahra and Farrah (2015), who argue that familiar language structures foster learner confidence and engagement by reducing the cognitive load required to understand the text.

Short stories' shorter, less complex nature in *Changes* also enhances learner confidence. Participant 2 noted that "short stories normally have simpler English than dramas," while Participant 9 appreciated how *Changes* exposed them to new vocabulary in a manageable way. This aligns with Kurdi and Nizam's (2022) research, which emphasises that short stories offer accessible language structures, making them more suitable for fostering language confidence in ESL learners.

4.3.3.5. *The Impact of Comprehensible Texts on Language Learning Confidence*

Learners also expressed that *Changes* contributed to their language development, further building their confidence. Participant 20 stated that as they read, "Every one of them I get to improve my language reading skills," underscoring the importance of gradual learning and familiarity in boosting self-assurance. This incremental improvement reinforces Olifant et al.'s (2019) perspective that positive, manageable experiences with literature can cultivate a more confident approach to language learning, contrasting with the frustration often associated with *Macbeth*'s complexity.

Participant 29 found additional personal relevance in *Changes*, mentioning that the stories "gave me a direction on how to live," which enhanced their connection to the material and, by extension, their confidence. This reflects Kartikaningtyas's (2015) argument that culturally resonant texts can make literature feel more meaningful and accessible, promoting confidence and enthusiasm in learners. As an intervention to boost learner confidence, I made use of the following approach, as noted in my reflective diary:

Reflective Diary Entry: April 29, 2024

"I combined Paper 2 (Literature) and Paper 3 (Creative Writing) by assigning essay topics related to *Changes*... learners explored their favourite stories, reflecting on themes and personal connections. This deepened their understanding while boosting their confidence in both language and literature."

Figure 10: Reflective Diary Entry (29 April 2024)

4.3.3.6. Implications for Curriculum Design

The analysis of this theme indicates that while *Macbeth* poses confidence challenges due to its archaic language, supportive teaching and relatable linguistic connections (e.g., the language of the Bible) can help mitigate these issues for some learners. However, the broader appeal of *Changes* highlights the importance of accessible and culturally relevant texts in fostering confidence. The anthology's familiar language and relatable themes allow learners to engage actively and confidently, underscoring the value of aligning curricular materials with learners' language proficiency and cultural backgrounds.

There are areas for improvement in my teaching strategies that I need to implement; for *Macbeth*, I plan to develop simplified, scaffolded summaries that maintain the original play's themes and ideas but reduce linguistic barriers. Interactive group discussions comparing Shakespearean and modern English versions of key scenes could also enhance understanding. For *Changes*, I aim to provide more opportunities for learners to present their insights creatively, such as through debates or multimedia projects that connect the stories to their personal experiences. Additionally, integrating reflective exercises like discussion prompts can help learners articulate their thoughts more confidently.

These strategies align closely with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasises the importance of scaffolding and social interaction in learning. Scaffolding, as defined by Vygotsky (1978), involves providing learners with the necessary support to bridge the gap between their current understanding and the demands of the learning task. By introducing simplified summaries and guiding learners through the complexities of *Macbeth*, I can scaffold their cognitive development within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), enabling them to grasp the play's themes and ideas more effectively. Additionally, interactive group discussions serve as a form of social mediation, allowing learners to co-construct knowledge through collaborative exploration of Shakespeare's text. This not only enhances comprehension but also encourages learners to develop critical thinking and interpretive skills in a supportive environment.

For *Changes*, providing creative outlets for learners to connect the stories to their personal experiences aligns with the Sociocultural Theory's emphasis on the role of cultural tools in learning. According to Vygotsky (1978), cultural tools such as language, storytelling, and multimedia projects are instrumental in mediating cognitive and emotional growth. These activities allow learners to internalize the cultural and thematic elements of the anthology while fostering a sense of ownership and pride in their cultural heritage.

Furthermore, reflective exercises such as discussion prompts encourage internalization of ideas, transforming external interactions into personal understanding. Vygotsky's concept of internalization underscores the importance of these activities, as they enable learners to articulate their thoughts and develop greater confidence in engaging with complex texts.

By incorporating these strategies, I aim to create a curriculum that not only addresses the linguistic and cognitive challenges posed by *Macbeth* but also leverages the cultural relevance of *Changes* to enhance learner engagement and confidence. This approach underscores the critical role of culturally responsive teaching in bridging the gap between curriculum design and learner needs.

These findings suggest that integrating more accessible texts into the curriculum, like *Changes*, can enhance learner confidence, while additional support should be provided for complex texts like *Macbeth*. By balancing classic and relatable literature, educators can create a supportive environment that builds confidence and reduces frustration, ultimately fostering a more positive attitude toward literature study.

4.3.4 Peer Influence and Expectations in Studying *Macbeth*

The theme of peer influence and expectations reflects how learners' attitudes towards *Macbeth* are shaped by their personal experiences and the perceptions and opinions of others around them. Participants' responses demonstrate positive and negative influences, revealing a complex relationship between peer expectations, curiosity, and individual motivation.

4.3.4.1. Negative Peer Influence on Learners' Initial Attitudes

A small sample of the participants reported a lack of initial interest in *Macbeth*, influenced by peers who described the text as difficult or unappealing. Out of 45 participants, 5 expressed disinterest due to negative peer feedback. For example, Participant 24 stated, "I am not interested in studying the drama *Macbeth* because I've heard that the drama is difficult to read due to Shakespeare English." Similarly, Participant 39 mentioned they were initially "not interested because many previous learners were saying *Macbeth* is hard to understand." These responses illustrate how negative peer opinions can create a bias before learners even engage with the text, leading to a lack of initial motivation.

This response aligns with Olufemi's (2012) discussion on Observational Learning, which suggests that individuals often adopt attitudes based on the behaviours and attitudes they observe in their social circles. In this case, the perception of *Macbeth* as a problematic and challenging text is reinforced by peer influence, shaping learners' initial expectations and attitudes toward the drama.

4.3.4.2. Shift in Attitude through Personal Engagement and Educator Support

Despite initial negative perceptions, 4 participants noted a change in attitude once they began reading *Macbeth*. Participant 39, who initially felt discouraged by peer influence, eventually found interest in the text, stating, "When we started reading, I started to be interested in *Macbeth* because even Mrs. Zulu was doing the wonders when she teaches us." Participant 39's change in attitude aligns with the idea that learners perform beyond their current capabilities when guided by a more knowledgeable other, in this case, the educator. This transformation underscores the significant role of direct engagement and supportive teaching in overcoming preconceived biases formed by peer influence. Nqoma, Francis, and Foncha (2017) noted that educators play a crucial role in re-engaging learners by making the text more accessible and relatable. Another learner indicated that her perceptions of *Macbeth* evolved with increased exposure and practice. One participant noted that they initially thought *Macbeth* "should have been read by learners at Varsity." However, with time, they found the drama to be "enjoyable, interesting," and simply requiring "a little practice to understand." This shift in attitude demonstrates the value of sustained engagement with challenging texts, as repeated exposure and familiarity can reduce intimidation and foster appreciation.

The shift from peer-influenced disinterest to personal engagement suggests that while peers may set initial expectations, a positive classroom experience can help learners form their perspectives. This supports the findings of Olifant et al. (2019), who argue that effective teaching can mitigate negative preconceptions, fostering a more positive attitude toward challenging texts. Additionally, the Internalization process (Vygotsky, 1978) suggests that while learners initially struggle with new and challenging material, repeated engagement and social interactions help them transform external knowledge into internalized understanding. The peer influence that initially discouraged learners from engaging with *Macbeth* was replaced by educator-mediated learning experiences, allowing them to develop their perspectives and appreciation of the text.

Thus, this shift in attitude highlights the importance of effective pedagogical strategies, educator support, and a classroom environment that fosters motivation and social learning. By leveraging both Motivation Theory and Sociocultural Theory, we can see that learner engagement is not just an individual cognitive process but also a social and cultural phenomenon shaped by interactions, scaffolding, and internal motivation.

4.3.4.3. Positive Peer Influence as a Source of Motivation

In contrast, 3 participants reported positive peer influence as a source of curiosity and motivation. Participant 44, for instance, felt interested in *Macbeth* because of her sister's positive experience, explaining, "I was very interested... since my sister used to tell me that she used to enjoy *Macbeth* while she was doing matric." This highlights how positive peer influence, particularly from family members or trusted figures, can create anticipation and an eagerness to engage with a text.

Similarly, Participant 21 expressed enthusiasm, noting that "many learners that have studied *Macbeth* stated that it is very challenging, and I love challenges, hence why it interests me." Here, peer influence is reframed as an opportunity, with the perceived difficulty of *Macbeth* becoming a motivating factor. This aligns with Annamalai and Muniandy's (2013) findings that positive expectations can boost learner confidence and engagement, suggesting that when challenges are encouraged, learners may feel more inclined to tackle them.

Despite the challenges associated with *Macbeth*, a few learners expressed the importance of approaching it with a positive mindset, and their responses serve as a source of motivation for their peers who have yet to study *Macbeth*. 5 participants highlighted the role of attitude in overcoming the text's difficulties. Participant 39 said "I would advise someone who has not read it... to have a positive attitude towards it," while Participant 21 noted that reading *Macbeth* and *Changes* requires "a positive attitude and mindset." These comments highlight the value of fostering resilience and open-mindedness when approaching complex texts, as a positive outlook can enhance learners' engagement and reduce anxiety related to challenging content.

Dyches (2017) emphasises that attitude can significantly influence a learner's ability to engage with literature, incredibly challenging or unfamiliar material. By encouraging learners to adopt a growth mindset, educators can help learners develop a more constructive approach to reading, which may make texts like *Macbeth* feel more approachable and enjoyable.

4.3.4.4. Curiosity Driven by Contrasting Peer Opinions

Some participants were motivated to validate or challenge peer feedback about *Macbeth*. Participant 13 mentioned being interested in studying *Macbeth* "because a lot of people... were saying it's boring, and its English is hard, so I want to find out... if it's true or a lie." This curiosity-driven response suggests that conflicting peer opinions can lead learners to approach the text with an open mind, motivated to form their own conclusions.

This response demonstrates a critical, independent approach to peer influence, as highlighted by Ghazali (2008), who argues that learners' attitudes are shaped not solely by external feedback but also by their desire for discovery and understanding. For some learners, curiosity about whether peers' claims are valid provides a solid impetus to engage with *Macbeth*, fostering a more investigative and self-directed attitude toward the text.

4.3.4.5. Implications for Classroom Strategies

The analysis of this theme reveals that peer influence, whether positive or negative, plays a significant role in shaping learners' attitudes toward *Macbeth* before they begin studying the text. However, as shown by participants' experiences, these initial attitudes can shift with direct engagement and supportive instruction. Educators can harness this influence by creating a classroom environment, encouraging personal interpretation and critical thinking, helping learners see beyond peer expectations and form their perspectives.

Moreover, educators can leverage positive peer feedback by highlighting past *learners'* successes and interests in *Macbeth*, framing it as a challenging yet rewarding text. Presenting *Macbeth* as an opportunity for intellectual exploration rather than a problematic text to be feared can mitigate negative expectations and foster a more positive outlook among learners. Furthermore, incorporating creative outlets like acting out scenes or using multimedia to explore key themes can help learners form a personal connection with the material, as I observed in my learners' engagement with performance-based tasks. To further support my learners, I plan to provide them with opportunities to explore *Macbeth* beyond peer opinions, through self-directed research or creative presentations, I aim to foster a deeper, more resilient engagement with literature.

Peer influence and expectations play a dual role in learners' engagement with *Macbeth*. While negative peer opinions may initially hinder interest, supportive teaching and a curiosity-driven approach allow learners to reassess these expectations. Encouraging learners to explore literature beyond peer opinions could lead to more authentic, positive engagement, building resilience in learners' attitudes towards challenging texts.

4.3.5 Educator Influence and Pedagogy in Studying *Macbeth* and *Changes*

The theme of educator influence and pedagogy reveals how effective teaching methods and enthusiastic presentations can transform learners' attitudes toward studying texts. The data suggests that educator engagement, creative introductions, and detailed explanations foster a supportive learning environment,

making complex literature more accessible and engaging for learners. This applies to classic dramas like *Macbeth* and short story collections like *Changes*, where the same enthusiasm and effort can bridge the gap between content and learner engagement. Educator influence aligns with the role of the “more knowledgeable other” in Sociocultural Theory. Through scaffolding strategies such as simplified explanations, role play, and multimodal resources, the educator created opportunities for learners to engage with difficult content like *Macbeth*. These interactions are not just instructional but form part of a cultural apprenticeship, where learners co-construct knowledge within their social and linguistic context.

4.3.5.1. *Overcoming Initial Disinterest through Engaging Teaching Methods*

Several participants noted that their initial disinterest in *Macbeth*, often influenced by peers, was reversed through engaging teaching methods. Out of 44 participants, 7 initially expressed disinterest. Participant 39, for example, expressed how he was initially “not interested because many previous learners were saying *Macbeth* is hard to understand” but eventually found themselves engaged, explaining, “When we started reading, I started to be interested in *Macbeth* because even Mrs. Zulu was doing the wonders when she teaches us.” This statement highlights the influential role that effective teaching plays in transforming negative preconceptions, as educators can present challenging texts in ways that feel approachable and exciting. Similarly, participant 3 shared how supportive teaching of *Changes* built their confidence. Participant 3 stated, “I do think being taught *Changes* can improve my English language skills because when I read stories, I come across bombastic words which the educator explains to me.” This highlights how educator intervention, especially in explaining challenging vocabulary, can transform disengagement into a proactive learning experience. Educators’ ability to demystify difficult texts—be it the archaic English of *Macbeth* or advanced vocabulary in *Changes*—creates an inclusive learning environment.

This aligns with Olifant et al. (2019), who found that educators can help reframe learners’ attitudes toward literature by breaking down complex texts and making them relatable. By addressing potential difficulties directly, educators like Mrs. Zulu mitigate learners’ initial resistance and build a sense of curiosity and openness, allowing learners to engage more fully with the material.

4.3.5.2. *Creative and Dramatic Introductions to Macbeth*

5 participants noted a creative and dynamic introduction to the play. Participant 32, described how “the way the educator introduced *Macbeth* to us... was very exciting and colourful, it was like she was there when the play was acted on stage.” This vivid and theatrical approach to introducing *Macbeth* brings the text to life, helping learners visualise the drama and making it relevant and engaging. By presenting

Macbeth with enthusiasm and creative flair, educators can capture learners' imaginations and make challenging content more relatable. While *Macbeth* benefits from educators' creative introductions, the stories in *Changes* also lend themselves to dynamic storytelling. For example, Participant 8 explained, "I'm extremely interested because [the stories] are easily understandable, and I relate with other stories." Educators can amplify this relatability by framing the stories with real-world connections or dramatic flair, helping learners appreciate their cultural and personal significance. These methods mirror strategies used for *Macbeth*, where imaginative and theatrical approaches brought the material to life.

This method resonates with findings from Harvey, Deuel, and Marlatt (2020), who emphasise the importance of using multimodal teaching approaches to help learners connect with literature. While technology may not be readily available in all township schools, creative storytelling and dramatic presentation can enhance engagement and foster a more profound interest in the text. This further suggests that an enthusiastic, imaginative approach can significantly impact learners' attitudes, helping them view literature as a living, engaging experience rather than a static, complex text.

4.3.5.3. Detailed Explanations and Active Engagement with the Text

Participants also emphasised the value of detailed explanations and a supportive learning environment. 9 participants described how the educator's detailed breakdown of *Macbeth* helped them understand the complex language and plot. Participant 18 described how "our educator explains *Macbeth* in detail; she is even able to make us feel like we are in the drama." By breaking down the complex language and plot, the educator provides clarity and context, allowing learners to feel immersed in the story rather than overwhelmed by it. This method of thorough explanation reflects Kromhout and Scheckle's (2021) view that effective teaching in literature requires more than rote instruction; it involves guiding learners through challenging texts with empathy and depth, fostering comprehension and confidence.

Moreover, participant 18 also noted that the educator regularly advised them to "prove by quoting to the drama," whenever they tackled assessment questions. The educator emphasised that, in all responses, whether opinion or inference-based, they should refer directly to the drama and use specific examples from it in their answers or discussions. The educator's emphasis on textual evidence encourages analytical thinking and engagement with the text. This aligns with Bertram and Christiansen's (2017) concept of active learning, where learners are taught to interact with the material critically, reinforcing both comprehension and retention. Such an approach boosts learners' confidence and fosters analytical skills, helping them develop a more meaningful and empowered relationship with literature.

4.3.5.4. Educator as a Motivational Figure

The data indicates that the educator's enthusiasm and dedication positively motivate learners. 10 participants shared comments reflecting their appreciation for an educator who "does wonders" in presenting the material, emphasising the importance of a supportive, inspiring figure in cultivating learners' interest in complex texts. This supports Annamalai and Muniandy's (2013) argument that educator enthusiasm can significantly influence learner motivation and engagement, especially when studying challenging material. Similarly, in teaching *Changes*, educators who highlight the relevance of the stories' themes to learners' lives—such as community, identity, or resilience— can help inspire greater interest and confidence.

The influence of a passionate educator is further highlighted in the shift from initial apprehension to genuine interest seen in Participant 39's statement stating, "When we started reading, I started to be interested in *Macbeth* because even Mrs. Zulu was doing the wonders when she teaches us.". This shift illustrates the educator's role as a motivator whose commitment and skill can help learners overcome initial obstacles and develop an authentic interest in the subject.

4.3.5.5. Implications for Classroom Practice

The analysis reveals that teaching methods, particularly engaging, immersive, and supportive, play a crucial role in shaping learners' attitudes toward not only more accessible texts like *Changes*, but also complex texts like *Macbeth*. Educators who provide creative introductions, thorough explanations, and opportunities for active engagement help demystify complex language and themes, making the material feel more accessible and relatable.

Incorporating these elements into the curriculum could foster a more positive and proactive attitude toward literature study. Educators should consider using dramatic storytelling techniques, immersive explanations, and analytical engagement to enhance learners' experience of literature. By fostering a classroom environment where learners feel supported, interested, and capable of understanding the text, educators can cultivate confidence and enthusiasm in learners, ultimately leading to a more meaningful engagement with challenging literature.

Educator influence and pedagogy are essential in mediating learners' experiences with *Macbeth*. Through creative, detailed, and supportive teaching, educators can help learners navigate complex texts, building confidence and genuine interest. The analysis highlights the transformative impact of effective

teaching on learners' perceptions of literature, reinforcing the value of passionate, dedicated instruction in supporting learners' academic and personal growth.

4.3.6 Enjoyment in Reading *Macbeth* vs. *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*

The theme of enjoyment in reading *Macbeth* versus *Changes* reflects learners' preferences for different literary genres, narrative styles, and themes. Participants' responses show a diversity of perspectives on what makes each text enjoyable, whether it be the dynamic storytelling of *Macbeth* or the relatable, varied narratives in *Changes*.

4.3.6.1. *Enjoyment of Macbeth for Its Drama and Suspense*

A few participants enjoyed reading *Macbeth*, mainly because of its dramatic and suspenseful elements. Eight participants specifically noted that they enjoyed the intrigue and plot twists in *Macbeth*. Participant 23 noted that *Macbeth* is "more enjoyable than *Changes* because it is more fictional," adding that the suspense and unexpected plot twists keep them "holding [their] breath." Similarly, Participant 39 described the experience of reading *Macbeth* as enjoyable because it creates a sense of anticipation, with readers "always wanting to know what is about to happen next."

These responses align with the findings of Dyches (2017), who argues that engaging plot structures and unexpected events can captivate learners, allowing them to immerse themselves in the text. The intrigue and suspense in *Macbeth* encourage readers to explore beyond the language barrier, making the challenging text feel more accessible and entertaining.

4.3.6.2. *Enjoyment Derived from the Interactive Nature of Macbeth*

Six participants appreciated *Macbeth* for its interactive potential in the classroom. Participant 32 noted that "everyone gets a chance to read, and we can hear different voices and talents," enjoying the diversity of character voices and personalities. Participant 43 echoed this, noting that their classmates' participation in reading and acting out the characters made the text "fun to read" and easier to understand.

This aligns with Harvey, Deuel, and Marlatt (2020), who found that interactive approaches, such as reading aloud and role-playing, can enhance learners' enjoyment of literature by making it a shared, dynamic experience. By assigning characters to learners, the drama of *Macbeth* becomes an immersive,

collaborative activity that helps learners engage with the story more deeply, enhancing comprehension and enjoyment.

4.3.6.3. *Macbeth as a Source of Historical and Thematic Fascination*

A few participants found enjoyment in *Macbeth's* historical and thematic elements. 4 participants remarked on the appeal of the play's historical context and exploration of ambition. Participant 9 remarked that *Macbeth* is a "vintage drama enlightening us more about the times of wars between kingdoms," a perspective that speaks to the appeal of exploring different historical contexts and the intrigue of ambition and power struggles. This reflects Kromhout and Scheckle's (2021) argument that literature provides learners with a "vicarious world," allowing them to step into different historical periods and social dynamics, which can be engaging and educational.

Participant 41 also noted a preference for drama over short stories, explaining that while the language of *Macbeth* is challenging, they enjoy the genre's structure and the unique dramatic experience it offers. This response underscores the idea that, despite linguistic barriers, the drama genre can be inherently engaging due to its intensity and focus on pivotal conflicts.

4.3.6.4. *Enjoyment of Changes for Its Relatable Stories and Accessible Language*

In contrast, 27 participants found *Changes* more enjoyable, valuing the anthology for its relatable themes and accessible language. Participant 29 noted that *Changes* "inspires me to understand... difficult words" and includes "stories... about reality." Similarly, Participant 33 expressed enjoyment from the diversity of writers and stories, stating that the variety "capture[s] my attention and creativity" and allows them to visualise the stories.

This response aligns with findings by Abuzahra and Farrah (2015), who argue that relatable, realistic narratives in short stories can foster a positive reading experience for ESL learners, helping them connect with the material on a personal level. The shorter, more superficial language structures in *Changes* make it an accessible text that learners can read with greater ease and enjoyment, significantly when they recognise elements of their experiences in the stories.

4.3.6.5. *Relatability and Enjoyment from Short Story Format in Changes*

Five participants noted that the short format of the stories in *Changes* was a factor that enhanced their enjoyment. While this number may seem low, it is important to emphasise that their responses highlighted the short format's impact rather than their overall attitude toward the text. Therefore, the low number does

not necessarily indicate a lack of appreciation for *Changes*. Participant 33 highlighted how the variety of stories "capture[s] [their] attention and creativity," making each story feel fresh and exciting. Participant 2 mentioned that the stories are "not too long," and some are relatable, which adds to their enjoyment of the text.

Kartikaningtyas (2015) supports this, noting that short stories are particularly suitable for ESL learners due to their manageable length, which allows learners to engage with complete narratives in a single sitting. This format can help sustain interest, as learners are not overwhelmed by lengthy plots or complex language, allowing them to appreciate each story as a standalone narrative.

4.3.6.6. *Tension Between Single Narrative Focus and Anthology Format*

Four participants indicated that they found *Macbeth* more enjoyable because of its continuous narrative and focus on the same characters; as Participant 25 noted, "*Macbeth* is enjoyable because *Macbeth* is a drama that focuses on the same characters." The unified storyline in *Macbeth* offers a cohesive journey through the characters' conflicts, contrasting with the anthology format of *Changes*, which presents varied narratives. For learners who prefer a singular narrative focus, *Macbeth* provides a consistent plotline, which helps them follow the story more closely and develop a sustained interest.

This contrasts with Participant 33's appreciation for the diversity in *Changes*, showing that preferences may vary based on whether learners enjoy continuous narratives or prefer anthologies' themes and perspectives. As Ceylan (2016) observes, different narrative structures appeal to different learner preferences and allowing learners to explore both types can enrich their engagement with literature.

On the other hand, some participants found the length of *Macbeth* and the structure of *Changes* to be sources of frustration. 7 participants found the long format of *Macbeth* and the multiple narratives in *Changes* overwhelming. Participant 25 shared that "*Macbeth*... discourages because it [is] a long text," while *Changes* was seen as boring due to "many stories that need my attention." These comments indicate that learners may feel overwhelmed by longer texts or anthologies with multiple narratives, which require sustained focus and frequent shifts in attention. Wood and Wood (1993) suggest that task overload, especially with lengthy or dense texts, can negatively impact learner motivation and interest. By offering texts that vary in length or by breaking down longer texts into manageable segments, educators can support learners who may struggle with the demands of long or multifaceted works.

To further highlight this, Participant 25's drawing features a crying emoji surrounded by titles of various short stories from the anthology, each written on what appears to be doors. Next to each title on the door, phrases such as "*Read me!*" "*Read me only,*" and "*Read me first*" are inscribed. The image includes

additional captions such as "Where should I knock?" and "It seems I have a lot to do," vividly illustrating the participant's sense of being overwhelmed and frustrated by the volume of content in the anthology.

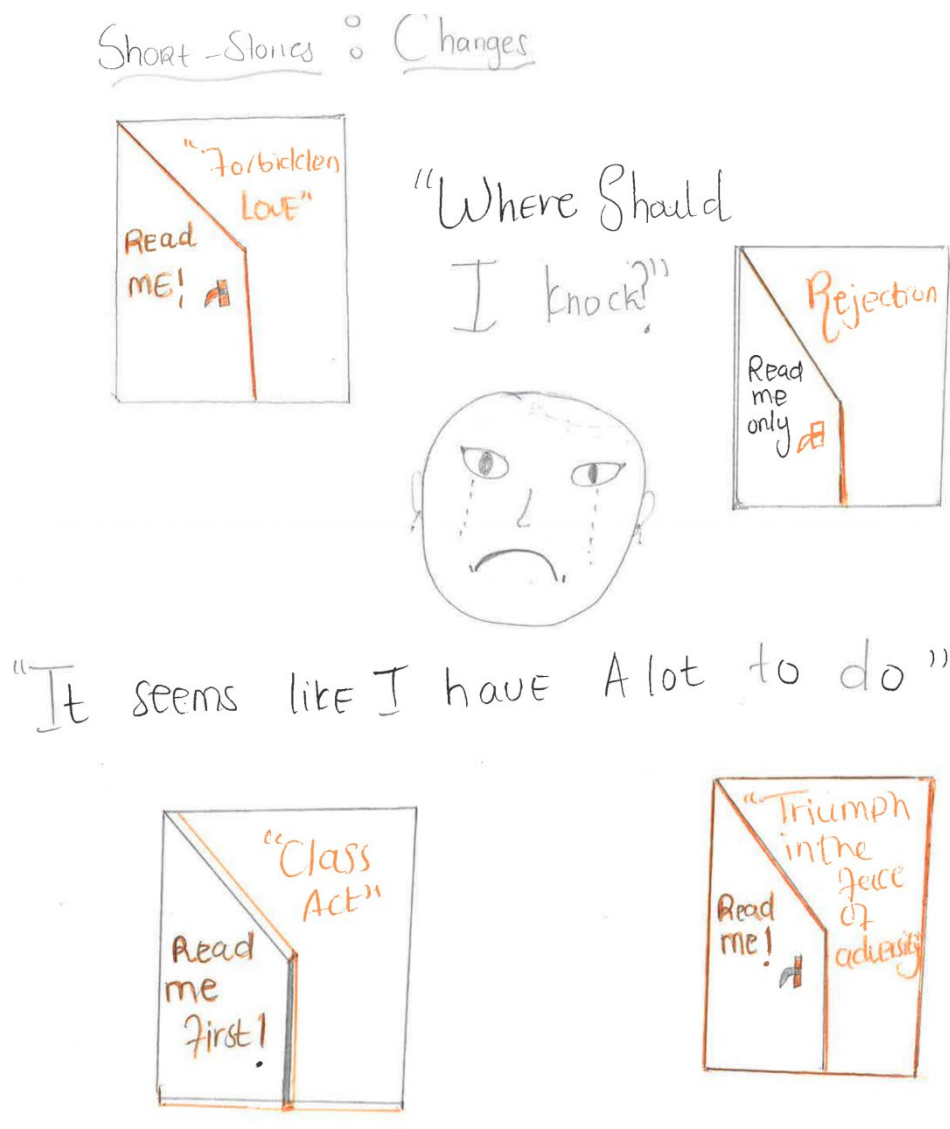


Figure 11: Participant 25's Visual Representation of Frustration about the many stories in *Changes*

This drawing reflects this theme, capturing the learner's emotional response to the perceived workload associated with the anthology. While short stories are often appreciated for their accessibility, this visual narrative reveals that the sheer number of texts in *Changes* can create feelings of anxiety and confusion about where to begin and how to navigate the material effectively. The crying emoji symbolises the participant's emotional state, indicating frustration and perhaps anxiety about managing the number of stories in *Changes*. The depiction of story titles as "doors" suggests a metaphorical barrier to accessing the content, with captions such as "Where should I knock?" emphasising the learner's uncertainty about where to begin and how to ask for assistance. The repetitive prompts of "Read me!" and similar phrases reinforce the sense of urgency and pressure felt by the participant, further contributing to the theme of

being overwhelmed. Here, the participant's image highlights the challenges of navigating a large anthology, offering a window into how these challenges impact their engagement with the text. This creative expression also illustrates the value of arts-based research (ABR) in eliciting, processing, and sharing nuanced experiences (Moris & Paris, 2022).

4.3.6.7. Implications for Classroom Practice

The data reveals that learners' enjoyment of *Macbeth* and *Changes* depends on various factors, including genre, narrative style, and language accessibility. For learners who appreciate suspense, drama, and historical intrigue, *Macbeth* offers a challenging yet rewarding experience, particularly when interactive, role-based teaching methods are used. Conversely, for learners who find satisfaction in shorter, relatable stories, *Changes* provides an accessible and engaging anthology that captures attention without the linguistic challenges of *Macbeth*.

While much of the data foregrounds learners' challenges with *Macbeth*, it is crucial to foreground the significant number of learners who expressed enjoyment, engagement, and motivation when reading the play. These positive responses were sometimes subtle or embedded within broader discussions but collectively point to a meaningful level of appreciation that warrants more attention.

For instance, several learners described *Macbeth* as enjoyable because of its fictional nature, suspense, and plot twists. This aligns with Dyches' (2017) findings that narrative suspense and imaginative engagement can transcend linguistic barriers, drawing learners into even challenging texts. Beyond the play's content, the interactive nature of classroom activities also significantly contributed to learners' enjoyment. These findings support Harvey, Deuel, and Marlatt's (2020) advocacy for performative, dialogic learning in literature classrooms.

Moreover, some learners were particularly drawn to the historical and thematic depth of *Macbeth*, which suggested an appreciation for the text's dramatic weight and socio-political themes. Others viewed this challenge as a source of academic and personal growth, echoing Participant 22's belief that studying *Macbeth* helps improve complex English skills essential for future academic pursuits.

The revision phase in Term 4 also revealed unexpectedly high levels of enthusiasm. Learners responded with excitement to multimedia resources and interactive quizzes, with some shouting answers joyfully and high-fiving peers when they were correct. These moments of active participation reflect authentic engagement and should not be overlooked.

Even those who began with negative peer-influenced attitudes experienced positive shifts. Participant 39, for example, transitioned from initial disinterest to growing enjoyment, attributing the change to the educator's engaging teaching methods. Another participant admitted they once believed *Macbeth* "should have been read by learners at Varsity," but later described it as "enjoyable and interesting" with practice.

These findings confirm that while the language and cultural barriers of *Macbeth* are real, they are not insurmountable, especially when the text is introduced through supportive pedagogy and creative methods. They also reinforce the theoretical lens of Motivation Theory, particularly in terms of intrinsic motivation—learners engage when they perceive value, challenge, and personal relevance. Similarly, Sociocultural Theory helps explain how peer interaction, scaffolded learning, and contextual mediation foster deeper literary appreciation.

This study presents a more balanced picture of learners' experiences by acknowledging and elevating these positive attitudes. It affirms that *Macbeth*, when taught with care and creativity, can resonate with ESL learners—not despite its complexity but because of its opportunities for exploration, performance, and academic achievement.

Considering these preferences, educators could incorporate a variety of genres and narrative structures into the curriculum to cater to diverse learner interests. Allowing learners to experience classic drama and relatable short stories encourages a well-rounded appreciation for literature, enhancing their engagement and enjoyment of reading.

Narrative engagement, interaction opportunities, and linguistic accessibility shape enjoyment in reading *Macbeth* versus *Changes*. While *Macbeth* captivates learners through its drama and suspense, *Changes* provides relatable, diverse stories that resonate with learners' experiences. By recognising these preferences, educators can support a more enriching and enjoyable literature experience, accommodating their learners' varied tastes and needs.

4.3.7 Academic Motivation and Aspirations in Studying *Macbeth*

The theme of academic motivation and aspirations examines how learners' perspectives on *Macbeth* are influenced by the play's role in their exams and overall academic achievement. The responses reveal a mix of motivation and discouragement, with some learners driven by the importance of *Macbeth* for their final marks. In contrast, others feel stressed and demotivated by the perceived difficulty of the text.

4.3.7.1. Motivation Driven by Exam Requirements and Final Marks

For some participants, *Macbeth* is a source of motivation due to its inclusion in the final English examination, which will impact their overall matriculation results. 6 participants shared that the importance of *Macbeth* in their final marks motivated them to engage with the material. Participant 19, for instance, expressed interest in studying *Macbeth* "because it is going to form part of my English examination Paper 2, which will contribute to my final year mark." This pragmatic approach indicates that the text's role in their academic success is an incentive, motivating them to engage with the material despite inherent challenges. In my reflective diary, I noted the following:

Reflective Diary Entry (March 3, 2024):

To increase their motivation for reading *Macbeth*, I emphasised how the text would be an important part of their English exam. I provided additional worksheets that focused on exam-style questions, which allowed learners to see the direct connection between their studies and their final marks.

Learners who engaged with *Macbeth* primarily for exam purposes demonstrate what Ryan and Deci (2000) describe as extrinsic motivation—where behaviour is driven by external rewards rather than internal interest. This type of motivation may lead to compliance but rarely fosters deep learning or long-term interest in literature. This aligns with research by Annamalai and Muniandy (2013), who emphasise that academic pressures, particularly in high stakes testing contexts, can drive learners to engage more diligently with challenging texts. Knowing that *Macbeth* directly impacts their final grades encourages learners to adopt a goal-oriented perspective, where comprehension of the text is tied to achieving academic milestones.

4.3.7.2. Obligation and Stress Related to Passing Matric

For a small number of learners, however, the compulsory nature of studying *Macbeth* generates stress and demotivation. 5 participants felt compelled to study the text due to its role in passing matric, which they perceived as a burden. Participant 34 shared discouragement and stress, noting, "I feel demotivated with this drama... because to pass matric, like it or not, I have to learn this story." This sense of obligation rather than interest can lead to negative attitudes, as learners feel compelled to engage with a text they perceive as 'challenging', as noted in previous responses by various participants.

According to Wood and Wood (1993), when academic tasks are perceived as compulsory rather than enjoyable or beneficial, they can lead to stress and demotivation, particularly if the learner feels

unprepared to handle the content. For this participant, *Macbeth* represents an academic hurdle that must be overcome, resulting in frustration rather than a positive motivation to learn.

4.3.7.3. *Academic Aspirations and the Desire for Language Mastery*

Some participants view studying *Macbeth* as a way to strengthen their English language skills, which they recognise as beneficial for academic and future career aspirations. 4 participants expressed intrinsic motivation to improve their language skills. Participant 22 noted an interest in studying *Macbeth* because it "will be used... to assess if we did understand the language/English that is quite difficult to understand." Here, the learner is committed to mastering challenging language as part of their academic progress, showing an intrinsic motivation to improve their skills and understanding.

This focus on language mastery aligns with Ghazali's (2008) concept of "cognitive attitude," where the learner's desire to achieve fluency in a second language drives them to engage with complex texts as a form of academic self-improvement. By tackling *Macbeth*, learners like Participant 22 see an opportunity to expand their language proficiency, which may enhance their confidence and readiness for future educational challenges.

4.3.7.4. *Implications for Supporting Learners' Academic Motivation*

The analysis of this theme reveals a range of attitudes toward studying *Macbeth*, driven mainly by the text's role in learners' academic assessments. While some learners are motivated by the importance of *Macbeth* for their final marks, others feel demotivated by the text's perceived difficulty. Educators might emphasise the practical benefits of engaging with *Macbeth* to support motivation, highlighting how mastering challenging language and analysis skills can have broader applications for learners' academic goals.

Additionally, providing structured guidance, such as homework exercises that gradually build comprehension, can help alleviate the stress associated with mandatory study requirements. By framing *Macbeth* not only as a compulsory text but also as an opportunity for language growth and exam preparation, educators can foster a more balanced and positive approach that encourages learners to persevere in their studies.

In response to the mixed motivations observed in my learners, I have tried to highlight the connection between *Macbeth* and learners' academic success by using targeted exercises that prepare them for exams. However, there is room to improve my approach. I could incorporate more collaborative learning activities, such as group discussions or peer teaching, to reduce the pressure associated with *Macbeth*

and make the learning experience more enjoyable. By fostering a supportive classroom environment and showing learners the long-term value of mastering *Macbeth*, educators of literature can help them approach the play with a more balanced and positive mindset.

Additionally, providing structured guidance, such as homework exercises that gradually build comprehension, can help alleviate the stress associated with mandatory study requirements. I plan to continue offering targeted homework that connects directly to exam preparation but also introduce opportunities for creative exploration of the text to make it feel less like an obligation.

Learners' academic motivations and aspirations seem to shape their engagement with *Macbeth*. For some, the exam-driven nature of the text provides a clear incentive to work hard, while others feel burdened by the necessity of passing. By addressing these mixed motivations, educators can create a supportive environment that encourages goal setting and persistence, ultimately helping learners approach *Macbeth* with a more positive and resilient mindset.

4.3.8 Genre Familiarity and Relatability in Studying *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*

The genre familiarity and relatability theme reveal how learners' prior experiences with certain types of literature shape their engagement with *Macbeth* and *Changes*. Responses show that learners often find short stories more relatable and accessible, while others are intrigued by the unfamiliar dramatic elements of *Macbeth*.

4.3.8.1. Familiarity with Short Stories and Accessibility of *Changes*

Many learners indicated a preference for *Changes* over *Macbeth*, highlighting their familiarity with the genre of short stories. 12 participants shared that prior exposure to short stories made *Changes* easier to engage with. Participant 35 noted a strong interest: "*Since Grade 10, I love reading Short Stories, and I understand them while I read them.*" This familiarity with short stories from earlier grades creates a sense of comfort and ease when approaching *Changes*, allowing learners to engage without the intimidation often associated with unfamiliar or complex texts. This supports Abuzahra and Farrah's (2015) findings, which suggest that previous exposure to a genre can enhance comprehension and engagement, particularly in ESL contexts.

Participant 24 also pointed out that studying short stories in lower grades made the difficulty level more manageable, noting, "*I'm interested in being taught Short Stories as I was being taught them at lower grades.*" This continuity in genre familiarity helps reduce cognitive load, as learners are already

accustomed to short stories' language style and narrative structure, making *Changes* a comfortable and accessible choice.

4.3.8.2. *The relatability of Themes and Short Length in Changes*

Nine participants also found *Changes* relatable specifically because of the relatability of themes and its shorter stories resonating with their personal experiences. Participant 2 shared that he found *Changes* "more enjoyable to read because the stories are not too long, and some of them I do relate with." This relatability factor aligns with Ceylan's (2016) argument that learners are more likely to enjoy and understand stories that reflect familiar cultural or personal experiences. In this way, *Changes* serves as both an accessible and relevant text, providing learners with narratives that mirror aspects of their own lives.

The brevity of the stories in *Changes* also supports this relatability, allowing learners to engage with entire narratives in a shorter time. This accessibility is crucial in ESL contexts, where lengthy or complex texts may discourage engagement due to the additional language processing demands.

4.3.8.3. *Challenges with Shakespearean Language in Macbeth*

Conversely, 11 participants highlighted their challenges with *Macbeth* specifically due to its Shakespearean language and unfamiliar genre. It is worth noting, however, that despite 85% of participants previously expressing difficulties with *Macbeth* in the central theme "Language Accessibility in Studying *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*," only a small number explicitly identified Shakespearean language and the unfamiliar genre as their primary challenge.

Participant 1 described *Macbeth* as "difficult to read, especially with the Shakespearean language," comparing it unfavourably to *Changes*, which they found "fun and enjoyable to read." This difficulty underscores the language barrier posed by Shakespeare's works, which are often removed from the everyday language and cultural experiences of ESL learners, as noted by Min (2023). Without previous exposure to early modern English or the conventions of Shakespearean drama, learners can feel distanced from the text, perceiving it as challenging and less relatable.

This difficulty with *Macbeth* further highlights the importance of genre familiarity in fostering engagement. Learners who lack exposure to Shakespearean works' dramatic structure and language may experience a disconnect that impedes comprehension and enjoyment.

4.3.8.4. *Appreciation for the Fictional, Suspenseful Elements in Macbeth*

While 37 learners found all aspects of *Changes* more relatable, 7 participants were drawn to *Macbeth* for its fictional and suspense qualities. Participant 23 shared that he found *Macbeth* more enjoyable than *Changes* because it is "more fictional... I just never know what to expect next and I am always holding my breath." This sense of suspense and unpredictability adds an element of excitement, allowing some learners to appreciate *Macbeth* as a unique literary experience, distinct from the realistic themes in *Changes*.

Dyches (2017) emphasises that dramatic works like *Macbeth* can engage learners by offering a heightened sense of tension and fantasy, appealing to learners' imaginations and encouraging a different literary engagement. For some learners, the unfamiliar genre becomes a source of interest rather than a barrier, allowing them to explore new themes and literary styles.

4.3.8.5. *Implications for Teaching Macbeth and Changes*

The data suggests that genre familiarity plays a significant role in learners' engagement with literary texts, with short stories providing an accessible, relatable experience due to their familiar presence in earlier grades. For texts like *Macbeth*, which learners find challenging due to unfamiliar language and genre, educators at this school could introduce preparatory activities to help familiarise learners with Shakespearean language and dramatic conventions. Currently, learners in this school are introduced to Shakespeare only in their final year of secondary school, without any prior background knowledge, leaving them feeling as though they are thrown into the deep end, which can be unfair as they are expected to adapt quickly. Therefore, if the school plans to continue teaching *Macbeth*, it would be beneficial to introduce Shakespearean texts earlier to prepare learners better. I cannot alter the school's curriculum, as I am not part of the decision-making process; however, while I may not be able to 'change the world,' the slight difference I can make for my learners is to introduce them to Shakespearean elements in earlier grades, by gradually building their familiarity with the language and dramatic conventions, they will not be thrown into the deep end when they reach Grade 12. Instead, they will have background knowledge of Shakespearean texts. I do not plan to introduce an entirely new drama that is not prescribed but will expose Grade 10 and 11 learners to excerpts from Shakespearean texts to provide a foundational understanding. By building a foundation of knowledge, educators can help bridge the gap between learners' familiarity with short stories and their engagement with classic drama.

Introducing elements of suspense and dramatization in teaching *Macbeth*, such as role-playing and scene reenactments, could also enhance relatability and excitement, as seen in participants' enjoyment of the fictional elements. Meanwhile, educators can highlight *Changes*' cultural relevance and relatability to reinforce its accessibility, allowing learners to build confidence and literacy skills through more familiar narratives.

Genre familiarity and relatability significantly influence learners' preferences and engagement with *Macbeth* and *Changes*. Short stories offer a familiar, accessible format that resonates with learners' experiences, while *Macbeth* provides a novel experience that appeals to learners interested in fictional suspense. Recognising these preferences can help educators create balanced, supportive learning experiences, encouraging learners to engage confidently with familiar and challenging texts.

Conclusion

The findings, organised into themes and discussed in this chapter, provide valuable insights into how learners perceive and interact with the prescribed texts.

The first objective, to explore the attitudes of Grade 12 ESL learners towards studying *Macbeth* and *Changes*, revealed stark contrasts in learner perceptions. *Macbeth* was widely perceived as linguistically challenging due to its archaic language, complex figurative expressions, and foreign historical setting, leading to disengagement and frustration. Conversely, *Changes* was considered more accessible, with its modern language and culturally relevant narratives fostering greater enthusiasm and confidence in reading. These attitudes significantly shaped learners' engagement, influencing their motivation, comprehension, and academic performance.

The second objective, to discover how learners' attitudes influence their studying of the prescribed texts, demonstrated that negative perceptions of *Macbeth* often lead to avoidance behaviours, increased reliance on educator explanations, and difficulties in comprehension and assessment performance. In contrast, learners who felt positively about *Changes* demonstrated greater independent reading habits, improved language confidence, and deeper engagement with literary analysis. The study highlighted that learners' preconceptions about literature, shaped by peer influence and previous exposure, play a critical role in their engagement levels. However, educator interventions, such as scaffolding strategies, interactive discussions, and multimedia resources, were shown to mitigate some of these challenges and improve engagement.

The third objective, to investigate why learners hold these attitudes, revealed a complex interplay of linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical factors. Language barriers are a significant challenge for *Macbeth*,

with learners struggling to understand Shakespearean English and figurative language. Cultural disconnect also contributes to disengagement, as learners find the themes and settings of *Macbeth* foreign and difficult to relate to. By contrast, *Changes* resonates more with learners due to its familiar contexts, accessible language, and relatable themes. Additionally, learners' attitudes were influenced by prior peer perceptions, personal reading confidence, and exposure to different genres in their formative years.

The fourth objective, to explore how, I can respond to Grade 12 ESL learners' attitudes toward studying *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* was achieved through my reflective diary which played a crucial role in documenting and analysing learners' attitudes, confirming observations that initially motivated this study. It provided first-hand insights into their struggles with *Macbeth*, their enthusiasm for *Changes*, and their responses to various teaching interventions. The diary also helped identify additional factors influencing engagement, such as peer influence, reading confidence, and classroom dynamics. By reflecting on daily classroom experiences, I was able to adapt teaching strategies to address learners' needs better, reinforcing the significance of educator reflection in responsive and effective teaching. The reflective diary validated key findings and contributed to the study's understanding of how attitudes toward literature are formed and how they can be transformed through targeted pedagogical approaches. Furthermore, the findings of this study emphasised the critical role of educator mediation in shaping learners' experiences with literature. The study found that learners responded positively to educator-led interventions such as modern translations, dramatization, and multimodal resources, which helped bridge the gap between *Macbeth* and their linguistic realities. Interactive activities, such as acting out scenes, comparative analysis with culturally relevant texts, and linking themes to contemporary issues, were particularly effective in fostering engagement. The findings underscored that when learners feel supported and actively involved in their learning, their resistance to challenging texts diminishes, and they develop a more meaningful connection with literature.

Overall, this chapter has demonstrated that learners' attitudes toward prescribed texts are shaped by a complex interplay of personal, linguistic, cultural, pedagogical, and social factors. The insights gained from this study highlight the importance of responsive teaching methodologies, curriculum adaptation, and an inclusive approach to literature instruction. Moreover, the findings presented in this chapter are informed by the theoretical grounding of Sociocultural Theory and Motivation Theory. Learners' attitudes, shaped by cultural relevance, peer dynamics, and educator mediation, reflect the social construction of knowledge within a particular educational context. Moreover, learners' academic motivations reveal a spectrum between extrinsic, curriculum-driven engagement and intrinsic, culturally connected enjoyment—further reinforcing the need for pedagogies that foster autonomy and cultural identity.

The study emphasises the need for a balanced curriculum that integrates Shakespearean and culturally relevant literature to cater to diverse learner needs. Educators can enhance engagement, critical thinking, and overall academic success by fostering an inclusive learning environment where learners feel represented in the texts they study. These findings contribute to a broader understanding of how attitudes toward literature are formed in ESL contexts and provide actionable insights for enhancing literary education in South African township schools.

The final chapter that follows will synthesise the key findings, discuss their broader implications for literature instruction in ESL contexts, and provide recommendations for enhancing the teaching and learning of prescribed literary texts in township schools.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This study explored the attitudes of Grade 12 English Second Language (ESL) learners toward studying *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* in a South African township high school. The research aimed to determine how these attitudes influence learner engagement, understand the reasons behind them, and explore how an educator's response to these attitudes impacts learners' experiences. The study adopted a qualitative, interpretive case study approach, drawing on Motivation Theory and Sociocultural Theory to frame the investigation. Through semi-structured questionnaires with an arts-based element, individual interviews, and a reflective diary, the study provided an in-depth analysis of how language accessibility, cultural relevance, learner confidence, and educator intervention influence the learners' engagement with these prescribed texts.

This chapter synthesises the key findings, discusses their broader implications for literature instruction in ESL contexts, and provides recommendations for improving the teaching and learning of prescribed literary texts in township schools. The study highlights the significant challenges learners face with *Macbeth*, the accessibility and relatability of *Changes*, and the crucial role of educator interventions in shaping learner engagement with literature. These findings contribute to the broader discourse on literature instruction in ESL settings and advocate for a more balanced and responsive approach that considers linguistic accessibility, cultural relevance, and learner motivation.

5.2 Summary of Key Findings

The study found that learners overwhelmingly perceive *Macbeth* as linguistically inaccessible and culturally distant. The complexity of Shakespearean English, archaic vocabulary, and the historical and foreign setting posed significant barriers to comprehension and engagement. Many learners expressed frustration with the difficulty of understanding Shakespeare's language, which often led to anxiety and a lack of confidence in their ability to engage meaningfully with the text. This linguistic challenge heavily relied on educator support, with learners frequently requiring translation and additional explanations to make sense of the play. Furthermore, the lack of cultural resonance with *Macbeth* contributed to learners' detachment from the text, as they struggled to relate meaningfully to its themes and characters.

In contrast, *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* was met with significantly more enthusiasm and engagement. Learners found the language in the short stories more accessible and relatable, allowing for greater comprehension and enjoyment. The cultural relevance of the stories played a crucial role in fostering a positive attitude, as learners saw reflections of their own experiences, values, and societal

issues within the narratives. The familiar themes and locally grounded contexts made *Changes* a more approachable and meaningful text for the majority of the learner participants, reinforcing the importance of culturally responsive literature in ESL classrooms.

A key finding of the study was the role of educator intervention in shaping learners' experiences with these texts. While *Macbeth* required significant educator scaffolding to bridge the linguistic and cultural gaps, *Changes* allowed for more independent engagement and self-directed learning. The study demonstrated that interactive teaching methods, such as discussions, role-playing, and visual storytelling, increased engagement and comprehension, particularly for challenging texts like *Macbeth*. However, the heavy reliance on educator support for Shakespeare's work raised concerns about learner autonomy and the sustainability of such approaches in resource-limited township schools.

5.2.1 Synopsis of Findings per Theme

Language Accessibility in Literary Engagement

Learners found the language in *Macbeth* challenging due to its archaic and complex vocabulary, making comprehension difficult. In contrast, *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* was perceived as more accessible due to its contemporary and familiar language.

Cultural Relevance of Literary Texts

Changes resonated with learners because they reflect African and South African cultural contexts, allowing learners to connect with themes and characters. Conversely, *Macbeth* was seen as culturally distant and less relatable, contributing to learner disengagement.

Learner Confidence in Interpreting Literature

The study found that learners exhibited greater confidence in analysing *Changes* than *Macbeth*. The familiarity with cultural narratives in *Changes* enhanced their interpretative skills, whereas *Macbeth's* unfamiliar content undermined learner self-assurance.

Role of Educator Mediation

Effective educator intervention was identified as a critical factor in helping learners navigate the complexities of *Macbeth*. The study highlighted that educator scaffolding increased comprehension and reduced anxiety associated with Shakespearean texts.

Peer Influence and Expectations

Peer discussions emerged as influential in shaping attitudes toward literary texts. Learners who engaged in collaborative reading activities showed more positive attitudes and improved engagement with complex literature.

Enjoyment and Engagement with Texts

Learners expressed greater enjoyment in reading *Changes* due to its engaging storytelling and relatable themes. *Macbeth* was seen as a difficult and less enjoyable text, requiring external motivation for engagement.

Academic Motivation and Aspirations

Learners demonstrated higher academic aspirations when literary texts were accessible and culturally relevant. *Changes* fostered a sense of accomplishment and motivation, while *Macbeth* posed challenges that hindered similar positive outcomes.

Genre Familiarity and Preferences

The study revealed a preference for short stories due to their brevity and narrative diversity. As a historical drama, *Macbeth* was perceived as dense and less appealing to ESL learners unfamiliar with the genre.

These findings provide critical insights into learners' engagement with prescribed literature and underline the importance of culturally responsive teaching strategies for ESL learners in township schools.

5.3 Implications of the Study

The findings of this study underscore the critical need for curriculum designers, policymakers, and educators to reconsider how literature is taught in ESL township schools. *Macbeth's* linguistic difficulty suggests that alternative strategies, such as using translated excerpts, modern adaptations, and supplementary contextual materials, could enhance learner comprehension and engagement. Moreover, the study highlights the necessity of integrating culturally relevant literature into the curriculum, as texts that resonate with learners' lived experiences foster deeper engagement and a more positive attitude toward literary studies.

The study also reinforces the need for differentiated instruction in ESL literature classrooms. Given learners' varying levels of language proficiency, educators should adopt flexible teaching strategies catering to diverse learning needs. This may include incorporating multimedia resources, providing guided reading activities, and fostering peer-assisted learning to bridge comprehension gaps. Additionally, encouraging learner autonomy through critical thinking exercises and independent reading

initiatives could mitigate over-reliance on educator explanations and promote greater confidence in literary analysis.

The findings of this study also carry significant implications for theoretical, curricular, and pedagogical approaches to literature instruction in ESL township schools

5.3.1 Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, the research contributes to applying Motivation and Sociocultural Theory in the ESL classroom. The study demonstrates that learners are more motivated and engaged when literary texts are culturally familiar and linguistically accessible. *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* resonated strongly with learners because it mirrored their cultural and social experiences, fostering intrinsic motivation and engagement. In contrast, *Macbeth* was perceived as alienating due to its complex language and distant cultural context, leading to disengagement. Motivation Theory underscores the importance of aligning instructional materials with learners' interests and backgrounds to sustain their intrinsic desire to learn. Sociocultural Theory further highlights the critical role of social interactions, cultural mediation, and teacher scaffolding in facilitating learner comprehension and engagement. Collaborative learning, peer-assisted reading activities, and structured teacher support emerged as essential for bridging comprehension gaps and fostering positive attitudes toward literature. These findings reaffirm the importance of socially situated learning and underscore the value of employing constructivist approaches that prioritise learner agency and cultural relevance.

5.3.2 Curriculum Implications

The study also presents vital implications for curriculum design. The current literature curriculum in South African township schools tends to privilege Western canonical texts like *Macbeth*, which often alienate learners due to their linguistic complexity and cultural dissonance. To address this challenge, curriculum designers must prioritise the inclusion of culturally relevant texts that reflect learners' lived experiences and social realities. Expanding the literary canon to include contemporary African plays, short stories, and other narratives would validate learners' cultural identities and foster a deeper connection to literary studies. Moreover, incorporating modern adaptations and translations of traditional texts like *Macbeth* could make them more accessible and engaging. The study also advocates for learner-centred curriculum practices involving learners in selecting literary texts. Educators can ensure that texts align with learners' preferences and promote greater engagement by allowing learners to contribute to decisions about prescribed literature. Such curriculum reforms would contribute to an inclusive and dynamic literary

education that aligns with the Department of Basic Education's goal of fostering critical thinking and cultural awareness.

5.3.3 Pedagogic Implications

Pedagogically, the findings emphasise the need for differentiated instruction that accommodates learners' diverse language proficiency levels and cultural backgrounds. Educators should adopt flexible teaching strategies that provide scaffolding to help learners navigate complex literary texts. Guided reading activities, graphic organisers, and structured classroom discussions can support learners in developing critical comprehension skills. Using multimedia and digital resources offers another avenue for enhancing learner engagement and comprehension. Videos, audio recordings, and interactive digital platforms can present literary texts in dynamic and relatable ways, mitigating the linguistic barriers associated with traditional print media.

The findings further highlight the importance of fostering collaborative learning environments where peer discussions and group activities are encouraged. Such practices promote sharing ideas and perspectives, helping learners develop a more nuanced understanding of literary texts. Additionally, educators should encourage learner autonomy by incorporating inquiry-based learning and independent reading projects. When learners are allowed to explore texts independently and express their interpretations, they develop greater confidence and critical thinking skills. These pedagogical adjustments would ensure that literary instruction in ESL township schools becomes more inclusive, learner-centred, and responsive to the diverse needs of learners.

In summary, the implications of this study call for a comprehensive reimagining of literature instruction in ESL township schools. By adopting culturally responsive curricula, incorporating constructivist teaching practices, and fostering collaborative and independent learning environments, educators can create meaningful literary experiences that empower learners and enhance their academic success.

5.4 Conclusion

This study has provided valuable insights into the attitudes of Grade 12 ESL learners toward studying *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* in a Township High School Context. The findings highlight the significant impact of linguistic accessibility, cultural relevance, and educator intervention on learner engagement with prescribed literature. While *Macbeth* posed considerable challenges due to its archaic language and unfamiliar context, *Changes* was widely embraced due to its relatability and accessible language. The study emphasises the importance of adopting pedagogical strategies catering

to learners' linguistic and cultural needs, ensuring that literature instruction is meaningful and effective in ESL classrooms.

By integrating culturally relevant texts, employing interactive teaching methods, and fostering learner autonomy, educators can help bridge the gap between prescribed literature and the lived experiences of ESL learners. Ultimately, literature should serve as a tool for empowerment, engagement, and critical thinking rather than as a source of frustration and disengagement. This study advocates for a responsive and inclusive approach to literature instruction that acknowledges learners' diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, ensuring that all learners can develop a genuine appreciation for the literary arts.

Finally, further research is needed to explore how different teaching methodologies impact ESL learners' attitudes toward literature. Longitudinal studies that examine the effects of various pedagogical interventions over time could provide deeper insights into how best to support learners in developing positive attitudes toward literary studies. Future research could also investigate how digital resources and technology-enhanced learning strategies can be leveraged to bridge comprehension gaps and increase engagement with prescribed texts in under-resourced schools.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Letter (UKZN)

Appendix B: Gatekeeper Letter

Appendix C: Informed Consent Letter

Appendix D: Semi-Structured Questionnaire

Appendix E: Interview Schedule

Appendix F: Reflective Diary

Appendix G: *Macbeth* Revision Quiz

Appendix H: Turnitin Certificate

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Letter (UKZN)



16 September 2024

Siphosethu Pretty Nhlapho (213517062)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear SP Nhlapho,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00007494/2024

Project title: Grade 12 English second language learners' attitudes towards studying Macbeth and Changes: an anthology of short stories at a South African township school.

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 12 August 2024 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

Incidents of adverse events and serious adverse events (AEs and SAEs) should be reported in writing to HSSREC, the study sponsors, and any regulatory authority (where appropriate), within 7 working days of the occurrence for local sites and 14 days for all other South African sites.

This approval is valid until 16 September 2025.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)
/nng

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Appendix B: Gatekeeper Letter



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RESEARCHER

Full Names: Siphosethu Pretty Zulu



Email: siphosethunhlapho@gmail.com/213517062@stu.ukzn.ac.za

HSSREC RESEARCH OFFICE

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Dear Principal

I hereby request your permission to conduct a research study located in Menzi High School. The research topic is Grade 12 English Second Language Learners' Attitudes Towards Studying *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* at a South African Township School. The aim of the study is to explore the attitudes of Grade 12 English Second Language (ESL) learners towards studying two specific literary works, namely the drama *Macbeth* and the anthology of short stories called *Changes* in a township high school. By exploring the attitudes of these learners towards these works, the study aims to identify any factors that may influence their attitudes towards these texts and explore the reasons for harboring these attitudes towards the two texts.

Over the course of this study, I will explore and answer the following questions with the Grade 12 English Second Language Learners.

1. What are the attitudes of Grade 12 ESL learners towards studying the drama *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* in a Township High School context?
2. How do these attitudes influence their studying of the drama *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*?

3. Why do Grade 12 ESL learners have the kind of attitudes they have towards studying the drama *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*?

The school will not be named in the study. In this case study, the data generation tools will include questionnaires, interviews and my reflective diary as the researcher that I will update based on my observations and experiences during the study.

Formal consent will be obtained from the participants, and they will not be identified by name in the study.

Regards

Siphosethu Pretty Zulu

Appendix C: Informed Consent Letter



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YAKWAZULU-NATALI

**COLLEGE OF
HUMANITIES**

RESEARCHER

Full Name: Siphosethu Pretty Zulu

[REDACTED]

Email: 213517062@stu.ukzn.ac.za /

[REDACTED]

HSSREC RESEARCH OFFICE

HSSRES Research Office

Contact: 0312608350/3587

Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za

Dear Learner

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

I am writing to seek your voluntary participation in a research study conducted by myself, Siphosethu Pretty Zulu at the University of KwaZulu Natal. The study, titled "Grade 12 English Second Language Learners' Attitudes Towards Studying *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* at a South African Township School," aims to explore your perspectives on the mentioned literary works.

Participation in this research involves individual interviews and completion of a questionnaire which will be conducted on the 12th of October 2024. Your anonymity is of utmost importance, and your identities will not be disclosed during or after the reporting process. Pseudonyms (false names) will be used in any specific references to individuals or schools to ensure confidentiality. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any stage without facing any negative consequences. The interviews will be voice-recorded for accuracy. Rest assured that all responses will be treated with strict confidentiality, and no monetary gains are associated with your participation. The goal is to contribute valuable insights to the field of English Second Language Learning without compromising your privacy. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me on [REDACTED]

Your cooperation is highly appreciated, and your contribution will significantly contribute to the success of this research. Thank you for considering participating in this important study. In the event of any problems, concerns, or questions, you may contact me or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee as mentioned on the top of this letter.

My supervisor is Dr. Bridget Campbell who is located on Edgewood campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. For further information/clarity, kindly contact her on +27 31 2603468 or e-mail Campbell@ukzn.ac.za.

The Edgewood higher degrees offices can be contacted on +27 31 2603895 or e-mail RhdEdgewood@ukzn.ac.za.

DECLARATION OF CONSENT

I (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project. I understand the purpose and procedures of the study and have been given the opportunity to ask any questions I may have had regarding the study and my participation.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Thank you for your contribution to this research. If you agree and are willing to be a participant, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether you are willing to allow the conversation to be recorded by the following equipment:

	Willing	Not Willing
Audio Equipment		

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

.....

.....

Declaration for Parents/Guardians:

I, _____ The parent/legal guardian of, _____ grant consent for my child to participate in the research study conducted by Siphosethu Zulu, a Master's student at the University of KwaZulu Natal, titled "Grade 12 English Second Language Learners' Attitudes Towards Studying *Macbeth* and *Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories* at a South African Township School." I have been informed of the nature, purpose, and objectives of the study. I understand that my child's participation will involve individual interviews, group discussions, and completing a questionnaire. I acknowledge that my child's responses will be treated with strict

confidentiality, and pseudonyms will be used to protect their identity during and after the reporting process. I am aware that my child's participation is voluntary, and they have the right to withdraw at any stage without facing any negative consequences. I understand that the interviews will be voice recorded, and my child will be provided with a letter of informed consent explaining the details of the study. I acknowledge that there are no monetary gains associated with my child's participation.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D: Semi-Structured Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE ON LEARNERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS BEING TAUGHT THE SHAKESPEAREAN DRAMA '*MACBETH*' AND '*CHANGES*,' A SHORT STORY ANTHOLOGY

SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE FOR DATA GENERATION FROM LEARNERS

Developed by S.P Zulu from UKZN School of Education (Department of Languages and Media Studies)

Introduction

Learners' attitudes towards being taught the Shakespearian drama '*Macbeth*' and '*Changes*' a short story anthology in a South African Township High School context has been an unexplored area especially from the learners' point of view. An exploration of this phenomenon can shed more light in understanding the factors that shape the attitudes of learners towards reading these texts.

Instruction

Please read the questionnaire carefully and respond to all the questions. Please note that there is no right or wrong answer. The study is interested in learning your views only. You are ensured of confidentiality of information shared by you. Please share the right information and information shared by you will be used for research purposes only. Participation in this study is completely voluntary.

Section 1: Demographic Information

Age:.....

Grade:.....

Gender:.....

Home Language:.....

Section 2: Familiarity with *Macbeth* and *Changes*

- a) Have you ever been exposed to these genres (Drama and Short Stories) in the previous grades?

Drama:

Yes No

Short Stories:

Yes No

b) Have you ever studied Shakespeare prior to being taught this Drama in Grade 12?

Yes No

Section 3: Attitudes towards being taught *Macbeth*.

a) How interested are you in studying the drama *Macbeth*? What are your reasons for being interested or not interested in being taught *Macbeth*?

b) Do you think being taught *Macbeth* can help improve your English language skills? Why or why not?

c) How confident do you feel about understanding the language of *Macbeth*? Discuss

d) How confident do you feel about understanding the themes of *Macbeth*? Discuss

Section 4: Attitudes towards being taught '*Changes*' an Anthology of Short Stories

a) How interested are you in being taught the short story anthology '*Changes*'? What are your reasons for being interested or not interested in being taught *Macbeth*?

b) Do you think being taught the anthology '*Changes*' can improve your English language skills? Why or why not?

- c) How confident do you feel about understanding the language of the stories in 'Changes'?
Discuss

- d) How confident do you feel about understanding the themes of the stories in 'Changes'?

Section 5: Comparing *Macbeth* and *Changes*

- a) Which do you find more enjoyable to read between *Macbeth* and *Changes*? Why?

- b) Which do you find more challenging to read between *Macbeth* and *Changes*? Why?

Section 6: Support and Resources

- a) Have you received any guidance or instruction from your educators on how to approach and understand: (a) *Macbeth* and (b) the stories in *Changes*? Explain.

- b) Do you feel you have enough resources, such as books and study guides, to help you understand *Macbeth* and the stories in *Changes*? Discuss.

Section 7: Personal Reading Habits

- a) How do you feel about reading for pleasure?

b) What do you read for pleasure?

Section 8: Additional Comments

Is there anything else you wish to share or any other comments you have regarding your attitude to the study of *Macbeth* or the short stories in '*Changes*'?

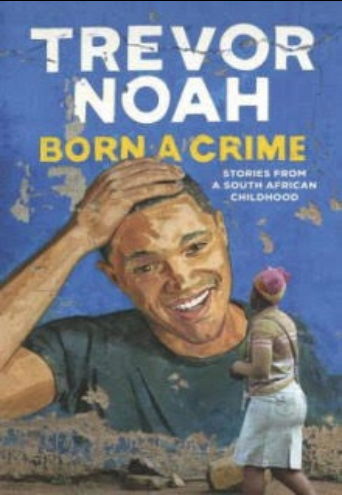
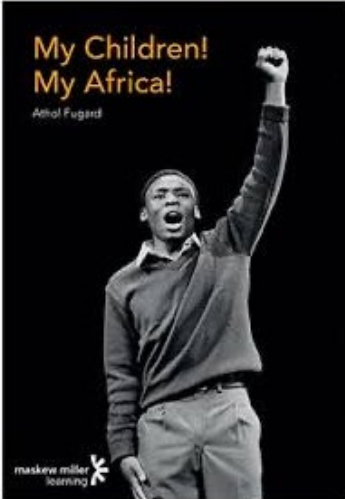
Section 9: Visual Metaphor/Arts Based Response

Visually express your initial feelings and thoughts upon learning that you would be studying the drama *Macbeth* and the short story anthology *Changes*. Feel free to use drawing, pasting pictures from magazines or creating a collage etc. to visually represent your feelings for both genres.

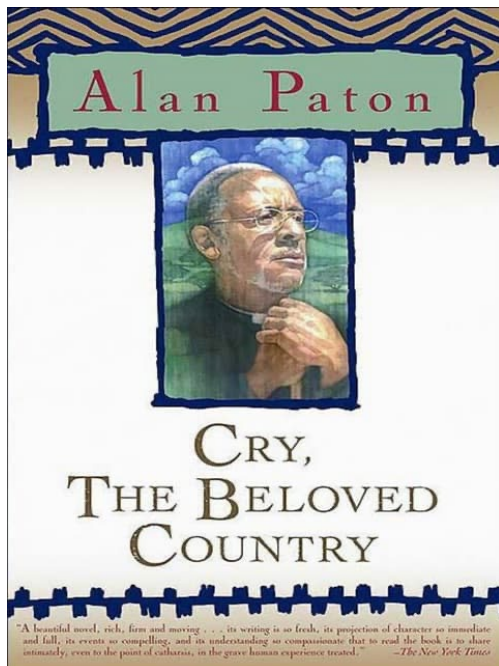
Section 10: New Book Choices/Suggestions

Considering the following book covers and summaries, which of these books would you prefer to read as part of your Grade 12 English curriculum, if you were to choose new prescribed books to replace *Macbeth* and *Changes*, which would you choose and why? Discuss.

Book Choices:

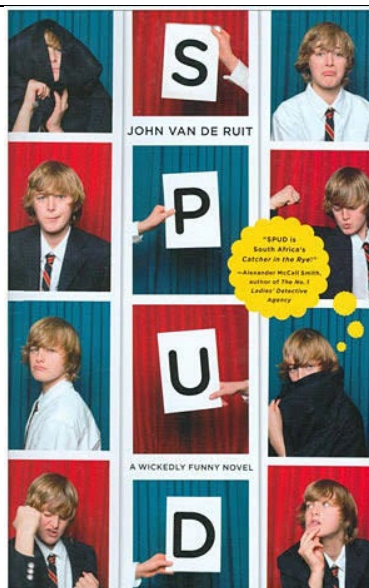
1.		<p>A compelling memoir of Trevor Noah's life growing up in apartheid South Africa, <i>Born a Crime</i> offers humorous yet profound insights into the challenges of identity, racism, and resilience. The title <i>Born a Crime</i> summarises the whole story: as Trevor came from a white family and a black family heritage, he was considered illegal and had to live hidden from the government and society itself. Trevor would grow under the shadows without knowing his identity, and who or what groups he belonged to</p>
2.		<p>The great South African playwright confronts the tragedy of apartheid in his native land in this compelling tale about the efforts of a humble and humane Black educator in a segregated township to persuade just one young person that education, not violence, is the answer to South Africa's problems.</p>

3.

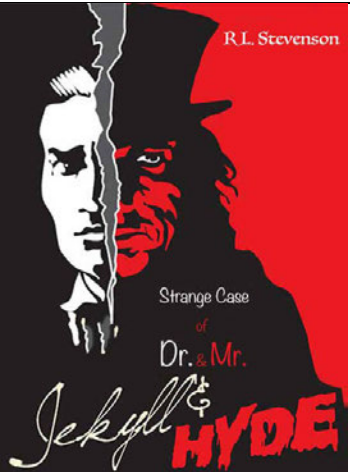
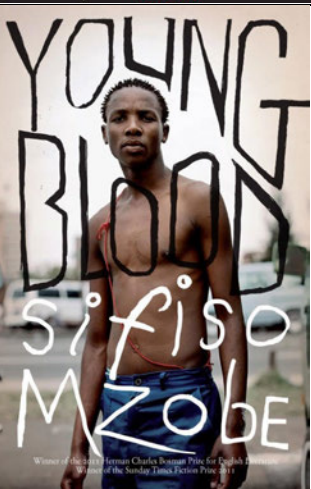
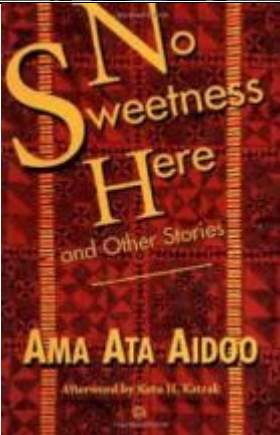


Hailed as one of the greatest South African novels, *Cry, the Beloved Country* was first published in the United States, bringing international attention to South Africa's tragic history. It tells the story of a father's journey from rural South Africa to and through the city of Johannesburg in search of his son. The reader cannot help but feel deeply for the central character, a Zulu pastor, Stephen Kumalo, and the tortuous discoveries he makes in Johannesburg. It is in a prison cell that Kumalo eventually finds his son, Absalom. The young man had earlier left their reservation-like homeland to make a new life in the big city, accompanied by an uncle who proclaims, "I do not say we are free as men should be. But at least I am free of the chief. At least I am free of an old and ignorant man, who is nothing but a white man's dog." Profoundly unfree, Absalom is now facing trial for the murder of a white man—a man who ironically cared deeply about the plight of the native South African population and had been a voice for change until his untimely death. Here we meet another father, that of the victim, whose own journey to understand his son eventually leads to his life and grief becoming strangely entwined with Kumalo's.

4.



It's South Africa 1990. Two major events are about to happen: the release of Nelson Mandela and, more importantly, it's Spud Milton's first year at an elite boys only private school. Cursed with parents from well beyond the lunatic fringe, a senile granny, and a dormitory full of strange characters, Spud has his hands full trying to adapt to his new home. Surrounded by names such as Gecko, Rambo, Rain Man and Mad Dog, Spud takes his first tentative steps along the path to manhood. (The path, it seems, could be a rather long road.) Armed with only his wits and his diary, Spud takes us from illegal night swimming to the red-

	<p>hot furnace of the cricket pitch, from ghostbusting to a catastrophic family vacation. He also invites us into the mind of a boy struggling to come to terms with a strange new world; a boy whose eyes are being opened to love, friendship and complete insanity.</p>
<p>5.</p> 	<p>The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde (1886) is about personality and transformation. Dr Jekyll discovers a way to split his own personality between good and evil. However, his alter ego, Hyde, begins to take over Jekyll's persona and finally, unable to find the antidote, Jekyll ends his life in despair.</p>
<p>6.</p> 	<p>Sipho is a “young blood”, a young man of the school-going generation caught up in a world of money, booze and greed. Living in Umlazi, Durban, he is seventeen, has dropped out of school and helps out at his father’s mechanic shop during the day. But odd jobs underneath the bonnets of wrecked cars do not provide the lifestyle his friends have. A fascinating look into the emotional landscape of car hijackers – by a vibrant new voice in South African literature.</p>
<p>7.</p> 	<p>A collection of 11 stories, which range from the politics of wigs to the joys of motherhood. In this collection, Ama Ata Aidoo explores postcolonial life in Ghana with honesty and humour. Tradition wrestles with new urban influences as Africans try to sort out their identity in a changing culture. True to the tradition of African storytelling, the characters come to life through their distinct voices and speech. If there is no sweetness, there is the salt essential to life, even if it comes from tears, and the strength that comes from a history of endurance.</p>

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION

Appendix E: Interview Schedule

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS ON LEARNERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS BEING TAUGHT THE SHAKESPEAREAN DRAMA 'MACBETH' AND 'CHANGES,' A SHORT STORY ANTHOLOGY

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR GENERATING DATA FROM LEARNERS

Developed by S.P Zulu from UKZN School of Education (Department of Languages and Media Studies)

1. How do you feel about studying "*Macbeth*" and "*Changes: An Anthology of Short Stories*" in your English class? What were your initial thoughts and emotions when you heard you will be studying these texts?
2. Have you heard any opinions from your peers or educators about these texts that have influenced your attitude or feelings toward them? If so, please share those experiences. (for example, did they say anything that made you feel anxious or scared about studying *Macbeth* or *Changes*?)
3. Has your attitude towards *Macbeth* and *Changes* changed since you've started studying them? If yes, what led to the change in your attitude or feelings?
4. Do your feelings about *Macbeth* and *Changes* affect how you do your homework or study these books? Does how you feel about them change how much effort you put in studying them?
5. Have you discussed your attitudes towards these texts with your classmates? Do you think many of them feel the same way? and how might this influence your own attitude?
6. In your ideal English class, what would your educator do to help you enjoy studying these texts and foster a more positive attitude towards studying "*Macbeth*" and "*Changes*"? Are there any *Changes* in teaching methods or classroom activities that you believe would improve your experience with these texts?
7. Do you think that a better understanding of the cultural and historical context of these texts would affect your attitude towards them? How important is it for you to connect the themes and issues in these texts to your own life and experiences? Do you relate to them.
8. Are there any specific challenges or barriers that you face in relation to studying these texts? How do these challenges impact your attitude and motivation to engage with the material?
9. Can you share any personal success stories or moments of enlightenment when studying "*Macbeth*" or "*Changes*" that have positively influenced your attitude towards these texts?
10. What is your favourite short story? And what is your favourite scene from *Macbeth* and why?

Appendix F: Reflective Diary

Thursday, January 26, 2024

Today, we revisited Figures of Speech, a topic the learners have covered previously, but one that is crucial for their understanding of *Macbeth* and the short stories. I wanted to ensure they had a solid foundation in identifying and analysing figures of speech, particularly irony, which is prevalent in *Macbeth*. I wrote down a list of the most common figures of speech that they encounter in the syllabus and wrote their descriptions with one example for each, and we discussed them, and they even recalled some examples and shared them in the class discussion.

While some learners seemed bored (giving out heavy sighs and complaining) viewing it as a "back to basics" exercise, I believed it was essential to reinforce their knowledge. I then required them to take down the notes and provide more examples for each figure of speech as homework, which they found tedious (I have to find other ways of teaching this, that is more creative and interesting to them in order to grab their attention and make it more exciting). However, when we reached dramatic irony in our discussion, their interest piqued, and they were eager to learn more. I defined dramatic irony as "when the audience has knowledge of something of which the actors are unaware," and provided an example from *The Little Shop of Horrors*. In the play/film *The Little Shop of Horrors*, the audience is aware that the plant craves human blood. The characters, however, are blissfully unaware of this. This helped learners understand how dramatic irony heightens tension and expectation. I then asked them to think of an example in *Macbeth* where we as the audience knew what was going to happen and the characters were oblivious to it and they made an example about Duncans' murder, which was a very good example.

I realised that reviewing figures of speech, although seemingly mundane, is vital for learners to appreciate the depth and complexity of *Macbeth*. By acknowledging their prior knowledge and building upon it, I aimed to create a solid foundation for future lessons.

Next steps:

- Provide more opportunities for learners to apply their knowledge of figures of speech in context.
- Encourage learners to identify and analyse dramatic irony in *Macbeth*.
- Monitor learners' progress and adjust instruction to meet their needs.

Tuesday, February 20, 2024

I have been teaching *Macbeth* and the short story anthology *Changes* during our extra study period on Tuesdays at 6:30 AM. As of February 19, 2024. During normal school hours I get to see my grade 12's once every day for an hour-long period. I choose to utilise the study period for teaching literature because there is a lot to cover, and we have limited time during normal hours and still have to cover other aspects of the syllabus. In my school, every grade 12 educator must choose an extra period outside of the normal teaching hours whether in the morning 6:30 to 7:15 or in the afternoon from 15:00 to 17:00 or 18:00 during summer. During my extra lessons we have managed

to complete Act 1-3 of *Macbeth*, the lessons are interactive, and learner centred, learners take turns reading the different characters, they are always keen to read and often fight over reading some characters lol. In between our reading we stop, and I allow them to ask questions, and I explain, making sure that they understand what is going on, especially since they read the Shakespearean English, they get confused a lot, so we have to stop and discuss for clarity.

I administered a quiz to assess learners' understanding. The quiz consisted of multiple-choice questions, matching columns, and short answer questions, I chose this task because it is not too strenuous, and it was just to check their knowledge so far before we continue further.

I am pleased that we are on track with our schedule, every year I always aim to finish reading the books by the end of the first term so that we have a long period to discuss, explain and assess. My school is a high performing school and there is always pressure to complete the whole syllabus by the 3rd term because the fourth term is for final exams only, leaving little time for revision. However, I recognise the need to slow down and focus on critical scenes and themes, because they need to fully grasp them in order to understand the drama better and also to do well in their exams, hence, I utilise the extra period to focus on literature. The quiz results were average, they did well with matching columns which had descriptions of characters and places etc, and they had to match them correctly, this informed me that they have grasped the basic knowledge of characters and important places. However, when it came to answering the questions where they had to discuss and explain, they seemed to struggle. Therefore, I plan to use these quiz results to inform my teaching and adjust my approach to better meet the learners' needs.

Next steps:

- Adjust teaching strategy to include more in-depth analysis and discussion.
- Focus on critical scenes and themes in *Macbeth* to enhance learners' understanding.

Term 1 Short Stories Reflection

This term we explored three Short Stories, namely, Forbidden Love, Class Act and The Girl Who Can. For each story read, learners had to take turns in reading the stories aloud and most were able to be read and finished within one period. During the reading session I allow them to ask questions for clarity, and I explain accordingly, I also ask them to highlight/underline important lines for discussion and future referencing. After reading they answer the questions on their books that followed each story. The next day I provide them with important notes to analyse the story, which include the setting, the relevance of the title to the story, narration, important themes, characters, tone, figures of speech, symbols and motifs etc. the purpose for this task is that they get to interact with the stories on their own, test their own understanding and gain more knowledge and clarity through the discussion of the themes and other aspects that are analysed. Of course they were not excited about writing but at the end of the day these notes will be their very own resource and reference book that will help them during assessments, I am a firm

believer in writing notes as I believe learners gain more when writing than just merely making copies for them that they will probably lose (experience has taught me that they lose them and run back to me when it's exam time and they need to revise, so we write!).

Next steps:

- Encourage learners to review and reflect on their notes regularly.
- Provide opportunities for learners to share their insights and observations with peers.
- Continue to emphasise the importance of notetaking and analysis in future lessons.

March 3, 2024

Today, something truly extraordinary happened that left me feeling both proud and inspired. One of my learners sent me a direct message on Instagram. It contained a short video clip of her and four of her classmates acting out Act 1, Scene 1 of *Macbeth*. They were performing the witches' famous spell, "Fair is foul, and foul is fair," with such passion and creativity. What made it even more remarkable was their use of sound effects—an eerie blend of witches' laughter, thunder, and lightning.

I was completely taken by surprise because I had never asked them to do anything like this. Apparently, they had been inspired by the way I demonstrated the witches' lines during class. I had encouraged them to read with expression, sound "evil," and really immerse themselves in the roles, which I showed them how to do. They took that small moment and ran with it, creating something extraordinary.

Over the holidays, they decided to go even further. They made more videos, wearing costumes and acting out scenes in different locations within their communities. This wasn't just a simple classroom activity—it became a creative project that connected them to the play on a deeper level.

As their educator, this filled me with immense pride. When we first started reading *Macbeth*, many of them had such a negative attitude toward it. They found it confusing, intimidating, and dull. But now, seeing them not only enjoy it but also bring the play to life in such a meaningful and creative way, I can't help but feel we've turned a corner.

This initiative of theirs shows me that they're beginning to understand the text—its themes, its characters, and its drama. More importantly, they're owning it. They've taken something written centuries ago and made it relevant and exciting for themselves.

It reminds me why I love teaching: moments like these, where students surprise you with their potential and remind you that learning isn't just about textbooks and assignments. It's about creativity, connection, and making meaning in ways that matter to them. I feel so grateful to be part of their journey.

April 29, 2024

Today, I embarked on a new strategy that combines teaching Paper 2 (Literature) and Paper 3 (Creative Writing) in a single lesson. We began with essay writing, and I provided learners with comprehensive notes that explained the different types of essays, specifically:

1. Narrative essays
2. Descriptive essays
3. Argumentative essays
4. Discursive essays

We discussed the differences and similarities between these essay types, and I offered examples of topics for each, as well as examples of how each essay is written.

The following day, learners practiced writing essays on topics related to *Macbeth* and Short Stories. For *Macbeth*, the topics were: "Compare and Contrast between the three major male characters in *Macbeth*, namely, *Macbeth*, Banquo, and Macduff." An argumentative essay topic: "The relevance of *Macbeth* in modern times, should learners continue studying this drama? Is it still relevant to today's youth?". For Short Stories, the topic was a narrative or descriptive essay: "The story that I find most interesting in *Changes*, the lessons obtained, and themes I resonate with the most."

The essays had to be 250 to 300 words, as learners are English FAL learners, and they had to show evidence of planning, write a first draft, show evidence of editing, and write a final draft as part of the writing process that is also expected in assessments. Learners had a week to complete the essays, and they responded positively, as seen in the attached examples of their essays.

The purpose of this strategy was to get learners to engage with the texts without having to answer questions but explore them in an essay and state their own opinions, thoughts, and reflections. I hope this will benefit them in understanding both the texts better and strengthen or foster positive attitudes towards them.

Next steps:

- Continue to integrate Paper 2 and Paper 3 lessons.
- Encourage learners to share their essays and provide peer feedback.
- Monitor progress and adjust instruction to meet learners' needs.

May 8, 2024

Today, we explored a new aspect of Paper 3, exploring letter writing, both formal and informal. I provided learners with comprehensive notes on the structure and format of different types of letters, delving into the details of salutations, body paragraphs, and closures.

The following day, I presented learners with four friendly letter topics based on Paper 2, asking them to choose two topics to write about. The topics were:

1. Pretend you are Davi from the story "Forbidden Love" and write a letter to Salome expressing your feelings of love and of fear for being found out that you have a child together since you are both from different racial groups in Apartheid South Africa. In your letter, be sure to include details about your relationship, your fears, and your hopes for the future.
2. Pretend to be Benetou from the story "Rejection" and write a letter to Dabba, your friend, explaining to her why you married her father. In your letter, be sure to include details about your decision, your feelings, and your experiences.
3. Pretend to be Thulisile from the story "Triumph in the Face of Adversity" and write a letter to your mother, Thembekile, after moving to the new home with your siblings, escaping from the abuse by your father. In your letter, be sure to include details about your new life, your feelings, and your gratitude.
4. Pretend to be Eveline from the story "Eveline" and write a letter to Frank after you had run away and decided to stay in Dublin, explaining why you chose to stay instead of eloping with him to a new country. In your letter, be sure to include details about your decision, your fears, and your hopes.

Learners enthusiastically chose their topics and wrote two letters each, demonstrating all three stages of the writing process: planning, drafting, and editing. Their letters showed a deep understanding of the stories and characters, and they eagerly shared their work with their peers in class. All four topics were covered, and the learners' engagement and creativity impressed me.

This activity allowed learners to immerse themselves in the stories, developing their writing skills and appreciation for the texts.

9 May 2024

The lesson focused on the process of writing diary entries, still focusing on paper 3 and 2. We went through notes on how to write a single diary entry and 2 entries written on different times of the day and on different dates. I then gave them topics based on paper 2 to practice:

1. Pretend to be Adjoa from the story "The girl who can" and write two diary entries. The first one must be your feelings before you left for school after hearing Maami and Nana arguing about your skinny legs and another one must be about your feelings after you won a trophy in athletics and how proud Nana was.

2. Pretend you are the main character in the story "Class Act" and write a single diary entry about your feelings after experiencing bullying at school for wearing a long skirt and being called sister marry Clarence.

The learners were the ones giving me topic ideas for this one and it showed me that they are excited about these activities that incorporate paper 2, they already knew the topics would be based on paper 2 and they gave topics on the stories we haven't used in our paper 3 lessons 😊 "Maam we haven't done Class Act yet" "yes, how about we write the main characters feelings after being bullied at school even by her educator" I was pleasantly surprised and made sure I use their ideas, these activities are yielding positive results and I am a happy and proud educator.

May 10, 2024

Today, we explored the short message (SMS) format as part of our Paper 3 and Paper 2 lessons. Recognising that learners had not been exposed to this format in previous years, I incorporated it into our transactional text activities. The SMS format is simple and relatable to my technologically savvy learners. After reviewing the notes and format, we moved to practical applications. I provided SMS topics based on the last two short stories we hadn't covered in our Paper 3 lessons:

1. Pretend to be Kadija from "A Bag of Sweets" and write an SMS to Kaltoum explaining why you stopped coming to the shop, having tried to resolve issues with her and your siblings but unable to continue due to her ill treatment.

2. Pretend to be Friedman from "The Wind and a Boy" and ask your mother, who lives in the city, for a bicycle to assist your grandmother with errands.

This marked our final Paper 3 and Paper 2 lesson, and learners were pleased to have completed the writing activities, despite enjoying the opportunity to delve into character perspectives and explore texts in a unique way. They will commence their exams soon and I am hopeful that they will do well.

10 July 2024

It is the beginning of the 3rd term, and I had given feedback to my learners on their term 2 exams. They wrote all three papers for the first time this year and they did well, I was happy with their paper 1 (Language) and paper 3 (Creative writing) performance. They showed maturity in their writing and showed that they have grasped the intricacies of these papers. However, paper 2 (Literature) was a disappointment.

During revision they had been given past papers to answer so that they could see how the departmental papers were set and the type of questions to expect, hence earlier in my diary entries I had noted the importance of focusing on the themes, figures of speech etc. because they come up in the exam and they needed to know how to tackle them. Alas, they didn't perform so well, they did their best but fell short in being able to fully express and discuss according to what the memo and the mark allocation required.

The irony questions confused them, some structured their answers in short stories by using the dramatic irony format/explanation, they confused situational and verbal irony with dramatic irony, they grasped the technique but used it wrongly. They were also challenged by the figures of speech question; they were able to identify them but fell short in discussing its relevance to in the text and the question carried 3 marks. Questions where they had to state their views and refer to the story carried 3 marks and I had guided them to provide 3 examples as the mark allocation requires, but most of them kept repeating the same point and some over explained the one point thinking a lengthy answer meant more marks which is not the case.

There were many mistakes that they made that could've been avoided and it was a bit disheartening especially since we went over past papers and spent enough time for revision. Perhaps I am being too hard on myself and my learners because it was the first time they had written such a paper in Grade 12 in a formal exam setting, maybe it was the nerves that led to them making so many errors or something, because it was clear that they had grasped the work it's just that they couldn't express themselves well, and some confessed that since they had to study all of the 8 short stories they ended up not having time to cover all aspects and spent less time on the stories they deemed more difficult than others and neglected the other ones thinking they are easier and they would be able to tackle them with ease in the exam which was a bad decision since no one knew which stories would come out since it was a common paper.

Even though I am disappointed, but we still have plenty of time to go back to the drawing board and refine my teaching strategies and for them to learn more and do better in their trial exams in September and their finals at the end of the year.

23 July 2024

Last week Friday, I asked my learners to go through the first three stories (Forbidden Love, Rejection and the girl who can). As they re-read the stories they are to identify and underline the lines that contain figures of speech and name them. Yesterday we looked at Rejection and I asked them to share which ones they have identified on their own, they stated the page numbers, read the lines, and discussed which figure of speech it was and what it meant in the story.

While they were doing this, I had my own notes that contained the figures of speech for each story, and I aided them. If they got it right, I let them know by congratulating them and asked the class to clap and cheer and it seemed to encourage them to share more. I also wrote down the meanings from my own notes so they could add on to theirs or correct theirs if they didn't get them right. Today we did the same exercise with Forbidden Love,

they shared their answers, and I gave constructive feedback and modelled the correct answers as they are expected to answer in their exams.

They seemed eager because they did the work, I saw the underlined lines on their books and I saw their discussions in their exercise books as instructed and they were sharing their answers without holding back, they were not worried if they were right or wrong they knew that by sharing what they wrote they will be receiving immediate feedback and know whether they are in the right track or not and make the necessary amendments. Whenever they began to give their answer, they would say “I am not sure but I would like to try...” or “I may be wrong but I think this line is an example of a metaphor because...” they were very engaged and willing to learn, I think their results seem to have motivated them to be more alert and not view these tasks as tedious lol.

4th Term Reflection – Revising *Macbeth*

The fourth term at our school is always a time for intense revision. Since we complete all the syllabi and tasks in the third term, the fourth term is dedicated solely to reviewing the content and preparing for final examinations. This year, I decided to switch things up a bit and take my learners to the media centre for some revision of *Macbeth*. We watched videos that summarized the play, complete with illustrations and a narrated voice explaining key events, themes, and quotes from each act and scene. The learners brought their exercise books to take notes and their drama books to follow along.

The change of environment seemed to energize them; they were excited to be outside the classroom and found the videos a refreshing and clear way to review the content. The combination of visuals, narration, and sound really helped them grasp the important themes and moments in the play. It was especially rewarding to see how much they enjoyed this method, as they had only been exposed to reading the text and our class notes throughout the year.

As the revision sessions continued, I decided to show them the movie adaptation of *Macbeth*, focusing only on the key scenes. We watched the opening battle, King Duncan’s murder, Banquo’s ghost at the banquet, Lady *Macbeth*’s persuasion of *Macbeth*, and a few key soliloquies. I would pause the movie at crucial moments and ask the students to refer to their books, following along with the text as it was being acted out. The learners loved this approach; it gave them a more vivid understanding of the drama and a chance to connect the visual elements with the text. They were enthusiastic and engaged, and I could see that this multi-media approach was helping them internalize the play in a way that reading alone hadn’t.

But the highlight of the revision sessions was the *Macbeth* Game Show Quiz I created. The quiz was designed in a fun, interactive format where the students had to call out answers. Some were multiple-choice, some true or false, and there were also lightning round questions to get them thinking quickly. They had an absolute blast! The atmosphere was filled with excitement and friendly competition, and I could see that they were genuinely engaged in the content in a new way. This strategy allowed them to test their knowledge while still having fun. It was rewarding to see them so excited to answer questions and interact with the drama.

The integration of technology, whether through the videos, the movie, or the interactive quiz, was a big hit with my learners. It gave them an experience beyond traditional reading, and I think it also helped them see the relevance and excitement of Shakespeare's work. I feel like this term has been such a turning point for their understanding and enjoyment of *Macbeth*. They are not only revising but also engaging deeply with the material, and that's a wonderful feeling as an educator. Watching them enjoy the revision process and seeing their confidence grow has been incredibly fulfilling.

APPENDIX G: *MACBETH* REVISION QUIZ

Macbeth Revision Quiz

Grade 12 | Game Show Style Quiz

Round 1: Setting and Castles

What is *Macbeth's* primary setting (country)?

- a) England
- b) Scotland
- c) Ireland
- d) Norway

Answer: b) Scotland

Where does King Duncan get murdered?

- a) Inverness
- b) Dunsinane
- c) Birnam
- d) Scone

Answer: a) Inverness

Which castle becomes *Macbeth's* final stronghold?

- a) Scone
- b) Inverness
- c) Birnam
- d) Dunsinane

Answer: d) Dunsinane

Round 2: Characters and Relationships

Who is *Macbeth's* best friend, whom he later betrays?

- a) Lennox
- b) Banquo
- c) Macduff
- d) Ross

Answer: b) Banquo

True or False: Lady *Macbeth* convinces *Macbeth* to kill King Duncan.

Answer: True

What is the name of Banquo's son?

- a) Malcolm
- b) Donalbain
- c) Fleance
- d) Siward

Answer: c) Fleance

Who ultimately kills *Macbeth*?

- a) Malcolm
- b) Banquo
- c) Donalbain
- d) Macduff

Answer: d) Macduff

Round 3: Plot and Key Events

What strange things happen the night of Duncan's murder? (Choose all that apply)

- a) Horses eat each other
- b) Owl's screech and kill falcons
- c) An eclipse occurs
- d) Storms rage and earthquakes tremble

Answer: a) Horses eat each other, and b) Owl's screech and kill falcons

What is Lady *Macbeth* doing when she starts sleepwalking?

- a) Talking to Banquo's ghost
- b) Washing her hands
- c) Reading a letter
- d) Calling for *Macbeth*

Answer: b) Washing her hands

What do Malcolm and Donalbain do after their father's murder?

- a) Seek revenge immediately
- b) Flee to England and Ireland
- c) Blame *Macbeth*
- d) Join *Macbeth's* army

Answer: b) Flee to England and Ireland

Round 4: Themes and Symbols

Which theme is symbolized by blood in the play?

- a) Loyalty
- b) Ambition
- c) Guilt
- d) Love

Answer: c) Guilt

What does the recurring motif of darkness symbolize in the play?

- a) *Macbeth's* ambition
- b) Evil deeds and secrecy
- c) *Macbeth's* downfall
- d) Lady *Macbeth's* power

Answer: b) Evil deeds and secrecy

True or False: The theme of fate versus free will is central in *Macbeth*.

Answer: True

Round 5: Supernatural Elements

Which character is considered the queen of the witches?

- a) Hecate
- b) Lady *Macbeth*
- c) Ross
- d) The Porter

Answer: a) Hecate

The witches show *Macbeth* several apparitions. Which of these is NOT one of them?

- a) A bloody child
- b) A floating dagger
- c) A crowned child holding a tree
- d) An armed head

Answer: b) A floating dagger

According to the witches, what will happen to *Macbeth's* rule if Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane?

- a) He will be crowned king of England
- b) He will gain a new ally
- c) His reign will end
- d) He will see Banquo's ghost

Answer: c) His reign will end

What do the witches tell Banquo about his future?

- a) He will be king
- b) His descendants will be kings
- c) He will betray *Macbeth*
- d) He will die in battle

Answer: b) His descendants will be kings

Round 6: Final Round - The Prophecies and Fate

The first apparition warns *Macbeth* to beware of whom?

- a) Banquo
- b) Malcolm
- c) Macduff
- d) Lennox

Answer: c) Macduff

How does the prophecy about "no man born of a woman" come true?

- a) Macduff is born via Caesarean section
- b) *Macbeth's* son kills him
- c) Banquo's ghost returns to take revenge
- d) A witch curses *Macbeth*

Answer: a) Macduff is born via Caesarean section

What do the witches throw into their cauldron while chanting "Double, double toil and trouble"?

- a) A human heart
- b) Eye of newt and toe of frog
- c) A poisoned apple
- d) Snake's skin

Answer: b) Eye of newt and toe of frog

Bonus Round: Lightning Questions (1 point each)

What title is given to *Macbeth* at the start of the play?

Answer: Thane of Glamis

What does Lady *Macbeth* call upon to "unsex" her?

Answer: Spirits

True or False: Banquo's ghost speaks to *Macbeth* at the banquet.

Answer: False

What signal does Lady *Macbeth* use to tell *Macbeth* the guards are asleep?

Answer: A ringing bell

Appendix H: Turnitin Certificate

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