**HOW CLASSROOM TALK CONTRIBUTES TO READING COMPREHENSION**

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***ABSTRACT***

*Research on the improvement of reading comprehension is an ongoing educational challenge in schools. Despite changes in literacy curriculum polices in South African schools, indicators of reading comprehension performance are still poor (PIRLS, 2018) and require further studies of how teaching at the classroom levels can be improved.*

*This article reports on a an ethno-methodological study of classroom interactions during a reading lesson, from the perspective of Melander (2012) and Stahl’s (2002) socially oriented theories of learning. The main questions were how talk is used by children for purposes of understanding a text, and how they display their own understanding for sharing and clarifying textual meanings with others. Data was analysed using conversation analysis principles embedded in the Clayman and Gill (2004) framework. This framework allows for exploration and analysis of the reading comprehension interactions on levels of content, specific patterns of sequencing, response preferences, lexical choices and gestures.*

*Findings indicate that grade four learners use talk in creative, spontaneous and dedicated ways in their attempts to understand a text during a classroom lesson. Interaction is a collaborative process where meanings are co-constructed. Learners take turns at talking in ways that reflect their personal understandings of words and sentences, and interact in ways which ensure interpretations and understanding of meanings. Non-verbal behaviour such as pointing, excitement, interruptions, tone of voice, faster and slower speech, sighs and observations are all patterns observed which in the context of conversation sequences, contributed to shared views and opinions, extension of utterances and phrases and ultimately comprehension. These findings highlight the value of independent attempts of meaning making and talking about the text for shared comprehension. The pedagogical implications the improvement of teaching of reading are discussed.*

***Keywords:*** *Reading comprehension interactions, classroom talk, conversation analysis, peer learning, classroom comprehension conversations*