English in Australia Terms of Use

CONTENTS

English in Australia

Guidelines for Contributors

English in Australia is the peer-reviewed national journal of the Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE).

The journal is committed to publishing material that is of importance to English educators. We welcome high quality teacher-oriented and scholarly submissions in any relevant field of English education, including literature and literacy education.

We are interested in submissions that reflect dilemmas, debates and concerns facing current contemporary English educators in Australia and elsewhere. Submissions may take the form of:

- A report on empirical research conducted with or by English teachers or students in classrooms
- A theorised discussion of English curriculum, or of the effects of policy on English teaching, or
- Practitioner inquiries, including reflective writing that takes a scholarly and methodical approach, that elaborates or illuminates aspects of the practices of English teachers.

Submissions should be explicitly linked to issues of English teaching, pedagogy or curriculum and demonstrate familiarity with current and pertinent scholarly literature.

Articles will be considered from any context where the learning and teaching of English is framed in ways that would engage and interest a secondary English teacher. Writers should take care to relate, early in their submission, the research context for the benefit of both Australian and international readers. The journal welcomes contributions that challenge traditional ways of thinking about English and that prompt readers to entertain new ways of conceptualising English curriculum and pedagogy

Contributors are encouraged to read previous issues of *English in Australia* to get a sense of the existing and ongoing scholarly conversations in our journal. Articles that share Higher Degree Research conducted by English teachers (e.g. Ph.D. and Ed.D. research findings) are welcome.

All articles are subject to double blind peer review by at least two reviewers. This means that the identity of the author is not divulged to the reviewers, nor are the reviewers' names revealed to the author.

Please refer to the following guidelines:

1. All articles should be submitted via Scholastica: https://english-in-australia.scholasticahq.com/
2. Recommended length of articles for publication is between 5000 and 7000 words (including references).
3. Ensure your name is removed from the article, including from the document properties.
4. All submissions should be typed with double spacing in an easy to read font (e.g. Times New Roman or Calibri, 11–12 point) with a 2.5 cm margin on all sides.
5. Your submission should begin with an abstract of 100–150 words that succinctly summarises the research: context; design or methodology; and findings.
6. All references should conform to the American Psychological Association (APA) style. Please consult the *APA Publication Manual*, 7th edition, or any guide to APA referencing available through university library websites.
7. Submissions are expected to have a high standard of written English. Please ensure that you have carefully edited and proofread your submission. Articles submitted with a poor standard of written English, style problems or inaccurate/missing references will be returned to the author for revision before being considered for blind review.
8. Where possible, avoid footnotes. Usually it is possible to incorporate them into the text. Where they cannot be avoided, they should be numbered with a superscript and listed at the end of the article (endnotes).
9. It is the responsibility of authors to seek copyright clearance for any materials quoted, as required.
10. It is the responsibility of authors to ensure that all required ethics approvals and relevant permissions have been received prior to the submission of an article for review. Please ensure that a statement about ethical issues appears in articles that include data collected from or about humans, including any pertinent information about approvals or permissions.
11. It is expected that a clear statement about the implications of the research for English education policy and/or practice appears in either the Introduction or Conclusion section of your article.
12. Please include in Scholastica a separate file with your full name and institutional affiliation for publication, and a 50-word biographical description.
13. You retain copyright of materials published in the journal; *English in Australia* holds first publication rights only. Authors retain the right to self-archive the final draft of their articles in their institution's eprint repository.

You can expect feedback from the reviewers and editor to help you shape your work effectively. Please feel free to contact the Editor or members of the Editorial team to discuss any contribution which you may be considering.

Although *English in Australia* is predominantly a curriculum research and practice journal, occasionally poems and short texts of other genres relevant to the themes and readership of the journal are also published. Such pieces should be relevant to the lives and work of English teachers and students and be accompanied by a short (300-800 word) abstract or reflection. Please email the Editor regarding submissions of this type.

Address for correspondence:

Kelli McGraw
Editor, English in Australia
School of Teacher Education and Leadership
Queensland University of Technology
GPO Box 2434
Brisbane 4001 AUSTRALIA
Email: kelli.mcgraw@qut.edu.au

Editorial

Kelli McGraw and Larissa McLean Davies

It is hard to talk about anything in 2020 without mentioning the COVID-19 pandemic. Writing this editorial in the second half of the year, as the incoming and outgoing editors of this journal, we may wish to be able to get back to talking about education in English, and in Australia, using various frames. But as our colleagues increasingly refer to 2019 and earlier years in terms such as 'the Before Time', the magnitude of 2020 as a social turning point cannot be written around.

When we wrote our editorial for issue 54.3, opening our series of papers on the *Futures for English* theme in a dedicated special edition, we reflected on the continued situation of crisis in Australia as the pandemic followed an intense and brutal period of bushfires across the nation. Writing now for issue 55.1, the pandemic continues to dominate world and local news. As this issue goes to (digital) press, many Australian State and Territory borders are still closed and the future of international travel remains uncertain. One of us writes from Brisbane on Jagera land, where schools were closed in early Term 2 but now are open, and state borders have until recently been firmly closed to all non-residents. The other writes from Melbourne on Wurundjeri land, where until recently a state of emergency had been enforced, including evening curfews, strict rules regarding movement and months of online school, challenging teachers, students and families. The long-term impacts of this on student learning and engagement, and on school retention are unlikely to be known for some time (Phillips & Cain, 2020; Nash & Eynon, 2020; Akbari, 2020), but early research findings indicate that those students already marginal in our school systems have been further disadvantaged by a widening of the gap between students as a result of the intense disruption.

What does all this mean for our social and cultural futures? What impact will 2020 have on the lives of young people, their families and teachers? How can a school curriculum begin to deal with social circumstances that are changing so rapidly and significantly? And what, specifically does this mean for subject English in the immediate, and longer term?

Amidst this pandemic the global influence of the #BlackLivesMatter movement has brought about social reflection and political action, bringing demands for long overdue change to the fore in the United States, the United Kingdom, and colonised nations such as Australia. Alongside these protests, globally, we have witnessed the increased public demand for the stories of Indigenous peoples and peoples of colour, to the extent that many texts, such as the anthology of stories *Growing Up Aboriginal in Australia*, edited by Anita Heiss sold out in 2020, and Magabala Books reported a 360% increase in sales (Kembrey, 2020). This global and national demand for the stories of Indigenous peoples, Black writers and people of colour, shows the significance of story, and the role of diverse stories in enabling us to understand others, develop connections and relations, and imagine different futures (Misson,1998; Dale, 2012). Yet, the demand for and purchase of these texts might also indicate that for many Australians, these stories represent 'new' knowledge, narratives, voices and experiences that they have not been exposed to as part of formal schooling. As we consider the 'Futures' for English, it is important to turn attention to the role of diverse stories in the curriculum, particularly in this time of environmental and social precarity and crisis.

In this edition of *English in Australia*, we continue the *Futures of English* theme with some further papers engaging with this topic. Jafanda and Thomas use dialogic reflections on teacher narratives to explore official and hidden curriculum for English as an Additional Language (EAL). In their article about student and teacher experiences of VCE English/ EAL in Victoria, they question who 'cuts' the stories available to students in the EAL course, in terms of the amount studied and the diversity of text selection, challenging future English to construct EAL students and teachers more agentively. Next, O'Sullivan probes the personal and professional beliefs of NSW secondary English teachers relating to literature and its role in their classrooms in an article exploring teacher beliefs. O'Sullivan's framing and discussion of teacher interview responses highlights the ongoing tension between notions of 'literature' and 'text' that surely must be attended to and resolved to some level for English in the future to be productively

defined. Continuing this thematic consideration of literature and closing the special section McKnight uses speculative non-fiction to conduct a curriculum inquiry, presenting a fictional curriculum for Literature in Victoria in 2023.

Surrounding the Futures-themed articles in this issue are non-themed articles that explore current questions in English education, as well as our publication features -- an article providing a Perspectives from the Past, and McPherson's *Reading and Viewing* column for adolescent text reviews. The Perspectives from the Past article chosen for this issue is by Cumming, Kimber and Wyatt-Smith (2011), from issue 46.3 of the journal. Ten short years ago a call for papers on the 'Futures' of English might have generated more such pieces on multimodality and the changing nature of English in a multi-literate world. In 2020, as we interact with the current review of the Australian Curriculum, it is timely to revisit perspectives from the past to consider the status of questions concerning multi-modality and technology in the curriculum.

The opening article in this issue is of particular note, based on the Keynote Address delivered by Yandell at the AATE National Conference in Melbourne in 2019. Yandell shares examples of student writing to frame an exploration of contemporary writing pedagogy in the UK context, tracing factors that have led to complexity in student stories, as products of highly contextual and socially situated classroom work, being ignored in favour of a focus on abstract models of writing according to genre. Questions of how to best evaluate, respond to and assess student writing, indeed all production modes, are without doubt among those that future English teachers must deal with.

Esten and Scott Curwood report findings of an action research project in a Year 11 English class, in which students conducted an inquiry-based project to underpin a Preliminary HSC study of two texts. In the study, inquiry-based approaches were used to foster 'creative dispositions', and the authors discuss the apparent symbiosis between inquiry and creativity seen when students produce original texts. Also appearing in this issue, Margaret Merga presents research findings from a study of teacher librarians in 30 Australian schools, sharing insights for English teachers about widely used library strategies for promoting reading for pleasure and as a social practice. These articles provide pathways for English teachers to refine and modify their own pedagogical approaches in the immediate future.

Some editorial thoughts about the 'Futures' for English, beyond the social circumstances and content of the articles in issues 54.3 and 55.1, pertain to *future plans for the journal* and the ways that the journal can continue to *sustain English education into the future.* From this issue onward, AATE will prioritise digital publication of the journal, with all AATE members receiving the full text journal in digital format via their ETA websites. Print copies of the journal will still be included in some ETA membership packages, and other interested individuals or institutions will be able to purchase print copies of the journal via their ETA or the AATE office (relevant contact details for this appear on the last page of this issue). All readers will continue to have access to the Editorial plus one other nominated article for each issue, which are provided open access on the AATE website.

References

Akbari, E. (2020). Coronavirus school closures could widen inequities for our youngest students. *The Conversation*. https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-school-closures-could-widen-inequities-for-our-youngest-students-136669

Cumming, J., Kimber, K., & Wyatt-Smith, C. (2011). Historical concepts of English, literacy and multimodality in policy and curriculum and conflicts with educational accountability. *English in Australia*, *46*(3), 42-53.

Dale, L. (2012). *The enchantment of English: Professing English literature in Australian universities*. Sydney University Press.

Kembrey, M. (2020). Publishers rush to fill demand as books on race and racism sell out amid protests. *Sydney Morning Herald*. https://www.smh.com.au/culture/books/publishers-rush-to-fill-demand-as-books-on-race-and-racism-sell-out-amid-protests-20200611-p551kf.html

Misson, R. (1998). 'Telling Tales Out of School' in Christie, F., & Misson, R. *Literacy and schooling*. Routledge.

Nash, V. & Eynon, R. (2020). Coronavirus school closures impact 1.3 billion children – and remote learning is increasing inequality. *The Conversation*. https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-school-closures-impact-1-3-billion-children-and-remote-learning-is-increasing-inequality-138656

Phillips, L. & Cain, M. (2020). 'Exhausted beyond measure': What teachers are saying about COVID-19 and the disruption to education. *The Conversation*. https://theconversation.com/exhausted-beyond-measure-what-teachers-are-saying-about-covid-19-and-the-disruption-to-education-143601

CHALLENGE & CHANGE
CONTEMPORARY LITERACY & ENGLISH TEACHING

AATE/ALEA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
BRISBANE 7-9 JULY 2021

AATE Australian Association for the Teaching of English

AUSTRALIAN LITERACY EDUCATORS' ASSOCIATION

Dear AATE Members

As co-convenors of the 2021 AATE/ALEA National Conference committee, we want to update you on some exciting news about next year's event. As you know, the conference was scheduled to take place in Brisbane in July 2021.

The great news is that, despite the various meeting and travel restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the conference is still going ahead as a shorter three-day online event from **Wednesday to Friday, 7 to 9 July**.

The conference committee is working hard to plan a program that will bring a fabulous and exciting online experience. Co-hosting the national conference online will be a first-of-its-kind for ETAQ. Building on the experiences we gained at the IFTE online conference in 2020, the committee is eager to create a digital event that includes satisfying levels of social interaction together with invigorating professional learning experiences. At the same time, the committee has high hopes that the conference will be highly accessible and affordable because of the use of virtual space.

The conference program is being created with innovative approaches in mind, using shorter session times and a variety of presentation genres, mixed with big moments for the whole group to tune in together around interesting speakers (national and international) and playful events that seek to nourish and nurture our professional growth. The committee is seeking to bring academic, teacher, student and literary voices together to provide a smorgasbord of ideas that can be accessed live or via recordings.

The theme of the conference is:

Challenge and Change: Contemporary Literacy & English Teaching

Stay tuned for more information:

- Website **www.englishliteracyconference.com.au/**
- Facebook **www.facebook.com/aatealeaconference**
- Twitter & Instagram **@aatealeaconf**

The 2021 AATE/ALEA National Conference committee hopes you will join us in looking forward to this not-to-be-missed online conference from 7 to 9 July 2021.

Please save the dates!

Dr Lindsay Williams & Dr Linda Willis

The Creative Sociability of English Classrooms and 'The True Nature of Stories' [1]

John Yandell, Institute of Education, University College London, United Kingdom

Abstract: In currently dominant accounts, English as a school subject, its content and processes, are construed as an induction into a well-defined, already-established disciplinary discourse or set of discourses. In an attempt to challenge this version of English, I present some examples of autobiographical writing by secondary students and I tell the story of an observed lesson. From these instances of practice, a different picture of English emerges – one where the English classroom might be regarded as a place of literary sociability, where students enter into dialogue with each other and with the literature that they read, and where the complex challenges entailed in any attempt to represent experience in words is properly acknowledged.

My starting point is a statement about the role that writing plays in schooling that might be taken to reflect the currently dominant view of the central purposes of education. The statement is taken from an essay by Frances Christie, who, as one of the most influential proponents of genre theory, has exerted considerable influence on the ways that English has been reconfigured over the past decades in Australia, the United Kingdom (UK) and other parts of the Anglophone world:

> The principal purpose of writing in contemporary societies is to construct, store, disseminate and critique the various disciplines or bodies of knowledge valued in English-speaking traditions and institutions, including, for example, literary studies, science, history, geography, and so on. While initiation into such disciplines begins in the primary years, it is in the secondary years that the challenges of learning the various disciplines or school subjects become most marked. That is because this is the period when the characteristic discourses of the different subjects emerge most distinctively: knowledge construction in science, mathematics, English, history and so on is increasingly expressed in different genres, different ways of reasoning, different ways of handling the 'uncommonsense' knowledge that the various disciplines represent. (Christie, 2013, p. 18)

I find the statement, and the position it represents, deeply troubling. I am concerned that this theoretical position has led to an unhelpful emphasis on product rather than process, an oversimplification of the formal properties of writing and an obliteration of any sense of young writers' identities and purposes for writing. The essay that follows is an attempt to draw attention to dimensions of schooling, and of what happens in English in particular, that cannot be accommodated within this model of language and learning. These dimensions merit our notice: they provide the basis for a different rationale for school as a place where young people can draw on the semiotic and relational resources available to them to make sense of their experiences and to engage in meaningful conversations with one another. I should make clear, too, that in what follows I will be drawing on evidence of policy and practice in England.[2] While I recognise that the experiences on which I focus have local, contingent aspects, I hope that their relevance to colleagues

working in schools in Australia will become apparent.

In Frances Christie's account, the language of schooling is, principally, the language of the disciplines, and it is by learning the language of the disciplines that students gain access to the knowledge that really counts – the knowledge that is powerful precisely because it differs from the experiential knowledge (common sense?) that can be acquired beyond the school gates (cf. Young, 2008; Young & Lambert, 2014). Christie conceptualises writing as deriving from the disciplines on which school subjects, at least in her account, are based. In the passage quoted above, she invokes 'literary studies' as one of these disciplines. Quite what she means by this remains unclear, and I am not at all sure that English as a school subject can straightforwardly be derived from the discipline of literary studies: more generally, the question of the knowledge-base of English remains a matter of contestation (McLean Davies & Sawyer, 2018). In what follows, I argue that the talk and writing that take place in school serve larger and more complicated purposes than merely the representation of disciplinary knowledge.

In Christie's model of language, there is a sharp separation of everyday and disciplinary (or, in Michael Young's terms, 'powerful') knowledge, and the primary function of schools is reducible to the transmission of (disciplinary) knowledge. As I and others have argued elsewhere, this does not seem to be the case in English, where the most exciting developments happen when students bring their everyday knowledge to bear on the material that they encounter in the classroom, and where their experience of language in the classroom enables them to think more, and differently, about themselves and about the wider world (Turvey, Yandell, & Ali, 2014; Yandell & Brady, 2016; Doecke & Yandell, 2018). In what follows, my focus is on the complexity of the writing – and thinking – that is accomplished when students are given the opportunity to use the semiotic resources available to them to grapple with and represent their own experiences.

Students' stories and teachers' responses (and responsibilities)

To explore these complexities, let's start with a piece written by a secondary school student in an English General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examination, the high-stakes test taken by 16-year-olds in England:

My Dad

My dad was a shopping arcade owner but he became a bad gambler he would bet on anything from maggot races to football that was when he went bust so every morning, afternoon and night he would go back to the demolition site where his shopping arcade [had been] and draw and paint pictures of the shopping arcade been demolished he would be their for 4 or 5 hours a time just sat their winging to himself wondering what to do next we have got pictures all over the house of the shopping arcade from beighn up and running to been flat on the ground from every angle possible. He is able to sell a lot of them to make money back that he has to pay back to the distributors our house has never beign the same since you could cut the atmosphere with a knife, my dad has beign offered a new job as the manager of a new shopping arcade he said he will think about it but knowone in the right mind wants my dad as their manager and noone would belive that he is going to take it. It would be to much pressure for him he would collapse, have a nervous breakdown. He would not survive a week let alone five years which would be the minimum contract aloued for such an important job. (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority [QCA], 1999b, p. 26)

I suspect that most teachers of English have experienced moments when a student uses the constraints – and possibly also the strange anonymity – of an examination paper to explore something that matters to them, something of such intense personal significance as to transcend the immediate circumstances of the test. If we can read 'My Dad' without becoming distracted by the surface imperfections of the text, by the writer's difficulties with orthography and punctuation, we might want to acknowledge what has been achieved here. The writer has confronted the problem of how to represent to others a story which is both painful and unfinalisable, a story which is about another human being while at the same time being about the teller and their relationship to this other human being. And, for the writer, telling the story seems to provide a means of thinking through what it might mean, of coming to terms with another person whose own misfortunes (or demons) have exerted such a powerful influence on their own life.

This apparently unassuming text is actually structured in very complex ways. There is nothing straightforward about the people and experiences that are represented here, and there is certainly nothing straightforward about what is involved in the act of representation. Experience is mediated linguistically

in ways that might be categorised as literary. Take, for example, the ways in which time is represented: time as chronological, objective, public, but also psychological; time as a dimension of lived human experience; time as recursive, evoked in and through acts of memory. This, at any rate, might be one way of responding to the story that is being told. It was not, however, how 'My Dad' was presented when it appeared in a government-sponsored publication, *Improving Writing at Key Stages 3 and 4* (QCA, 1999b), produced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, the body responsible for the oversight of the National Curriculum and of centrally-regulated regimes of assessment in England. There, it was intended to exemplify the weaknesses of writing characteristic of students who were awarded a grade F. Below is part of the commentary on 'My Dad' that was offered in this booklet:

Textual organisation

- Opening: The main character (dad) is very clearly established, as is the theme/narrative problem (consequences of dad's gambling). But the time-scale is not clear and remains a weakness of the narrative throughout.
- Ending: This remains congruent with the growing theme, and there are hints of future developments. However, though there is some sense of closure, it finishes on a banal technicality about the legal terms of a contract.
- Coherence/cohesion: … the noun phrase (my dad) is used only three times and there is a consequent overuse of *he/his*, but with only one character, this is less damaging to cohesion than it otherwise might be.
- Reader-writer relationship: The choice of lexis is arguably too informal in the opening. An A grade writer might lend distance and formality by using *father* instead of my *dad* and *bad* is not a strong adjective to describe a gambler in this context … The reader is positioned to be critical of the father by ironic repetition and contrast. But the main problem is a lack of detail and excess of pace – there is so much more that the reader wants to know.
  (QCA, 1999b, p. 28)

I offer the commentary here as an object lesson in how not to respond to the stories that students tell. It is an approach which starts from a template, a set of preconceived notions of what a text should look like, how it should be organised, what register of language should be adopted; it judges what the student has actually written on the basis of its divergence from this model. What it signally fails to do is to consider the writer's purposes or what the writer might be accomplishing in this piece. If this were merely a chronological account, chronicling stages in the economic and psychological decline of a man with a gambling addiction, the strictures about timescale might have some justification. But it isn't – it involves the representation of the writer's relationship with this person, their sense of them across time and the vicissitudes of the family's experiences. Likewise, the suggestion that greater formality of lexical choices would be desirable seems spectacularly to miss the point – and the force – of the student's decision to write about their *dad*. When, in the final sentence, there is a shift into a more public, formal register, this is dismissed as the introduction of a banal technicality. Again, this marks a colossal failure in imagination and empathy: from the protected viewpoint of the commentator, the length of a contract of employment might appear thus; from the perspective of all those, including the writer, whose material circumstances force them to confront the real effects of precarity, such matters are very far from technicalities. They are banal only insofar as the everyday struggle for existence is banal.

I present this example of institutionalised mis-reading because, in this era of standards-based reforms (Darling-Hammond, 2004), its recommended method of responding to the stories that students tell has become perilously close to plain common sense. The government-approved document in which it appeared was part of a larger research project, looking at the ways in which English teachers' impressionistic judgements of the quality of their students' writing might be mapped onto discrete, objective and fairly easily quantifiable variations of lexis and textual organisation that could be identified in a large sample of student writing (QCA, 1999a). In itself, this analysis might be regarded as providing evidence that experienced teachers' judgements were grounded in what Bethan Marshall (2011), following Royce Sadler, has characterised as a form of guild knowledge. But the effect of the Technical Accuracy Project (QCA, 1999a) was much more profound – and much more damaging to writing pedagogy – than this might indicate. What happened next was that the analytic categories of the research project (lexical choices, sentence lengths,

markers of textual cohesion and coherence, and so on) were then transformed into pedagogic categories – the individual features of written text that were to be taught explicitly and as markers of effective writing. It is an approach which has had profoundly damaging effects in English schools in the past two decades (Barrs, 2019). And it is an approach which, sadly, has been replicated across much of the Anglophone world (see, for example, Petrosky & Mihalakis, 2016; Doecke & Breen, 2013).

What I have tried to suggest is not only that it has promoted 'bad writing' (though I fear that that has been its bitter harvest), but also that, in itself, it enacts a symbolic violence against our students. That, it seems to me, is precisely what is happening in the commentary on 'My Dad', where the complexity of the work is ignored and where the prescriptions that are applied to it, in the most cloth-eared fashion, amount to the imposition of a set of class prejudices. (Is it vulgar to talk about contracts of employment? Is the education of gentlefolk our primary concern?)

Within the domain of schooling, neoliberal systems and processes operate to deny difference, individuality, agency, to reduce all work to what is easily measurable and quantifiable, to treat processes of education as if they could adequately be represented by cells on a spreadsheet (Turvey, et al., 2014; Unwin & Yandell, 2016; Doecke & Yandell, 2020; Yandell, Doecke, & Abdi, 2020). The treatment of 'My Dad' provides an instance of these processes at work, of the misrecognition that is involved in so reductive an approach to a student's act of meaning-making. The same processes also operate to misrepresent what happens in English lessons, to reduce to some imaginary one-way transmission of knowledge the complex, multifaceted and unpredictable interactions through which learning happens.

The story of a lesson

We have seen that what might superficially appear to be a very simple text in fact involves complex work, both in the organisation of time within the narrative and the construction of the narrator, not to mention other dimensions. The stories that students bring into class can never be dismissed as 'just experience' – they always involve a complex rendering of experience for other audiences, complex relations between the storytelling and the audience of the text. This has come home to me repeatedly in the work that I do as a teacher educator. To illustrate this, I want to tell the story of a lesson. Before I do, though, I want to say why

I think such stories are vitally important. My interest is in the stories that our students encounter, in written or other forms, and in the stories that they tell and how we might respond to them. But I am equally interested in the stories that we tell as teachers, and why these stories are valuable and should be attended to.

The work that stories do, and how they do it, is not reducible to the sterile categories of genre that characterise Christie's approach to language and learning. Stories tend to particularise things. They recognise, too, the perspectival. I have been reading the latest collection by Kei Miller, *In Nearby Bushes* (2019). Consider these lines in his poem 'The Understory':

> Whoever did tell you there was two sides
> to every story is someone who don't know the true
> nature of stories. Try two hundred, or two thousand …
> (Miller, 2019, p. 8)

Nowhere is this multiplicity, this multidimensionality, more apparent than in relation to classroom stories, and stories of classrooms.

So, when I tell you the story of a lesson, it is, in a very limited sense, my story, in that I am the one telling it and in that I am, necessarily, telling it from my perspective. But I recognise that there would be other ways of telling it, other perspectives from which it might be told. It isn't – and it cannot be – either definitive or objective. In his essay, 'The Storyteller', Walter Benjamin (1955/1970) insists on the importance of the role of listeners: it is they who must determine what the story means (see Pereira & Doecke, 2016).

It is a lesson that I was privileged to observe earlier this year, in a boys' comprehensive school in inner London. It's a school with a diverse student population, diverse ethnically and in class terms. The lesson was taught collaboratively by Sarah, a student teacher in the preservice teacher education programme on which I work, and her mentor, Amy, a teacher with over twenty years' experience of working in inner London schools.[3] The lesson was located in a unit of work on autobiography. In the previous lesson, the students, a class of 11- and 12-year-olds, had been given a choice of two homework tasks: they were either to choose an artefact that meant something to them and bring it in to school, prepared to talk about it, or they were to interview an older family member.

Rather unusually – no, more than that, quite remarkably – the majority of the class seemed to have chosen to do both. If this surprised me, what really intrigued me were the artefacts they had brought with

them. In a class of about twenty-five boys, at least six or seven were clutching teddy bears (if you accept that as a quite capacious term for a variety of more or less ursine, more or less anthropomorphised, cuddly toys). And they had stories to tell.

Charlie presents his first shoes. He explains that he never used to like wearing shoes or socks – and he came to like these ones because of the colour (bright red). Will presents a painting he had done as a very young child – a representation of his anger. 'It's very abstract', comments Raphael. Rubel likes the textures on the right of the image. Edmir talks about his teddy – 'like Spiderman, but a plushier version'. Deodan has also brought in a teddy bear – linked to his diagnosis of diabetes, in that the bear was given to him after a visit to the hospital. He becomes very emotional, and Amy comforts him. Artan, who is sitting next to me, presents his first bear, which he made himself when he was about five. He explains that he was taken by his big sisters to a 'build a bear' workshop. He says the bear reminds him of the longevity of his relationship with his sisters.

'Was that [the bear-making trip with his sisters] before you came to this country?' asks another student. Initially, I misconstrue the force of this question. In the wider political context of the 'hostile environment' for immigrants that has been deliberately fostered by recent UK governments, it is easy to assume that any such reference to a student's migrant status is intended as a slur, a questioning of their right to be here, or to participate in the conversation. But, as the lesson proceeds, I realise that I have misunderstood. Artan and his interlocutor have known each other for years. They, like many of the boys in the class, had attended the same primary school. There is a shared history here that informs much of the sharing of artefacts and memories. What is impressive, I gradually realise, is the quality of attention from the other students – as when they are listening to Adam's story of the box.

Cormac comments on this – the value of the box as a repository of objects that have meaning for Adam. Ali shares his mother's memories: she has told him one story about playing cricket at Lord's, and another about a British National Party (neo-fascist) march that took place outside the flats in Tower Hamlets where she grew up. Amy invites Michael to share the message in the book he has brought in – a message from his former teachers. Rubel talks about the school photographs he has brought in – from Year 3, with his brothers. Josh presents his scrapbook from nursery. My observation

notes, below, are addressed to Sarah, my student teacher:

> What has been going on for the past twenty minutes has been extraordinary, hasn't it? The students have been wonderful, both in sharing and in receiving these memories. There have been glimpses, too, of shared histories – of several students recognising the teachers who wrote the message in Michael's book, the student whose question to Artan revealed a prior knowledge of his Bosnian heritage, and so on. What is happening here is a significant moment in the development of the class's identity as a class, and in their sense of what subject English might mean to them – as a space in which all sorts of private and public experiences can be shared, relished, worked on and considered.
>
> There is also something to be said here about the complexity of the rendering of time in these shared memories. There is, generally, a concern to locate the memory in chronological time: this was when I was in Year 3, or when I was 4, and so on. But alongside this there is also a sense of memory operating across time, of memory being (re-)constituted in the stories that are told and retold, and of the distance between the teller and the memory: this is what life was like then, and what I was like then, and this is how I am now … In this – really rather important – sense, the timeline might be somewhat of a distraction, an oversimplification, since it appears to fix the memory at a point in time, without acknowledging the ways in which the memory functions as a bridge across time and as a resource for the ongoing work of identity (re-)making.
>
> (From my lesson observation notes, January 17, 2019)

This story of the lesson is significant because it involves attending to processes, not just products, because it renders visible those dimensions of education that are effaced by the neoliberal discourse of spreadsheets and rubrics. It is not possible to tell this story without recognising that what happens in the classroom is socially enacted, enacted in history and culture – the diverse histories and cultures of the participants. This is where teachers' and students' work gets done. And the claim that I am making is that such work demands recognition in three different senses of the word. First, what I have described is, with local variation, familiar to anyone who has spent time in English lessons. Its surprises are the everyday surprises of school life. Second, such work, which draws on, and arises out of, the students' sense of themselves and of the challenges of representing their own histories, their own formation as social beings, needs to be understood as intrinsically valuable. And third, it obliges us to involve ourselves in re-cognition, in thinking again about what is happening in such moments:

[W]e are positing 'creativity' as being potentially a function of those institutional settings and the social relationships enacted there, rather than treating it as a dimension of human experience that exists outside the school walls, even as we affirm the potential of the students' creativity to challenge the conventional practices and assumptions that obtain in those settings.

… our intention here is to do no more than try to capture the sociability that formed a necessary context for them to create their texts and to learn from each other …

(Doecke & McClenaghan, 2011, p. 77)

Memory, writing and the social

The creative sociability, or sociable creativity, captured by Doecke and McClenaghan, was also salient in the writing that Amy's students produced in the course of their work on autobiography. Recalling Ian Reid's (1984) gallery/workshop binary, I think it is helpful to see Amy's classroom as a workshop, in that this aptly characterises the writerly approach to literary texts that was evident in the pieces they wrote – a body of work which reveals how their reading and writing had been brought into close and productive dialogue, one with the other (cf. Barthes, 1973/1990; Barrs & Cork, 2001).

Also relevant here are two strands of Reid's argument about the development of writing. First, questioning the assumption that 'children's writing should always aim to record the authentic contours of a personal experience', he insists on the validity of a more playful and inventive approach to the rendering of experience in words, 'perhaps using a half borrowed, self consciously "literary" language to bring into being something not felt or known until uttered' (Reid, 1984, p. 27). Second, he emphasises the social nature of the workshop for

its insistence that most learning occurs not as a private, interior experience but as an *interactive* one, socially shaped. Knowledge, in the Workshop, is less a personal acquisition than an interpersonal production: relational, collaborative, and more specifically a matter of exchange. (Reid, 1984, p. 3)

The literary text, for Amy's students, becomes a resource for textual production, to be sure, but much more than this: it is a resource for making meaning, for recognition. What I mean by this is a process of seeing something familiar, but also of thinking again, and of attributing value or significance to the thing observed:

My special thing is my small Arsenal shirt because I have had it since I was 4. I loved the shirt and wore it everywhere. I remember in reception/year 1 I really wanted to wear the shirt but it was way too small.

… To some people, it might seem like a piece of clothing, but to me it's a memory I love so much and see differently from others. My uncle bought it for me. (Kadir)[4]

For some of Amy's students, the extract from Pepys's diary, his account of the fire of London (Pepys, 1666), provided a model for their own diaries in which there is a Pepysian oscillation between the immediate and domestic, on the one hand, and, larger social matters, on the other. Here is a fragment from Edmir's diary that does precisely this:

Wednesday

I came back from school tired. As I was about to open the door, I heard my dad cheering. He later tells me that Kosovo are finally having their own army, which is really good, because when Serbia try to come at us again we are prepared.

Thursday

It was after dinner when I started running up the stairs and I booted up my PS4 and played *Resident Evil 2.*

The claim that I am making here about what Pepys does for Edmir is that it expands Edmir's sense of what is sayable, thereby enabling him to represent his experience as encompassing both the local (coming home to play on his PS4) and the political (his family's investment in their Kosovar heritage).

The text that seemed to achieve most in offering Amy's students a different set of potentials for meaning-making, or a different way of thinking about experience, was Ian Whitwham's (2017) 'The Fish and Chip Club'. In this memoir, Whitwham recalls his final year at primary school in the 1950s. It is a wonderfully evocative piece, in which the intense emotions of childhood friendships are enacted against the looming shadow of the 11-plus exam, the mechanism for sorting 11-year-olds into different kinds of school, and hence allocating different futures (see Yandell, 2020).

What Amy's students take from it, however, is Whitwham's rendering, through dialogue and a first-person narrative in which attention is paid to the vivid particularities of sense data, of the sociality of childhood. Whitwham's piece provides them with resources to rework in their own representations of primary school experience:

It's a Friday afternoon, the lunchtime of a summer in year four. I'm with my best friends – Kai, Shayan, Hamzah and a couple of year sixes, just standing there.

We all have our packed lunches in our hands. We are sitting down eating, and Hamzah offers me one of his Actimel drinks. I take it in pleasure.

I'm in my awesome, stripy t-shirt and my favourite blue shorts that say 'Malibu Beach' on them. The sun is out so I'm as cheerful as Santa on Christmas. 'Ah, I would kill to be in Hawaii right now!' screams Hamzah.

We all chime in with 'me toos'. We sit there dreaming of this spectacular beach fun holiday when a ball hits my face.

'So, Artan, are we going to play basketball or what?' shouts Kai, taking my Actimel.

He's drinking MY Actimel and I just sit there. (Artan)

We met on Monday, on the bus in front of the school gates. The sky a teal blue and beams of light shine on us as we chat on the back row seats. Anthony, Michael (or Mike for short), Maisie and a few other friends, waiting for one week of rest, away from our parents. It is the summer of 2018, around the end of June. We're all around 11.

We are laughing hysterically, thinking about our pasts.

'Yo, remember when Anthony had a crush on the TA?' Mike laughs, trying to get the words out.

Everyone on the bus goes silent. I start to cackle, and after a while everyone does too, except Mike who is fully red in the face.

'Ha ha,' Michael replies sarcastically. 'Says the guy who cried after being rejected.'

Before anyone can reply, the bus starts. (Raheem)

These autobiographical narratives differ markedly from the 'My Dad' piece. There is an interior dimension, a focus on affect, but these memories are irreducibly social. Things happen in the social, and the social is where identities are formed, challenged, reframed. These are also, interestingly, not elegiac in tone, at least not in the way that Ian Whitwham's piece so poignantly is. But what they also take from Whitwham is a sense of the ways in which experience can be played with, shaped as it is transformed into the stuff of narrative. This is not quite what Reid had in mind, I think, in his defence of the fictive artifice, and yet there is an important sense in which Artan and Raheem are bringing into being something which becomes differently known, differently meaningful, as it is formed in the act of writing.

What Amy's students have been doing, the stories that they have been telling, reading and writing, might make us want to think again about the disciplinary foundations of subject English. Their work is not reducible to the abstract models of writing provided by Christie and other genre theorists, nor could it be categorised as the 'literary studies' that Christie invokes as a body of knowledge. And yet I am struck by the way that Amy's unit of work on autobiography is structured around a series of encounters with texts that might be regarded as literary: extracts from Roald Dahl (1986) and William Woodruff (2002), as well as Pepys and Whitwham. Her students' own writing is produced in dialogue with these writers as well as in dialogue with one another. The literariness of the work that they produce, its playfulness as well as its often remarkably assured sense of form and of audience, seem to me to be enabling conditions of their writing. In Amy's classroom, the students are taken seriously as human beings, each with their own history, and taken seriously as writers, engaged in the same struggle as any published author – the struggle to render experience in language.

Notes

1 A version of this paper was given as a keynote address at the Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE) Conference, Deakin University, Melbourne, December 1st, 2019. My title is a quotation from Kei Miller (2019, p. 8).

2 In what follows, I focus on policy and practice in state schools in England. In each of the other countries of the UK, the relationship between government policy and curriculum has been a somewhat different one. For an account of these differences, see Jones (2015).

3 Teachers' and students' names have been pseudonymised.

4 My thanks to Amy and her students for sharing these pieces of writing with me.

References

Barrs, M. (2019). Teaching bad writing. *English in Education*, *53*(1),18–31. https://doi.org/10.1080/04250494.2018.15 57858

Barrs, M., & Cork, V. (2001). *The reader in the writer: The links between the study of literature and writing development at key stage 2*. London: Centre for Language in Primary Education.

Barthes, R. (1990). *S/Z*. Oxford: Blackwell. (Original work published 1973).

Benjamin, W. (1970). *Illuminations* (H. Zohn, Trans.). Glasgow: Collins. (Original work published 1955).

Christie, F. (2013). Genres and genre theory: A response to Michael Rosen. *Changing English*, *20* (1),11–22. https://doi.org/10.1080/1358684x.2012.757056

Dahl, R. (1986). *Boy.* London: Penguin.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2004). Standards, accountability, and school reform. *Teachers College Record*, *106* (6), 1047–1085. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9620.2004.00372.x

Doecke, B., & Breen, L. (2013). Beginning again: A response to Rosen and Christie. *Changing English*, *20* (3), 292–305. https://doi.org/10.1080/1358684x.2013.816531

Doecke, B., & McClenaghan, D. (2011). *Confronting practice: Classroom investigations into language and learning.* Putney, NSW: Phoenix.

Doecke, B., & Yandell, J. (2018). Language and experience (rereading Growth through English). In A. Goodwyn, C. Durrant, W. Sawyer, L. Scherff, & D. Zancanella (Eds.), *The future of English teaching worldwide: Celebrating 50 years from the Dartmouth conference* (pp. 159–171). London & New York: Routledge.

Doecke, B., & Yandell, J. (2020). The English literature classroom as a site of ideological contestation. In A. Al-Issa & S-A. Mirhosseini (Eds.), *Worldwide English Language Education Today: Ideologies, Policies and Practices* (pp. 35–52). London & New York: Routledge.

Jones, K. (2015). *Education in Britain: 1944 to the present* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Polity.

Marshall, B. (2011). *Testing English: Formative and summative approaches to English assessment.* London & New York: Continuum.

McLean Davies, L., & Sawyer, W. (2018). (K)now you see it, (k)now you don't: Literary knowledge in the Australian Curriculum: English. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, *50* (6), 836–849. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2018.1499807

Miller, K. (2019). *In nearby bushes.* Manchester: Carcanet.

Pepys, S. (1666). *The diary of Samuel Pepys.* Retrieved from https://www.pepysdiary.com/diary/1666/09/

Pereira, Í.S.P., & Doecke, B. (2016). Storytelling for ordinary, practical purposes (Walter Benjamin's 'The Storyteller'). *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, *24* (4), 537–549. https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2016.1210200

Petrosky, A., & Mihalakis, V. (2016). 'Why didn't I know about this book when I started?': In memory of Donald Graves and Arthur Applebee. *Changing English*, *23* (2):172–182. https://doi.org/10.1080/1358684x.2016.1162964

QCA. (1999a). *Technical accuracy in writing in GCSE English: Research findings.* London: QCA.

QCA. (1999b). *Improving writing at key stages 3 and 4.* London: QCA.

Reid, I. (1984). *The making of literature: Texts, contexts and classroom practices.* Kent Town, South Australia: AATE.

Turvey, A., Yandell, J., & Ali, L. (2014). English as a site of cultural negotiation and creative contestation. In B. Doecke, G. Parr, & W. Sawyer (Eds.), *Language and creativity in contemporary English classrooms* (pp. 237–254). Putney, NSW: Phoenix.

Unwin, A., & Yandell, J. (2016). *Rethinking education: Whose knowledge is it anyway?* Oxford: New Internationalist.

Whitwham, I. (2017). The Fish and Chip Club. *Changing English*, *24* (1), 3–10. https://doi.org/10.1080/1358684x.2016.1274197

Woodruff, W. (2002). *The road to Nab End: An extraordinary northern childhood.* London: Abacus.

Yandell, J. (2016). Growth and the category of experience. *English in Australia*, *51* (3), 19–24.

Yandell, J. (2020, forthcoming). English and difference. In C. Daly, & J. Davison (Eds.), *Debates in English teaching (*Chapter 2) (2nd ed.), London & New York: Routledge.

Yandell, J., & Brady, M. (2016). English and the politics of knowledge. *English in Education*, *50* (1), 44–59. https://doi.org/10.1111/eie.12094

Yandell, J., Doecke, B., & Abdi, Z. (2020). Who me? Hailing individuals as subjects: Standardized literacy testing as an instrument of neoliberal ideology. In S-A. Mirhosseini, & P. De Costa (Eds.), *The Sociopolitics of English Language Testing* (pp. 1–22). London: Bloomsbury.

Young, M. (2008). *Bringing knowledge back in: From social constructivism to social realism in the sociology of education.* London & New York: Routledge.

Young, M., & Lambert, D. (2014). *Knowledge and the future school: Curriculum and social justice.* London: Bloomsbury.

John Yandell taught in secondary schools for twenty years before moving to the Institute of Education, University College London, where he has worked since 2003. He is the editor of the journal, *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education* and the author of *The Social Construction of Meaning: Reading literature in urban English classrooms* (Routledge).

Creativity and Inquiry in a Preliminary HSC English Classroom

Peta Estens, *University of New England, Australia*

Jen Scott Curwood, *The University of Sydney, Australia*

Abstract: Creativity is integral to the inquiry process. Inquiry-based work highlights students' understanding of the ways that literature and language mediate lived experiences and social relationships. Within the secondary English classroom, students and teachers can engage in collaborative and imaginative activities to read texts, ask questions, and construct their own critical and creative responses. This action research study was situated in a Year 11 English class in Sydney, Australia. Through an inquiry-based project, students analysed William Shakespeare's *Henry V* and Jack Davis's *The Dreamers* and considered historical contexts, themes, and values. Through producing their own creative work in response, students developed the five core dispositions that mark the creative process as they became inquisitive, persistent, imaginative, collaborative, and disciplined.

All things are ready, if our mind be so. – William Shakespeare, *Henry V*

A classroom scene

'Miss, I'm responding to Shakespeare. His words are clever. I think I need to respond to him by trying to meet his style.'

His English teacher Peta smiled and said, 'Lachlan, if I told you a few weeks ago that you would have to respond to this inquiry question by writing a poem – '

He interrupted, 'I know, I know, Miss, but I gotta try, you know … I think it will be hard, but I think I gotta try.'

Introduction

An inquiry-based approach to teaching requires the development of lessons where students are challenged and self-motivated. Reflecting a constructivist view of teaching and learning, this approach is focused on the types of experience presented to students, the nature of active learning and the importance of curiosity, self-direction and collaboration. Meaningful learning occurs when students are able to 'discover knowledge for themselves, perceive relations between old and new knowledge, apply knowledge to solve new problems, communicate their knowledge to others and have continuing motivation for learning' (Macedo, 2000, p. 12). Inquiry-based learning, therefore, is based on students' independent intellectual investigations, confrontations, and contributions.

This action research study was situated in a Year 11 English class in Sydney, Australia. As an English teacher and a teacher educator, we believe that action research can be a tool for teachers to understand and improve their practice in a way that is 'governed by principles of honor, trust, and social justice' (Groundwater-Smith, 2005, p. 331). Rather than focusing on short-term goals or quick fixes, this approach to research aims to disrupt existing structures that often serve to marginalise and disenfranchise students (Curwood, 2014). To explore the role of inquiry-based learning in the secondary English classroom, we examined how students engaged with the plays *Henry V* and *The Dreamers*.

Linking inquiry, creativity, and technology

Inquiry-based approaches to teaching and learning enable students to personalise their learning experience, selecting specific tools and strategies that work best to solve open-ended, problem-based, and experiential tasks. As Macedo (2000) argues, meaningful learning occurs when students are able to 'discover knowledge for themselves, perceive relations between old and new knowledge, apply knowledge to solve new problems, communicate their knowledge to others and have continuing motivation for learning' (p. 12). Teachers can initiate the inquiry process by posing a fundamental question that serves as a trigger for investigation. Students are then encouraged to select and explore information and facts before synthesising multiple sources, formulating a focus, and presenting their findings. Notably, there is a need for information to be presented in a variety of different ways, and then revisited at different times, in different contexts, for different purposes, and from different conceptual perspectives.

Inquiry is inextricably related to creativity, which involves the ability to produce work that is both novel and appropriate (Sternberg & Lubart, 1995). Banaji and Burn (2007) argue that the rhetorics of creativity emerge from the contexts of research, theory, policy, and practice. To that end, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has identified five core dispositions for the creative process: inquisitive, persistent, imaginative, collaborative, and disciplined. Building on these dispositions, creativity 'improves students' self-esteem, motivation, and achievement, preparing pupils for life and enriching their learning experiences' (Lucas, Claxton & Spencer, 2013, p. 9). Furthermore, creativity is needed to solve problems and challenges beyond the classroom and enables the emerging workforce to compete in a global market.

Within the secondary English classroom, creativity is integral to the inquiry process. Rather than simply learning formulaic answers or repeating theoretical information, students need to be equipped with skills and challenged by activities that propel transformative knowledge construction. Inquiry-based work illuminates students' understanding of the ways that literature and language mediate lived experiences and social relationships. Students and teachers can engage in collaborative and imaginative activities to read texts, ask questions, and write their own critical and creative responses.

Within inquiry-based learning, digital technologies enable an interconnection of texts, encourage multimodal representations, and offer an authentic audience. Curwood, Magnifico and Lammers (2013) argue, 'Instead of taking young people away from literature and literacy, online spaces and digital tools can motivate students in new and complex ways to engage with reading, writing, and designing' (p. 684). Within the English classroom, online platforms can offer students new ways to participate in the inquiry process and share their writing as part of a community. Magnifico (2010) explains, 'Novice writers become more expert within a writing community … by becoming active members, taking on common practices and values – and, critically, being seen by an audience of other members as knowledgeable participants and, eventually, as experts' (p. 174).

In this way, the English classroom can nurture student collaboration within an open-ended inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning, ensuring that the diverse creative dispositions are fostered. As students grapple to problem-solve the inquiry question, these creative dispositions, often synonymous with those characteristics required for learning, prevail. That is, in order to learn, students must demonstrate discipline, persistence, and imagination as they collaborate with teachers and classmates to solve the inquiry task.

How do English teachers ensure that their students are learning in a creative and dynamic environment? Effective teachers need to teach the expertise of their subject area while developing their students' inquiry skills and creative dispositions. Over the course of the inquiry project, teachers may find themselves being co-constructors of knowledge (Craft, 2005), reflective practitioners (Esquivel, 1995) and supporters and facilitators (McWilliam, 2009). Teachers need to support students as they actively work to find meaning and seek solutions to deepen their understanding of literature (Curwood & Cowell, 2011). They also need to mentor and support students as they wrestle with a concept, navigate through information, and generate possible solutions that illustrate their understanding (Gresham, 2014).

English in Australia

Although creativity has been identified as one of the seven capabilities in the Australian Curriculum, the established and at times rigid compartmentalisation of subject content may undermine transformative learning experiences. Ewing (2010) has noted that the current national curriculum 'continues to privilege a

traditional subject hierarchy with traditional textual understandings of literacy (reading and writing) along with numeracy taking priority. Thinking processes seem secondary to more technical skills that are more easily measurable with multiple-choice tests' (p. 28). Developing students' skills in deconstructing and composing multimedial, interactive and navigational conventions demands that teachers learn a new language and appreciation for new literacies. Cisco (2007, as cited in Cumming et al., 2012) distinguishes new and emerging digital texts as having distinct differences from long-held understandings of literacy education, and argues that 'these distinct differences extend to the range of skills and attributes designated as desirable for twenty-first century students' (p. 10). Furthermore, these types of skills and student dispositions cannot be assessed by standardised testing (Reeves, 2010, as cited in Cummings et al., 2012, p. 10). There is a responsibility for curricula, including models of assessment, to foster students' reading, writing, and viewing of multi-layered texts and to provide inspiration for their critical and creative work (Curwood, 2012).

The New South Wales Stage 6 English Syllabus requires Year 11 and Year 12 students to analyse and reflect upon a complex and diverse range of texts. Teachers and students are challenged to engage with a dense curriculum and meet national content objectives and outcomes. In addition, Australian schools are increasingly held accountable for student achievement on standards-based tests.

There is growing pressure for teachers and students to raise test scores in national and state examinations such as the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and the New South Wales Higher School Certificate (HSC). As Fehring and Nyland (2012) argue, 'What is valued in literacy learning has become that which can be measured, quantified, analysed, and compared', and subsequently 'a narrowing of the curriculum, together with a marginalisation of multicultural Australians, has been the result of such rectifications' (p. 10). In particular, certain subjects and assessment strategies are often privileged, which has a profound impact on curriculum development as well as on the ways in which schools are designed, staffed, and resourced (Wyn, 2009).

Unlike state and national assessments designed as a measurement *of learning*, classroom assessments must be designed *for learning*. Teachers use evidence about the progress of students to inform their teaching.

Local school assessment is centred on developing individual students' content knowledge. Inquiry-based learning positions the teacher to adopt the role of 'guide on the side' and 'meddler in the middle', creating 'opportunities for hands-on, minds-on and, where appropriate, plugged in learning collaborations' (McWilliam, 2009). According to Darling-Hammond (1994),

> The way we are going to get more powerful teaching and learning is not through national tests. It's through assessments that are developed by local communities … so that students are working towards much more challenging standards and teachers are learning how to look at their students differently, how to support their learning better.

Drawing on constructivist views of literacy and learning, this action research study explored how the responses to summative assessments through an inquiry-based approach can improve motivation and support the learning of Preliminary HSC English students.

Preparing for the HSC exam
We are concerned that such a narrowing of the English curriculum, coupled with the growing value placed on high-stakes assessments, serves to discourage students from engaging in active inquiry. In this study, we sought to explore how inquiry-based and digitally mediated learning has a place in Year 11 English and can effectively prepare students for the HSC exam at the end of Year 12.

At the time of the study, Peta worked as an English teacher at a K–12 boarding and day school in Sydney, Australia, which included over 1,600 boys from diverse cultural, socioeconomic, and geographic backgrounds. While the school has a strong focus on academic achievement, it also prides itself on developing a boy's character. There are many programs designed to cultivate a sense of altruistic leadership, appreciation for the arts, pride in athletic prowess, and spiritual enrichment. The school encourages teachers to engage in action research, take risks, and implement innovative approaches to teaching and learning.

The study was conducted in Peta's Year 11 Preliminary HSC Advanced English class. The Preliminary HSC is the prelude to the final high school year, in which students complete examinations at the end of their senior secondary schooling. All 17 students in the class volunteered to participate in the research. English classes at the K–12 school were streamed according

to current achievement and the participants were considered to have average performance in the subject. Over the nine-week unit, data collection included two surveys, multiple interviews with each student, a teacher reflective journal, and artefacts including student work samples and online blogs, forums, and wikis. Fifteen class periods were video-recorded for later analysis, and five other class periods were observed by multiple educators. Debriefing occurred with professionals from the K–12 school and The University of Sydney who served as external auditors to clarify the interpretation of data and support critical self-reflection as a teacher-researcher.

We used a thematic approach to data analysis and employed multiple cycles of coding (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). Data sources were analysed as they were collected, which allowed themes and relevant subthemes to emerge. For example, under the *motivation* theme, multiple subthemes emerged such as *rite of passage*, *competitive nature*, *deadlines*, *novelty of project* and *collaboration*. As Saldaña (2013) noted, some themes may be refined into subthemes as participants' processes, emotions and values become apparent and the data progresses towards 'the thematic, conceptual and theoretical' (p. 12). This process clarified the emergent themes and assisted with triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

The inquiry-based project on *Henry V* and *The Dreamers*

In this project, students analysed Shakespeare's *Henry V* and Jack Davis's *The Dreamers*. The inquiry-based question posed was, 'How do William Shakespeare and Jack Davis shape empowerment and disempowerment in their respective texts?' Using a blended-learning approach, this project was incorporated into the NSW Board of Studies Stage 6 English Curriculum; Module A: Comparative Study of Texts. In their investigation, students examined how, within the historical contexts, values could be projected differently, enabling some to feel empowered while others feel disempowered. The students had a full term to complete the inquiry and present a creative project showing their knowledge and understanding of these concepts.

Agency is a vital part of the inquiry process. Heick (2013, as cited in Chu et al., 2017) asserts that inquiry frameworks need to be grounded on the level of student agency, whereby as they 'advance in their acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills, [they] are allowed increasing freedom in their choice of research questions, study methods, data collection and analysis processes, and presentation mode' (p. 135). Each student created timelines, set their own activities for classwork and homework, and selected tools from the resources available to complete each stage of the inquiry process. Gannon (2011) argues that both print and digital resources are important, as 'young writers take up these resources not as 'products' like books but textual 'assets' for playing with and generating new textual artefacts' (p. 187). Students' inquiry-based projects were driven by both their uncertainty and their curiosity, as they engaged in self-directed learning (Wilhelm, 2007). Their final creative work included diaries, interviews, documentaries, websites, poems, and speeches. Digital tools facilitated their investigation as well as their production processes, and students used tools like iMovie and iBook to demonstrate technical skills such as programming, video editing, and remixing.

The entire course content was flipped online so that Peta could assume the role of mentor in the classroom while students adopted a self-regulatory style in their approach to learning. The digital platform iLearn, commercially known as Schoolbox, enabled Peta to support self-directed learning by mentoring and guiding students with their own discoveries as they navigated through course content in order to solve problems and devise solutions.

To support students' inquiry process, Peta established a resource-rich digital platform for the students to navigate, investigate, and contribute to as they made discoveries. It included pages, audio files, movie files, wikis, blogs, and forums dedicated to: (1) introducing and explaining inquiry-based learning; (2) Shakespeare's *Henry V*; (3) Jack Davis's *The Dreamers*; (4) how to compare and contrast texts; (5) guides to creating different text types; and (6) explanations of the formative and summative assessments for the unit of work.

Conscious that such fundamental freedom offered to students to govern their own learning, and thus their own use of time in class, may have been initially confronting and overwhelming, Peta asked each learner to select a visual cue that would indicate the phase they were at within their inquiry process. Peta's idea for these visual cues was inspired by de Bono's (1985) concept of thinking hats, but she adapted it for inquiry-based learning. This method encouraged students to plan, monitor, and regulate their thinking processes while developing new knowledge and communicating

their inquiry process to others. Students were asked to wear different-coloured hats in the classroom to indicate their activity or purpose for the day. Students often changed their coloured hats during the lesson as they moved to different phases of inquiry.

The processes of inquiry included:

- Researching – those digging through information wore a green hat.
- Questioning – those who were perplexed or asking questions wore a red hat.
- Reflecting – those who were digesting information wore a blue hat.
- Analysis – those who were deconstructing and exploring a concept more deeply wore a gold hat.
- Illumination, composing, creating – those who were building their solution or generating their findings wore a silver hat.

The five processes of inquiry are not rigid, and they were often revisited and sometimes occurred simultaneously. For instance, as students analysed, they may also have reflected, and as students reflected, they may also have asked questions.

The digital platform offered a number of resources and materials to support students' inquiry process and guide them in each role as a researcher, questioner, reflector, analyst, and illuminator. Ultimately, the flipping of Preliminary HSC Course Content into a collaborative online space enabled Peta to use scheduled class time to both mentor students as they adopted self-directed learning strategies and nurture their development of critical and creative thinking processes in problem-solving.

The creative dispositions enable the inquiry process
Our study uncovered a symbiotic relationship between the processes of inquiry and the creative dispositions. In effect, the creative liberty offered to students activated multiple creative dispositions and actively engaged the students with inquiry. Moreover, inquiry-based learning cultivates the creative capacity of students. It became clear that the participants in this study had different favoured dispositions: some were more naturally collaborative, while others were more inquisitive. Notably, it was the stronger or more prevailing creative disposition that engaged the students with their inquiry project and in turn propelled the development of their creative thinking skills.

Charlie (all names are pseudonyms) was inquisitive with his study, and he reflected how his inquiry

was driven by 'how much I wanted to know'. Frank preferred collaboration, and he suggested that learning 'independently can sometimes be a bit hard, but on a class level can be too big. Small groups allow the discussion of ideas'. Interestingly, it was the more predominant creative disposition of the student that served as the way *into* the processes of inquiry.

The self-regulatory nature of inquiry-based approaches to learning enables the creative dispositions to emerge organically. In this study we observed how, through the processes of inquiry, the emergence of one creative disposition fostered a simultaneous development of the other four core dispositions of the creative mind. For example, Charlie was curious about course content and course concepts. He preferred to work independently and grappled with disciplining his focus to problem-solve. At one point, he reflected, 'It's also really hard to get used to that freedom … it is hard to pick a direction to take'. However, through engaging in inquiry-based learning, Charlie developed discipline as his inquisitive nature drove his desire to create a solution that far exceeded the expectations of students in the Preliminary HSC course.

Charlie's final project, an hour-long presentation using integrated technologies through Prezi, illustrated the depth of his investigation. Through carefully and critically analysing the language of the plays, he examined: (1) the role of women in empowering male leaders; (2) the role of friends in shaping the empowerment of male leaders; and (3) the relationships of leaders with children as symbols of empowerment. He shared, 'Being creative allows me to restrict myself in ways that I choose'. Through inquiry-based learning, Charlie developed the discipline to curb his curious nature in order to effectively and efficiently solve problems.

Frank, who is collaborative in nature, reflected in his use of the plural 'we' and 'us' that he identifies learning as a collective experience. He said, 'I learned that we can use technology to help us express our thoughts, as seen with several students project, who did things like websites, iMovie and virtual books on iPad'. Frank is a social student who was aware of other students' progress with their projects. He was challenged by the discipline required for solitary research, and shared, 'At some stages, it was difficult getting myself to push through with it and getting motivated to work on it'.

Frank was engaged by the collaborative experience and developed persistence and discipline through the inquiry-based approach to learning. He reflected, 'After

getting started on it, and thinking out how I am going to set it out and what I was going to write about, it became much easier to work on it'. In fact, Frank came to value the independent experience of being inquisitive and imaginative as he constructed his own solution to the inquiry question. He stated, 'When we are continuing on with our own project, we can tell the teacher the points we find interesting, and if the teacher believes it to be debatable, the teacher can present it to the whole class to gather various ideas and opinions on it'. Though Frank still valued the collaborative experience, the inquiry process encouraged him to develop the other four core dispositions of the creative mind.

There is an interdependent relationship between being creative and engaging in inquiry. Notably, it was the student's favoured creative disposition that initially engaged them in inquiry. When one creative disposition is ignited within a student, a growth in all five is naturally fostered through the inquiry-based approach to learning. We argue that English teachers who design tasks that offer creative liberty nurture deep-learning experiences for their students.

The relationship between inquiry-based learning and the processes of creativity

By researching, questioning, reflecting, analysing and composing, students developed their creative skills. Importantly, students who were given the opportunity to be self-regulating and who were empowered with finding a solution to an inquiry question were engaged in critical and creative thinking. In other words, an inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning motivates the development of students' creative capacity. Gresham (2014) identified a number of ways that students express this creative capacity within the English classroom, including:

- to grapple, wrestle, and develop grit.
- to collaborate, cooperate, and play.
- to be absorbed, immersed, and to experience a sense of flow.
- to re-create, re-invent, and re-envision.
- to escape and experience the unreal.
- to have elevated capacities for expression.
- to have confidence, feel pride, and fulfilment.

Students developed grit for learning as they wrestled with unique problems and challenges. For instance, Henry was confronted by the freedom of personalised learning experiences through inquiry-based learning. He said, 'The challenge is plunging into the unknown as I have never done anything like that before'. Kevin

agreed that there is an element of apprehension with inquiry-based approaches and having creative freedom, and remarked, 'What I thought about the inquiry process … the whole idea was quite scary – to do my own thing'. Indeed, at the outset many students wanted the teacher to resume the role of directing their ideas and determining their schedules. Ben shared, 'What has been challenging for me was when I started I had no clue where to go. It's hard to get a grip and start. But when you start you get the guts of it and it's a lot easier and you get direction and purpose on where to go'.

The students' reflections on tackling the challenges of inquiry shows how the classroom evolved into a place of dynamic student-driven activity. The self-directed and self-regulatory nature of inquiry-based approaches to learning permitted students to take risks, and overcome challenges as they wrestled with researching, questioning, reflecting, analysing and composing. As Nathan stated, 'I find I can always step out of my comfort zone when I express myself creatively'. There was a self-realisation and developing maturity in confronting intellectual challenges and understanding their own processes for learning.

Henry's reflection captured how inquiry-based approaches to learning develop a student's grit and confidence:

> In the initial stages of the project I was very sceptical about what it would involve. I honestly never saw myself at the stage I am now. And I was very anxious about the weeks ahead. I based my timeline on what I thought I could achieve in the period of time given and looking back now I see my project is very different to what I thought it would originally turn out to be.

The students developed pride as they progressed with the inquiry and met their self-imposed deadlines. They realised that the enjoyment of learning comes at a price and they were determined to *pay it*.

In one lesson, a colleague from a different teaching discipline observed how the inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning was unfolding in the flipped English classroom. In particular, he was interested in how the digital platform facilitated their inquiry. More than a third of the class indicated that the most useful online tools had collaborative features. In particular, students found each other to be a source of inspiration in broadening and deepening their understanding of the concepts studied. Both Ben and John were explicit in suggesting, 'The forums were most useful. These provided a space for students to pose questions or make

statements for others to comment upon'. Consequently, it can be surmised that young adults can productively and effectively use online interactions to share work for the purposes of collaboration and critique.

Conclusion

English teachers who adopt inquiry-based approaches in the classroom shift their focus from teaching content to equipping students with an appreciation and understanding of how to learn. Students initially found the coloured hats to be a novelty; however, they served as meaningful signifiers. Firstly, the hats ensured that students entered the classroom with a clear sense of purpose. Secondly, the hats enabled students to see who else was working in the same phase of inquiry at any time. Many students commented that they had 'started to think in hats' in other subject areas. Ben commented that he had become aware that he was working more effectively in other subject areas. He explained, 'I think that the method you go about things is important because you have learnt how to inquire and how to start from the bottom'.

Students were exceedingly proud of their sense of achievement in having solved the inquiry question and presented their knowledge and understanding with creative liberty. Gresham (2014) argues that fostering creativity in classroom tasks bolsters students' confidence and pride. Nathan reflected on the processes of being creative: 'It feels that you can express your ideas and be proud of it when other students look at your achievement. Good ideas shine through with [creative compositions] in a way they do not to the same extent in essays'. The inquiry-based approach to learning nurtured the students in developing skills in researching, questioning, reflecting and analysing. At different times, and throughout the process of inquiry, students were challenged to be disciplined, persistent, imaginative, inquisitive, and collaborative in order to problem-solve. This action research project shows how inquiry-based approaches to teaching and learning are essential in developing students' creative capacity.

> I will let you dream – dream on old friend
> Of a child and a man in September,
> Of hills and stars and the river's bend;
> Alas, that is all to remember. – Jack Davis, *The Dreamers*

References

Banaji, S. & Burn, A. (2007). Creativity through a rhetorical lens: Implications for schooling, literacy and media education. *Literacy, 41* (2), 62–70. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9345.2007.00459.x

Chu, S.K.W., Reynolds, R.B., Tavares, N.J., Notari, M. & Lee, C.W.Y. (2017). Guides and suggestions for classroom implementation. In S.K.W. Chu, R.B. Reynolds, N.J. Tavares, M. Notari & C.W.Y. Lee (Eds.), *21st century skills development through inquiry-based learning: From theory to practice* (pp. 131–161). Singapore: Springer.

Craft, A. (2005). *Creativity in schools: Tensions and dilemmas.* London: Routledge.

Cummings, J., Kimber, K. & Wyatt-Smith, C. (2012). Enacting policy, curriculum and teacher conceptualisations of multimodal literacy and English in assessment and accountability. *English in Australia, 47* (1), 9–18.

Curwood, J.S. (2012). Cultural shifts, multimodal representations, and assessment practices: A case study. *E-Learning and Digital Media, 9* (2), 232–244. https://doi.org/10.2304/elea.2012.9.2.232

Curwood, J.S. (2014). From collaboration to transformation: Practitioner research for school librarians and classroom teachers. In K. Kennedy & L.S. Green (Eds.), *Collaborative models for librarian and teacher partnerships* (pp. 1–11). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Curwood, J.S. & Cowell, L.L.H. (2011). iPoetry: Creating space for new literacies in the English curriculum. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 55* (2), 110–120. https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.00014

Curwood, J.S., Magnifico, A.M. & Lammers, J.C. (2013). Writing in the wild: Writers' motivation in fan-based affinity spaces. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 56* (8), 677–685. https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.192

Darling-Hammond, J. (1994). Reinventing our schools: A conversation with Linda Darling-Hammond. *Technos Quarterly, 3* (2).

de Bono, E. (1985). *Six thinking hats: An essential approach to business management.* New York: Little, Brown.

Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (2000). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.) (pp. 1–32). London: SAGE.

Esquivel, G.B. (1995). Teacher behaviours that foster creativity. *Educational Psychology Review, 7* (2), 185–202. https://doi.org/10.1007/bf02212493

Ewing, R. (2010). *The arts and Australian education: Realising potential.* Camberwell: ACER Press.

Fehring, H. & Nyland, B. (2012). Curriculum directions in Australia: Has the new focus on literacy (English) and assessment narrowed the education agenda? *Literacy Learning: The Middle Years, 20* (2), 7–16.

Gannon, S. (2011). Creative writing and/in/beyond the Australian curriculum. In B. Doecke, G. Parr & W. Sawyer (Eds.), *Creating an Australian curriculum for English: National agendas, local contexts* (pp. 185–200). Putney: Phoenix Education.

Gresham, P. (2014). Fostering creativity through digital storytelling: 'It's a paradise inside a cage'. *mETAphor, 1*, 47–55.

Groundwater-Smith, S. (2005). Painting the educational landscape with tea: Rereading 'Becoming Critical'. *Educational Action Research, 13* (3), 329–346. https://doi.org/10.1080/09650790500200295

Lucas, B., Claxton, G. & Spencer, E. (2013). *Progression in student creativity in school: First steps towards new forms of formative assessments.* OECD Education Working Paper No. 86. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Macedo, D. (2000). *Chomsky on miseducation.* Lanham & Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield.

Magnifico, A.M. (2010). Writing for whom? Cognition, motivation, and a writer's audience. *Educational Psychologist, 45* (3), 167–184. https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2010.493470

McWilliam, E. (2009). Teaching for creativity: From sage to guide to meddler. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 29* (3), 281–293. https://doi.org/10.1080/02188790903092787

Miles, M.B., Huberman, A. & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers.* Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Sternberg, R.J. & Lubart, T.I. (1999). The concept of creativity: Prospects and paradigms. In R.J. Sternberg (Ed.), *Handbook of creativity* (pp. 3–15). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wilhelm, J.D. (2007). *Engaging readers and writers with inquiry: Promoting deep understandings in language arts and the content areas with guiding questions.* New York: Scholastic.

Wyn, J. (2009). *Touching the future: Building skills for life and work.* Australian Education Review No. 55. Camberwell: ACER Press.

Peta Estens commenced a role at The University of New England in 2020 as Lecturer of ICT in Education. Previously, she taught English at Kincoppal Rose Bay and The King's School, both boarding and day schools from diverse ethnic, rural and urban backgrounds. She completed her Master of Education (Research) at the University of Sydney in 2016. This action research was completed in 2012-2013 when Peta Estens taught English at The King's School.

Jen Scott Curwood, PhD, is an Associate Professor in the Sydney School of Education and Social Work at the University of Sydney. Her research explores the intersections of literacy, creativity, and technology.
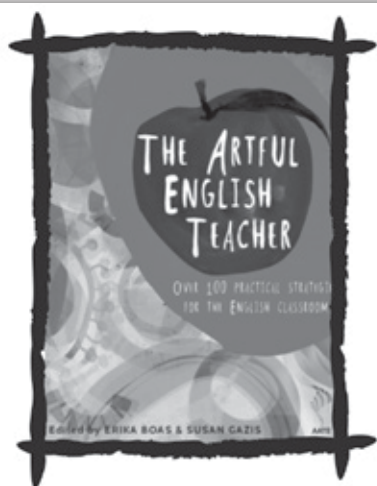
'We Talk Books': Teacher Librarians Promoting Book Discussion to Foster Reading Engagement

Margaret K. Merga, *Edith Cowan University, Australia*

Abstract: Although teacher librarians play a role as literacy and literature educators in schools, little research attention is given to this role. In addition, the use of book discussion in school libraries to enhance reading engagement is not often closely considered as an educative practice. This paper draws on qualitative research findings from interviews with teacher librarians in 30 Australian schools to explore how these educators stimulate book discussion to foster reading for pleasure as part of their professional practice. This paper finds teacher librarians stimulate book discussion to foster reading for pleasure in a variety of ways, and for diverse reasons, with an overarching goal being the promotion of reading for pleasure. A range of approaches to discussion around books emerge from the data, including peer to peer, teacher to student, and other diverse interplays. Teacher librarians actively promote reading as a social practice and encourage students to value reading for pleasure.

Introduction

Although conceptualised in diverse ways, reading engagement can be viewed as a reciprocal relationship between reading skills, attitudes and frequency. For example, as explored in-depth in Author (2019a), improvements in reading attitudes are related to improved reading skills, however improved reading skills are also related to better reading attitudes. Many frameworks and theories have been developed to inform interventions seeking to enhance reading engagement. For example, *expectancy value theory* suggests that expectancies and values related to an activity such as reading can 'influence performance, effort, and persistence' in the activity (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000, p. 69). Therefore, reading frequency and effort can be shaped by young people's values and attitudes in relation to reading. To become strong readers, young people must have both the skill and the will to read regularly (Gambrell, 1996). Reading for pleasure is beneficial and associated with gains in diverse facets of literacy such as vocabulary (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2001) and reading comprehension (Mol & Bus, 2011). It has also been linked to personal development in older children (Howard, 2011). However, research suggests that regular reading may be in decline, and young people's enjoyment of reading may also be sliding (e.g., Clark & Teravainen-Goff, 2020); as children move into upper primary school and beyond, they typically have lower motivation to read (Parsons et al., 2018). Reading engagement is significant as young people's perceptions of the enjoyment, but also the importance and value, of reading may influence how often they read (Merga & Mat Roni, 2018). School libraries may play a valuable role in supporting young people to maintain positive attitudes toward reading, and regular reading habits, as reading promotion is typically a key goal in school library programs. This role of school libraries and their staff can be crucial in supporting reading engagement, with recent research with primary school aged students finding that 'increasing students' opportunities to access a library can have a strong positive influence on their

reading engagement' (Mat Roni & Merga, 2019, p. 286).

Libraries typically have the highest concentration of books in a school, and the reading of books in particular offers notable educative benefits (Torppa et al., 2019). Although children can learn from experiences with diverse text types, the reading of books is more strongly associated with literacy benefit than other text types (Jerrim, Lopez-Agudo & Marcenaro-Gutierrez, 2020; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2011). Rather than being related to literacy benefit, the reading of text messages, emails, social networking posts and comic books is related to lower reading performance (OECD, 2010; Pfost, Dörfler & Artelt, 2013; Zebroff & Kaufman, 2016). This may be related to research that suggests that although reading easier texts can support young people's reading fluency, surprisingly, this does not necessarily lead to greater gains in reading comprehension (as reviewed in Lupo, Strong & Conradi-Smith, 2019). The reading of fiction books in particular offers greater academic benefit than the reading of their non-fiction counterparts (Baer et al., 2007; Jerrim & Moss, 2019), and reading fiction can also help to build capacity for empathy and perspective-taking (Mar, Oatley & Petersen, 2009). Therefore, it is recommended that interesting books, at least some of which are fiction, be part of students' reading diet.

Book discussion can have a beneficial influence on young people's attitudes toward books and reading (Alvermann et al., 1999; Ivey & Johnston, 2013; Merga, 2018). McGraw & Mason (2017) note that students view reading in a positive light when it is a 'dynamic, empowering and imaginative process', and reflection on students' comments on their reading experiences inspired teachers in their project to 'plan more socially-oriented activities that get students actively thinking, interpreting, talking and imagining' (p. 18). Harnessing book discussion to evoke student engagement enhances the social aspect of reading; although reading beyond the point of functional reading skill acquisition is a typically independent activity, it is nonetheless a social practice. Engaged readers are 'motivated to read, strategic in their approaches to comprehending what they read, knowledgeable in their construction of meaning from text, and socially interactive while reading' (Guthrie, Wigfield & You, 2012, p. 602). As book discussion can enhance social interaction as well as positioning and valuing of books and reading, it can play a valuable role in fostering reading engagement in young people (Ivey & Johnston, 2015). However, recent

research suggests that book discussion of self-selected texts is rarely undertaken in the classroom (Merga, 2018).

To improve students' exposure to enjoyable discussion about books, alternative sites beyond the classroom must be considered, with the school library emerging as a key consideration. School librarians with dual library information and education qualifications may be strongly situated to lead such discussions. In Australia, dual qualified educators and library information specialists are known as *teacher librarians*, and it is important that their status as fully qualified teachers be recognised so that their contribution to student learning is not ignored (Australian School Library Association, 2018). English literacy learning in Australia is not confined to the classroom, and although teacher librarians play a role as literacy and literature educators in schools, relatively little research attention is given to the impact of their instruction and the educational facilities they manage. However, recent research has found that discussion about books may typically form part of the role expectations of Australian teacher librarians as a key component of reading promotion (Merga, 2020).

Opportunities for book discussion in school libraries can help to promote a culture of reading in a school, and act to counter some of the negative trends that threaten to subsume the significance of reading for pleasure in young people's lives. School and education systems struggle to balance the need to raise students' reading attainment, whilst also endeavouring to create vibrant reading cultures within schools (Cremin & Moss, 2018). In this era of high-stakes testing and consistent focus on measurement of student outcomes, some young people have concluded that reading is something that is done purely for the purposes of formal learning or assessment, rather than pleasure (Manuel, 2012; Merga, 2016). The neoliberal culture that predominates in contemporary schools may preclude imaginative engagement, with McLean Davies, Doecke and Mead (2013) noting that 'teachers of literature in both England and Australia' may 'struggle to open up the worlds of imagination available in literary texts to their students in a policy setting that is shaped by standards-based reforms, where the only things that matter are what "count"' (p. 236). Teacher librarians encourage reading for pleasure as part of their role across nations (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, 2015). Therefore, encouraging and supporting students to engage with

literary texts in ways that emphasise imaginative engagement and pleasure are within their purview.

Although their role as educators has received limited consideration in the extant research (as reviewed in Merga, 2019b), teacher librarians may play an important one in building and sustaining positive attitudes toward reading for pleasure in young people. This can be done in many ways, however discussion of books in the context of pleasure emerges as an important intervention that can influence young people to read more frequently and have more positive attitudes toward reading for pleasure. As reading engagement is associated with literacy skill benefits, students' educational outcomes can be enhanced by strategies that support reading engagement. Some forms of discussion around books such as book talks are not new (e.g. Roser & Martinez, 1995), and the discussion of literature may be a long-standing practice in many schools, however greater consideration of this practice is warranted as discussion about books and reading for pleasure may take a variety of forms, and be enacted for a variety of purposes. More needs to be known about these forms and purposes, and how they are enacted in contemporary school libraries rather than traditional classroom settings. To this end, this paper draws on the expert views shared by experienced teacher librarians across 30 schools in Australia, to explore how teacher librarians stimulate book discussion to foster reading for pleasure in order to yield practical implications for both classroom and library-based educators seeking to enhance student reading engagement. The talking and discussion strategies described in this paper can be used by teacher librarians and classroom educators to promote reading for pleasure, and to foster stronger collaborative potentialities between literacy teachers in the library and the classroom.

Methods

The (Blind name) project (hereafter the Project) sought to explore, amongst numerous other goals, how teacher librarians fostered engagement in literature and literacy, and how they encouraged their students to read books. The Project was inspired by encounters with teacher librarians in my previous school-based research projects concerned with reading engagement. It became apparent to me as a researcher that the teacher librarian often occupied an explicit or implicit literacy leadership role within the school, and that insufficient attention had been paid to this role. The project sought to make visible the potentialities and actualities of this role in contemporary Australian schools.

The Project collected data from teacher librarians at *N*=30 schools using an in-depth interview approach. Both metropolitan and rural schools took part in the study, as per Table 1. Both government (public) and private schools were included, and schools of diverse sizes located across a range of socio-economic contexts were involved. As per Table 1, findings typically had relevance for both primary and high school classrooms as they were derived from interviews of teacher librarians working across primary, secondary and whole-school libraries.

Table 1. School characteristics

Characteristic	in sample (n = 30)	in sample (%)
Years catered to		
Primary	1	3.3
Secondary	13	43.3
Whole school (includes primary and secondary)[a]	16	53.3
Enrolment gender		
Co-educational	25	83.3
Girls only	2	6.7
Boys only	3	10
Location[b]		
Metropolitan	23	76.7
Rural	7	23.3
School fee type		
Government (public)	14	46.7
Private	16	53.3
Number of students		
300–599	2	6.7
600–899	8	26.7
900–1199	6	20
1200–1499	6	20
1500–1799	4	13.3
>1800	4	13.3
ICSEA[c] value of school		
900–999	5	16.7
1000–1099	13	43.3
1100–1199	12	40

(Merga, 2019b)
[a] libraries were not always whole school, sometimes separated into junior and senior libraries
[b] based on location of library visited

As per Table 2, most respondents were females and all in their 40s–60s. Most respondents had more than a decade of experience in their role.

Table 2. Respondent characteristics

Characteristic	in sample (n = 30)	in sample (%)
Gender		
Female	28	93.3
Male	2	6.7
Other	0	0
Age Group		
20–29	0	0
30–39	0	0
40–49	7	23.3
50–59	13	43.3
60–69	10	33.3
Years of experience as a teacher librarian		
0–9	11	36.7
10–19	12	40
20–29	5	16.7
30–39	2	6.7

(Merga, 2019b)
Note. Limited additional detail is provided around individual respondents in order to prevent deductive disclosure of their identities (Kaiser, 2009).

The semi-structured interview schedule that was the primary data collection instrument for this project was 'organised around a set of predetermined open-ended questions, with other questions emerging from the dialogue between interviewer and interviewee/s' (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 315). Data was collected in schools by the author from March 29–June 26, 2018. Teacher librarians were asked questions about their support of literature and literacy learning that were designed to elicit the strategies they commonly used, such as book discussion. Use of book discussion was described by all respondents in relation to fostering reading engagement in the context of reading for pleasure, though as I explore further herein, this discussion could take diverse forms.

I conducted a *directed content analysis* (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) of the full data set to locate the data relevant to this project, and to identify the array of expressions that book discussion took within school libraries. Although we know that book discussion can be beneficial, and that it may occur in diverse forms, 'the goal of a directed approach to content analysis is to validate or extend' (p. 1281) existing knowledge. To this end, I searched the entire interview text for all respondents for mention of discussion, using keywords generated from an initial reading (*talk*; *discuss*; *conversation*; *chat*; *recommend*) and their related tense forms. This aligns with the method espoused by Hsieh and Shannon (2005), whereby 'if the goal of the research is to identify and categorise all instances of a particular phenomenon … then it might be helpful to read the transcript and highlight all text that on first impression appears to represent' the phenomenon (p. 1281).

Where keywords were used in the context of reading for pleasure with students, instances were extracted and placed into a data subset for analysis. If the use of a form of *talk*, *discuss*, *conversation*, *chat* or *recommend* was explicitly non-verbal (e.g. an online chat or recommendation), it was excluded, as this paper focuses on verbal exchanges, and this limitation, along with that of self-report, is noteworthy. Themes were only included if they recurred across more than three respondents (10%), and findings relate to seven recurring themes that meet this salience criterion, and therefore not every kind of book discussion used by respondents is included in the findings and discussion. Further quantising of these themes was not undertaken as the small sample size precludes statistical-probabilistic generalisability (Smith, 2018). Quotes are presented in lightly edited verbatim form for readability, with original meaning carefully retained.

Findings and discussion

Peer promotion and recommendations
Peer recommendations were encouraged and supported by respondents who linked these opportunities to surges in interest around particular texts, and such recommendations were felt to be effective in motivating disengaged readers. For example, Mavis noted that

> the best thing for reading is peers recommending a book. Harry Potter came out, those girls who had never read a book before, a whole book, read books. And the same with the other series that are really popular. If there's something that the others will talk about, that's the best.

Mavis highlighted the appeal of books becoming central to social discourse. In addition to facilitating

these opportunities, teacher librarians also listened closely during these exchanges where possible to get ideas about collection-building, to ensure students had access to materials that were of interest to them. For instance, Stephanie noted that 'what I'm doing now is getting the students to talk more about their books, because I feel sometimes it's better coming from other students'. She used what she learned from these exchanges to connect students with related materials that were already available in the library, noting that

> then I could say, 'But these books also match up with that theme', and we had a whole load of kids borrowing that as well, so I think the power of the students talking about their books is working for my classes this year.

Peer recommendation could also spread with the teacher librarian as the conduit. Hannah explained that

> I also read student suggestions, because I make suggestions to them so they can make suggestions to me. Often that one works. Because I'll say, 'This book I'm reading now was recommended by a year 8, and it's enjoyable, I'm finding it really fantastic'. And then often that will lead to someone else reading it.

This approach may be particularly appropriate where the children in question are shy, lack confidence in sharing their ideas out loud, or may not want their peers to know what they are reading, as teacher librarians can share student recommendations while preserving student anonymity.

Engagement in peer promotion and recommendations can enhance student reading engagement and expand student exposure to a broader base of potential reading material. Ivey and Johnston (2013) found that 'social activity was central to engaged reading, occurring inside books in the form of dialogical relationships with characters and outside of books in dialogical relationships with others and with selves' (p. 271). Peer recommendations may be particularly valued by certain kinds of young reader. In her study of avid teen readers, Howard (2008) found that

> Avid Social Readers experience a clear and mutually reinforcing relationship between friendship and reading. Reading exists in a 'virtuous circle' in which friends encourage reading for pleasure and shared reading experiences solidify friendships. Avid Social Communal Readers want to read the same materials as their friends to reinforce their membership in the group and to avoid the feeling of being left out … (p. 109)

Howard also noted that 'Social Communal Readers do not just share recommendations; they also frequently exchange the reading materials themselves amongst members of their friendship circle' (p. 111), and Avid Solitary Readers were also receptive to recommendations though from family rather than peers. As such, this form of book discussion may be attractive to young readers with diverse orientations toward reading, though it may not be equally appealing to all.

Talking with authors

Book discussions could be generated by the authors of the books themselves, and teacher librarians often organised author visits. Although there is a paucity of research examining the impact of author visits on student reading engagement, respondents in this study affirmed that they typically yielded positive outcomes. For instance, Ruthie noted that author visits stimulated student discussion as well as recognition, explaining that 'if they saw, you know, an *Old Tom* book, they would talk about how Leigh Hobbs got them to draw just like him. Those sorts of conversations went on. Yeah, they kind of owned those people that they saw'. Debbie was in concordance with Ruthie's depiction of student 'ownership' of familiar authors, explaining that as a result of author visits and discussion, 'that author might become a real person to the students, by coming into their school and talking about being an author, and all that goes with it'. Libba explained that connecting with local authors was important

> because they are writing some amazing books, and they're relevant to these kids' lives, plus the kids have got access to seeing those authors quite often … we regularly have authors here, an author in residence … every year we have an author here for a week … plus other times through the year. So the kids are listening to those authors, they're reading their work, this doesn't mean to say that they shouldn't be reading from other authors but, you know, there are some amazing authors in Australia, and they're writing about the stuff that these kids are living, their similar lives.

Listening to and talking with local authors could have observable implications for reading engagement. For instance, Jeanette felt that access to a 'range of writers' in her library influenced student borrowing, as 'the kids go for those books because they've heard them talked about', highlighting the link between book discussion, enhanced student familiarity, and potentially improved student reading frequency,

breadth and attitudes. In addition, Veronica highlighted that discussions between authors and students can also play a role in supporting the industry:

> It's great for kids to be able to meet authors and talk to them and find out about their ideas and thoughts. And so, you know, the fact that these authors are often available to come to our school. I'm a big believer and supporter of the industry, and I think that kids read the books, they love the authors, they buy the books, more books are made.

As such, book discussion as a social practice is also a promotional practice that can support the writers' livelihoods and therefore secure continuance of available literature into the future, which is important due to the vulnerability of the writing profession (Zwar, 2016). In addition, in recent times Australian literature has achieved increasing prominence in the Australian Curriculum (as explored in McLean Davies, Martin & Buzacott, 2017), and book discussions with Australian authors can enrich students' engagement with these texts.

One to one book matching and guiding choice

Finding a match between the book and its young reader is important. As contended by Kozak and Recchia (2019), 'being able to match a reader to a book is one of the greatest tools in the teacher's arsenal' (p. 573). This process involves communicative exchanges between the teacher librarians and the students, which are essential to finding a book that is a good fit for students' interests and abilities. As Liana noted, 'the conversations that we have around books' are important to support matching 'when I'm helping them select at the shelf'.

Young people may struggle with the challenges of making effective book choices (Merga & Mat Roni, 2017; Mackey, 2014). Where teacher librarians guide choice, they may also build children's capacity to choose independently. This may involve asking students to make connections with the genres that interest them in other media forms. Penny explained that

> There's a conversation that you have, particularly with reluctant boys, they don't want to read, and so I'll say, 'Well, what are your interests?' or, 'What movies have you liked?' If they like the adventure genre, then you can say, 'Well, let's find something'.
> So, you find something … you give them one, and then they come back and say, 'Oh, I actually read that, that was the first book I've ever finished. Are there any more?' And you just hope it's part of a series, give them the next one. [Laughs] So, I'm looking for that. I'm

looking for series, because series are a good; then they don't have to think. A lot of it is about choosing. They're not good at decision-making.

Similarly, Kate explained that students would say

> 'Miss, I want something to read', and I'll just walk around with them, and we do their browsing with them, and you're just pulling stuff off the shelf.
> And then you're just saying, 'I want you to sit down there with those ten books and pick one of them'.

In consultation with the student, she would find ten potential matches, and then leave it to the student to choose from a less overwhelming volume of books, noting that this approach 'just seems to work'.

Teacher or student-led book talks and discussions

Book talks could take multiple forms, with a number of teacher librarians describing a didactic form, where a teacher or student would deliver a book talk in front of a student audience. Unlike peer discussion, or shared discussion (with teacher librarian also as participant) around books, teacher or student-led book talks usually had a single primary presenter and were not characterised by fluidity of exchanges. They also typically had a specific purpose. For instance, Francesca explained that for her, a book talk looked like

> me with a basket of books saying, 'Have you read this one? This one's great, you know', and just showing them. The kids, they're really funny, they will choose a book that's on a table or in a basket or, you know, if they've got a choice of one out of 20 then (they are) much more willing to pick one up, than if they've got the whole library. It's just too much for them.

For Francesca, the book talk was an opportunity to share material with students in ways that highlighted the aspects of the book that students might find engaging, in order to facilitate student choice and enhance accessibility.

Although the focus was on reading for pleasure, such book talks might also make connections to curricular content. Ana explained, 'I usually give a bit of a spiel, show them some new books, they've been doing narratives this term, so just talking about narratives and genres, maybe read the blurb on a few books or read the opening page'.

Book talks were also often delivered by students, with supportive instruction from the teacher librarian. Debbie details how she marries curricular requirements with fostering a love of reading in her approach to student-led book talks, encouraging her students:

to be a reading community, and that means they talk to others about what they are reading. If they like a book, they let everybody know. Year 6 students, for example, choose a book and they tell us about it, it's a 10 to 15-minute presentation which is aligned with the curriculum, so they have to not just tell us the obvious, the literal, but they have to make connections.

So, what in this story is something I've seen in my world? Has happened to me or has happened to a friend? The characters' traits, so it's going past the literal and looking at the inferring. So, they have to promote a book, so the objectives are they're trying to get everyone else to love this book and want to borrow it, as well as show me they can make these connections and think deeply about what they're reading.

In this manner, Debbie encouraged her students to locate themselves and their peers in the stories they read, and to use these points of connection to foster peer engagement.

In addition to more formal book talks, teacher librarians also described use of teacher- or student-led book discussions which were comparatively informal, and which did not involve a single presenter; rather, all students and the teacher were potential contributors. Respondents tended to strongly stress the informal nature of these exchanges, showing awareness of the need to avoid aligning the activity with work. For example, Ingrid explained that she starts her lessons with these discussions,

and then we always encourage the students to tell everyone about a good book they've read, but just very informally. We do have discussions at the end, but the informal just 'this was a great book, I loved it because of … ' and that's peer sharing of ideas and also, we do it, we model it.

Similarly, Kate described making the books highly accessible and generating discussion around them, also pointing out how her wide reading makes her uniquely qualified to support these activities, and highlighting the focus on pleasure, rather than work:

[U]sually I find it really valuable just to have the books all out on the floor, on the table. And be sitting down, actually reading going, 'Oh, this one's really great, I've read it'. So, we do have to read widely.

In discussions I've had where others have said, 'Well, why can't English staff run the library as well?' In my experience, I read widely. An English teacher reads their texts. So, [laughs] they don't necessarily know what is the up-and-coming thing for young people, unless they've got kids of their own. So, it's the breadth … and making sure that they don't have to do any activities on them, because that's the quickest way to turn a kid off.

Kate's distinction around the difference between her role and the role of the English teacher was part of a broader discussion about cuts to school libraries and staffing (Merga, 2019b), which is relevant, because as student access to teacher librarians decreases (e.g. Kachel, 2015; Softlink, 2020; Teravainen & Clark, 2017), their access to the skill set of the teacher librarian is diminished. Kate and many others were extremely concerned about recent local cuts to qualified library staffing.

Student recommendations supporting collection building
Collection building is important, as research suggests that a 'library with a rich and varied collection is vital for students' reading proficiency and thereby for a successful academic and professional career of the students. In other words, school quality partly depends on the quality of the school library' (Nielen & Bus, 2015, p. 9). This quality can be enhanced through student participation in the collection building process, and Aggleton (2018) described the importance of student involvement in collection building as essential, stating that children

should be consulted on collections that relate to children's culture. Collections of children's literature, whether in libraries or archives, can be seen as holding a dual cultural position, as both adults' and children's culture, provided children are interacting with the adult-produced texts. Therefore, if collections of children's literature are being used by children, these collections can be viewed as a site for the creation of children's culture, and children should be enabled to participate alongside adults in the development of these collections. (p. 15)

Where students discuss and recommend books, they can support the teacher librarians' efforts in collection building to ensure a quality collection that is reflective of students' diverse and evolving reading interests. Grace described verbally encouraging students to contribute to collection building, explaining that

when having conversations with the kids in the shelving, if we don't have it, if a part of a series is missing, or there's a series they want, or an author they want, I say, 'Go and fill in the form. Put in as much detail as you can', because sometimes, you know, a title has more than one author, so I actively encourage them that way.

Conversation could also be used to direct students to books already in the collection. Liana described how reading book reviews in popular magazines used to stimulate student support of collection building, which

has now shifted to students offering recommendations from websites:

> I love it when the kids come and recommend, and that was one of the benefits of having *Dolly* magazine … apart from Dolly Doctor that [laughs] the boys have read.
>
> But often there were books in there to recommend, and the kids would come to me, and they'd say, 'Oh, Miss, can we get this book in?'
>
> And I said, 'Oh yeah, where, you know, where did you find out about that?'
>
> 'Oh, you know, it's in on the *Dolly* page … in the *Dolly* magazine and stuff, and *Girlfriend* magazine.'
>
> So even those sorts of things have been really good at getting the kids in to recommend stuff. And some of the websites, too, like, *Inside a Dog* and *Goodreads*, the kids are often using those now, and coming to me and saying, 'Can we get these books in?'

This account from Liana provided interesting insight into how young people's engagement with media has been a source of book recommendations over time, which could lead to their access to these books after communicative exchanges with their teacher librarian, and research has begun to capture how young people may use social networks and websites to source book recommendations (e.g. Merga, 2015).

Discussing reading for benefit

As mentioned in the introduction, there is an association between young people's understanding of reading as important, and their continued engagement in the practice, and poor understanding of the life-long benefits of reading may lead some students to curtail their reading for pleasure (Merga, 2019a). This is reflective of *expectancy value theory* as previously defined. It therefore assumes that motivation to perform a task 'is determined by an individual's perception that they will be successful in performing a task (expectancy) and that they perceive a value in accomplishing the task' (Malloy et al., 2013, p. 274):

> The value of participating in a reading task is related to how personally interesting it is, how important the task is deemed to be, and how the successful completion of the task serves future needs, and therefore task valuing (of reading) can influence student reading engagement. (p. 280)

Teacher librarians show an understanding of, and a resistance to declining task valuing attributed to reading. In their discussions with students, they highlighted how the reading of books could develop a range of literacy skills, as well as foster empathy; Lucinda explained to her students that 'We can all give

you the facts about what happened, but if you really want to start empathising with what it feels like, then you've got to get some of these sort of books as well'.

Rosie attempted to enhance students' understanding of the benefits of engaging in a sustained practice of reading by using a sporting analogy.

> The one that usually connects the most with kids is when I talk about sport, in terms of, sport is a skill if you play it, and that's why you go to training and coaching to improve your skills; so you'll play a better game on Saturday. Now if you don't go to training, you don't improve. And reading's the same as a skill. And the more you read, the better you get.

Sometimes the students themselves could identify the benefits of reading in discussion with their teacher librarians. For example, when describing improved outcomes for one of her previously reluctant readers in her reading program, Maria explained that

> he came to me in third term, and he said, 'You know, Miss, since I've been doing the reading program, my marks have been going up.'
>
> And I said, 'What do you mean?'
>
> He says, 'Well, I used to get 46 for HASS (Humanities and Social Sciences) and now I'm getting 72.'
>
> And I said, 'Why do you think?'
>
> And he said, 'It's because I can understand the questions.'
>
> Yeah, so, that was very significant to me, that (the benefit) flows on into other things, which I sort of suspected it would anyway.

As such, exchanges around the benefits of reading could be both student and teacher initiated. They could lead to students' enhanced task valuing in relation to reading, which in turn can improve their reading engagement.

Modelling being a reader

Teacher librarians were also cognisant of the importance of modelling positive attitudes toward reading, and their role as reading models may be particularly valuable in the context of research suggesting that all classroom teachers may not be effective models (e.g. Spear-Swerling et al., 2020). This may be related to the fact that not all teachers enjoy reading for pleasure, with only a quarter of elementary teachers in the United States having a strong and unqualified enjoyment of reading (Applegate & Applegate, 2004). Teacher librarians described being active and careful models, with Gloria explaining that 'it's those sort of things that are just your general everyday conversations with the kids that I think make them realise you love

reading', and 'telling them what you're reading, telling them what you've read, what you've enjoyed, I think, is part of it'.

Teacher librarians also explained how reading can be incorporated into daily practice so that students can achieve their reading frequency goals. For example, Liana told her students about her regular practice of reading in the car when being driven by someone else:

> I talk to the kids here about that and so some of them are now … I noticed that in their reading goals they wrote that they're now going to read on the bus, because a lot of them have a long bus trip, and I said, 'Well, read on the bus if you don't feel sick'. And they went, 'Oh, yeah, that's a good idea'. So, reading on the bus, so reading in the car. I read over breakfast because I'm the last … we all have breakfast at different times virtually and because I'm sitting there by myself anyway, so I read my book at breakfast. It's only for ten minutes because that's all I sit down … I don't have long for breakfast, got to get out the door. But yeah, I read at all those times. So, whenever I possibly can.

Liana described her students' learning about how she managed to incorporate reading into her day at every available opportunity, which in turn highlighted possibilities for them to increase their own reading frequency. In a similar vein, Matilda reminded students to read over the vacation period, stating that 'I said, "You might have some extra time in the holidays just to sit and be quiet and read a book, so make sure you've got a couple of things you can fall back on"'. She extended the student loan period to encourage students to borrow heavily over this time, potentially reducing the impact of vacation-related literacy declines (e.g. Allington et al., 2010).

Alicia tried to recruit celebrity models for keen reading in order to engage her young students. She explained that

> I'm trying to get together a bit of a program, like a celebrity reads, get some of the footy guys to (answer), 'What was your favourite book when you were a kid? Why was it your favourite', then promote that to the kids.
>   So, if they go, well, you know, 'This was my favourite book', and they kind of idolise that sports person, they might want to give it a go.

Parents and teachers were also recruited to act as models by teacher librarians. For example, Ashleigh organised 'a fathers' night where the dads come in and they read with their children and we sit around the library', with the purpose of showing that 'Dad's reading, and getting them involved in that as well'.

She also tried to be a model for students herself, 'role modelling things from a very, very young age, just my own love of literature'.

Conclusions

This paper suggests that teacher librarians in Australia stimulate book discussion to foster reading for pleasure in a variety of ways, and for diverse reasons, with overarching goals being promoting reading for pleasure, enhancing the social position of books, and communicating the ongoing importance of reading as both a beneficial and enjoyable practice. Promotion of book discussion in the library recognises the role of social factors that can shape reading engagement (Ivey & Johnston, 2015), and promotes understanding of the continued importance of regular reading beyond the early years of schooling (Merga & Mat Roni, 2018).

A range of approaches to discussion around books emerge from the data, including peer to peer, teacher to student, and other diverse interplays. These include facilitating peer book promotion and recommendations, arranging for opportunities to discuss books with their authors, providing one-to-one book matching and guiding choice, organising and conducting teacher or student-led book talks and discussions, using student recommendations to support collection building, discussing reading for benefit to highlight the ongoing importance of reading, and modelling positive attitudes toward and practices of reading. Teacher or student-led book talks were a more formal, didactic way of encouraging interest in a particular book, while often demonstrating curricular links, but pleasure remained the focus. Teacher or student-led book discussions were comparatively informal and fluid and could involve tactile handling of books in discussion. Further research could explore students' perceptions of each of these specific types of book discussion, to determine which approaches are most closely linked with enhancing student attitudes toward reading.

Both English teachers and staff in school libraries can draw on these findings to inform their own practice around fostering discussion of reading books for pleasure. Classroom teachers could collaborate with teacher librarians to share resources and consult more closely with them to ensure that collection development in both classroom libraries and the school library is reflective of students' interests and reading preferences. Students' verbal recommendations directed to their teachers and teacher librarians could also support

collection building, and websites and other media can be used to generate discussion that can lead to these recommendations. Given the aforementioned declines in student access to teacher librarians, there is a growing need for classroom teachers to also adopt these strategies when recommending reading for pleasure. Peer to peer promotions and recommendations may be facilitated to encourage regular and broad reading and provide insights for collection building to ensure that students have access to interesting reading materials. Staff can share peer recommendations and talking with authors can give students the opportunity to develop a sense of attachment to their works, which has been linked to increased borrowing rates. Teacher librarians also facilitate one-to-one book matching and guide choice in close discussion with their students to ensure that students' individual tastes and skills are considered, and to support students to make independent choices. With many students not understanding the importance of lifelong reading (e.g. Merga, 2019a), teacher librarians' verbal explanations of the benefits of reading for pleasure can enhance student reading engagement, along with their own modelling, and their support of the modelling of parents and teachers. Teacher librarians can also create opportunities for this modelling to be observed.

Finally, in the context of growing understanding of the importance of book discussion to foster reading for pleasure, the work of qualified library staff warrants greater consideration, as these staff may use talking and discussion around books in various ways to stimulate student engagement, making an important contribution to young people's perceptions of books and reading. It is important that the role that these staff play in fostering reading for pleasure not be taken for granted, in the context of dwindling funding for school libraries and their staffing (e.g. Kachel, 2015) and low levels of employment of dual-qualified teacher librarians (e.g. Dix et al., 2020). Sustained focus on reading and literature purely for formal learning or testing (McLean Davies, Doecke & Mead, 2013; Manuel, 2015) can potentially be offset to some extent by these activities, and by harnessing the value of the school library and the staff within it.

References

Aggleton, J. (2018). Where are the children in children's collections? An exploration of ethical principles and practical concerns surrounding children's participation in collection development. *New Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship*, 24 (1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/13614541.2018.1429122

Allington, R.L., McGill-Franzen, A., Camilli, G., Williams, L., Graff, J., Zeig, J., … & Nowak, R. (2010). Addressing summer reading setback among economically disadvantaged elementary students. *Reading Psychology*, 31 (5), 411–427. https://doi.org/10.1080/02702711.2010.505165

Alvermann, D.E., Young, J.P., Green, C. & Wisenbaker, J.M. (1999). Adolescents' perceptions and negotiations of literacy practices in after-school read and talk clubs. *American Educational Research Journal*, 36 (2), 221–264. https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312036002221

Applegate, A.J., & Applegate, M.D. (2004). The Peter effect: Reading habits and attitudes of preservice teachers. *The Reading Teacher*, 57 (6), 554–563. https://doi.org/10.1080/19388071.2014.898719

Australian School Library Association (ASLA). (2018). What is a teacher librarian? Retrieved from http://www.asla.org.au/advocacy/what-is-a-teacher-librarian.aspx.

Baer, J., Baldi, S., Ayotte, K., & Green, P. (2007). *The reading literacy of U.S. fourth-grade students in an international context: Results from the 2001 and 2006 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

Clark, C., & Teravainen-Goff, A. (2020). Children and young people's reading in 2019. *National Literacy Trust research report*. Retrieved from https://cdn.literacytrust.org.uk/media/documents/Reading_trends_in_2019_-_Final.pdf

Cremin, T., & Moss, G. (2018). Reading for pleasure: Supporting reader engagement. *Literacy*, 52 (2), 59–61. https://doi.org/10.1111/lit.12156

Cunningham, A.E., Perry, K.E., & Stanovich, K.E. (2001). Converging evidence for the concept of orthographic processing. *Reading and Writing*, 14 (5–6), 549–568. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1011100226798

DiCicco-Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B.F. (2006). The qualitative research interview. *Medical Education*, 40 (4), 314–321. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365–2929.2006.02418.x

Dix, K., Felgate, R., Ahmed, S.K., Carslake, T., & Sniedze-Gregory, S. (2020). School libraries in South Australia 2019 Census. *Australian Council for Educational Research*. Retrieved from https://research.acer.edu.au/tll_misc/33

Gambrell, L.B. (1996). Creating classroom cultures that foster reading motivation. *Reading Teacher*, 50, 14–25.

Guthrie, J.T., Wigfield, A., & You, W. (2012). Instructional contexts for engagement and achievement in reading. In S.L. Christenson, A.L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 601–634). New York: Springer.

Howard, V. (2008). Peer group influences on avid teen readers. *New Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship*, 14 (2), 103–119. https://doi.org/10.1080/13614540902794086

Howard, V. (2011). The importance of pleasure reading in the lives of young teens: Self-identification, self-construction and self-awareness. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, *43* (1), 46–55. https://doi.org/10.1177/0961000610390992

Hsieh, H.F., & Shannon, S.E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, *15* (9), 1277–1288. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). (2015). *IFLA School Library Guidelines (2nd Ed.)*. Retrieved from https://www.ifla.org/files/assets/school-libraries-resource-centers/publications/ifla-school-library-guidelines.pdf

Ivey, G., & Johnston, P.H. (2013). Engagement with young adult literature: Outcomes and processes. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *48* (3), 255–275. https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.46

Ivey, G., & Johnston, P.H. (2015). Engaged reading as a collaborative transformative practice. *Journal of Literacy Research*, *47* (3), 297–327. https://doi.org/10.1177/1086296X15619731

Jerrim, J., Lopez-Agudo, L.A., & Marcenaro-Gutierrez, O.D. (2020). Does it matter what children read? New evidence using longitudinal census data from Spain. *Oxford Review of Education*, 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2020.1723516

Jerrim, J., & Moss, G. (2019). The link between fiction and teenagers' reading skills: International evidence from the OECD PISA study. *British Educational Research Journal*, *45* (1), 181–200. https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3498

Kachel, D. (2015). The calamity of the disappearing school libraries. *The Conversation*. Retrieved from https://theconversation.com/the-calamity- of-the-disappearing-school-libraries-44498

Kaiser, K. (2009). Protecting respondent confidentiality in qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research*, *19* (11), 1632–1641. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732309350879

Kozak, S. & Recchia, H. (2019). Reading and the development of social understanding: Implications for the literacy classroom. *The Reading Teacher*, 72(5), 569-577. https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1760

Lupo, S.M., Strong, J.Z., & Conradi Smith, K. (2019). Struggle is not a bad word: Misconceptions and recommendations about readers struggling with difficult texts. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *62* (5), 551–560. https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.926

Mackey, M. (2014). Learning to choose. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *57* (7), 521–526. https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.290

Malloy, J.A., Marinak, B.A., Gambrell, L.B., & Mazzoni, S.A. (2013). Assessing motivation to read: The motivation to read profile – revised. *The Reading Teacher*, *67* (4), 273–282. https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1215

Manuel, J. (2012). Teenagers and reading: Factors that shape the quality of teenagers' reading lives. *English in Australia*, *47* (2), 45–57.

Mar, R.A., Oatley, K., & Peterson, J.B. (2009). Exploring the link between reading fiction and empathy: Ruling out individual differences and examining outcomes. *Communications*, *34* (4), 407–428. https://doi.org/10.1515/COMM.2009.025

Mat Roni, S., & Merga, M.K. (2019). The influence of extrinsic and intrinsic variables on children's reading frequency and attitudes: An exploration using an artificial neural network. *Australian Journal of Education*, *63*(3), 270–291.

McLean Davies, L., Doecke, B., & Mead, P. (2013). Reading the local and global: Teaching literature in secondary schools in Australia. *Changing English*, *20* (3), 224–240. https://doi.org/10.1080/1358684X.2013.816529

McLean Davies, L., Martin, S.K., & Buzacott, L. (2017). Worldly reading: Teaching Australian literature in the twenty-first century. *English in Australia*, *52* (3), 21–30.

McGraw, A., & Mason, M. (2017). Reading as an imaginative act: Strategies for reading. *English in Australia*, *52* (2), 9–19.

Merga, M.K. (2015). Are avid adolescent readers social networking about books? *New Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship*, *21* (1), 1–16.

Merga, M.K. (2016). 'I don't know if she likes reading': Are teachers perceived to be keen readers, and how is this determined? *English in Education*, *50* (3), 255–269.

Merga, M.K. (2018). Silent reading and discussion of self-selected books in the contemporary classroom. *English in Australia*, *53* (1), 70–82.

Merga, M.K. (2019a). *Reading engagement for tweens and teens: What would make them read more?* Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO.

Merga, M.K. (2019b). *Librarians as literacy educators in schools*. Basingstoke, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan.

Merga, M.K. (2020). School librarians as literacy educations within a complex role. *Journal of Library Administration*. https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2020.1820278

Merga, M.K., & Mat Roni, S. (2017). Choosing strategies of children and the impact of age and gender on library use: Insights for librarians. *Journal of Library Administration*, *57* (6), 607–630.

Merga, M.K., & Mat Roni, S. (2018). Children's perceptions of the importance and value of reading. *Australian Journal of Education*, *62* (2), 135–153.

Mol, S.E., & Bus, A.G. (2011). To read or not to read: A meta-analysis of print exposure from infancy to early adulthood. *Psychological Bulletin*, *137* (2), 267. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021890

Nielen, T.M., & Bus, A.G. (2015). Enriched school libraries: A boost to academic achievement. *AERA Open*, *1* (4), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858415619417

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2010). *PISA 2009 Results: Executive Summary.* Washington, DC: OECD Publishing.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2011). *Education at a glance.* Washington, DC: OECD Publishing.

Pfost, M., Dörfler, T., & Artelt, C. (2013). Students' extracurricular reading behavior and the development of vocabulary and reading comprehension. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 26, 89–102. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2013.04.008

Parsons, A.W., Parsons, S.A., Malloy, J.A., Gambrell, L.B., Marinak, B.A., Reutzel, D.R., … & Fawson, P.C. (2018). Upper elementary students' motivation to read fiction and nonfiction. *The Elementary School Journal*, 118 (3), 505–523. https://doi.org/10.1086/696022.

Roser, N.L., & Martinez, M.G. (1995). *Book talk and beyond: Children and teachers respond to literature.* Newark: International Reading Association.

Smith, B. (2018). Generalizability in qualitative research: Misunderstandings, opportunities and recommendations for the sport and exercise sciences. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 10 (1), 137–149. https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2017.1393221

Softlink. (2020). *The 2019 Softlink Australia, New Zealand, and Asia-Pacific school library survey report.* Retrieved from https://www.softlinkint.com/blog/softlink-apac-school-library-survey-report/

Spear-Swerling, L., Wei, Y., Dostal, H., & Hernandez, B. (2020). The print exposure of teacher candidates in relation to their achievement and self-ratings of early reading experiences. *Reading and Writing.* https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-020-10035-3

Teravainen, A., & Clark, C. (2017). School Libraries: A literature review of current provision and evidence of impact. *National Literary Trust.* Retrieved from https://literacytrust.org.uk/research-services/research-reports/school-libraries-literature-review- current-provision-and-evidence-impact-2017/

Torppa, M., Niemi, P., Vasalampi, K., Lerkkanen, M.K., Tolvanen, A., & Poikkeus, A.M. (2019). Leisure reading (but not any kind) and reading comprehension support each other – A longitudinal study across grades 1 and 9. *Child Development.* https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13241

Wigfield, A., & Eccles, J.S. (2000). Expectancy – value theory of achievement motivation. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25 (1), 68–81. https://doi.org/10.1006/ceps.1999.1015

Zebroff, D., & Kaufman, D. (2017). Texting, reading, and other daily habits associated with adolescents' literacy levels. *Education and Information Technologies*, 22 (5), 2197–2216. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-016-9544-3

Zwar, J. (2016). Disruption and innovation in the Australian book industry: Case studies of trade and education publishers. *The Australian book industry: Authors, publishers and readers in a time of change.* Australia: Macquarie Economics.

Margaret K. Merga is a Senior Lecturer at Edith Cowan University in Western Australia. She conducts research on literacy, libraries and higher education. Merga is the author of three recent books in reading, librarianship and quantitative data analysis, and the 2020 Inaugural Patron of the Australian School Library Association.

Homogenised Narratives *in* and *through* English:

Examining the Hidden Curriculum in an Australian Secondary EAL Context

Mahtab Janfada, *University of Melbourne, Australia*

Chermaine Thomas, *Catholic Education Melbourne, Australia*

Abstract: This paper examines the ideological underpinnings of the English as an Additional Language (EAL) curriculum that drive the practice of secondary teachers in Victoria, Australia, and how students' needs and rights are seen and addressed *in* and *through* English discourse and hegemony. Bakhtin's (1986) dialogic approach and van Lier's (1996) AAA principles, namely Awareness, Autonomy, Authenticity, in constructing curriculum as interaction inform this work theoretically and methodologically. These frameworks will unfold in the reflective narrative of an experienced EAL secondary teacher as she interrogates issues related to choice of texts, assessment and inclusion/exclusion of EAL students within/from mainstream classrooms, and how literacy is conceptualised in these contexts. Focus is given to the genre of narrative writing, prevalently taught and used in Australian secondary schools, to examine its affordances as well as potential pitfalls for the futures of English in a plurilingual world in terms of diversity and heterogeneity.

Who cuts my stories?

In one of my consultations earlier this year at a secondary college, the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) English teacher raised some concerns for a refugee background student in her Year 12 class. This student arrived in Australia in 2017, after fleeing her war-torn country and living in a period of transition in a second country. This student is the only one (with a non-Anglo background) in her cohort taking this subject but has to join the mainstream English class since the school does not have a large enough English as an Additional Language (EAL) cohort to create a separate class for these students.

The conversation between the teacher and myself revolved around the issue of addressing the differences in such contexts pedagogically and professionally, particularly in preparation for the EAL examinations as part of the VCE. Schools which offer both EAL and English, often select the same texts from the published list, to use across both subjects, for Units 3 and 4. The point of difference is in Unit 3, EAL students read and study one text compared to VCE English students who must read and study two texts (VCAA, 2020). For School-based Assessment Coursework (SAC), the types of differentiation used are differentiation by task and conditions, which are, in this case, reduced word limits for written tasks, reduced time limits for spoken tasks and access to the use of a dictionary. Aside from these parameters, teachers have to navigate how to address these differences. But does cutting their stories make it easier for them to complete the assessments?

This scenario was recalled by Chermaine (second author) in discussion around the needs and rights (Benesch, 1999) of EAL students in the Australian secondary context. This discussion occurred in conversation with Mahtab (first author), who was the lecturer in a subject named 'Curriculum Design in a Multilingual Era' in a Master of TESOL program. This subject was

a platform for the authors to initiate and continue further dialogue as professionals around the issues of relevance to EAL contexts. Chermaine identified that the burning issue was around misconception of the linguistic needs of EAL students in the secondary context. The differentiation by conditions, such as reduced word counts, at VCE level is often applied to all other levels (7–10) as the only means of differentiation. She felt this was an oversimplification of the needs of EAL students. It assumed that EAL students lacked sufficient words for the stories they want to tell, and possibly suggested that students struggle in telling their stories in a manner which conforms to Anglophone logical reasoning. Chermaine was concerned that cutting their stories would (1) be unjust, (2) not bring more equity and equality to the way they are assessed, and (3) not support these students' sense of belonging and inclusion. Delving into this matter provoked a conversation about how literacy knowledge in English is perceived in such contexts, and in the EAL curriculum, and whether teachers and learners are seen as mere implementors and accommodators of the policy or, potentially, as agents of change. This paper is the extension and expansion of Chermaine and Mahtab's dialogic discussions. The theoretical and methodological framework of the subject informing this study will be elaborated further in the next section.

This paper intends to contribute to the conversation about 'Futures for English' in two ways. Firstly, it addresses two questions central to this special theme: Is the English curriculum sufficiently diverse to respond to the needs of students and the semiotic practices in which they engage? And what can the past tell us about the future for English? In order to address these questions, we will examine the ideological underpinning in the VCE English/EAL curriculum which drives the practices of teachers and explore how students are seen and taught *in* and *through* English discourse and hegemony. Since these issues are often not explicitly articulated and are massively normalised, we label them in terms of the 'hidden curriculum', as has been reflected in recent critical scholarship globally (Alsubaie, 2015; Chao, 2011; Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2015).

We will unpack the notion of the 'hidden curriculum' at curriculum level (VCE English/EAL), at classroom level (genre approach, limited differentiation – i.e., reduced word counts, short answer responses, etc.) and also at student level (considering their needs, and the ways language is a barrier to demonstrating their understanding of content and forming new knowledge).

Secondly, the paper uses 'narratives' both metaphorically and literally here: we are interested in the role storytelling can play in the curriculum, and what stories/narratives the curriculum is telling us. This meta-narrative of curriculum is also what we refer to as the 'hidden curriculum'. For the purpose of this paper, the hidden curriculum will be unveiled through Chermaine's dialogic reflections on her process of engagement with the EAL curriculum as a learner, teacher, leader and curriculum designer. Particular focus will be on 'narrative as a genre', which is prevalently taught and used in Australian secondary schools, to examine its affordances and the subsequent potential pitfalls for the futures of English in a plurilingual world.

The theoretical and methodological frameworks which afford us a deeper dive into the issue will be discussed next. For the purpose of this paper, post-structuralist theories are consulted, and in particular the 'dialogic approach' (Bakhtin, 1981) informed our thinking at the multiple levels of philosophy, curriculum studies and the design of the current research, as well as the relationality between researchers/authors. We elaborate on these theoretical constructs and the way literacy *in* and *through* English is conceptualised historically and politically.

Theoretical and methodological frameworks
At the philosophical level, Mikhail Bakhtin's (1986) theory of dialogue and heteroglossic narratives of the world does justice to the fundamental essence of this article; this was also the main philosophical ground of the subject 'Curriculum Design in a Multilingual Era'.

A Russian–Soviet literary theoretician and philosopher of language, Bakhtin (1986) conceptualises language as 'dialogue'. Bakhtin's main philosophical claims are that language is inherently dialogic and that there is a dialogic relationship between language, culture and the formation of the self (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). For Bakhtin, language is dynamic, multi-voiced and contextual. Dialogue, therefore, is a 'complex metaphor that incorporates the intricate relationship between speakers, between points of views, between social discourses, between past, present and future that are held together in language' (Hamston, 2006, p. 56). This perspective acknowledges that the world is contested and full of tensions and struggles, which results in multi-voicedness (the existence of multiple

voices in one utterance). Therefore, in each utterance and dialogue, we face different ideologies, worldviews and conceptual horizons which interact with each other (Wertsch, 1991). As we do so, a heteroglossia emerges, reinforcing the integral role of the unique, heterogenised narratives people tell/create as life-long learners. True dialogue, in Bakhtin's terms, leads to transformation of the self, or what he calls 'ideological becoming' (Bakhtin, 1986).

A dialogic approach is translated into the level of the language curriculum through van Lier's concept of *curriculum as interaction* (1996). In his influential book *Interaction in the language curriculum: Awareness, autonomy and authenticity* (1996), van Lier firmly reinforces the dialogic nature of teaching, learning and language education. He establishes the AAA principles, namely Awareness, Autonomy and Authenticity, to underscore the multi-voiced narratives that teachers as curriculum designers can bring to their classrooms. He argues that this occurs only if they become critically *aware* of what drives their practice, ideologically, politically and socio-culturally, seek for *authentic* texts and authentic practices for particular people, contexts and times, and exercise their *autonomous* pedagogical action which serves students best. Van Lier's suggestion of curriculum as the dynamic interrelatedness of theory, research and practice (van Lier, 1996, p. 55) reaffirms the important role teachers can and must play in shaping their own curriculum narrative. This is what Cormany, Maynor and Lanin (2005) term the 'development of a self' (p. 219). The three fundamental principles of AAA, introduced in the 'Curriculum Design in Multilingual Era', created a conceptual framework for Chermaine in constructing her future curriculum design with awareness, autonomy and authenticity.

Methodologically, and at the design level of this study, a dialogic approach informs our paper too. This study emerged from continuous dialogue between the authors, which began during the course of the subject, and led to further professional dialogues. Chermaine has been involved in curriculum design for many years as a teacher, consultant and designer, and brought to the fore her lived experience and expertise. Mahtab brought ways of working with theory to our reflective dialogues. We explored ways in which these conceptual theoretical principles, discussed in the class, could translate or unfold in the actual context of EAL as Chermaine's locus of design and make new sense of EAL practices. In this collaboration, there was no More (or less) Knowledgeable Other (MKO)

(Abtahi, 2017; Vygotsky, 1978) in this relationship, but two 'differently knowledgeable' professionals bringing our thoughts together to explore and expand the boundaries of EAL education in the secondary context in Australia. It is worth noting that both authors come from non-Anglo backgrounds and have studied and taught in diverse transnational and translingual contexts. This afforded us a lived experience of implicit hegemonies, represented *in* and *through* English.

Understanding language as dialogue is significant in this paper. It helps us appreciate what voices are in play in constructing a narrative, and in a curriculum, and what homogenised narratives students and teachers are encouraged to tell. The next section will examine how literacy knowledge is conceptualised or defined historically (past and present) to identify necessary revisiting for the future of literacy practices *in* and *through* English.

Literacy perspectives and position of 'self'

Literacy in the current globalised world, goes beyond a person's ability to read and write; it encapsulates the person's ability to competently and confidently present her/himself socially and critically as well (Gee, 2015). This has high significance in a multilingual, multicultural context such as Australia. Whilst communicating *in and through* English is dominant in school settings, individuals also need to develop confidence and competence in expressing their ideas and voices in English in order to be part of a range of social and institutional discourse communities.

Increased mobility and globalisation have continued to influence the social, cultural and linguistic settings of Australia, contributing to more heterogeneous populations. The 2018–2019 population data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2020) indicated that more than 7.5 million (29.7%) of people living in Australia were born overseas. This is reflected in the diversity of the classrooms in Australia, particularly in Victoria. Census data from 2016 show that Victoria had the second largest number of people born overseas, at 31%, with Western Australia having the highest proportion at 35% (ABS, 2020).

The data from the ABS provide an insight into the linguistic and cultural makeup of the students in our classrooms. With more students attending our schools speaking a first language other than English, teachers and students need to understand how we can harness their multicultural and multilingual capital and repertoires to support the learning of English. If

English is the medium of instruction in schools and the dominant language spoken in Australia, what place does a student from a culturally and linguistically diverse background have to exercise their voice and agency in learning English as a second language?

There are three main moves in the theoretical perspectives of English literacy which we explore to make sense of some of the assumptions informing English pedagogy and curriculum in the particular context of this paper, namely *a skills-based approach, language socialisation* and *critical literacy.*

The skills-based approach to literacy is grounded in behavioral psychology, and emphasises technical aspects of language and surface features. According to Hyland (2006), this approach assumes that literacy is a set of atomised skills to be learnt by students and transferred to other contexts. Hence the focus is 'on attempts to fix problems with student learning, which are treated as a kind of pathology' (p. 120). Meaning is perceived as static and there is not much space for dialogic negotiation over multiplicity or complexity of meanings for the learners to operate as inquirers in the world (de Silva Joyce & Feez, 2016; Pennycook, 2014) and they remain as voiceless outsiders. Critical scholars have challenged this approach because of its focus on the de-contextualised features of language, and the myth of neutrality (Benesch, 1996) governing the ideology. Awareness, authenticity and autonomy in this approach are reduced to instrumental learning of techniques and homogenised reproduction of the target language, identical to the native speaker of English. Social approaches to literacy emerged to refine understanding of 'skills' and bring attention to issues of learning within social contexts.

Language socialisation is grounded in a socio-cognitive paradigm, appreciating social and cultural aspects of language education and supporting an integrated view of learning which links language, user and context. It is a more 'discipline-sensitive, genre-based and discourse-based approach which sees learning as an induction or acculturation into a new culture rather than an extension of existing skills' (Hyland, 2006, p. 20). Though this approach brings awareness to the transformative nature of communities, and authentic learning is considered to be contextual, it still considers culture and discourse as homogenised, uncontested and universal. In doing so, it fails to appreciate the complexity, diversity and heteroglossic identities/ narratives Bakhtin (1986) and van Lier (1996) speak of.

There is also an assumption that a text can only be understood in one particular way, and that every competent reader will construct the same (or largely similar) meanings from the text, as intended by the writer. A reader's perception or creation of meaning in dialogue is not considered; hence negotiation of power is dismissed (Wilson, 2009). Critical literacy emerged to address this shortcoming.

The critical approach to literacy is grounded in Freire's (1993) critical pedagogy and critiques a positivistic paradigm to education, or a 'banking' model of education (p. 248), which encourages passivity in students and does not afford any space for students to develop an authentic and autonomous voice in society. Unlike the socialisation model, this approach emphasises students' experiences, or more critically, the unequal power relations which structure those experiences. That is where Lea and Street (1998) see literacy as something we *do* which is an activity 'located in the interactions between people and stories they weave together (Barton and Hamilton, 1998, p. 3). For the purposes of this paper, we also draw on critical race theory and its intersection with language learning, inspired by the work of Flores and Rosa (2019), LaScotte and Tarone (2019) and Anya (2016). These inform our work in addressing the conceptual diversity that EAL students bring to their educational spaces.

Also evident in the review of literacy approaches is the way students' needs are considered. According to Benesch (1996). in dominant skill-based approaches, students' needs are seen as 'lacks' leading them to assimilate to and accommodate the existing hierarchy. In other words, this 'narrows human capacities to fit particular forms' (Simon, 1992, p. 142). Benesch (1999) talked about 'rights analysis' which calls attention to the importance of taking into consideration learners' opportunities for negotiation and resistance both within and beyond the language classroom. In other words, within specific social contexts, students can exercise their right to challenge dominant discourses and pre-existing sets of expectations. For teachers, this process involves a complex discovery of what is possible, desirable and beneficial at certain moments and in certain contexts for students. Hence, the concept of learners' needs becomes more complex and is focused not simply on what learners need to do, but also on who they want to become.

In the next section, we will discuss these theoretical constructs through Chermaine's reflective narrative as she reflects on engaging with the ideological process of becoming more 'aware, autonomous and authentic'.

We will discuss how this approach led her to propose a new approach in her curriculum design.

Dialogic reflections on Chermaine's narratives
Through the authors' dialogic discussions, Chermaine was conscious of bringing *awareness* to her experiences. In essence, there is a simultaneous dialogue between different voices, at different times and places, that unfolds in Chermaine's utterances as she reflects on past, present and future. This highlights how Chermaine's dialogue with her past experiences, and with other classmates, raised her awareness of the present and anticipated future design and practice. The struggle between opposing forces is evident throughout her reflection, as an inevitable part of a dialogic approach dealing with unpredictability, complexity and multiplicity of voices. Importantly, she reflects on the pull-in, push-out forces she faces, in particular with what she is required to work with curriculum principles and rules, the hidden ideologies they promote and what she struggles to achieve. Such 'struggles' underpin dialogic methodology, which encourages researchers to engage fully with the interplay between internal and authoritative discourses (Freise, 2018; Markova 2018; Skidmore & Murakami, 2016; Sullivan, 2011), in this case between the hidden curriculum and its potentially monologic/racialised ideologies and what (EAL) students deserve to receive in order to flourish. This is part of Chermaine's attempt to cultivate dialogue in her context, and revitalise the role of 'narrative' as a rich and powerful genre to enable heteroglossic voices to breathe out, and not be suppressed.

Chermaine stated that her personal idea of curriculum and its development had been that it is created externally (and possibly passively) by the school curriculum team, government/systems, regulatory bodies and/or academics. She perceived her role to be limited to 'implementing' a curriculum as opposed to contributing to and participating actively in its development with *autonomy*. This echoes Cormany et al.'s (2005) description of curriculum as 'a bit like trying to fix on a moving target' (p. 222), because oftentimes, it brought about a sense of disempowerment – a perceived lack of control 'over the system' or lack of *authenticity*.

Chermaine was interested to examine the opposite perspective on curriculum, the one in which curriculum is an interactive process between theory, research and practice (van Lier, 1996, p. 55) and more fundamentally a process of shaping self or 'ideological becoming' Bakhtin (1986). Chermaine was keen to explore how her design of curriculum or work with current curriculum could be a resonation of self, identity and growth through language; in other words, how to become not merely a good engineer (at the technical level of design) but more importantly a co-constructor of knowledge, involving students' diverse stories.

Chermaine had to unveil ideologies driving her own practice, and the mainstream system and curriculum, as she tried to unpack the scenario mentioned at the beginning of this paper related to how the language and literacy needs of EAL students are addressed. In our dialogue, we identified three areas where those needs were considered somewhat reductively and homogeneously, namely *choice of texts*, *assessment* and *inclusion/exclusion* of EAL students within/from mainstream classrooms. We elaborate on each briefly below.

Choice of texts
At the micro level of decision-making, Chermaine highlights the process of text selection as part of the study design for VCE English/EAL (VCAA, 2020). EAL students are required to do a close study of three texts (one of which can be a film). According to the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) (2019b), 'VCE EAL students must select a total of three texts across the Units 3 and 4 sequence from the text list published annually by the VCAA' (p. 2).

This list of texts is generated by the VCAA and English/EAL Text Advisory Panels. Texts which are determined to be suitable for EAL students are indicated on the list by the symbol (EAL). Whilst on the surface this demonstrates an awareness of the diverse language needs of EAL learners, the use of the same texts for both VCE English and EAL still demands the rigour required of first language speakers. It must be acknowledged that the Text Advisory Panel endeavours to ensure that the text list as a whole 'will be suitable for a diverse student cohort from a range of backgrounds and contexts, including students studying English as an Additional Language' (VCAA, 2019b, p. 1). However, the main differentiation in this regard comes down to fewer texts for EAL students, but of the same kind, and the same approach to literacy (mainly skills-based). Chermaine reflected on this in terms of hidden curriculum and argued that despite efforts at the policy level of curriculum planning to address diversity, in actuality the underlying ideology is one that promotes an Anglophone way of thinking

and seeing the world. The question remains as to how 'diverse' and global these texts are and how diversely they are treated in terms of literacy practice.

Assessment approaches

Chermaine acknowledged that the dominance of a skills-based approach is evident in assessment outcomes and in the fact all students must achieve an identical level of competencies. In 2018, when the VCAA introduced a Speaking and Listening component for EAL students, anecdotal feedback from students suggested that the testing was stressful as they did not know how to adequately prepare for it and felt a lack of context. Feedback from teachers suggested they, too, faced challenges preparing for these assessments, especially if they were teaching EAL students in a mainstream English classroom. As these are part of the SAC, schools have to create their own assessments.

Although it seems ideal for teachers to have agency to create assessments suitable for the needs of their learners (VCAA, 2020), the learners' feedback suggested the testing is merely 'checking a box' as opposed to a meaningful assessment and learning practice. Worryingly, this scenario is not uncommon, and in many mainstream English classrooms teachers are teaching classes of students English whilst concurrently planning for and assessing EAL learner(s) in the same class. This often means that assessment targets first language proficiency and does not differentiate EAL students in any deeper sense, beyond length of essays or time allowances. This is not addressing students' needs, or their rights, sufficiently or equitably.

Inclusion/exclusion

The above-mentioned issues regarding text selection and assessment indicate not only the homogenising of students' needs, but also the adopting of a deficit model to address EAL students. Therefore, the dilemma for teachers remains when and how they can 'include' EAL students in the mainstream. This was evident to Chermaine during reporting terms, as the prevalent questions/enquiries from schools revolved around the question, 'When does the child move to the English curriculum?' Such questions, albeit asked for practical purposes, subconsciously point to the low value placed on EAL, because EAL students feel 'included' only when they can fully dissolve themselves and conform to the standard target *in* and *through* English.

Less noted is whether an EAL learner has 'progressed' to being reported on against the English standards,

which means he/she is performing in the subject at first language proficiency level, which is often overlooked as achievement. This implicitly reveals the ideology of English as a superior language. Flores and Rosa (2019), in their application of critical race theories in language education contexts, poignantly argue that bilingualism is celebrated and valued only when another language is added to English, not the other way around (when English is added to another language). This is where the 'power of language' is neglected at the expense of the 'language of power'.

The model of supporting EAL students often adopted in mainstream schools is one where students are removed from classrooms to work one-on-one with a teacher; or in small groups, or asked to drop subjects so space can be created in their timetables to 'catch up' on their other subjects. This (of course) is done with good intentions, with teachers determining what the student's needs are, but the question remains: how does the student view this exclusion? Is this favorable to their morale? Do they have any right to speak up for what they actually need/want?

The issue therefore is not necessarily whether to include them in the same class or run a separate one, but rather, to fundamentally perceive EAL students as learners who bring with them diverse and powerful resources rather than deficits. The danger is, as Baker and Wright (2006) suggest, that when a weak bilingual model prevails in the system, a learner's L1 is continuously minimised because the medium of instruction (English) gets higher significance. Gradually parents also prioritise English at home, which results in students perceiving their first language as a peripheral rather than an integral part of their identity and the stories they can tell about their 'self' and society.

At the policy level, it is encouraging that VCAA has released the new F–10 EAL curriculum (VCAA, 2019a) separately from English and that it is due for implementation across government and Catholic schools in Victoria in 2021. The new EAL curriculum includes pluralingualism awareness as a new strand. In practice of the EAL context, it still packages learners and considers a homogenised set of needs and 'rights' for all of them, disregarding the linguistic, cultural and social resources they bring to the class and society in a larger aspect. This is shown in the way EAL students are *included* in the same class or *excluded* as a group of learners lacking certain skills needed to be seen as competent learners *in* and *through* English.

In Chermaine's conversations with mainstream teachers who have EAL students, many teachers state that they are yet to understand how to fully harness students' L1/L2 abilities and cultural experiences in English language development. This is what Canagarajah (2013) describes as translingualism – 'a shuttling between languages and a negotiation of diverse linguistic resources for situated construction of meaning' (p. 1). This is where the AAA principles need to be invited into both the curriculum and teacher education in a long-term vision of futures for English in Australia.

As Chermaine explored the curriculum and students' pedagogical needs in an EAL context, mainly in terms of *texts*, *assessment* and *sense of inclusion*, she realised these issues were strongly visible and accessible in the dominant genre-based approach to curriculum design. More specifically, in 'narrative as a genre' practice. She acknowledges the affordances of this approach as an experienced teacher. However, for the purpose of her authentic and autonomous design, she chose to explore how this approach might potentially jeopardise heterogenous voices and the narratives both students and teachers can make, and how it can be implemented in a way that addresses diverse needs *in* and *through* English. The next section explores and discusses this tension and possibility.

Genre-based curriculum design: framing narratives

The genre-based approach to teaching is based on the theoretical perspective that texts are social semiotic products and processes. It draws on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, and is in line with a socialisation approach to literacy. The genre approach, frequently used together with Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday, 1978), creates a 'scientific' approach to teaching. This approach has been a popular methodology in language teaching within Australian secondary schools (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Derewianka, 2015; Locke, 2010; White, Mammone & Caldwell, 2015).

Whilst acknowledging the rich affordances of genre-based approach to pedagogy and learning, it has been under criticism by many scholars at different contexts and from different perspectives (Frawley & McLean Davies, 2015; Locke, 2010). This paper tries to extend and explore these affordances and challenges in the EAL context of Australian secondary schools and what it may mean for our multicultural society.

In reflecting on her own practice within the genre-based approach, Chermaine tried to create a robust process for students' learning, ensuring they were able to use language meaningfully in different contexts. Anecdotal evidence from her experience of using this approach indicated a high level of success for students, who noted they felt they had been given 'the answer to a secret'. In saying this, Chermaine recalled learning the genre approach to teach English Language as part of her Postgraduate Diploma in Education in Singapore in 2002, and almost seventeen years later, she is duplicating the same practice, albeit in another country. In terms of contemplating futures for English, the genre approach might require revisiting due to significant changes in the pedagogical needs and rights of students within multilingual/plurilingual and multicultural contexts of education.

As stated, this by no means questions the rich affordances of genre-based pedagogy and its benefit to learners' engagement with language and its function. Rather, we argue that the way these genres are implicitly defined and implemented *in practice* is reduced to rigid (in this case, narrative/storytelling), racialised and reductive views of the multilingual voice. This does not allow for heteroglossic, diverse voices to emerge freely and fluidly through classroom discourse. Additionally, it does not seek to promote students' awareness, autonomy, authenticity and agency in expressing themselves *in* and *through* English. This will be further explained below.

The main criticism of the genre-based approach is that *in practice*, it teaches genres as 'predictable and normative social discourses, to which students need to conform' (Mickan, 2013). This criticism is most compelling in teaching of 'narratives' as a particular type of genre where students are taught the textual organisation and structural patterns of 'storytelling'. This assumes all narratives comprise a framework in this order: *orientation*, *complication*, *series of events* and *resolution*. Accordingly, students are asked to analyse and write narratives conforming to these models in their assessments.

Referring to our theoretical framework of both Bakhtin (1986) and van Lier (1996), and the questions we began with, this narrow implementation of a genre-based approach to teaching narratives is problematic at multiple levels that we discussed earlier (reductive view of text selection, assessment, students' sense of identity and inclusion).

In light of the AAA principles, it is worth contemplating how '*authentic*' the process of text selection that

schools undertake is, as it informs how students are required to write their responses based on the texts they have read.

- Are these texts chosen on the basis of how local/ global they are, or if they can be interpreted interculturally/transculturally?
- Structure-wise, the same questions are valid: Who designed this format for narrative as an acceptable genre? Whose logic is this existing narrative structure based on?
- Does everyone tell stories in the same way, or this it the most accessible one to the 'English' reader?

This is equally questionable in terms of 'autonomy':

- Do teachers/students possess any voice to choose/ resist these texts or structures?
- How do students express their voices in a language they have a different connection to?

Awareness of the above points sheds light on the inadequacy of differentiating EAL students from mainstream English students by allowing them to tell shorter stories. Although the intention is to 'cut' their stories in order to make the curriculum more inclusive, the end result is likely to be less diverse and more homogenised stories.

Seen through Bakhtin's dialogic lens, this approach to teaching narratives is preventing multi-voicedness and heteroglossic stories from coming to the fore. Particularly in the context of a multicultural and multilingual EAL classroom, where both teachers and students bring diverse ontological and epistemological knowledges to the classroom space, urging all students to tell stories in an identical structure sounds paradoxical. The significance of these heteroglossic perspectives through the construction of dialogue is acknowledged by many scholars, such as LaScotte and Tarone (2019) and Anya (2016) among others.

Though Chermaine gained further awareness of the existing gaps, she had to face the realities of practice and the barriers these pose. These push-in-pull-out tensions became a constructive struggle for Chermaine as she developed her authenticity and autonomy when preparing a proposed curriculum design for her subject. She decided to push the boundaries in her design, and applied a critical genre approach (Bhatia, 2005), allowing each student to create her/his own text of narratives/stories without necessarily following the template-model. She decided to take diverse examples of narratives across languages and cultures,

allowing students to choose and reflect on their own narratives. The students could work collaboratively on analysing and interpreting a narrative from different cultural perspectives, and were encouraged to reshape or restructure this in their own way. This was not to threaten the curriculum and what students produced for summative assessments. Rather, it was to open up possibilities for students' awareness, authenticity and autonomy.

Adding a fourth A: Agency

In this process of reflective dialogue, Chermaine shed light on past experiences, analysed present practices and suggested possibilities. The AAA principles became a powerful conceptual framework; however, we would like to extend this framework and add a fourth 'A' for Agency. This might be implicit in van Lier's (1996) model, but it became very evident to Chermaine that agency plays a significant role both for teachers and students and is explicitly emerging. Importantly, teachers' and students' senses of agency are strongly interrelated – when we examine who cuts the stories of students, the other side of the same coin is who cuts the stories of teachers. To reclaim these stories, we need, not only 'Awareness, Authenticity and Autonomy', but also a strong sense of 'Agency' and a willingness to make a change.

If the classroom is a space that truly endeavours to be dialogic in nature, based on relationality, it challenges conventional understandings of language and sees language as dynamic and not outright 'owned'. In this light, both teacher and learner must be able to exercise agency, albeit interchangeably and with some barriers of circumstance. It is vital for teachers not to cut their own stories, even if this creates tensions between their roles and circumstances. It is through the exercise of including teachers' stories that students are encouraged to share theirs, across cultures.

Clearly these four 'As' in the AAAA principle inform and build on each other. As teachers, part of our practice must include an awareness of self. Agency can only be shifted if one is aware of where and when one has agency and autonomy. When one is aware of the freedom to exercise it, only then can one do so. In acknowledging the extreme pressures teachers are under in terms of choice of text, assessment and sense of inclusion and belonging, both for themselves and for students, agency plays a critical role. By understanding the metalanguage as well as the culture of context, teachers can exercise their agency through

making active choices of texts and tasks, and creating space for richer pedagogical possibilities.

Futures for English: 'Letting stories breathe'
Through reflective accounts of past and present, we argue in this paper for the significance of multiplicity, difference and heterogenous stories in our educational practices. To understand the best pedagogical prospect to address the diverse needs and rights of students in a multicultural, plurilingual educational context, we are deemed to be bringing awareness to true recognition of this diversity, in terms of not 'deficit' or mere 'demography', but different and valuable insights and resources that EAL students bring to their classrooms.

This, in turn, affords more powerful stories, narrated *in* and *through* English: those which encourage heterogenised and contradicting stories and open up space for dialogue and complexity in thinking instead of homogenising people's senses of self through a hidden curriculum (Alsubaie, 2015). This is what Frank (2010) signifies in his book as *letting stories breathe* and not suffocating diverse and rich resources for learning and expansion, and letting learners craft their own agentive selves (Hull & Katz, 2006).

Teachers, particularly those who are bilingual and bicultural, should contribute equally to this space through their diverse stories and their pedagogical facilitation of stories interculturally and transculturally. A future for English where different perspectives can be not only seen but heard, one where our EAL students have confidence in expressing their voices equally, is desirable. This is fundamentally important for our curriculum: to encourage Awareness, Autonomy, Authenticity and Agency among teachers and students. Hopefully this will assist us in thinking about language education without falling back on the notion of Standard Australian English or English as 'mother tongue'. It will also enable us to educate truly literate global citizens who can act competently, confidently and agentively in their lives. This leads to the true meaning of a dialogic pedagogy which underscores relationality in a dynamic and ever-changing context of learning. The relationship between language, identity and culture should be more carefully attended to, as it signifies how teachers and students can become potential agents of change through the way they think, negotiate, act and tell stories. As Fecho and Clifton remarked, 'to cultivate agency in a dialogical self is also to cultivate awareness of selves in dialogue, in flux, and in progress' (2017, p. 134).

References

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2020). *Migration to Australia 2018–19*. Retrieved from: https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/3412.0Main%20Features42018-19?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=3412.0&issue=2018-19&num=&view=

Abtahi, Y. (2017). The 'more knowledgeable other': A necessity in the zone of proximal development? *For the Learning of Mathematics*, *37* (1), 35–39.

Alsubaie, M.A. (2015). Hidden curriculum as one of current issue of curriculum. *Journal of Education and Practice*, *6* (33), 125–128.

Anya, U. (2016). *Racialized identities in second language learning: Speaking blackness in Brazil*. New York: Routledge.

Baker, C. & Wright, W.E. (2006). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism* (4th ed.). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Bakhtin, M.M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays* (M. Holquist, Ed., C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans.). Austin: University of Texas Press.

Bakhtin, M.M. (1986). *Speech genres and other late essays* (C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Eds., V.W. McGee, Trans.). Austin: University of Texas Press.

Barton, D. & Hamilton, M. (1998). *Local literacies: Reading and writing in one community*. London: Routledge.

Benesch, S. (1996). Needs analysis and curriculum development EAP: An example of a critical approach. *TESOL Quarterly*, *30* (4), 723–738. https://doi.org/10.2307/3587931

Benesch, S. (1999). Rights analysis: Studying power relations in an academic setting. *English for Specific Purposes*, *18* (4), 313–327. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906 (98)00011–8

Bhatia, V.K. (2008). Towards a critical genre analysis. In V. Bhatia, J. Flowerdew & R. Jones (Eds.), *Advances in discourse studies* (pp. 166–177). London: Routledge.

Canagarajah, A.S. (Ed.). (2013). *Literacy as translingual practice: Between communities and classrooms*. New York: Routledge.

Chao, T.C. (2011). The hidden curriculum of cultural content in internationally published ELT textbooks: A closer look at new American inside out. *Journal of Asia TEFL*, *8* (2), 189–201.

Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (1993). Genre as social process. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *The powers of literacy: A genre approach to teaching writing* (pp. 22–37). Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Cormany, S., Maynor, C. & Kalnin, J. (2005). Developing self, developing curriculum, and developing theory: Researchers in residence at Patrick Henry Professional Practice School. In D. Tedick (Ed.), *Second language teacher education: International perspectives* (pp. 215–255). Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum & Associates.

Derewianka, B.M. (2015). The contribution of genre theory to literacy education in Australia. In J. Turbill, G. Barton

& C. Brock (Eds.), *Teaching writing in today's classrooms: Looking back to looking forward* (pp. 69–86). Norwood, Australia: Australian Literary Educators' Association. Retrieved from https://ro.uow.edu.au/sspapers/1621/

de Silva Joyce, H. & Feez, S. (2016). *Exploring literacies: Theory, research and practice.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Flores, N. & Rosa, J. (2019). Bringing race into second language acquisition. *The Modern Language Journal*, *103*, 145–151. https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12523

Fecho, B. & Clifton, J. (2017). *Dialoguing across cultures, identities, and learning: Crosscurrents and complexities in literacy classrooms.* New York: Routledge.

Frank, A.W. (2010). *Letting stories breathe: A socio-narratology.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Frawley, E. & McLean Davies, L. (2015). Assessing the field: Students and teachers of writing in high-stakes literacy testing in Australia. *English Teaching: Practice & Critique*, *14* (2), 83–99. https://doi.org/10.1108/ETPC-01–2015-0001

Freire, P. (1993). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (Revised ed., M. Bergman Ramos, Trans.). New York: Continuum.

Freise, M. (2018). *Inspired by Bakhtin: Dialogic methods in the humanities.* Brighton: Academic Studies Press.

Gee, J. (2015). *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourses.* London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315722511.

Halliday, M.A.K. (1978). *Language as a social semiotic: The social interpretation of language and meaning. London*: Edward Arnold.

Hamston, J. (2006). Pathways to multiliteracies: Student teachers' critical reflections on a multimodal text. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, *29* (1), 38–51.

Hull, G. & Katz, M.L. (2006). Crafting an agentive self: Case studies in digital storytelling. *Research in the Teaching of English*, *41*, 43–81.

Hyland, K. (2006). *English for academic purposes: An advanced resource book.* New York, NY: Routledge.

LaScotte, D. & Tarone, E. (2019). Heteroglossia and constructed dialogue in SLA. *Modern Language Journal*, *103*, 95–112. https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12533.

Lea, M.R., & Street, B.V. (1998). Student writing in higher education: An academic literacies approach. *Studies in Higher Education*, *23* (2).

Locke, T. (Ed.). (2010). *Beyond the grammar wars: A resource for teachers and students on developing language knowledge in the English/literacy classroom.* New York: Routledge.

Markova, I. (2018). *The dialogical mind: Common sense and ethics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mickan, P. (2012). *Language curriculum design and socialisation.* Multilingual Matters.

Pennycook, A. (2014). *The cultural politics of English as an international language.* London: Routledge.

Simon, R.I. (1992). *Teaching against the grain: Texts for a pedagogy of possibility.* Greenwood Publishing Group.

Skidmore, D., & Murakami, K. (Eds.). (2016). *Dialogic pedagogy: The importance of dialogue in teaching and learning.* Multilingual Matters.

Sullivan, P. (2011). *Qualitative data analysis using a dialogical approach.* London, UK: SAGE. Doi: https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446268391.

Tajeddin, Z. & Teimournezhad, S. (2015). Exploring the hidden agenda in the representation of culture in international and localised ELT textbooks. *The Language Learning Journal*, *43* (2), 180–193. https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2013.869942

van Lier, L. (1996). *Interaction in the language curriculum: Awareness, autonomy, and authenticity.* London: Ringman.

VCAA. (2019a). *English as an Additional Language (EAL): Rationale and aims.* Retrieved from https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/english/english-as-an-additional-language-eal/introduction/rationale-and-aims

VCAA. (2019b). *VCE English and English as an Additional Language (EAL) Text List for study in 2020 and 2021.* Retrieved from https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/english-and-eal/Pages/index.aspx

VCAA. (2020). *Victorian Certificate of Education English and English as an Additional Language study design.* Retrieved from https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/vce/english/2016EnglishEALSD.pdf

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Wertsch, J.V. (1991). *Voices of the mind: A sociocultural approach to mediated action.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

White, P.R.R., Mammone, G. & Caldwell, D. (2015). Linguistically based inequality, multilingual education and a genre-based literacy development pedagogy: Insights from the Australian experience. *Language and Education*, (*29*)3, 256–271. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2014.994527

Wilson, K. (2009). *Reading in the margins: EAP reading pedagogies and their critical, postcritical potential* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Technology Sydney, Sydney.

Mahtab Janfada (PhD) is a Lecturer and Coordinator in Language and Literacy Education at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, The University of Melbourne. Her expertise is in critical and dialogic pedagogy and language curriculum design in multilingual era. She was formerly an Academic at Tehran University Language Centre.

Chermaine Thomas is a Learning Consultant at Catholic Education Melbourne. She has worked as a secondary English Language teacher in Singapore and an EAL teacher in a New Arrivals Program in Melbourne. She has recently completed the Master of TESOL program at the University of Melbourne.

Personal and Professional Identities

Personal and Professional Identities:

Exploring the Relationship between NSW Secondary English Teachers' Beliefs and Values About Literature and its Role in their Classrooms

Kerry-Ann O'Sullivan, *Macquarie University, Australia*

Abstract: Literature is an enduring and distinctive component in English education and reading is central to teachers' conception of the subject. What continues to be contentious are the ways literature is defined and how teachers' values influence what their students will read. This paper is drawn from a larger research study and reports 18 NSW English teachers' beliefs about literature/ books/texts, drawn from detailed interviews that were analysed critically using a grounded theory approach. The teachers professed their pleasure in reading literature, which is linked to, and evident in, the passion they invest in its teaching. However, they also experienced tensions in their professional practice that revealed complex relationships between their identity constructions, teaching and literature. The values underpinning the teachers' beliefs and their perceptions of their professional role in relation to literary study are important to explore as our educational contexts increasingly narrow while, at the same time, the forms of reading and writing continue to expand.

Introduction

> … those books are there, with the subtle secret of invisibility
> and a dozen other strange secrets written therein.
> (H.G. Wells, *The Invisible Man*, 1897)

Literature is an enduring formation on the broad landscape of subject English. What teachers select for students to read provokes frequent debate because reading and writing occupy much of our time in an English classroom. As Kress (2004) has observed, '[w]riting as mode and book as medium have shaped western imagination, forms of knowledge, practices of reading; the technology of writing has shaped the book, and the technology of the book has shaped how writing has developed' (p. 113). Our practices and forms of reading and writing continue to expand, in contrast to increasingly narrowing educational priorities. These contexts underpin this exploration of English teachers' views of and values about reading literature and their perceptions of their professional role in relation to its study in the classroom.

English teachers in Australia experience constant pressure from an intensifying emphasis on standardised testing and measurement, functional skills, and curricula that favour identifiable product-oriented outcomes. In New South Wales (NSW), for example, the competitive role of the Higher School Certificate (HSC) (Jogie, 2015) – an external accountability regime that dominates political and community attention – combined with ongoing demands for achievement and innovation mean that teachers work in contexts that are complex, highly charged and constantly changing. Educators experience comparable

challenges in countries such as England and the USA, where tight policy frameworks, legislative mandates and the current 'standards' discourse constrain professional judgement and autonomy (Easley, 2013; Goodwyn, 2012a; O'Sullivan, 2016).

English teachers are challenged when framed by both these contextual demands and a global reform agenda of conformity to limiting standards, reductive practices and professional regulation. Subject English has a rich history of exploration, diversity and creativity, yet when faced with such conditions, how do its teachers view and manage their work? This article is drawn from a larger research project in NSW and England that examines the ways in which English teachers respond when negotiating the contesting forces that are shaping their careers and influencing their classroom practices.

The focus here synthesises the NSW participants' beliefs about literature/books/texts to explore the relationships between professional identity, pedagogy and subject English. The sharing of some English teachers' voices, whose lived experience offers us authentic insights, is central. What emerges from their views is the combination of a confident personal identification with literature and a professional identity that displays strong beliefs about literary material and its role in the classroom. The teachers professed their pleasure in literature and stated the purposes they see in its classroom study. This leads to a discussion of some tensions found in both teaching English and identity construction. The literary developments in relation to subject English and the key shifts within literary and textual theories constitute a complex set of debates which require deeper analysis. Therefore, a brief overview of some selected aspects is provided below to illuminate the accounts the teachers give.

Literature: A consideration of some perspectives
Philosophical and historical discussions about the identity and purposes of literature reveal disagreement and complexity. The term 'literature' derives from the Latin *litteratura*, the root word for which is *littera* (a letter of the alphabet), and has been used from the late fourteenth century onward to mean an 'acquaintance with books', 'book learning in general' (Pope, 2012, p. 60). Literary inclusions in an English curriculum have always been subject to debate and to appropriation by different interest groups (see, for instance, Belas & Hopkins, 2019; Bloom, 1994; Goodson & Marsh, 1996; Green, 1990; Manuel & Brock, 2003). Varying

purposes proposed for literary study have included aesthetic appreciation (Iser, 1978; Leavis, 1930), the inculcation of moral values and civilising influences (Bloom, 1994), literacy skills development (Morgan, 1997) and the exploration of socio-cultural practices and issues of power (Apple, 1989; Mellor & Patterson, 1994). Eaglestone (2009) suggests that literature may be 'something that *overflows* or *escapes* from any attempt to limit it or put it in a box', proposing it could be 'more like a verb, a "doing", than it is a noun or thing' (p. 50).

In the nineteenth century, the management and regulation of schooling were linked explicitly to the reading of literature and attempts to promote nationalistic spirit. For example, in England in 1921, the 'Newbolt Report' (a.k.a. *The teaching of English in England*) established the 'new English' as a core subject, adopting a view that allowed for the growth of a child through an encounter with art. Manuel and Carter (2019) have acknowledged the report's valorising assumptions about 'the superior civilising and character-building utility of literature and literary study' (p. 2).

By 1930, English became a dominant university discipline. One of its leading exponents, F.R. Leavis (1895–1978) of Cambridge University, was zealous in his desire for an educated class that valued authoritative literature for its contribution to social harmony and the enrichment of cultural life. An elite canon in English literature was established. This Leavisite inheritance promoted the intrinsic artistic worth of great literary works as engaging a reader's personal sensibility with humanising improvement. This approach was widely regarded as influential in England and Australia for many decades (Gibbs, Mullins & O'Sullivan, 2005).

The term 'literature' is problematic in numerous ways and is located within a complex set of debates. Changes in perceptions about learning and pedagogy in the 1960s and 1970s challenged the placement of literature at the heart of English teaching. A focus on the centrality of the student, manifested in the influential model known as Personal Growth (Dixon, 1967), advocated the development of an individual student's personal responses and fostered creativity, self-expression and engagement with a student's own experiences.

Theoretical shifts in contemporary approaches to literary studies have seen the concept of 'literature' interrogated more deeply and the term 'texts' come into more usage. The contribution of reader-response theory, especially in Louise Rosenblatt's (1978) work

on literary engagement and her inclusion of the reader in the experience of literature, highlighted the importance of exploring connections between texts, readers and contexts. Rosenblatt's views about the importance of both the reader and the text have had a significant impact on teachers and how they understand transactions in classrooms (Glover, 2018). Eagleton's 1983 *Literary theory: An introduction* was also influential in disturbing previously held views and practices. He asserted, 'Literature, in the sense of a set of works of assured and unalterable value, distinguished by certain shared inherent properties, does not exist' (p. 10).

Significant developments in notions around reading and responding have provoked changes in English classrooms, generating opportunities for alternative ways of constituting the subject. Peim (2009, p. 149) suggests that 'the definition of English was problematised, expanded and altered'. Contemporary literary and cultural theories recognise that all knowledge is mediated in some way and that textual practices are shifting and complex. For example, in *The pleasure of the text*, Roland Barthes (1975) stated that the main source of meaning was no longer perceived as authorial, as this imposed limits on the writing.

Across its multi-layered history, subject English has responded, often with some contestation, to change and new challenges. This sample of contributions from rich studies of theoretical perspectives underscores an ongoing exploration of the concept of literature and of ways of reading, with an accompanying expansion of terminology being used to address this work. Key points to note include the centrality of literature's role in the development of subject English and the shift to what Scholes (1985) described as 'textual power'. What is also important is the actual process of reading:

> learning how to read closely and carefully, how to situate a text in relation to other texts (intertextuality), how to situate a text in relation to culture, society, the world (extratextuality). (Scholes, 1998, p. 166)

Understanding that texts embody cultural, political and social assumptions and that there are effects of power in their production are important contributions for contemporary readers' interpretations.

This brief theoretical exploration provides a framework for considering the data which follow. The overview gives a reference point for various perspectives on literature over time and acknowledges a range of versions to place alongside the teachers' views. Some more traditional perspectives may be considered to have been displaced by contemporary ideas, but it is helpful to remember the bricolage of ways in which teachers understand and experience subject English. In recognition of these issues, the following explores a study of some English teachers' beliefs about literature/books/texts, the influence of these on their practice, and their considerations about the future of literature in their classrooms.

The research design

Approach to the study
This report focuses on the views of 18 English teachers from four NSW independent schools located in metropolitan Sydney. These teachers formed the Australian component of an international research project (see Note 1) which also included 15 English teachers from six schools in England. As the chief investigator, I conducted and recorded all thirty-three in-depth semi-structured interviews face to face to produce a qualitative data set that captured a range of perspectives and English teaching experiences.

The overarching research question was: How do educators in the contested fields of English and literacy 'find a balance between external expectations, contemporary pressures, professional aspirations, and personal values'? (O'Sullivan, 2016, p. 65). This investigation was created in response to the dominant educational and contextual factors affecting teachers' work globally, where strong external pressures from standardised testing, performance outcomes and measurement and a productivity/commodification agenda drive both the teacher's classroom practice and their career. Full accounts are published elsewhere (see, O'Sullivan & Goodwyn, 2020). The following are the broad investigative areas: 1. concepts of professional identity and values; 2. subject perceptions and pedagogies; 3. contextual influences and teachers' work; 4. educational change and English; 5. professional priorities and career factors; and 6. teacher self-efficacy and future views of subject and self.

A grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was used to build an understanding of teachers' own subject theories from the emerging data and to privilege their voices. The interviews were transcribed and an inductive, iterative approach was used for the interpretation of these transcripts to draw content-level themes, investigate and assign codes, and identify patterns and clusters of key words and ideas. Working

within a generative grounded framework in which repeated ideas and concepts become apparent, the participants' discourses were analysed critically (Gee, 2011) for thematic and conceptual codes, situated meanings, identity construction and relationships, and to describe how language is used. Points of connection and departure evident across the participants' language-in-use in four different settings were also examined.

The English teacher participants

After formal ethics approval was received from the respective universities, participants (see Note 2) were recruited, self-selecting through professional networks. In NSW, teachers were selected as a 'convenience sample' from professional connections and by direct requests to independent secondary school principals. In England, participants came through links to professional networks, principally The National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE). These selection processes facilitated easy access to several schools, which allowed for multiple interviews to occur with English teachers at each site. Although this narrowed the sample of schools, there was merit in hearing numerous teachers' views from within the same subject/Department group.

It is important to observe that these 18 participants come from four large independent K–12 schools across metropolitan Sydney, NSW, where approximately 40% of secondary students attend private/independent schools. These included one single-sex boys' school; the other three schools are co-educational. One is classified as religious, one as secular and two as non-denominational. They average 69% of students in the top quarter of the Index of Community Socio-Economic Educational Advantage (ICSEA) measure, where the average for Australia is 25% (ACARA, 2020). While the participants represented the voices of some professionals who were willing to give time to interviews and who demonstrated a desire to share their views, the sample has an obvious limitation due to the more privileged nature of the schools involved. Any school system and its source of government funding or parental fees will make a difference and be a part of the structural reality of the teachers' contexts. Any broader workforce representation cannot be claimed.

Of relevance is Gee's (2011) description of 'socially situated identities' (p. 150) which are constructed mutually in a speech situation and where a speaker's meaning is inflected by factors such as their background, social and cultural groupings, and other identity aspects. 'Situated meanings arise because particular language forms take on specific or situated meanings in specific different contexts of use' (Gee, 2011, p. 65). The responses presented here need to be considered within the specific social practices of the interview situation, with an awareness of provisional subjectivities that are constructed through the dynamics of language-in-use, and the partial nature of the discursive relationships established in textual creation.

This sample has also some unique contextual influences informing their responses. Teese (2007) argues that private schools have received greater funding growth than other sectors, thus deepening the stratification in school education. He characterises them as 'fortified sites', distinctive in providing significant opportunities and achievement, and with a capacity for social advantage. He states,

> conditions are created in these settings which involve the pooling of the cultural capital and ethos of individuals and the pedagogical multiplication of these advantages. (p. 16)

Unlike most government school English departments, which have very limited funding, these teachers do not rely on an established, ageing book room. Students generally purchase their own texts. When there are more resources available, there is scope for teacher choice. Some of the teachers reported significant parental and community pressure regarding students' results, especially on external markers such as the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy and the HSC. One observed, 'they have high expectations because they spend a lot of money and I understand that'.

According to Twiselton (2006, p. 88), knowledge is 'an inter-subjective construction, one that happens between individuals and the cultures in which they operate'. The presence of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) obtained from participation as part of a social class, with symbolic cultural competence and authority that denotes group position and privilege, is identified within the participants' school contexts. The habitus or physical embodiment of cultural capital provides resources for a collective identity within the social order and the participants' responses are embedded within a privileged context.

The 18 NSW teachers' responses are drawn from an analysis of these open questions:

- How would you describe yourself as an English teacher?

- What do you value most in your work as a teacher of English?
- What vision do you have about literature for future students?

This sample included 12 female and 6 male teachers of varied ages who had a range of responsibilities; for example, there were three Heads of English, one Deputy Principal and some early career members. They had teaching experience across state, independent and religious school systems. Their qualifications included undergraduate majors in English, Masters-level study and a doctoral degree.

The teachers' perspectives about their personal valuing of literature and their views on its role in the classroom give an opportunity for a small group of classroom practitioners to add their professional voices to debates that often disregard their expertise and agency.

Key findings

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to analyse specific text selections, lists of texts prescribed for study at any given point in time can suggest a great deal about the values and assumptions of a society, and about teachers' beliefs and preferences (see, for example, Doecke & McLean Davies, 2017; Gibbs, Mullins, & O'Sullivan, 2005; McLean Davies, 2014; O'Sullivan, 2005). Texts selected for study provide insights into how subject English is perceived and valued, understandings of identity and cultural affiliation, and a society's attitudes towards issues such as class, gender and ethnicity. Teachers' choices often reflect Bernstein's (1971) argument about the direct relationship between 'the distribution of power in society' and the processes of selection and transmission of 'the educational knowledge it considers to be public' (p. 47).

In identifying a strong influence of emotional affect in the teachers' views about literature, it is acknowledged that there was not a detailed exploration of their teaching practices. Meaning-making and complex cultural production are characteristics of English classrooms (Yandell, 2014). In focusing on 'valuing' or identifying preferences, the pedagogical work is not made explicit (Yates et al., 2019). The agentic roles of readers appear less foregrounded and the kinds of knowledge required in practice remain tacit when classroom applications are not examined.

The findings report the eighteen teachers' views about their reading of literature and about its role in their classrooms, and some of their beliefs about English. These are drawn from an analysis of their responses about their subject, their teaching aims and what they personally value as English teachers. To reflect the data's thematic patterns, their voices are presented through four key threads: personal pleasure in literature; the values ascribed to literature; literature in the classroom; and literature in the future.

Personal pleasure in literature

> I have an absolute adoration for literature and reading. (Female, experienced teacher)

Each of the participants expressed strong emotions about literature, and across the sample, there were 20 uses of 'love', with a repetition of similar choices from the affective domain including 'passion', 'passionate', 'enjoy' and 'appreciate'. The descriptors 'beautiful', 'great' and 'wonderful' were used to characterise aspects of literature, for example, 'a beautiful sentence', 'a great paragraph', and 'all these wonderful things'. Fourteen of the 18 teachers affirmed their personal valuing of reading and linked this explicitly to 'literature'. Most privileged an emotional connection to literature when discussing their sense of self as an English teacher and what mattered to them about the subject. They used personally assertive and subjective expressions. One explained this as her motivation for becoming an English teacher: 'I was just so much in love with literature and I knew that teaching was part of my personality'. Another merged her personal interests with her professional role:

> I think it's my job to share my passion for literature, for wide reading, and just the incredibly beautiful use of language. Part of that sharing means I have to be a wide reader and I have to be constantly immersing myself in current as well as our canonical texts. (Female, experienced leader)

These teachers conveyed their deep attachment to literature and wanted to share their own enjoyment with their students. The affective domain is powerfully displayed through their emotive and relational lexicon. These findings are not surprising. A distinctive feature in research about English is an emphasis on, and debate about, teachers' perceptions of the importance of literature in the subject. For example, in Goodwyn's (2012b) survey of 254 in-service teachers in England, 75% of respondents responded 'very' when asked about the personal importance of literature to them. They indicated their desire to share strong personal

responses to literature with their students, also a feature in the current data.

Values ascribed to literature

> I think I do have a bias, I guess, to texts that have stood the test of time, so in terms of their insight into humanity, but also their role that they play in shaping culture. (Male, mid-career, Head of Department)

Over two-thirds of the participants characterised literature as having timeless qualities, universality and enduring aesthetic value. They not only appreciated these aspects for themselves as readers, but also prioritised them for their students to experience. A Head of English stated, 'I think I still envisage all the classics will always have, in any unit I ever write or year group I ever teach, will have an exalted place'. Literature was described as 'the distilled knowledge of all of our humanity', containing 'inherent humanism', 'human values' and 'wisdom', able to 'tell us about ourselves' and give us 'examples of other lives'. The essentialising of its purpose and the privileging of emotional connections suggest singular representations in literature. The use of 'all', 'inherent', and 'exalted', for example, further emphasises particularised literary experiences as 'universal'.

This opinion about literature's characteristic of timelessness spanned all the participant age and experience groups, including the early career teachers, who also showed the influence of cultural heritage views in their stated acknowledgements of the enduring nature of literary concerns. For example, they thought that 'it's a lot about teaching them the human values through literature' and 'It's the humanity. It's the universality'. These concepts would undoubtedly seem problematic to teachers working in other settings, especially in relation to the lived experiences of voices that are so often omitted or marginalised, though the views of these interviewees appear to be supported by statements made in official documents.

Given these findings, it is relevant to consider the following explanation of 'literature' from the Key Ideas in the *Australian Curriculum for English F–10*:

> The term 'literature' includes literary texts from across a range of historical and cultural contexts that are valued for their form and style and are recognised as having enduring or artistic value. While the nature of what constitutes literary texts is dynamic and evolving, they are seen as having personal, social, cultural and aesthetic value and potential for enriching students' scope of experience. (ACARA, n.d.)

Critical attention to the use of the terms 'valued' and 'value' is required. How does this identification occur and for what reasons, and whose 'values' are privileged? It is pertinent to ask what assumptions are embedded within the range of valuing ascribed to literary texts.

In the current *NSW 6 English Stage 6 syllabus* (NESA, 2017) and *NSW English K–10 syllabus* (NESA, 2012) 'historical' is omitted from contexts in defining 'literary texts'. These are stated as 'Past and present texts across a range of cultural contexts that are valued for their form and style and are recognised as having enduring or artistic value'. 'Literature' includes 'texts', echoing definitional debates:

> Literally means anything written, but the term is generally associated with works of imagination, fictional and non-fictional. It is often used to mean texts that are highly regarded examples of their forms and media. (NESA, 2012, 2017)

In the teachers' responses, there was a narrow focus on 'classics', with Shakespeare cited by most, and *To kill a mockingbird* and *Lord of the flies* mentioned frequently. Half the sample identified a study of Shakespeare because of its 'universal' themes and 'distilled wisdom':

> I think it's the simplicity of the themes – the simplicity of the themes. Ambition Yes. Ambition. Fear. Greed. Blood. Death. Murder. Some are good, some are not, yet those themes are still – will always – have always resonated, will always resonate. (Male, experienced Head of Department)

> I think it's important to look at Shakespeare and say, well … 400 years ago, what was relevant? Is that relevant now? Yes, it is. Well, wow, that means that humans haven't changed that much! People are people. (Female, experienced teacher)

Other participants shared similar beliefs, including Shakespeare as an essential component of their literary repertoire.

> Shakespeare's such a wonderful author and for us is really the English language god. We have a lot of modern authors, but no one really like that. (Female, experienced teacher)

These teachers would have studied Shakespeare at school and at university, and most were currently teaching at least one Shakespearean play. This commitment was a common thread, most likely from personal preference and familiarity but also due to Shakespeare's continuous inclusion in prescribed NSW

HSC text lists for senior English students. As a teacher observed:

> One of the things I've always said to students and I say this to every class, that in 500 years time, English classes will still be learning Shakespeare in the exact same way that they are learning today. I honestly believe that – I think in 500 years time. (Male, mid-career teacher)

Aesthetic principles are evident, with echoes derived from a Leavisite tradition. These are often linked to a response traditionally valued and produced in a reader by a canonical piece of literature. A tension appears between some teacher beliefs about literary works and contemporary thinking on the expansive nature of texts. These views may seem at odds with the NSW curriculum intentions and understandings of the ways contemporary meaning is shaped, how students navigate across varied textual and representational forms, and the richness of our multi-voiced world. Classroom decision-making considers students' needs and interests, their prior educational and literary experiences, and many local contextual factors. It is important to note here in this cluster of responses that the teachers are revealing a partial identity only, one that is socially situated and reflects their current cultural and professional contexts, framed by workplace pressures and community expectations.

Consequently, paradoxical aspects emerged within the data. It is possible to hold different perspectives about the personal and the public self. While it is problematic to position humanity's diversity in universal terms, the teachers were confident about the richness of literary experience they desired for their students. They wanted to stimulate their students' imaginations and engage their artistic appreciation by immersing them in stories about other people. If the literary focus is limited, however, it is unclear how this responsiveness will be developed. To explore this aspect further, the next section reports on the teachers' thoughts about the role of literature and reading in their classrooms.

Literature in the classroom

I need to empower them to love reading and to love literature and to love poetry and Shakespeare and graphic novels and all these wonderful things that make literature what it is, the diversity and richness of it. (Female, experienced leader)

The teachers were unanimous about the importance of literature in their classrooms giving various reasons

for this belief. In the quotation above, the speaker presents an expanded definition of literature to include contemporary examples such as graphic novels. This expansion reflects the complex matter of terminology raised earlier. The data in this set of findings further this consideration of definitions because there appeared to be a potential elision of the terms literature and texts through the ways they were conceptualised or applied in use.

In addition to the concept of 'universality' being valued in literary study, teachers spoke about their students learning about language and building skills. Examples included, 'For me, grammar goes hand-in-hand with literature, because if you have a good understanding of how language works it allows you to understand literature so much more' and 'It's a way to once again get back to the power of the word'.

Most agreed that their pedagogical focus was talking about ideas and perspectives with students. As one stated, 'Getting those discussions started is what I love about English as a subject, when we've actually committed to the actual text that we're looking at and the ideas you get out of it'. Literary study was described as 'a great way of just unpacking a lot of cultural ideas' and it presented an opportunity for students to 'engage more deeply in discussions' because 'all texts are in some ways containing cultural social values'. In these examples, it seems students participate in deeper examinations of textual values. There was no elaboration given as to meaning of the descriptor of 'cultural'. Typically, the following teacher finds personal satisfaction in classroom discussions because they are 'something I do really appreciate, when you can have those intellectual discussions about texts, your feelings, your thoughts, your reactions to values and attitudes'.

Although not addressed in detail in the interviews, a range of views about current classroom practices emerged. One teacher stated, 'I spend a lot of my time with the kids convincing them that literature matters. Words and language can change the world, in fact, it's the only thing that ever has'. Some addressed concerns about the pressures of limited time affecting students' capacity to experience deeper study, especially for seniors. The demands of external examinations often shifted the teaching focus, as this senior English teacher explained:

> I would love to do more close reading of texts. I feel like I get a text and I've got to read through it very quickly, find the concepts, engage with the ideas, get the kids engaged

with that, teach key themes, extract bits of text. I find there's a lot. I would love to be able to go in closely, focus on looking at the language. (Female, mid-career teacher)

Signalled in these responses was an interchange, or exchange, of the term 'literature' and the term 'texts'. A shift appeared when some teachers moved from speaking about their personal valuing of literature and love of reading to focusing on their pedagogical interactions in a classroom context. It was only during my detailed analysis that I discerned this shift, so could not interrogate it further in interview. Although a couple maintained their linguistic choice of 'literature' throughout their responses, most adopted 'texts' as a broader marker of their practice with students. This finding will be addressed further in the Discussion section.

A blending is evident in statements such as 'we definitely want to set students up for success, so we ensure that we cover texts, you know we do Shakespeare, we do a broad range of texts, drama and poetry across the whole spectrum of texts'. In connection with the ongoing theoretical changes within the disciplinary studies relating to English, this experienced Head of English recounted his continued development in thinking about, and using, the term 'literature':

Literature in terms of more than just the written word but literature in terms of film – so visual literacy – art, painting. But my definition of literature as a professional has evolved throughout my entire career. (Male, Head of Department)

Some underlying assumptions about literary perspectives are evident in the data, and importantly, these raise questions about how we conceptualise the role of literature and texts in our practice. How do we challenge values and attitudes, promote a contestation of ideas and build critical and imaginative thought? In the transactions of the classroom, textual material generates varying responses for each reader (Glover, 2018). Further, with technological inventiveness and multimodality, author and reader roles continue to evolve. To discuss some of these factors, the teachers were asked about their expectations about the future study of literature.

Literature in the future

Eighty or 90 per cent of what I do in the classroom will be based in the book. (Male, mid-career teacher)

There was a divergence of views when the teachers were asked to imagine the future role of literature in relation to their English classrooms. The following teacher said that he would maintain his privileging of literature, which he had characterised as books:

things don't change, and I think we lose that a lot of the time with this focus on the new and the whirligigs and the flashing lights and the whatever. (Male, mid-career teacher)

Another saw a continued tradition of the past: 'I would still imagine a curriculum that is full of classics and is full of teachers that understand the classics and value them'. However, most teachers identified a broadening of types of texts with an expansion of the voices and issues studied in classrooms. This early career teacher's view was typical: 'I think there needs to be a more global approach to literature and a greater incorporation of world literature, which I think is heavily lacking in the Australian curriculum'. An experienced leader who also wished for 'a broadening of the texts' recognised the significant resourcing problems many schools face in gaining 'the funding to have wonderful libraries and great resources'. She acknowledged the privileged context of her own school, where financial restrictions were not a major factor.

Another teacher raised his concerns about students' lack of reading due to 'the use of eBook and online versions of the text' because 'you always have to be over their shoulder, always make sure they are in fact reading the book'. Regarding the use of digital versions, for example, there are issues around school resourcing, teachers' planning and professional learning, and students' access to equipment. From a classroom perspective, all sorts of literature and texts are important as their forms and features and the ways in which they are read and experienced expand. Varied materials and mediums coexist in a study of English. Reading the word, image and screen, and interacting by turning a page, navigating 'controls', or touching, clicking or scrolling are all key skills in the repertoire of twenty first century literate practices.

Discussion

The findings reveal some tensions between the teachers' personal values about literature and the ways in which they desire to support their students' classroom reading practices. This is demonstrated in an apparent cultural heritage privileging of literary material while simultaneously advocating for personal growth philosophies. It is a complex matter, reflecting the contested nature of English, the multiple dimensions

that exist within the school subject and some blurring of pedagogical beliefs. These elements are not necessarily harmonious; neither are they necessarily in opposition. The teachers' voices echo historical antecedents, seminal changes and contemporary paradigms. The intricacy of subject English is evident in its capacity to hold different meanings and uses and its ability to invite personal views.

A historic connection is evoked through a stated commitment to particularised cultural representations, seen in the specificity of naming 'Shakespeare' and in declarations that literature provides insights about the nature of humanity in a 'universal' way. The teachers' personal pleasure is a strong motivation in the classroom, as is their desire to share their reading experiences with students. Some clearly preferred the 'classics of literature', especially Shakespearean drama, while a few prioritised a wider range of 'texts'. 'Cultural' reasons appeared tacit and warrant further interrogation.

Cuthbert (2019) states:

Experiential, personal knowledge plays a constructive role in aesthetic interpretation, but only if it is a starting point from which iterative intellectual and imaginative moves are made in an engagement between author, pupil, text and teacher. (p. 192)

Thus, it is important to note again a distinction between what might be studied and how this is explored in practice. There is no assumption made that because Shakespeare's plays feature in many English classes and in the NSW HSC Prescriptions for text study that these are taught without thoughtful critique or micro-political examination.

According to Belas and Hopkins (2019, p. 328), '[i]t is the dynamic between identity, history, culture and society where literature has such a fundamental role to play in relation to contemporary citizenship'. In exploring aesthetic principles alongside the inventiveness of new forms and modes of expression, students have critical and creative opportunities to move beyond the predictable. Interestingly, Dixon (1967) signalled another view of literature in his *Growth through English* through his recognition of 'the acceptance of pupils' work as embryonic literature' (p. 5), in which students' own writing would be studied.

These teachers aspire to engage their classes in active discussions and 'intellectual' exploration. This attention to students' responses draws on a personal growth legacy, and yet there are contextual

limitations acknowledged in terms of competing educational priorities and policies, the pressure of time and students' interests. The complex reality of the daily work of teachers is apparent in their ongoing negotiations around their beliefs, pedagogies and curriculum choices. In looking to the future, there was less agreement and certainty. This reflects the current pressures teachers face and the ongoing strain of balancing so many elements of policy, school, subject, students and self.

In terms of their professional identity, the teachers reveal confident constructions with strong expressions of personal values and beliefs. Their individual meanings for English inform their views as professionals. This exemplifies what Danielewicz (2001) characterises as an identity that 'arises from the perpetual dialectic between internal states and external conditions' (p. 197). This fusion of the personal self with the teacher self is influential in shaping some of the seeming contradictions in the responses when different aspects of identity assert themselves. The apparent slippage between the teachers' use of 'literature' and 'texts' is an example. There is an interesting switch between individual affect and the more outward-looking professional. When they describe themselves as English teachers and state what they value in their teaching, they state their personally felt connections with 'literature'. Their focus is on self-identity. When they shift to considering their professional role more broadly, for example in terms of their hopes for their students, and reflect from the more public or external perspective, for some teachers a distinction appears, perhaps unconsciously, and 'texts' is used.

Historically, studies in literature feature ongoing adjustment, transformation and expansion (Belas & Hopkins, 2019). The same is true of our subject. The changing contextualisation of literary works, the processes of textual decision-making, and the shaping of classroom practice necessitate debate, negotiation and reflection. In highlighting the significance of these matters, Elliott (2018) acknowledges

[t]he right to speak to any literature, but also the right for an authentic voice, reflects the tensions of power relations within our teaching and learning spaces, both on a personal and a societal level. (p. 268)

Ways forward include a critical examination of the distinctive elements and perspectives in a variety of literary and textual forms; acknowledging affective engagement, personal interpretation, experimental

usage and intellectual speculation; and recognising the past's movement into the new and emergent.

Concluding thoughts

Educators across the globe face the relentless force of standardisation, whereby everything is measured and prescribed metrics become valued over innovation. Inevitably, the curriculum is narrowed, testing is privileged, and pressure is intensified. In Dixon's (2015) view, the consequence is 'to squeeze the joy and pain out of any imaginative responses to literature, and to crib, cabin and confine any language for life into the unreal world of test questions' (p. 433). Resistance of the prevailing conditions is challenging, but 'doing' something only to have students pass an exam offers little satisfaction for these teachers. An experienced participant expressed her aim:

> Let's just enjoy the literature that we've got and immerse ourselves in it and come out thinking wow, that was cool, that was a great story, that was an awesome character. (Female, experienced teacher)

These English teachers' reflections from their specific contexts offer important insight into the beliefs and values that underpin their professional identities and practices. Their sincere contemplations convey an enthusiastic commitment to supporting their students' deeper learning. We hear ardent personal beliefs informing their professional identities and providing motivation at a time of increasing shifts and pressures in subject English and in education globally.

The complexity of literary and textual study invites continued critical reflection and investigation of the layered social and cultural practices that imbue and surround any work. In trying to bridge the concepts of literature and texts, Misson and Sumara (2006) suggest that English

> encompasses the artistic and imaginative texts we know as literature, but moves through to teaching about practical everyday texts that we also need to read and produce as we live in the world. (p. 2)

The teachers' views appeared to be both inward and outward, both personal and professional. Writers and readers exist in a relationship cast, perhaps, with a 'subtle secret of invisibility'. While recognising these problematic categorisations, teachers and students can have many different encounters that offer rich, authentic opportunities for their personal engagement and agency. A concluding celebratory thought comes from one of the English teachers: 'Books have come

along and saved my life … I've read something at the right time and gone, wow, and it's saved my life'.

Notes

References

ACARA. (n.d.). *F–10 curriculum: English: Key ideas.* Australian Curriculum. Retrieved from https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/english/key-ideas/

ACARA. (2020). *My school.* Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority. Retrieved from https://www.myschool.edu.au/

Apple, M.W. (1989). *Teachers and texts: A political economy of class and gender relations in education* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Barthes, R. (1975). *The pleasure of the text* (R. Miller, Trans.). Toronto: HarperCollins Canada Ltd.

Belas, O. & Hopkins, N. (2019). Subject English as citizenship education. *British Educational Research Journal, 45* (2), 320–339. https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3500

Bernstein, B. (1971). On the classification and framing of educational knowledge. In M.F.D. Young (Ed.), *Knowledge and control: New directions for the sociology of education* (pp. 47–69). London: Collier-Macmillan.

Bloom, H. (1994). *The western canon: The books and school of the ages.* London: Macmillan.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). New York: Greenwood.

Cuthbert, A.S. (2019). Literature as aesthetic knowledge: Implications for curriculum and education. *The Curriculum Journal, 30* (2), 181–195. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585176.2019.1576534

Danielewicz, J. (2001). *Teaching selves: Identity, pedagogy, and teacher education.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Dixon, J. (1967). *Growth through English: A report based on the Dartmouth seminar, 1966.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dixon, J. (2015). Developing English. *English Teaching: Practice & Critique, 4* (3), 427–434. https://doi.org/10.1108/ETPC-04-2015-0031

Doecke, B. & McLean Davies, L. (2017). Changing the subject: Text selection and curriculum development in VCE English 1990. In T. Dolin, J. Jones, & P. Dowsett (Eds.), *Required reading: Literature in Australian schools since 1945* (pp. 174–195). Melbourne: Monash University Publishing.

Eaglestone, R. (2009). *Doing English: A guide for literature students* (2nd ed.) London: Routledge.

Eagleton, T. (1996). *Literary theory: An introduction.* (3rd ed.) Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd.

Eagleton, T. (1983). *Literary theory: An introduction.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd.

Easley, J. (2013). The rules of engagement: Examining the limits of standards and accountability policy, *The Educational Forum, 77* (2), 214–224. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2012.760697

Elliott, V. (2018). What do we teach when we teach literature? *English in Education, 52* (3), 267–270. https://doi.org/10.1080/04250494.2018.1519936

Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews.* Vintage: New York.

Frye, N. (1962). *Design for learning: Reports.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Fuery, P. & Mansfield, N. (2000). *Cultural studies and critical theory.* (2nd ed.) South Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

Gee, J.P. (2011). *An introduction to discourse analysis. Theory and method* (3rd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Gibbs, D., Mullins, T. & O'Sullivan, K-A. (2005). Reinventing English: Text lists and curriculum change in Ireland and Australia. In J. Zajda (Ed.), *International handbook on globalization, education and policy research: Global pedagogies and policies* (pp. 567–582). Dordrecht: Springer.

Glover, M. (2018). The dangling conversation: The location and function of author, text and reader in literary texts. *English in Education, 52* (1), 67–78. https://doi.org/10.1080/04250494.2018.1414416

Goodson, I.F. & Marsh, C.J. (1996). *Studying school subjects: A guide.* London: The Falmer Press.

Goodwyn, A. (2012a). One size fits all: the increasing standardisation of English teachers' work in England. *English teaching: Practice and critique, 11* (4), 36–53.

Goodwyn, A. (2012b). The status of literature: English teaching and the condition of literature teaching in schools. *English in education, 46* (3), 212–227. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1754-8845.2012.01121.x

Goodwyn, A. (2002). Breaking up is hard to do: English teachers and that LOVE of reading. *English teaching: Practice and critique, 1* (1), 66–78.

Green, B. (1990). A dividing practice: 'Literature', English teaching and cultural politics. In I. Goodson & P. Medway (Eds.), *Bringing English to order: The history and politics of a school subject.* (pp. 135–161). London: The Falmer Press.

Jogie, M. (2015). Desperate shadows of '*Belonging*': Revealing pedagogical issues with teaching prescribed English texts in the NSW Higher School Certificate (HSC). *Australian Educational Researcher, 42* (3), 335–352. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-014-0166-8

Iser, W. (1978). *The act of reading: A theory of aesthetic response.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Kress, G. (2003). *Literacy in the new media age.* Routledge: London.

Kress, G. (2004). Reading images: Multimodality, representation and new media. *Information Design Journal + Document Design, 12* (2), 110–119. https://doi.org/10.1075/idjdd.12.2.03kre

Leavis, F.R. (1930). *Mass civilisation and minority culture.* Cambridge: Minority Press.

Manuel, J. & Brock, P. (2003). W(h)ither the place of literature?': Two momentous reforms in the NSW Senior Secondary English Curriculum. *English in Australia, 38* (136), 15–26.

Manuel, J. & Carter, D. (2019). Resonant continuities: The influence of the Newbolt Report on the formation of English curriculum in New South Wales, Australia. *English in Education, 53* (3), 233–239. https://doi.org/10.1080/04250494.2019.1625709

McLean Davies, L. (2014). You are what you read: Text selection and cultural capital in the (globalising) English classroom. In A. Goodwyn, L. Reid & C. Durrant (Eds.), *International perspectives on teaching English in a globalised world* (pp. 235–244). London: Routledge.

Medway, P. (1990). Into the 60s: English and English society at a time of change. In I. Goodson & P. Medway (Eds). *Bringing English to order: The history and politics of a school subject* (pp. 1 – 46). London: The Falmer Press.

Mellor, B. & Patterson, A. (1994). Producing readings: Freedom versus normativity? *English in Australia, 109,* 42–56.

Misson, R. & Sumara, D. (2006). Reclaiming the 'creative' in the English/literacy classroom. *English teaching: Practice and critique, 5* (2), 1–5.

Morgan, W. (1997). *Critical literacy in the classroom. The art of the possible.* London: Routledge.

NESA. (2017). *NSW 6 English Stage 6 syllabus.* New South Wales Education Standards Authority. Retrieved from https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/11-12/stage-6-learning-areas/stage-6-english/english-advanced-2017/glossary

NESA. (2012). *NSW English K-10 Syllabus.* New South Wales Education Standards Authority. Retrieved from https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/k-10/learning-areas/english-year-10/english-k-10/glossary

Newbolt, H.J. & Board of Education. (1921). *The teaching of English in England: Being the report into the Departmental Committee appointed by the president of the Board of Education to inquire into the position of English in the educational system of England.* London: His Majesty's Stationery Office.

O'Sullivan, K-A. & Goodwyn, A.C. (2020). Contested territories: English teachers in Australia and England remaining resilient and creative in constraining times.

English in Education. 54, 3, 224–238. https://doi.org/10.10 80/04250494.2020.1793667

O'Sullivan, K-A. (2016). Contested territories: Subject English, teacher education and professional standards in Australia. *English teaching: Practice & critique*, *15* (1), 55–3. https://doi.org/10.1108/ETPC-09-2015-0073

O'Sullivan, K-A. (2005). *Silent voices: A study of English teachers' responses to curriculum change* (Unpublished PhD thesis). Sydney: Macquarie University.

Peim, N. (2009). The elusive object of transformation: English, theory and Bernstein's sociology of education. *Changing English*, *16* (2), 149–164. https://doi.org/10.1080/13586840902863137

Peel, R. (2000). Introduction. In R. Peel, A. Patterson & J. Gerlach (Eds.), *Questions of English: Ethics, aesthetics, rhetoric and the formation of the subject in England, Australia and the United States* (pp. 1–35). London: Routledge Falmer.

Pope, R. (2012). *The English studies book* (3rd ed.). London: Routledge.

Rosenblatt, L. (1978). *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Said, E. (1993). *Culture and Imperialism.* New York: Knopf

Scholes, R. (1998). *The rise and fall of English: Reconstructing English as a discipline.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Scholes, R. (1985). *Textual power: Literary theory and the teaching of English*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques.* (2nd ed.). California: Sage Publications.

Teese, R. (2007). Time and space in the reproduction of educational inequality. In R. Teese, S. Lamb & M. Duru-Bellat (Eds.), *International studies in educational inequality, theory and policy. Volume 1: Educational Inequality: Persistence and Change* (pp. 1–21). Dordrecht: Springer.

Twiselton, S. (2006), The problem with English: The exploration and development of student teachers' English subject knowledge in primary classrooms. *Literacy*, *40* (2), 88–96. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9345.2006.00437.x

Wells, H.G. (2004). *The invisible man*. A Grotesque Romance. Original version 1897. Retrieved from http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/5230

Yandell, J. (2014). Classrooms as sites of curriculum delivery or meaning-making: Whose knowledge counts? *Forum*, *56* (1), 147–155. https://doi.org/10.2304/forum.2014.56.1.147

Yates, L., McLean Davies, L. Buzacott, L., Doecke, B., Mead, P., & Sawyer, W. (2019). School English, literature and the knowledge-base question. *The Curriculum Journal*, *30* (1), 51–68. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585176.2018.15 43603

Kerry-Ann O'Sullivan is a Senior Lecturer in the Macquarie School of Education, Macquarie University, NSW, with a PhD in English curriculum. Her research and teaching interests include English and literacies education in times of contestation, pedagogical decision making and professional identity construction.

Literature 2023: A Speculative Curriculum of Possibility

Lucinda McKnight, Deakin University

Abstract: The development of curriculum requires dialogue with both past and future. As the state of Victoria gears up to revise the current study design for Literature, one of three 'Englishes' students can study at senior levels, numbers of students opting to take the subject have dropped over recent years. With high-stakes exam-based assessment dominant, the Literature course has been narrowed significantly over the past three decades to privilege writing text response essays under exam conditions. This article seeks to imagine a different curriculum, that articulates with possible student futures and tells a different story from the current study design. This small project in creative writing as educational research hopes to inspire others to imagine curriculum differently.

Introduction: An opportunity for alternatives

This article takes the occasion of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority's (VCAA) call for feedback on the current Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) *Literature* study design to imagine a new curriculum; the current study design is only accredited until 2021 (now extended to 2022 due to COVID-19). Literature has long been taught as an independent subject (separate from English and English Language) in Victoria, and although this is not the case in other places, this article has implications for all English courses that involve the study of texts. The VCAA has sought to evaluate the current study design through a survey which includes questions about the clarity of the language in the current study design, suggesting the refinement of this language, rather than dramatic change to the course.

This article proposes a more radical approach to evaluating curriculum, using creative writing as inquiry. Specifically, this is 'critical curriculum writing' (McKnight, 2016, p. 16), building on the notion of writing to inquire (Richardson & St Pierre, 2008) and performing writing around curriculum that is *not actually* curriculum. This writing resonates with and against the formal curriculum writing that has preceded it in mandated national or local documents and previous study designs, and also anticipates how others might respond. In this sense, critical curriculum writing is in dialogue with other texts, including the current study design and the one that will now be developed by VCAA for 2023. Yet it is not limited by these texts, or their constraints, and inhabits an imaginary of possibilities, as speculative work that will never be mandated but may serve to inspire.

This article therefore offers an alternative curriculum for 2023, and, Walter Benjamin (1999) style, enacts both past and future in the present. Intertextually reimagining the past, the article draws on Ian Reid's (1984) workshop model, which remains a powerful manifesto for moving from a gallery approach appreciating literature to hands-on engagement with it. This is curriculum writing as storytelling, about who we have been, who we are and who we will be. I recognise all the outstanding work that many teachers are doing to expand the boundaries of the current course and do not mean in any way to diminish their achievements, or those of their students. However, Literature could better leverage student learning through a course that rejects, rather than promotes, formulaic responses.

Telling stories about the future

This writing is also in dialogue with the Institute for the Future's *Global youth skills: Work+learn paths for future ready learners* report (2019b). In my imaginary, curriculum is developed with the lives and voices of young people paramount; this report, based on interviews with 60 young people aged 16–30 in six cities around the world – Austin, Berlin, Chongqing, Jeddah, Lagos and Mexico City – provides these voices. These interviews were followed by collaborative workshops to establish what the learning ecosystems that make up these youth futures might be. This research conducted by the Institute for the Future is based on 'Diffusion of Innovations' theory (Rogers, 1962) and has successfully predicted many key cultural trends (Institute for the Future, 2019b, p. 3).

While I feel wary about subscribing to potentially reductive futures discourses, which may tend to idealise futures and neglect structural challenges, all curriculum designers are engaged in the work of imagining the future. I am concerned that the Literature course studied in Victorian schools today is even more conservative than the Literature course I studied in 1984. The world has changed, and is changing. The study design of the Literature course needs to change too.

Influential elements of the Institute's report include the need to develop skills in self-directed learning, web design and authoring, online teaching and video authoring, virtual reality design, collective action and community building, art and design skills, emotional and interpersonal intelligence, maker skills, empathy, self-awareness and narrative building, peer-to-peer collaboration and more. These skills must be assessed at senior levels if they are to be taken seriously and taught in schools.

Further, this proposed curriculum is in dialogue with other paradigm-shifting work, including that of Sasha Matthewman, who posits a post-carbon curriculum and advocates for teaching English 'as if the planet mattered' (2018). Creative, critical curriculum writing rejects any need for curriculum to pretend to be neutral or apolitical, as regularly claimed by conservative forces in Australia's national media (for example Donnelly, 2014, p. 1), who argue that ideology belongs solely on the left. The severity of the climate crisis means that Australia, and the world, need ongoing cross-curricular priorities in sustainability.

Beyond dry and distant discourse

This introduces other influences, as well, from new materialist, posthumanist and Indigenous ways of thinking, doing and being that help to deconstruct curriculum as an abstract, discursive husk and foreground the human and nonhuman bodies involved in the Literature course. Recognising the existence and vibrancy of matter allows humans to prioritise respecting the materiality of the world. I draw particularly on Mark Helmsing's (2016) work on the social studies curriculum as I pursue how it may be adapted for English and Literature. Helmsing writes of what it would mean to perceive the world, rather than 'viewing' it, challenging the ocular-centric mythologies (McKnight & Whitburn, 2017) enacted in the current Literature curriculum through the requirement to write text response essays using two critical 'lenses' (VCAA 2015, p. 16).

A reimagined Literature would, following Helmsing's work, involve 'the flows of the tangible world, its images, and what lies inside and outside of students' minds' (p. 137). He advises that educators must reject versions of culture that 'remove the lived, physical sense of the world in favour of writing formulaic essays that ventriloquise established and distant explanations' (pp. 138–139). Sadly, this feels all too much like the current Literature requirement for students to analyse texts by juggling two critical lenses dictated by literary critique, in school-located 'modes of disenchantment' (p. 142).

Helmsing's antidote is to discover a 'sense of wonder to learn of and for the diverse relations unfolding in the world' (p. 140), to have students actively engaged in selecting, arranging and making a curriculum that jolts, energises and enlivens, that inspires a will to social justice through sheer, exuberant love of existence, that destabilises objectives and courts the unexpected. This is a curriculum 'composed of a constellation of fragments, at once unified and distributed, held together by bodies and objects in a continuous flow' (p. 143). The language of his propositions contrasts dramatically with the language of the existing study design in its own materiality. A curriculum for Literature should be rich with material wonder, with the colour and texture of language and sound, and with the tangibility of image.

Text, texts and contexts: The current study design

The current study design opens thus, with the scope of the study:

VCE Literature focuses on the meaning derived from texts, the relationship between texts, the contexts in which texts are produced and read, and the experiences the reader brings to the texts. In VCE Literature students undertake close reading of texts and analyse how language and literary elements and techniques function within a text. (VCAA, 2014, p. 5)

The words 'text/s' is used 25 times (also within 'contexts') on this first page. There is a much-lamented crisis in the number of students studying Literature in Victoria, with teachers on the Victorian Association for the Teaching of English (VATE) Literature Network online forum describing their plight and often seeking to merge classes with other schools. Schools that have run Literature classes for decades are relinquishing them entirely due to low numbers and pressures to study STEM subjects. Could this crisis be related to the current Literature study design? I wonder how many students reading the opening paragraph above would feel passionate about this version of the study of ~~Literature~~ texts? And what do students actually do?

In Unit One, students read texts and write text response essays. In Unit Two students read texts and write text response essays and comparative text response essays. In Unit Three, students write further comparative text response essays and creative text response essays that copy a set text. In Unit Four, students write text response essays drawing on something called 'a [*sic*] literary criticism' (p. 19), and in the exam, on two 'literary criticisms'. They then write text response essays involving close textual analysis. While there are opportunities for more diverse practice in completing school assessed coursework (SAC), and varied suggestions for this in the document, in practice SAC is generally used to develop one key skill: writing text response essays under exam conditions.

Teachers are uncertain about the value of current English courses. As evidence of this, Elsie McGarvie (2015), an English teacher at Our Lady of Mercy College in Melbourne, writes in the Victorian Association for the Teaching of English's journal *IDIOM*: 'Reading and responding is too passive. What if the end of school assessment for English was writing a book?' This is such a paradigm-shifting article (the theme of the issue is 'Paradigm Lost') that when I first read it, I wanted to rush back into the English classroom, which I left some years ago feeling disillusioned with the increasingly constrained senior curriculum.

McGarvie writes only a snapshot, however, and in contrast, what I want to attempt here is an actual curriculum document as a work of speculative fiction, an imaginative contribution to the field, while also picking up on some of McGarvie's points, including the value of research into genre. While the focus of her piece is on English, I concentrate on Literature.

Nonfiction and fiction in educational research

The concept of employing fiction as educational research has been well described, for example in Tom Barone's (2008) work on creative nonfiction as social research and through Noel Gough's (2003) creative curriculum inquiry. It is recognised as a valid, playful and unique mode of inquiry into professional practice (Rowland et al., 1990); it has been artfully demonstrated in Valerie Walkerdine's (1990) remembered *Schoolgirl fictions* and by Peter Clough's (2002) fictionalised narratives of teaching.

In this instance, I write speculative fiction as nonfiction, as a way of imagining another world, rather than primarily to reflect on past practice. This curriculum writing is speculative in that it countenances what does not currently exist: the agentive participation of students in negotiating, shaping and producing lessons, responses and tasks for assessment in the subject.

As McGarvie describes, it is assessment that needs to change, before practices in English classrooms will. Research shows how even when mandated curriculum is progressive and flexible, if teachers perceive that teaching to the test will benefit their students in relation to high-stakes tests, then education is narrowed (Kiss & Mizusawa, 2018). Assessment needs to support teachers in diversifying both pedagogy and outcomes, while still satisfying accountability demands. The curriculum I offer is hopefully speculative, but not preposterous in this regard.

In this document, I address students directly, not obliquely, respecting the pedagogical implications of address (Ellsworth, 1997). Students matter. They are not merely the products of some curricular contract between state and teachers. I try to avoid the fascistic 'students will' of curriculum discourse and propose what curriculum may do for students, not what they will do for it. The preference for impersonal, detached language in curriculum documents is a feature described elsewhere as a masculinist paradigm of hard, cold, 'scientific' rigour in education (McKnight, 2016). Passion has a place in curriculum, and everywhere learning is imagined. Materiality, also associated with a more earthy or feminine context, similarly has a place

in representations of educational intent and practice.

This fictional curriculum rejects the bland language of mandated curriculum and deliberately uses the second person, potentially opening dialogue with students. This writing also uses the first person, to acknowledge that someone – a person, or group of people, with rhetorical intent – writes curriculum; it is always political and constitutive, created by and seeking to create particular subjectivities.

In the section that follows, I present a first draft of a fictional curriculum document to be implemented in 2023. I hope readers will forgive me for blurring the genre line between writing curriculum and writing pedagogy, in order to bring this imagined course to life.

* * * * * * * * * *

Literature 2023: A study design for Victoria

I acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands of the white settler state of Victoria, and pay my respects to elders past and present. I acknowledge that every day I walk, work and write on Wurundjeri land that was never ceded, and that the first language of this place is Woiwurrung.

What is Literature, as an area of study?

Literature is the study of ideas and cultures expressed in a range of forms, including paper novels, plays in performance, spoken or print poetry and digital film. Literature is unputdownable, a page turner, a blockbuster that will keep you glued to the screen. Literature is writing your own work of art. Literature is debate, defence, challenge, argument, conflict, justification and resolution. Literature is life or death, at desks and everywhere else too. Literature connects us to the land and to the world, foregrounding the impact on the earth created by human actions. Literature is experiencing emotion, sensing the world and developing empathy through imagination. Literature takes us to places we have never been, and introduces us to people we would never otherwise meet. Literature recognises connections between the arts and between disciplines, and is relevant to all. Literature takes us, physically, out of classrooms and into the world, into libraries, galleries and museums and into the lives of others. Literature is about subtlety, complexity and change, about aesthetics and wonder. Literature is about reading, writing, creating and working analytically and imaginatively with texts that embody all the above.

Why Literature?

Literature is for students who are curious about the world. Literature makes life more vivid, rich, nuanced and resonant. Through Literature, you are invited to craft yourself as a literate person, a curator of ideas, with the capacity to question and evaluate them, to act on them, and to share them with others. Literature is with you for life, and will return to illuminate life's events, to intensify your joys and comfort you in sorrow. Literature hopes to change you, to make you more wise, more powerful, and more articulate. In Literature, you learn to argue a case with eloquence and conviction, and to reason, and to base your arguments on evidence. Literature heightens your sensitivity to connectivities and ecologies, and increases acuity of perception. Literature makes you an expert reader, an expert listener and an expert writer, in a community of others with similar interests. Literature encourages you to reflect on your identity: who you are as a person, as an Australian, and as a citizen of the world. In Literature, you have the opportunity to develop a collaborative relationship with your teacher and peers, who learn from your work.

Aims

- To enhance your capacity to read for both insight and pleasure, for life.
- To expand your knowledge of the world, in all its complexity.
- To develop authentic literary skills around the interpretation and creation of texts.

Structure of study (This structure is repeated at Years 11 and 12, but you study different texts and choose different activities each year)

Literature provides you with the opportunity to study four set texts:

- one novel,
- one poem or set of poems,
- one play in performance, and
- one film.

One of these texts needs to be created by or with an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australian. One of these texts needs to have been published in the last five years. Each of these texts may be studied in relation to other texts chosen by you and your teachers that enhance study of the set text.

Literature challenges you to respond to these texts by developing a portfolio of your own work.

Assessment

Authenticity is the principal driver of assessment in Literature, so your portfolio is assessed on tasks that equate to the kinds of communication activities that

take place in the cultural and creative industries, where literature is made and consumed in multiple forms. End-of-year exam questions focus on texts, to ensure fair assessment and to preclude pre-prepared answers. Literature is assessed by the portfolio, worth 70% and an end-of-year exam worth 30%.

Portfolio

The content of the final portfolio is selected by you in consultation with your teacher. Your program of study is therefore partly tailored by your own interests, passions and plans. A statement about this selection process forms part of the portfolio. You designate an authentic audience and purpose for each item created.

A reading journal is a compulsory component, but is not assessed.

Exam

The exam is two hours long, and involves writing two essays. The first is a close textual analysis of a passage, short poem or still from one of the four set texts. The second is based on an unseen essay prompt that requires knowledge of one of the four set texts. You need to select a different text for each essay. You can bring a single piece of paper with a list of quotes into the exam. This is not a memory test.

Authentication

Class attendance, participation in the drafting process and conferencing with peers and teachers are key to authentication. All portfolio items are accompanied by written documentation for every stage, including teacher sign-off. Some of this work will be completed under supervision in class.

In addition, the writing in your final exam will be digitally moderated against your portfolio to detect contract cheating. All portfolio elements, including scripts for digital submissions, will be checked using plagiarism detection software.

Study of set texts

The study of set texts involves you in activities that bring the text to life, as well as preparing you for the exam. Some of these activities may form the basis of your portfolio work. Classroom activities focus on active, rather than passive, engagement with texts and offer a variety of forms of response and creative practice. They are designed to encourage intimate knowledge of any text, to understand contexts for both creation and interpretation, and to increase understanding of and skill in authorial techniques.

All plays are studied in performance, whether via theatrical performances attended live, or viewed on screen. Scripts are used to support study, not as the basis of study.

A reading journal is a key component of Literature, and is submitted as part of the portfolio. One of the key purposes of this journal is to explore the nature of reading, and different theories of reading, including your own. Your journal is also a space for engaging with further literary theories and issues, such as: which texts might be labelled 'literature'; the limitations of canonical boundaries; and the role of literature and the literary imagination in society.

You are encouraged to work in communities formed around the set texts informing your portfolio activities, to collaborate, share work, give feedback, test ideas and act as audiences, and to enrich each other's study. Together with your teacher and peers, you can find and establish face-to-face and online platforms and procedures for these communities.

Literature aspires to work-integrated learning, and through being involved in activities, you are encouraged to imagine yourself in a future workplace, perhaps as a writer, editor, critic, agent, film maker, poet, journalist, librarian, teacher, psychologist, artist, researcher, activist, scientist, counsellor, futurist, entrepreneur, historian, environmentalist or conservator. You are likely to need to complete at least part of your portfolio through fieldwork.

Suggested class/portfolio activities

Requirements

It is imagined that you have opportunities to experiment with these activities in your classes, so you are likely to create many more than the final five items. These activities require full documentation of all stages, including brainstorming, planning, editing, drafting, polishing and publishing. Each activity requires you to work out how to go about doing the task, and is based on knowledge of the set text, as well as independent research into what might be required in the task, such as sourcing models or inspirational materials and identifying genre conventions/audience expectations and stages of the process. Your selection of activities needs to be negotiated with your teacher. Some schools may choose to concentrate on specific activities, depending on the needs of cohorts for scaffolding, but it is hoped that the capacity for you to have some degree of choice is respected.

- One of your final items needs to be the reading journal, although it is not assessed.
- One of your final items needs to be based on a research task. ®

- One of your final items needs to be a creative task. ©
- One of your activities needs to incorporate an oral component (this can be negotiated with your teacher, and may consist of, for example, an oral progress report).
- One of your activities needs to incorporate a collaborative component that can be designed with your teacher (for example, seeking feedback via an online community, running a book group, participating in an online readers' community or organising a literary function at school). This can be logged in your reading journal, with evidence.
- Your portfolio needs to be based on at least three of the four set texts.

Possible activities (further activity ideas can be negotiated with your teacher)

*Please note: traditional text response essays or close analyses assessed by the end-of-year exam and written for markers alone are not appropriate for the portfolio.

- Collect a set of literary essays or reviews as models. Annotate these to identify features of a literary essay or review. Write a literary essay on or review of a set text for a literary magazine, such as *Meanjin*, or newspaper supplement. ®
- Create a book club guide to a text, drawing on literary criticism, then run and audio record the book club. ®
- Write fanfiction based on a set text for a fanfiction website on which you are an active participant. If one does not exist, create it and invite others to join. ©
- Translate a portion of a set text into a different medium and write an analysis of what is gained and lost in this process, for a journal based on the new medium. ©
- Create a set of original study materials based on a set text for students in the following year.
- Transform a literary text into a computer game, creating the design documentation. ©
- Write a collection of poetry in different forms inspired by, and drawing on, a set text to publish online. Accompany this with an exegesis. ©
- Visually annotate a series of passages or stills for peers to access via a school-based website.
- Set up a social media account as a character from a set text and post in their guise. Develop a social media campaign to promote your work to peers studying the same text. ©
- Design a reverse-ekphrastic exhibition, of artworks that you create or select based on their resonances with a set text. Write the exhibition label texts and stage the exhibition for your class. © or ®
- Organise and give a public lecture on a set text, inviting other students in Victoria studying the same text to be fellow presenters.
- Write a research-based report on your year level's response to a set text, including a survey, interviews and analysis. ®
- Write a long-form newspaper article or opinion piece on an issue emerging from your study of a set text, for a specific newspaper. ®
- Create a series of visual maps demonstrating the relevance of a set text to contemporary society. Mount a display for your peers. ®
- Write an introduction to an emergent genre linked to a set text, such as mythopoeia, millennial fiction or cli-fi, for your peers, based on some reading research. ®
- Invent multimodal media coverage of a series of events in a set text for sharing on your school's intranet or news program. ©
- Create a podcast exploring a mystery in a set text, for sharing online with others studying the text. ©
- Devise and undertake a reading program in the genre of a set text, producing an annotated bibliography of personal responses. ®
- Research where a set text fits into a genre or genres, reading related texts and giving an oral report back to your class. ®
- Write a review of the overall critical response to a set text and how it has changed over time for your peers. ®
- Interview someone who has a particular perspective on a set text, or events or characters in it. Edit this audio or video to create an online resource for others studying the text. ®
- Write an analysis of attitudes to sustainability in a set text, for example by calculating the carbon footprint of characters or entities based on their actions, or researching how the natural world is portrayed. ®
- Write a detailed proposal for an innovative staging of a set play and present it to drama teachers for feedback and revision. ©
- Establish yourself as an expert on a set text by publishing a blog, a Pinterest board, an Instagram account or similar related to the text. ©
- Identify and read two other works in any genre or media dealing with issues or themes similar to those in a set text. Write a comparative evaluation of their treatments to encourage your class in wider reading.®

- Write a virtual reality script for a portion of a set text for students in your school who are interested in VR coding or design. ©
- Develop an extended response to a set text that draws on literary theory for a politically oriented journal or magazine. ®
- Write an extended personal narrative that relates to a set text for a designated publication. ©
- Create a website demonstrating your knowledge of a set text for future students as on online teaching resource. ©
- Research how a set text might form part of a workplace program and write a proposal for its use (for example, a work of adolescent fiction used in a counselling or art therapy program, a film used in medical education, a text studied at a significantly different year level, or poetry used to raise awareness of Indigenous issues in a workplace). ®
- Write a personal letter to a future student of the text, sharing how the text affected you and giving advice for study, referring closely to the text. ©

Assessment criteria

Your portfolio will be assessed on:

- a confident and sophisticated capacity to respond to set texts in a range of ways.
- initiative, ingenuity and application in the preparation of the portfolio and its contents.
- knowledge of and insight into set texts, demonstrated by appropriate, detailed and effective linking (whether through explicit or implicit means) to the set text.
- effective demonstration of a process approach to creation of responses.
- thorough and strategic research completed in achieving research-based activities, with research incorporated meaningfully and ethically.
- appropriateness of responses for a range of authentic purposes and audiences.
- originality and impact of creative work.
- use of language, in all relevant modes.
- ability to meet all the requirements.

Formative assessment of portfolios, including self and peer assessment, takes place during term time, with key milestones set within schools for an initial plan, due dates for plans, drafts and final submissions of pieces, and conferencing dates.

Assessment of exams

Exam assessment is based on criteria developed through workshops with teachers in the study design process, and exams are marked holistically.

Advice to teachers

This advice, to be developed with teachers, supports teachers in drawing on student ideas and needs as the basis of class activities, with students participating in each other's portfolio projects as required. Curriculum is therefore often student-led and negotiated, and class activities are frequently student-led. This advice will also support teachers in ensuring that the course is informed by both literary theory and literary criticism, and give recommendations for contributing to constellations (Helmsing, 2016; McKnight, 2018) of material that will intertextually enrich the study of individual set texts. As the year progresses, the portfolio activities instigate the development of diverse research and resource banks around the set texts, as students share their work. Teachers need to help students make these accessible to all. Advice for including Indigenous and sustainability perspectives will be fully developed here.

As students engage in the project work that underpins each activity and communication response, teachers need to assist them to find appropriate physical spaces for their requirements. The Institute for the Future reports that 'The lack of physical spaces for working, learning, convening, DIY making, art events, and debate is one of the obstacles cited most often by young lead learners' (2019a, p. 2). Learning spaces matter, too.

* * * * * * * * * *

Conclusion: Just one possible curriculum story

This curriculum is significantly different from the existing curriculum outlined earlier in this article, in its scope, language, mode of address and suggested activities, yet is probably not radical enough. It is a rough first draft that has not benefited from any collaboration or feedback: I welcome constructive criticism. Yet I hope even the most critical readers will experience this curriculum as a paradigm shift away from the text response essay and the formulaic exam response. While close analysis and text response essays remain important components and ways to respond to texts, they do not dominate this curriculum. They may perhaps remain the most straightforward and fair way to assess students under exam conditions. Unseen materials, for example, tend to advantage certain students, especially those bringing elite forms of cultural capital to education. Asking students to write on their portfolios in exams, for example in reflective ways, may invite memorising of pre-prepared essays. Yet this could be further explored, with general, unseen prompts on the nature of reading, for example,

that students could adapt to any text.

The intention here is to construct students as agentive and independent learners in a participatory and personalised classroom culture. The approach of this study design lends itself to students creating meaningful Work+Learn narratives, as advocated by the Institute for the Future (2019b). It effects the kinds of paradigm shifts imagined by McGarvie (2015) and Helmsing (2016) and gestures towards bodies in our classrooms doing more than sitting at desks writing text response essays, and teachers doing more than marking them. This could be the shift in orientation (Snaza et al., 2014, p. 51) necessary initially, for more radical and experimental pedagogies to be ultimately enacted in the portfolio activities. This is a curriculum that connects students to the world in more meaningful, purposeful, diverse and indeed 'worldly' (McLean Davies et al., 2017, p. 21) ways.

For those to whom the above seems impossible, I can only remind Victorian teachers of the English Writer's Workshop and Writing Folio that were central to the study of senior English for many years, and successfully orchestrated assessment of a range of diverse and creative pieces. Similarly, the Year 11 Communication Project in English from the Victorian Certificate of the 1990s, which has similarities to the curriculum described above, led students on individual journeys of research, interaction and communication. Anecdotally, students from that period remember this project as the highlight of their schooling. My high school Literature course in 1984 involved interviewing a significant person connected with a set text, and writing an extended piece exploring what she had to say and how it altered my perceptions of the text. It is an exercise I think about at least weekly, that has profoundly affected my life, increasing my reflective and critical capacities.

As a kind of Trojan Horse, the tail of which could wag English throughout the school (in a bizarre mixed metaphor), this senior curriculum is designed to reinstate the teaching of writing as process and the production of meaningful, authentic, purposeful pieces of writing in response to literature in classrooms throughout schooling. Students would need a diverse range of writing experiences, both creative and critical, throughout schooling to meet the challenges of this course.

This is not to return to what are constructed as the bad old days, when writing was said to be 'caught not taught'; I recognise the value of explicit teaching, careful lesson planning, worked examples, multiple exposures, strategic questioning, purposeful feedback, development of metalanguage, and differentiation (DETV, 2017) that form part of any expert teacher's repertoire. Yet all these can still complement a more process-oriented approach. They are not mutually exclusive.

As an English method lecturer, I ask pre-service teachers about their best memories of English and Literature. Those completing high school in recent years mention their wonderful teachers and the special relationships they have had with them, the generous support given and the kindness and interest shown. They describe passion, persistence and high expectations. This is invariably despite the ghastly tasks that form students' *worst* memories, especially the dreaded high-stakes exams and rote learning of quotations, essay formats, or even entire essays.

I encourage others to engage in creative and critical curriculum writing, to outline their own dreams, and send them to VCCA to further feedback on the current study design. What would a curriculum written by a student be like? Or one written by an Indigenous Australian Literature teacher? Posthumanist and new materialist approaches call for even more radical interventions. What would a curriculum 'written' by the earth be? These multiple voices could provide resources that expand the worlds and imaginations of curriculum writing, and tell stories about other ways that students' and teachers' lives, and the future of our planet, can be.

References

Barone, T. (2008). Creative non-fiction and social research. In J.G. Knowles & A.L. Cole (Eds.), *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research: Perspectives, methodologies, examples, and issues* (pp. 105–115). Los Angeles: SAGE.

Benjamin, W. (1999). *The arcades project* (H. Eiland & K. McLaughlin, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Clough, P. (2002). *Narratives and fictions in educational research.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

DETV. (2017). *High impact teaching strategies: Excellence in teaching and learning.* Melbourne: Victoria Department of Education and Training. Retrieved from http://www.education.vic.gov.au/documents/school/teachers/support/highimpactteachstrat.pdf

Donnelly, K. (2014, January 14). Coalition's call to review school curriculum based on sound reasons. *Sydney Morning Herald.* Retrieved from http://www.smh.com.au/

comment/coalitions-call-to-review-school-curriculum-based-on-sound-reasons-20140113-30qqn.html

Ellsworth, E.A. (1997). *Teaching positions: Difference, pedagogy and the power of address*. New York: Teachers' College Press.

Gough, N. (2003). *Intertextual turns in curriculum inquiry: Fictions, diffractions and deconstructions.* (Doctoral dissertation). Deakin University, Melbourne.

Helmsing, M. (2016). Life at large: New materialisms for a (re)new(ing) curriculum of social studies education. In N. Snaza, D. Sonu, S.E. Truman & Z. Zaliwska (Eds.), *Pedagogical matters: New materialisms and curriculum studies* (pp. 137–151). New York: Peter Lang.

Institute for the Future. (2019a). *Global youth skills: Innovators' guide*. Palo Alto, CA: Institute for the Future. Retrieved from https://www.iftf.org/fileadmin/user_upload/downloads/work-learn/4_GlobalYouthSkills_Innovators_Guide_Ism_0201419.pdf

Institute for the Future. (2019b). *Global youth skills: Work+Learn paths for future-ready learners*. Palo Alto, CA: Institute for the Future. Retrieved from https://www.iftf.org/fileadmin/user_upload/downloads/work-learn/GlobalYouthSkills_Final_Report_021419_sm.pdf

Kiss, T., & Mizusawa, K. (2018). Revisiting the pedagogy of multiliteracies: Writing instruction in a multicultural context. *Changing English*, *25* (1), 59–68. https://doi.org/10.1080/1358684x.2017.1403283

Matthewman, S. (2018). *The post-carbon English curriculum*. Paper presented at the 6th World Curriculum Studies Conference, Melbourne. Abstract retrieved from https://www.iaacs2018.info/

McGarvie, E. (2015). What if the end of school assessment for English was writing a book? *IDIOM, 51* (2), 8. Retrieved from https://www.vate.org.au/system/files/idiom-issue/Idiom_vol51_no2_FINAL_PL.pdf

McKnight, L. (2016). Curriculum as colour and curves: A synthesis of Black theory, design and creativity realised as critical curriculum writing. *Gender and Education*, *30* (2), 222–238. https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2016.1225010

McKnight, L. (2018). Sponsors of pleasure: Wide reading re-imagined through social curation. *Changing English: Studies in culture and education*, *25* (3), 300–311. https://doi.org/10.1080/1358684X.2018.1460581

McKnight, L., & Whitburn, B. (2017). The fetish of the lens: Persistent sexist and ableist metaphor in education research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 30* (9), 821–831. https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2017.1286407

McLean Davies, L., Martin, S.K., & Buzacott, L. (2017). Worldly reading: Teaching Australian literature in the 21st century. *English in Australia, 52* (3), 21–30.

Reid, I. (1984). *The making of literature: Texts, contexts and classroom practices*. Norwood, SA: Australian Association for the Teaching of English.

Richardson, L., & St Pierre, E.A. (2008). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials* (3rd ed., pp. 473–499). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Rogers, E.M. (1962). *Diffusion of innovations*. London: Free Press of Glencoe.

Rowland, G., Rowland, S., & Winter, R. (1990). Writing fiction as inquiry into professional practice. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 22* (3), 291–293. https://doi.org/10.1080/0022027900220306

Snaza, N., Appelbaum, P., Bayne, S., Carlson, D., Morris, M., Rotas, N., et al. (2014). Toward a posthumanist education. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing, 30* (2), 39–55.

VCAA. (2015). *Literature Study Design implementation presentation*. Melbourne: Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority.

VCAA. (2014). *Literature: Victorian Certificate of Education study design*. Melbourne: Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority. Retrieved from https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/vce/literature/2016LiteratureSD.pdf

Walkerdine, V. (1990). *Schoolgirl fictions*. London: Verso.

Lucinda McKnight is a lecturer in English method at Deakin University, Melbourne. She is an active member of the Victorian Association for the Teaching of English and the Australian Association for Research in Education. Her research interests are in gender, curriculum design and English teaching.

Historic Conceptualisations

Historic Australian Conceptualisations of English, Literacy and Multimodality in Policy and Curriculum and Conflicts with Educational Accountability

Joy Cumming, Griffith University; Kay Kimber, Griffith University; Claire Wyatt-Smith, Griffith University

Abstract: Attainment of functional English literacy skills by all students has been a focus of Australian national policy since the 1989 Hobart Declaration (MCEETYA, 1989). This focus underpins current educational accountability policy enacted through the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). The Adelaide and Melbourne Declarations (MCEETYA, 1999, 2008) maintained focus on English literacy skills but also identified ICT skills as essential for students for 21st century, suggesting teachers should make use of contemporary learning resources to engage students. Literacy, multimodality and ICT have been intertwined in various definitions of literacy and English in Australian policy and curriculum for some time. This article examines historical and current constructions of English, literacy, multimodality and ICT in policy and curriculum over the last two decades and in current educational accountability practices through NAPLAN. Research on Queensland teacher identification of English literacy skills is reported to show how national educational accountability that fails to reflect policy and curriculum focuses on multimodality may serve to narrow classroom English literacy.

Introduction: Australia's vision for a multimodal and technological future

A Google search on 'multimodality and literacy' on 31 August 2011, identified (about) 572,000 results, with many scholarly articles, including free access articles, and commentary. A further refinement 'and youtube' yielded (about) 116,000 results including student postings. Multimodality is not the future – it is the present.

The Australian Government has invested $2.4 billion in the Digital Education Revolution to 'contribute sustainable and meaningful change to teaching and learning in Australian schools that will prepare students for further education, training and to live and work in a digital world' (DEEWR, 2011). This includes $16m for professional development to assist teacher proficiency in using information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the classroom. Further funding is being provided to allow online access to the Australian curriculum and sharing of resources.

A shared vision for education by Australia's Ministers of Education as expressed in the Adelaide Declaration (MCEETYA, 1999) is for Australian students to be 'be confident, creative and productive users of new technologies, particularly information and communication technologies' (DEEWR, 2008, p. 4). Students should be engaged in 'challenging and stimulating learning activities' supported by ICT with teachers using 'contemporary learning resources and activities' to develop 'student centric programs of learning' (p. 4). The more recent Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008) notes that while many teachers already

make use of ICTs, 'use of digital media … [is] essential' for 21st century skills (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 5). The Melbourne Declaration, echoing the Adelaide declaration, wants young Australians to become successful learners who have 'essential skills in literacy and numeracy' and are 'creative and productive users of technology, especially ICT, as a foundation for success in all learning areas' (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 8).

Two General Capabilities in the new Australian Curriculum, linked to the Melbourne Declaration, are 'Literacy' and 'ICT competence' (ACARA, 2010). Literacy includes listening, reading and viewing, writing, speaking and creating print, visual and digital materials accurately and purposefully within and across all learning areas. ICT competence requires students' to use 'ICT effectively and appropriately when investigating, creating and communicating ideas and information at school, at home, at work and in their communities' (ACARA, 2010, p. 19). Australia's national policy and curriculum identify broad goals and expectations for 21st century learners that have evolved significantly over the last twenty years.

Literacy, English and multimodality in Australian policy and curriculum: A chronology

Over the last two decades, definitions of literacy and English curriculum in Australia have encompassed a range of skills and knowledges. While earlier constructions of literacy complexity used terms such as multiliteracies (Cazden et al., 1996), rapid growth of technology has led to emphasis on integration of literacy with technology and 'text' forms encountered in modern communication. Complexity is enhanced by the concept of multimodal literacy, recognising that in modern society communication usually involves more than one form. In the following discussion, we provide a chronology of the evolution of English – literacy in Australian policy and curriculum over this time. Our focus is to explore how conceptualisations have changed, or have not changed: the discussion shows that multimodality has been present for some time.

Appendix 1 traces the evolution of literacy definitions in Australian policy and curriculum, from the first MCEETYA collaboration, the Hobart Declaration of 1989 (MCEETYA, 1989), that created national focus on 'English literacy'. The goal was English literacy skills for all students, including 'listening, speaking, reading and writing' (MCEETYA, 1989, [6a]). As shown in Appendix 1, initial conceptualisation of national English and literacy was therefore a combined 'English

literacy' of four macroskills. 'Information processing and computing' skills were also identified as key educational aims (MCEETYA, 1989, [6d]).

Following the Hobart Declaration, MCEETYA and the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA) identified national literacy goals (MCEETYA, 1997a) and launched the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan (DEETYA, 1998), focused on intervention in early schooling through diagnosis and identification of students at risk, and state assessment procedures. Emphasis was on 'reading, writing and spelling' (MCEETYA, 1997a) with agreed national benchmarks on reading, writing and spelling to be developed to measure students' achievements (see DEETYA, 1998).

The 1999 Adelaide Declaration endorsed these goals,[1] with the specific goal that 'every child leaving the primary school should … be able to read, write and spell and communicate at an appropriate level' (see DEETYA, 1998, p. 9). The Adelaide Declaration continued focus on fundamental reading, writing and spelling skills. Communication skills, possibly incorporating listening and speaking skills, were not defined.

At this time, a Commonwealth literacy policy, including the agreed National Literacy and Numeracy Plan, was produced following stakeholder consultations (DEETYA, 1998). Avoiding a singular definition of literacy, the policy highlighted the awareness of researchers and practitioners of the complexity of literacy and changing literacy demands and contexts. The national policy starting point was that '[e]ffective literacy is intrinsically purposeful, flexible and dynamic' involving 'integration of speaking, listening and critical thinking with reading and writing'. The policy noted cross-curriculum literacy demands and emphasised the additional literacy concepts, viewing and critical thinking. It emphasised the impact of 'electronic communication technologies' identified in the National Plan and new literacy demands they would bring. Even then, Commonwealth policy stated further investigation was warranted into the relationship between literacy and technology. Considering the technology use cited then – email, hypertext, internet – it is clear communication has moved exponentially into cyberspace.

In keeping with the National Plan and Adelaide Declaration, national literacy benchmark statements of minimum expectations for Years 3, 5 and 7 students were finally developed (Curriculum Corporation,

2000). The Year 3 literacy benchmarks (see Appendix 1) emphasised written texts in a focus on reading, writing and spelling, but including 'electronic media'.

Development of the national literacy benchmark descriptors involved iterative consultation with experts, including teachers.[2] Two features of early literacy benchmark drafts in 1997 were (i) inclusion of strategic skill descriptors such as capacity to predict text from context, and (ii) adequate (minimum), proficient and exceptional (high-achieving) level descriptors within a Year level. However, descriptors of strategies and reasoning were removed from the benchmark standards, despite being considered essential indicators by teachers and other consultants, due to difficulty assessing these skills by the simplified test format that had, by then, been identified as the process for accountability. Advanced level descriptors within a Year were not pursued due to lack of agreement among consultants as to whether advanced skill levels represented skills for a higher year level, or greater breadth and quality of skills within the Year. Final literacy benchmark standards were minimum expected English literacy skills assessable through simple standardised test formats such as multiple-choice items, or essays. The literacy skills eventually addressed were reading, writing and spelling. Draft benchmark descriptors for speaking, listening and viewing developed by June 1997 were not included in final versions.

Considerable valuable literacy research was conducted in Australia during the 1990s and 2000s. One specific addition to definitions of literacy brought new insights into conceptualisation of cross-curriculum literacies. Cumming and Wyatt-Smith used video technology to capture the lived literacy experiences of students of different achievement levels taking a range of subject in Years 11 and 12 in two Australian states (Cumming & Wyatt-Smith, 2001; Wyatt-Smith and Cumming, 2003). Literacy experts who analysed videotape and artefact data identified the breadth of literacy experiences of students as they switched not only from subject to subject but also from teacher to teacher and from administrative to curriculum focus. These students navigated 'curriculum literacies', conceptualised as much more than a singular literacy across the curriculum.

To assist the move towards a common national curriculum, Curriculum Corporation (CC) developed national Statements of Learning in English (2005) through collaboration with stakeholders (state and territory curriculum authorities) to identify essen-

tial elements common to existing curriculum. While not intended to be a replacement curriculum, these national Statements were intended to represent opportunities to learn that all Australian students should have. In contrast to the minimum literacy benchmark standards, the Statements were intended to be 'challenging but accessible' to inform the forthcoming national literacy assessment program (CC, 2005, p. 3). They were based on state and territory English curriculum aims that 'students develop … capacity to critically interpret and construct spoken, written, visual and multimodal texts in a broad range of mediums' (CC, 2005, p. 2). They included reading and viewing, writing, and speaking and listening. Texts with which students might engage included traditional print and virtual sources such as CD-ROMS and websites. The 2005 Statements therefore not only reflect the original four macroskills mentioned in the Hobart Declaration for English literacy but also capture 'viewing' and engagement with electronic forms of communication and text – multimodality.

In 2008, the third and most recent statement of common national goals was released – the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008). Following similar principles to the Hobart and Adelaide declarations, it focuses on equity, outcomes for disadvantaged students, and essential educational outcomes for the 21st century. Literacy and knowledge of 'key disciplines' remain 'the cornerstone of schooling for young Australians' (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 5). The goal of a national curriculum was strengthened as well as national educational accountability assessments.

Literacy was not defined in the Declaration. However, it identifies 'use of digital media … [as] essential' for 21st century skills (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 5) with successful learners having 'essential skills in literacy and numeracy', and with 'creative and productive' use of technology, especially ICT, a 'foundation for success in all learning areas' (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 8). The Melbourne Declaration therefore reinforces both the richer sense of literacy prevailing in earlier national policy and interrelationships between literacies and technology and different media forms of the current era.

The new Australian curriculum is framed by *The shape of the Australian curriculum 2.0* (ACARA, 2010). Endorsing the Melbourne Declaration, the Australian curriculum encompasses discipline studies including English, and General Capabilities including literacy. The General Capability literacy is 'defined' as follows:

Students become literate as they develop the skills to learn and communicate confidently at school and to become effective individuals, community members, workers and citizens. These skills include listening, reading and viewing, writing, speaking and creating print, visual and digital materials accurately and purposefully within and across all learning areas. (ACARA, 2010, p. 19).

Literacy is to be reinforced in other subject areas with the national curriculum prioritising English and literacy' (ACARA, 2010, p. 12). Version 2.0 of the shape paper emphasises ICT competence as a second general capability, attained through learning 'to use ICT effectively and appropriately when investigating, creating and communicating ideas and information at school, at home, at work and in their communities' (ACARA, 2010, p. 19). The framework for the Australian curriculum therefore includes English, literacy and ICT. While the document does not use the term 'multimodal', these three areas are identified as strongly interrelated. Visual and digital materials are included for literacy, while communicating ideas and information are included for ICT.

The final document now to inform teachers' work is the Australian Curriculum English (ACARA, 2011a). The final Foundation to Year 10 English curriculum was endorsed by the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) on 8 December 2010 for implementation across Australia by 2013 (MCEECDYA, 2010). Returning to the Hobart Declaration, English and literacy are evident in the three intertwining strands of the English curriculum: language, literature and literacy. Students are to 'learn to listen to, read, view, speak, write, create and reflect on increasingly complex and sophisticated spoken, written and multimodal texts across a growing range of contexts with accuracy, fluency and purpose' (ACARA, undated 1). In English curriculum, 'students learn to read, write, listen and speak accurately, flexibly and critically, and to view and create increasingly complex texts in a variety of contexts' (ACARA, 2011a, p. 10). Expectation that students engage with spoken, written and multimodal texts is present from Foundation Year level.

Further, the English curriculum provides definitions of key terms in definitions and expectations including 'listen', 'read', 'view', 'text' and 'multimodal text' (Appendix 1). Texts include 'written, spoken or multimodal and in print or digital/online forms'

while 'multimodal' refers to 'combination of two or more communication modes, for example print, image and spoken text as in film or computer presentations'. Presentation of Australian curriculum on the ACARA website is itself multimodal, involving written texts, hyperlinks and video explanations.

The Australian Curriculum English establishes English and literacy as interrelated and strongly based within modern communication and visual technologies and forms. It presents a curriculum that represents the cutting edge of considerations of the nature of English and literacy. The Generic Capability literacy, while having broader application, is strongly tied to and consistent with the English curriculum framework.

Teachers now have a rich framework to work with in terms of expectations for all students. Over the next few years, teachers will become familiar with these and manage curriculum change as they have done for the last twenty years. The evolution of thinking from the inclusion of viewing, of digital forms of text, of information and communication technology, can be traced through considerations of English and literacy from the Hobart Declaration of 1989. Multimodality is firmly established in the Australian national curriculum English. The expectation placed on Australian teachers is to ensure students have skills necessary for 21st century lifestyles and employment. Throughout policy and curriculum developments, literacy, English and English literacy have become interchangeable, although not identical.

However, inconsistency with official curriculum expectations, literacy statements in the national declarations on the goals of schooling, and the national Statements of Learning occurs with the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). ACARA identifies that curriculum continua are being prepared for publication for the General Capability of literacy across the curriculum with descriptions for Years 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10, including a conceptual framework, evidence base and references for literacy, showing development across bands of year levels. These are 'to guide the future development of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)' (ACARA, undated 2). The critical question is how this next development will shape the work of teachers. We consider this next by considering the general impact of educational accountability testing accompanying the national declarations, policy and curriculum developments in classroom practice to date.

Realising national literacy goals: The development of educational accountability

Congruent with the national literacy focus developing from the Hobart Declaration was agreement for a National Report on Schooling marking the beginning of a process of national reporting to the Australian people, to provide an annual national snapshot of state and territory educational performance, predominantly literacy and numeracy. The move to educational accountability through standardised tests of literacy and numeracy commenced with the Hobart Declaration, and its identification of the four macroskills; listening, speaking, reading and writing. While a 1980 report indicated a national assessment program was not appropriate and that individual school should be the 'primary agent to conduct skills assessments' (Harrington & McDonald, 1999, p. 4), states and territories agreed to the National Report. Further national agreements, and persuasion using the 'power of the purse' through federal allocation of education budgets, have resulted in Australian national curriculum, the national testing program (www.nap.edu.au), and publication of all schools' performance.

As noted, literacy benchmarks for assessment and reporting of reading, writing and spelling produced by Curriculum Corporation were originally released in 2000 after considerable consultation and refinement. While benchmarks for listening and speaking were expected to be developed (see, for omission, MCEETYA, 1997b), these did not eventuate. The Adelaide Declaration of 1999 that identified literacy skills of reading, writing and spelling, and communication also did not elaborate on the last of these.

The national literacy benchmarks of minimum standards were the starting point for educational accountability and the National Report on Schooling (see, e.g., MCEETYA, 2000). Initially, states' student performances on benchmark standards were assessed through state-based testing of random samples of students across Australian schools, providing an overview of 'what our students are learning and where the greatest needs lie' (Campbell, 1996, 4290). This later changed to whole cohort testing, with parents provided with individual simplistic reports of their child's achievement.

Initial performance indicators were the percentage of students achieving the literacy benchmark standards with comparability of state-based test outcomes determined through consultation and statistical equating, despite the lack of a national curriculum. From 2008, state-based literacy tests against the benchmark standards were replaced by the national literacy tests in National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), reporting on literacy constructs of *reading, writing* and *language conventions* based on the national Statements of Learning for English (ACARA, 2011b; CC, 2005). Current reporting is not only the percentage of students achieving the minimum standards, but also student outcomes across six bands of performance for each year level, statistically linked to a literacy/English continuum from Year 3 to Year 9. As noted earlier, new continua are being identified from the Australian curriculum General Capability literacy with descriptions for Years 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10 expectations to inform future NAPLAN development (ACARA, undated 2). However, student participants in NAPLAN even for Year 3 will not have undertaken the full national curriculum for several years.

National reporting is now public through MySchool (www.myschool.edu.au) with publication of individual school NAPLAN outcomes and comparisons to 'like' or 'statistically similar' schools. NAPLAN and publication of school data have greatly increased the high-stakes nature of the literacy tests for schools and teachers. This in turn increases pressure on schools and teachers to improve performance, and consequently preparation by teachers to ensure student success. This will have impact on teachers' classroom practice.

Considerable gaps exist among conceptualisations of literacy and English literacy in curriculum, literacy policies, the national statements of learning, and the enacted focus on literacy – English literacy in the NAPLAN tests. Gaps also exist between NAPLAN literacy test content and valued outcomes identified in early consultations for the national literacy benchmarks.

All current test formats are written, and, apart from the writing section, predominantly multiple choice or simple response. For writing, students construct a conventional hand-written 'composition'. Clearly missing from NAPLAN are opportunities for students to demonstrate their literate capabilities in viewing, shaping, designing, listening, speaking, critical thinking (apart from inferential reading comprehension items), technology,[3] digital and multimodality, with the exception of text with printed images as stimulus material. Taking account of these omissions, a critical question is sufficiency of the testing regime for monitoring the quality of education provision and outcomes for 21st century citizenry.

The impact of national accountability literacy tests on teachers and schools

Assessment is a critical component of the teaching and learning cycle. Considerable research identifies effective assessment practices, including current conceptualisations of assessment and learning (see, e.g., Assessment Reform Group, 2002; Black & Wiliam, 1998). Assessment can be seen as driving classroom instruction or leading it. Assessment-driven instruction can be both positive and negative. Use of assessment evidence to identify student needs and direct further teaching is positive. Assessment providing diagnostic information on student strengths and weaknesses is positive. However, assessment that serves to narrow curriculum and drive teaching and learning practice to focus on 'what is on the test', with excessive practice of standardised test formats and items, is negative.

Considerable international research demonstrates that negative effects can emerge from high-stakes external accountability testing that identifies individual school performance: schools resort to 'game-playing' to improve assessment outcomes, even removing students from testing (Heilig & Darling-Hammond, 2008); teachers engage in 'triaging' by concentrating on students near benchmarks to get them over the line, leaving behind students most at risk (Jennings & Dorn, 2008); teachers narrow curriculum by focusing on test content and test-taking practice, teaching transmissively, making little use of results to assist student learning (Harlen, 2005), and overpractising test-item types (Shepard, 2003). Further, borderline students are 'triaged' at the expense of others, particularly high-achieving students.

The current form of NAPLAN with items across a continuum of performance does address the last issue. Australian states and schools appear to set targets to improve student performance across levels (Chilcott, 2011). However, the downside to tests with items covering multiple levels is that fewer items can be used for diagnostic purposes for low-achieving students – those at-risk students who were the original focus of national policy.

Evidence that the high-stakes nature of NAPLAN tests and MySchool publications is having negative impact on Australian classrooms has emerged. Allegations and findings of cheating have been made. The negative impacts of accountability assessments identified in international research have been reported to an Australian government Senate enquiry (see, Cth Australia, 2010, pp. 43–45). As one Queensland submission stated:

The time spent on preparing students for this test, analysing results and setting narrow targets has become counter productive. That is to say, the time spent preparing and administering the NAPLAN has taken away valuable teaching and learning time that is better spent on supporting student learning. ... The high stakes nature of the NAPLAN has also served, in many schools, to narrow curriculum offerings. ... If the high stakes nature continues a narrowing of focus on literacy and numeracy outcomes from the NAPLAN will inevitably become the focus of many schools (NAPLAN Senate inquiry submission). (Cth Australia, 2010)

As a result, the Senate committee recommended 'ACARA [should] identify, analyse and report publicly on possible means of strengthening the relationship between NAPLAN tests and the wider curriculum' (Cth Australia, 2010, p. 45).

Impact of educational accountability on teacher constructions of English and literacy: One research example

Evidence that educational accountability affects teachers' ways of viewing English literacy emerged in a project Cumming and Wyatt-Smith conducted through funding provided by the Queensland Studies Authority in 2006, prior to the introduction of NAPLAN. At that time, Queensland's literacy policy, *Literate Futures* (Dept. Ed., 2000), encompassed national policy directions, describing a rich environment for literacy and multiliteracies. It included viewing, 'surfing', and 'real and virtual communities'. The starting definition was:

Literacy is the flexible and sustainable mastery of a repertoire of practices with the texts of traditional and new communications technologies via spoken language, print, and multimedia. (Dept.Ed., 2000, p. 9).

While the term 'multimodal' was not used, the connotations are present.

Our project examined interrelationships between teacher judgment of student performance and the then Queensland state literacy testing program. Overall, we found that teachers' judgments reflected the narrow focus of the tests measuring national literacy benchmark performance (Cumming, Wyatt-Smith, Elkins, & Neville, 2006). Also evident was how the focus of educational accountability tests, and high stakes attached to test outcomes, put at risk local and system efforts to broaden teachers' perspectives on English literacy, with tension between narrow technicist under-

standings of literacy education, and exploratory pedagogical approaches linking literacy and curriculum, and literacy and ICTs.

In our project, 56 teachers of students in Years 3 and 5 in schools across Queensland were interviewed and asked to describe literacy practices of students 'above', 'at' and 'below' expected levels (Cumming et al., 2006, p. 55). Comments were provided for 70 specific students and for Year level students in general. No formal definitions of literacy or numeracy were provided to teachers, nor were 'levels' defined. Thus comments and descriptors provided by teachers were both their constructions of literacy and their constructions of quality of performance.

Overall, teachers associated literacy with discipline subject 'English', focusing on reading (decoding and comprehension), and writing text, including operational or control aspects such as spelling and grammar. These also dominated teachers' own assessment practices. Cultural and critical dimensions of the 2005 Queensland English syllabus in place at that time were rarely mentioned, nor students as designers or innovators. No teacher mentioned ICTs or development of higher order thinking skills as literacy goals.

Descriptions of Year 3 students' literacy achievements *below* expected levels focused on reading decoding skills, with emphasis on reading aloud: 'inappropriate intonation', 'struggles to read words with more than three letters', 'does not apply decoding strategies', 'needs a lot of work on sight words and initial letters'. Teachers separated comprehension from decoding, indicating these students had 'difficulty with comprehension, find[ing] it hard to understand the questions and [form] inferences about texts'. For writing, teachers focused on simple sentence construction, with which most students had difficulty, spelling, and punctuation. Students had limited strategies, did not take risks and were slow and lacking in confidence. Teachers also referred to learning difficulties including poor memory. They did not comment on listening or viewing skills.

Year 3 students *at* level were described as being able to comprehend written texts, to do 'simple structured writing', with less focus on decoding skills. Motivation and attitude were seen as the barriers to higher performance: 'takes time to complete tasks', 'struggling to get through the class work', '(needs) motivation and a good environment'. However, some students were described as taking pride in their work and 'keen and interested'.

For Year 3 students *above* level, different descriptors were used. Some focus on reading aloud fluency occurred. Comments on reading comprehension included 'can do a re-tell' and 'make inferences'. Considerable focus was on writing text, including 'eloquent vocabulary', 'mature', 'volume and quality' and '[effective] sentence structures'. Student learning strategies were a focus with comments including 'far deeper level', 'more detailed', 'problem solver', 'only have to tell once'. Creativity was a focus also: 'quirky', 'excellent creative thinking', 'imagination', 'captures the reader's attention', 'insightful comments', 'flair', 'initiative'. Students were described as confident readers, loving books and focused. Comments on oral communication skills were made for 'above level' students.

Teachers made few comments on literacy skills other than reading and writing text, or on literacies across the curriculum. They did discuss contexts where children could demonstrate knowledge and strength, such as oral presentations and PowerPoint presentations, noting that these were not assessed by the state literacy tests. Teachers sited students along a continuum of progression, identifying areas where a child was improving. No comments were made about multimodal literacies, inclusion of technology either as part of literacy or as part of literacy assessments, or non-text based skills. Listening skills were not mentioned.

In the context of external accountability testing, comments by teachers showed attention to traditional and limited aspects of literacy, echoing literacies assessed by the external tests. This may have been influenced by the project's context, as teachers knew we were exploring congruence between their conceptualisations of students' achievement and external test outcomes. However, teachers' comments did extend beyond external test focuses. They showed the extent to which teachers still identified strategies of literacy learning as important, a focus of the original draft literacy benchmarks but not of the external tests. Teachers attended to attitude and engagement as critical factors in student literacy achievement. Their textual focus was the written word in standard contexts; their focus as teachers on literacy learning was much broader.

Conclusion

Our project findings demonstrated that increased high stakes for educational accountability testing may work against increasing teacher engagement with broader constructions of English/literacy and with multimodality and technology emphasised throughout national

declarations and definitions of literacy and English over the last twenty years.

This discussion shows that the educational accountability focus of NAPLAN has not kept pace with 21st century learning agendas and identified essential skills for 21st century learners in national policy and curriculum. Broadening literacy forms included in NAPLAN could be effective in broadening teachers' focus. Teachers already have pedagogical focuses that reflect a fuller curriculum.

The core questions for policy and practice become (i) how do we ensure that we maintain breadth of focus in English curriculum, multimodality and technology in classrooms in a high-stakes external educational accountability environment, and (ii) how can we develop a high-stakes external educational accountability system more aligned, as suggested by the Australian Senate report, with the breadth and richness of a 21st century curriculum. For classroom teachers, the practical question is how to integrate and sustain multimodality with subject English and English literacy for 21st century learning processes and outcomes in classroom assessment practices, in an environment where external accountability exerts such influence.

Notes

1 As this article focuses on English literacy, subsequent references to numeracy are not made. However, federal policy emphasises both as essential outcomes for students.

2 Cumming was a consultant to Curriculum Corporation for the literacy and numeracy benchmarks as well as assessment issues.

3 Information communication and technology (ICT) is the focus of an independent national test under the national assessment program. ICT skills are tested for random samples of students in Years 6 and 10 on a three-yearly cycle. ICT is not linked to NAPLAN literacy.

References

Assessment Reform Group (ARG). (2002). *Assessment for learning: 10 principles.* UK: ARG.

Australian Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Authority (ACARA). (undated 1). Aims. In *The Australian curriculum: English.* Retrieved 2011 from: http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/English/Aims

ACARA. (undated 2). General capabilities. In *The Australian curriculum.* Retrieved 2011 from: http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/GeneralCapabilities

ACARA. (2010). *The shape of the Australian curriculum 2.0.* Sydney: ACARA.

ACARA. (2011a). *English: Foundation to Year 10 curriculum.* Sydney: ACARA.

ACARA. (2011b). *Statements of learning.* Sydney: ACARA. Retrieved 2011 from: http://www.nap.edu.au/NAPLAN/Statements+of+Learning/index.html

Black P. & Wiliam, P. (1998). Assessment and classroom learning. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice, 5*(1): pp. 7–74.

Campbell (Senator). (1996, October 16). *Parliamentary Debates.* (Commonwealth Senate). Australian Capital Territory: Hansard.

Cazden, C., Cope, B., Fairclough, N., Gee, J., et al. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies. Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review, 66*(1): pp. 60–92.

Chilcott, T. (2011, April 8). Race to tap NAPLAN's $34m. *The Courier-Mail.* p. 8.

Commonwealth of Australia (Cth Australia). (2010). *Administration and reporting of NAPLAN testing.* Canberra: Australian Senate. Retrieved 2011 from: http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/eet_ctte/naplan/report/report.pdf

Cumming, J.J., & Wyatt-Smith, C.M. (2001). A multi-theoretical and multi-disciplinary approach to literacy education and curriculum research. In J.J. Cumming & C.M. Wyatt-Smith (Eds). *Literacy and the curriculum: Success in senior secondary schooling.* (pp. 1–10). Melbourne: ACER.

Cumming, J.J., Wyatt-Smith, C., Elkins, J., & Neville, M. (2006). Teacher judgment: Building an evidentiary base for quality literacy and numeracy education. Brisbane: Griffith University. Retrieved 2011 from: http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/3514.html

Curriculum Corporation (CC). (2000). *Literacy benchmarks Years 3, 5 & 7.* Sydney: CC.

CC. (2005). *Statements of learning for English.* Carlton South, Vic: CC.

Department of Education (Dept. Ed). (2000). *Literate futures: Report of the literacy review for Queensland state schools.* Brisbane: Department of Education.

Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA). (1998). *Literacy for all: The challenge for Australian schools.* Canberra, ACT: DEETYA.

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). (2008). Success through partnership: Achieving a national vision for ICT in schools. *Strategic plan to guide the implementation of the digital education revolution initiative and related initiatives.* Canberra: DEEWR.

DEEWR. (2011). *Digital education revolution.* Retrieved 2011 from: http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/DigitalEducationRevolution/Pages/default.aspx

Harlen, W. (2005). Teachers' summative practices and assessment for learning: Tensions and synergies. *The Curriculum Journal, 16*(2): pp. 207–223.

Harrington, M., & McDonald, S. (1999). *Literacy: A chronology of selected research and Commonwealth policy initiatives since 1975*. Canberra: Parliamentary Library. Retrieved 2011 from: http://www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/chron/1999–2000/2000chr02.htm

Heilig, J.V,. & Darling-Hammond, L. (2008). Accountability Texas-style: The progress and learning of urban minority students in a high-stakes testing context. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 30*(2): pp. 75–110.

Jennings, J., & Dorn, S. (2008). The proficiency trap: New York City's achievement gap revisited. *Teachers College Record*, September 08, 2008 [tcrecord.org ID Number: 15366].

Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA). (2010). *Seventh MCEECDYA Meeting 8 December 2010 Communique*. Retrieved 2011 from: http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/verve/_resources/C07_Communique_8_Dec_2010.pdf

Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). (1997a). *Information statement 6th MCEETYA meeting, Melbourne, 14 March 1997*. Retrieved 2011 from: www.mceetya.edu.au/mceecdya/6th_mceetya_meeting,11510.html

MCEETYA. (1997b). *Information statement 8th MCEETYA meeting, Melbourne, 11 December 1997*. Retrieved 2011 from: www.mceetya.edu.au/mceecdya/6th_mceetya_meeting,11510.html

MCEETYA. (2000). *National report on schooling in Australia 2000*. Canberra: MCEETYA.

MCEETYA. (1999). *The Adelaide declaration on national goals for schooling in the twenty-first century*. Retrieved 2011 from: http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/mceecdya/adelaide_declaration_1999_text,28298.html

MCEETYA. (1989). *The Hobart declaration on schooling*. Melbourne: MCEETYA.

MCEETYA. (2008). *The Melbourne declaration on educational goals for young Australians*. Melbourne: MCEETYA.

Shepard, L.A. (2003). Reconsidering large-scale assessment to heighten its relevance to learning. In J.M. Atkin & J.E. Coffey (Eds). *Everyday assessment in the science classroom*. Arlington, VA: NSTA Press.

Wyatt-Smith, C.M. & Cumming, J.J. (2003). Curriculum literacies: Expanding domains of assessment. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice, 10*(1): pp. 47–60.

Appendix 1:

A chronology of literacy, English and multimodal emphasis in Australia since 1989

Hobart Declaration (MCEETYA, 1989) [emphasis added]	• Agreement to map appropriate knowledge and skills for 'English literacy' • 'to develop in students … skills of *English literacy*, including skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing.' (Aim 6a) • 'to promote equality of education opportunities, and to provide for groups with special learning requirements.' (Aim 3)
National literacy goal & subgoal (MCEETYA, 1997a) & National Literacy and Numeracy Plan (DEETYA, 1998) ['benchmarks']	• 'comprehensive assessment of all students by teachers as early as possible in the first years of schooling … to ensure that … literacy needs of all students are adequately addressed and to intervene as early as possible to address the needs of those students identified as at risk of not making adequate progress towards the national … literacy goals. … use [of] rigorous State-based assessment procedures to assess students against the Year 3 benchmark for … reading, writing and spelling for 1998 onwards.' (MCEETYA, 1997a) • goal: 'every child leaving primary school should be … able to read, write, and spell at an appropriate level.' (MCEETYA, 1997a) • sub-goal: 'every child commencing school from 1998 will achieve a minimum acceptable literacy and numeracy standard within four years (recognising that a very small percentage of students suffer from severe educational disabilities).' (MCEETYA, 1997a) • development of agreed national benchmarks in literacy and numeracy, against which all students' achievement in these years can be measured. (DEETYA, 1998)

National Literacy and Numeracy Plan: 'Literacy for All: The Challenge for Australian Schools' (C'th literacy policy) (DEETYA, 1998)	• 'Effective literacy is intrinsically purposeful, flexible and dynamic and involves the integration of speaking, listening and critical thinking with reading and writing.' • 'This definition draws attention to the significance of effective literacy which requires the ability to read and use written information, to write appropriately, in a wide range of contexts, for many different purposes, and to communicate with a variety of audiences. Literacy is integrally related to learning in all areas of the curriculum, and enables all individuals to develop knowledge and understanding. Reading and writing, when integrated with speaking, listening, viewing and critical thinking, constitute valued aspects of literacy in modern life. This comprehensive view of literacy reflects current use of the term in the professional literature. ... 'literacy is more than just being able to read and write; it is the ability to comprehend, interpret, analyse, respond, and interact with the growing variety of complex sources of information' ... Purposeful, flexible and dynamic literacy developed in the early years of schooling provides the foundation for continued development throughout an individual's lifetime.' • '[T]he [National Literacy and Numeracy] Plan draws attention to the multiple uses of literacy and the changing nature of literate practices in modern society. New electronic communication technologies bring new literacy demands; the relationship between literacy and technology is an area for active professional investigation.' • 'New information technologies bring with them profound changes in the range and nature of texts, and to ways of accessing new information. Email, for example, creates a greater immediacy in written communication, reducing the temporal space so that often writing has some of the immediacy of speech. Hypertext allows readers to read text in non-linear ways, and to interact with texts. Students are using the Internet to communicate with learners around the globe, and to access information world-wide. Users of the new technology bring new literacy skills into play: composing texts appropriate for email communication and critically analysing information found through the Internet.'
Adelaide Declaration (MCEETYA, 1999)	• every child will: • '[attain] high standards of knowledge, skills and understanding through a comprehensive and balanced curriculum in the compulsory subject area[s] ... English' (Goal 2.1) • '[attain] the skills of ... English literacy; such that every child leaving primary school should be ... able to read, write and spell and communicate at an appropriate level.' (Goal 2.2) • 'Schooling should be socially just so that ... learning outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students improve and, over time, match those of other students' (Goal 3.2)
National literacy benchmarks (Curriculum Corporation, 2000)	• Literacy Benchmarks Years 3, 5 and 7 – minimum acceptable standards 'all but a few' students should attain by a respective Year level. Minimum benchmark statements for *writing, spelling* and *reading* were completed by December 1997. Benchmark statements for *speaking, listening* and *viewing* to be developed by 1998 (MCEETYA, 1997b). However, benchmark statements for listening and speaking were not finalised. • Year 3: Reading At benchmark standard, students read and understand a range of texts that are suitable for this year level. These texts appear in, for example, picture books, illustrated chapter books, junior reference material and the electronic media. Typically, texts that these students are able to read have predictable text and sentence structures. Words that may be unfamiliar are explained in the writing or through the illustrations. Typically, these texts use straightforward, everyday language. When students read and understand texts like these, they can: • identify main purpose of text (e.g. say that purpose of a set of short simple instructions is to help you do something) • identify sequence of events in stories • find directly stated information in written text and/or illustrations • make links between ideas stated directly and close together in different parts of text (e.g. predict end of story; work out character's feelings from an illustration; make links between a diagram and its label) • work out meaning of some unfamiliar phrases and words. Writing At benchmark standard, students compose simple pieces of writing that make sense to the reader and show basic understanding of the writing task. The pieces of writing contain a few ideas related to task and topic. The ideas are usually briefly expressed. The pieces of writing show evidence of some organisation of subject matter (e.g. a simple beginning, middle and end in a story). However, they may also include irrelevant details, or ideas not well tied into the writing. (Elaboration of structure and content) Spelling At benchmark standard, students spell accurately: • many frequently used and readily recognised words (e.g. come, going, like, saw, was, went, but, from, they, very, you) • other one- and two-syllable words: • most words of one syllable with common spelling patterns (e.g. *sharp, thick, star, crown, spoon, free, green, play*) • some words of two syllables with common spelling patterns (e.g. *sunny, playing*). While students are expected to spell accurately the words described above, they also attempt to spell a wider range of words. Errors made with these words should be close to the look and/or sound of the correct spelling (e.g. *gess* for *guess, jungil* for *jungle, redy* for *ready*). (Curriculum Corporation, 2000)

Cumming and Wyatt-Smith (2001); Wyatt-Smith and Cumming (2003)	• Curriculum literacies: 'We use "curriculum" deliberately as a noun, rather than the adjective "curricular", in order to demonstrate that this conjunction represents the interface between a specific curriculum and its literacies, rather than literacies related to curriculum in a generic sense, or a single literacy that can be spread homogeneously across all curriculum.' (Cumming & Wyatt-Smith, 2001, p. 10; Wyatt-Smith & Cumming, 2003, p. 50)
National Statements of Learning (literacy) (Curriculum Corporation, 2005)	• '[D]esigned to be challenging but accessible to students at years 3, 5, 7 and 9. They differ from the *Literacy Benchmarks* … which represent minimum standards of achievement.' (p. 3) • 'The *Statements of Learning for English* have been written in the context of the following aims of English curriculums in Australia which seek that students develop … the capacity to critically interpret and construct spoken, written, visual and multimodal texts in a broad range of mediums …' (p. 2). • Reading and Viewing: Students read and view simple texts that entertain, move, report, explain and give opinions. They read and view imaginative texts such as children's stories, rhymed verses, fairytales and fables. They also read and view information texts such as reports, transactions and explanations. The texts they read and view contain ideas and information related to their real and imagined worlds, with illustrations that clarify meaning. The texts may be in illustrated books, school newsletters, local newspapers, children's magazines, advertisements, films, and on television programs, CD-ROMs and websites. … They … understand that texts can be produced for different audiences and that the interests of the intended readers and viewers can be reflected in the text. • Writing 'Students write texts on familiar topics for known readers to entertain, describe and express their opinions in print and electronic mediums.' (pp. 5–6) • Speaking and listening standards have also been developed. These are not listed here as they are not included in NAPLAN.
Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008)	• 'Literacy … and knowledge of key disciplines remain the cornerstone of schooling for young Australians.' (p. 5) • 'the use of digital media … [is] essential' for 21st century skills (p. 5) • 'successful learners' … 'have the essential skills in literacy and numeracy and are creative and productive users of technology, especially ICT, as a foundation for success in all learning areas' (p. 8) • 'The [national] curriculum will include a strong focus on literacy … skills' (p. 13) • 'Educational outcomes for Indigenous children … are substantially behind those of other students in … literacy …' (p. 15)
Shape of the Australian Curriculum 2.0 – General Capabilities (ACARA, 2010)	• 'Literacy [–] Students become literate as they develop the skills to learn and communicate confidently at school and to become effective individuals, community members, workers and citizens. listening, reading and viewing, writing, speaking and creating print, visual and digital materials accurately and purposefully within and across all learning areas' • 'literacy … must be reinforced and strengthened through learning in other contexts including science, history, geography and technologies' (ACARA, 2010, p. 12). The national curriculum will prioritise 'English and literacy' (p. 12). • ICT competence is attained through learning 'to use ICT effectively and appropriately when investigating, creating and communicating ideas and information at school, at home, at work and in their communities' (p. 19)
Australian Curriculum English (ACARA, 2011a)	• Literacy includes students' 'application of … English skills and knowledge to read, view, speak, listen to, write and create a growing repertoire of texts' (Aims: http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/English/Aims) • 'In English, students learn to read, write, listen and speak accurately, flexibly and critically, and to view and create increasingly complex texts in a variety of contexts. The general capability of Literacy is drawn from the content descriptions in the Language and Literacy strands of the English curriculum. The literacy knowledge and skills are developed and applied through all three strands: *Language, Literature* and *Literacy*.' (General capabilities: http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/English/General-capabilities#Literacy) • 'Interpreting and creating a range of types of texts with accuracy, fluency and purpose', with sub-strands 'Texts in context', 'Interacting with others', 'Interpreting, analysing and evaluating' and 'Creating texts' (General capabilities) • 'the ability to listen, read and view, write, speak and create print, visual and digital materials accurately and confidently to enable students to become effective individuals, workers and citizens' (General capabilities).

Australian English curriculum: Year 3 (ACARA, 2011a)	• Year 3 Level Description: 'Students engage with a variety of texts for enjoyment. They listen to, read, view and interpret spoken, written and multimodal texts in which the primary purpose is to entertain, as well as texts designed to inform and persuade. … texts describe complex sequences of events that extend over several pages … [and] use complex language features, including varied sentence structures, some unfamiliar vocabulary, a significant number of high-frequency sight words and words that need to be decoded phonically, and a range of punctuation conventions, as well as illustrations and diagrams that both support and extend the printed texts. Students create a range of imaginative, informative and persuasive types of texts including narratives, procedures, performances, reports, reviews, poetry and expositions.' • ACARA English curriculum definitions: • *Listen*: 'the use of the sense of hearing as well as a range of active behaviours to comprehend information received through gesture, body language and other sensory systems' • *Read*: 'to process words, symbols or actions to derive and/or construct meaning. Reading includes interpreting, critically analysing and reflecting upon the meaning of a wide range of written and visual, print and non-print texts' • *View*: 'observe with purpose, understanding and critical awareness. Some students use oral, written or multimodal forms to respond to a range of text types. Other students participate in viewing activities by listening to an adult or peer describing the visual features of text, diagrams, pictures and multimedia' • *Text*: 'the means for communication. Their forms and conventions have developed to help us communicate effectively with a variety of audiences for a range of purposes. Texts can be written, spoken or multimodal and in print or digital/online forms. Multimodal texts combine language with other systems for communication, such as print text, visual images, soundtrack and spoken word as in film or computer presentation media' • *Multimodal text*: 'combination of two or more communication modes, for example print, image and spoken text as in film or computer presentations'
Australian English curriculum Year 3 Expected achievement standard (ACARA, 2011) *[revision of these Standards in late 2011 has not changed the overall focus of these statements]*	• '… students listen to, read and view a range of spoken, written and multimodal texts, identifying their different purposes. They attend to others' views and respond appropriately. They use monitoring and self-correcting strategies to clarify meaning when reading, viewing and listening to an increasing range of types of texts. Students create a range of imaginative, informative and persuasive written, spoken and multimodal texts for familiar and unfamiliar audiences. They contribute actively to group discussions … They communicate expressively and clearly about familiar ideas and information to known small audiences, in mostly informal situations. … They create imaginative texts based on characters and situations encountered in their reading and viewing. … They organise texts in paragraphs composed of logically grouped and sequenced sentences. Short sentences are meaningful and correctly structured, and some complex sentences are used appropriately. They choose vocabulary appropriate to the purpose and context of their writing. They use simple punctuation correctly, and use a variety of spelling strategies to spell high frequency words correctly.'
NAPLAN tests 2009–2010	• Writing Prompt Single page sheet, 17 images including six photographs Topic: *Today you are going to write a narrative (a story). The idea for your story is "What a mess!"'* (ACARA, 2010, http://www.nap.edu.au/_Documents/NAPLAN%202010%20Test/Writing_Prompt.pdf) • Reading • Text: Reading Magazine 2009 – seven pages of print text (factual information, recipe, postcard, story, persuasive text, story, sequence) with pictorial support (ACARA, 2009, http://www.nap.edu.au/NAPLAN/The+tests/NAPLAN+2009+Tests/index.html) • Questions: 32 multiple choice questions (3 to 4 options) (shade the bubble); 2 sequence order questions; 1 multiple option question. • Language Conventions (40 minutes) Written language conventions: 25 single word spelling, 18 selection of appropriate word[s] to insert in text, 1 word meaning, 6 punctuation.
ACARA General Capability literacy: literacy capabilities for end of Year 2, 4, 6, 8 &10	• Publications on 'conceptual statements and continua' are being developed for the general capabilities including 'the conceptual framework, evidence base and references for the capability', and 'a continuum of learning, showing development across bands of year levels' • For the generic capability literacy, development 'includes descriptions for the end of Years 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10 … to guide the future development of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN).' (ACARA, *The Australian Curriculum General Capabilities* <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/GeneralCapabilities> at 13 April 2011.)

This article was originally published in *English in Australia*, Vol. 46, No. 3, pages 42–53

ENGLISH
IN AUSTRALIA

The journal of the **Australian Association** for the **Teaching** of **English**

Call for Papers: *English in Australia* 56.2

SPECIAL ISSUE: ENGLISH @ HOME

Deadline for full manuscripts: 7 February 2021

The landscape of teaching English in 2020 is markedly different to any in recent memory in Australia and around the world. The catastrophic bushfire season across Australia was closely followed by the news of a pandemic that would alter the everyday lives of individuals and the institutional structures that we have taken for granted.

In this context students have to varying extents engaged in learning from home, with parents/guardians finding themselves in the position of educators, and teachers virtually extending their classrooms to bedrooms, studies and living rooms.

This issue considers how these changes have been experienced by individuals and schools, and at a policy level in terms of the teaching of English. Manuscripts for this upcoming special issue are invited to explore a range of fields and issues, including but not limited to the following questions:

Full scholarly papers of between 5000 and 7500 words (including references) should be submitted to https://english-in-australia.scholasticahq.com/ by 7 February 2021.

Guidelines for contributors and information about English in Australia can be found at
https://www.aate.org.au/journals/contribute-to-english-in-australia

All manuscripts are subject to double blind peer review.

Questions about this CFP can be directed to the Special Edition Editors:

Dr Kelli McGraw kelli.mcgraw@qut.edu.au

Ceridwen Owen ceridwen.owen@monash.edu

$\overset{\text{\&}}{\underset{}{}}$READing VIEWing

with Deb McPherson

I have to start the column this week with poetry as two outstanding anthologies need to take centre stage. Paul Kelly and Kate Clanchy have curated two very different selections, Paul has collected the poems he loves and shares all 342 of them with us in a 410-page feast while Kate has edited a slim volume of poems from a school in England written by eleven to eighteen-year-old students. Both anthologies will knock your socks off.

Poetry

***Love is as Strong as Death* Poems chosen by Paul Kelly (2019) Hamish Hamilton hardcover**

In his introduction to this superb collection Paul Kelly says poetry is friendlier than you think. It hovers close by, and we reach for it on ritual occasions and it lives in our everyday speech.

The poems are arranged in alphabetical order by title or first line and this has unexpected results. It's a very democratic arrangement and you find some interesting connections as various unlikely poems 'hang out together'. Kelly had a rule of selection; if he loved a poem it went in. The anthology has the comfort of the familiar such as Hardy, Keats and Harwood, as well as the excitement of the new such as Beneba Clarke and Cobby Eckermann. Kelly's other rule was no lyrics of songs but he broke it with Archie Roach's 'Took the Children Away'. You will also find the powerful and moving language of the *Uluru Statement from the Heart.* This is a collection to take into a classroom and let loose. A wonderful set of indexes, including those poems that have been set to music by Kelly, helps the exploration and there is so much to share.

***England: Poems from a school* edited by Kate Clanchy (2018) Picador**

This marvellous collection of poems by students, aged from eleven to nineteen, from an English school in Oxford reflects a diverse school population. The students' passion often comes from loss, and the memory of that loss, as they write about the pain of leaving home and making a new life in a different

land. Their poems sing out to the reader. Award winning poems such as the 'Doves of Damascus' are side by side with other poems from students which will break your heart and make you laugh as well as cry. They all have a freshness and vitality that arrows straight to the heart. Kate Clanchy is a poet in residence at the school. Her introduction explains how this school has shown that poetry is for everyone. *England: Poems from a school* is an exceptional collection.

Fiction for Stage 4

***The Assassination of Brangwain Spurge* MT Anderson and Eugene Yelchin (2018) Candlewick Press hardcover**

MT Anderson and Eugene Yelchin have created an absolute hoot of a book. This is a mind-stretching collaboration that takes our Tolkien-inspired assumptions about goblins and elves and gives them a good shake while also taking aim at worn out ideologies and tyranny. If you add in barrels of humour, serial barbarity and grossness you get some idea of what you are in for when you open this explosive cover. Let's head to the beginning of the story where Brangwain Spurge, elf historian, is asked by his old school bully, Lord Ysoret Clivers, Order of the Clean Hand, to spy on the Goblin kingdom, under cover of taking a gift to the Goblin king. Clivers doesn't disclose that the sparkling gem is a bomb to blow up the goblin king, which will almost certainly take out Spurge as well. He will be hosted in the Goblin capital by Werfel, the Archivist, one of the nicest characters I have encountered in literature, who is a Goblin historian at the Court of the Mighty Ghohg. Werfel is very excited to meet his counterpart historian and is crestfallen when Spurge is rude and culturally ignorant.
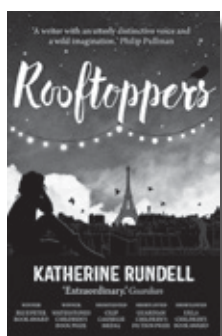
Brian Selkirk's graphic novel, *The invention of Hugo Cabret*, might be a precursor to this text. But Anderson and Yelchin take a different tack in which the words and the images don't complement each other; they contradict each other! What a teaching

opportunity as the pictures are frauds and represent an unreliable visual narrator in a book. Gradually both goblin and elf begin to see the good qualities in each other, and after a mishap with the bomb and the spectre of all-out war, find themselves the most sought-after individuals in two kingdoms. Both sides have people who want to capture and kill them as well as people who want to find them as they are the most reliable witnesses of what really happened when the bomb went off.

Yelchin calls this book 'a laugh-out-loud misadventure of two fools blinded by ideology and propaganda.' And as such it can be a wonderful text for students to explore in the classroom.

Rooftoppers Katherine Rundell (2013) faber and faber

I'm reading backwards in the Katherine Rundell's oeuvre and have discovered *Rooftoopers*, an extraordinary adventure on the roofs of Paris. One-year-old Sophie was found floating in the English Channel in a cello case, after the ship she and her mother were on was wrecked. Although she remembers her mother waving there is no sign that her mother was rescued and Sophie is brought up by the man who lifted her into the rescue boat, a scholar by the name of Charles Maxim. Sophie is brought up with love and books, an unconventional upbringing according to the National Childcare Agency who do all they can to remove Sophie from his care. Sophie grows up tall and generous and bookish, just like her guardian. They are both appealing characters who run away to Paris when the authorities come to separate them. It is in Paris that Sophie hopes to find her mother, based on a clue in the cello case.

If the first part of the book is pacey wait until Sophie finds herself on the rooftops of Paris with Matteo, a boy who escaped from his harsh orphanage and now lives above Paris. Matteo is skilled at navigating the rooftops, while never touching the ground. There is danger here and violence; it takes all Sophie's courage to follow him across the rooftops.

Katherine Rundell's books call out for an author study in Year 7. Faced with *The explorer, The good thieves, Rooftoppers* and *The wolf wilder*, students will want to read them all. This is an author who ate tarantulas on television when discussing *The Explorer* because her

characters eat one! Rundell's first novel, *The girl savage*, has just arrived in the mail and I can't wait to read it.

Fiction for Stage 5

The Secret Commonwealth: The Book of Dust Volume 2 Phillip Pullman (2019) Penguin/David Flickling

The first volume of *The book of dust* (*La Belle sauvage*) was an exhilarating and terrifying journey and it's hard to believe that Volume 2 could increase the pace and excitement while dealing more deeply with the battle against the power and authority of the Magisterium – but it does!

Lyra Silvertongue has grown up. She was a baby in *La Belle sauvage* when young Malcolm saved her life. Now she is twenty, and the events of *His dark materials* trilogy have made her a marked person. She is forced out of the college which was her home by the dark influences of the Magisterium. A murder has occurred that will have fateful consequences and this alternative world is changing again. The relationship between her daemon, Pantalaimon, and herself is changing too, and to their mutual dismay there is a rift between them; they are being driven apart by their differences. They both fear their relationship may not be recoverable. Lyra must hide from the forces against her and flees across Europe into Asia along the silk road where the mysteries around the dust and the daemons and the disappearing roses are concentrated on a lost city and a multinational chemical firm. Plot lines follow Lyra, Pantalaimon and Malcolm. He is now a young academic who, with others, knows the importance of Lyra and seeks to protect her. The world is being pulled apart by powerful political forces. It seems as if Pullman is writing for an older audience and drawing strong parallels with forces, institutions and darkness in our own world.

This is a demanding book and an astonishing one as well. It can be read on many levels. It will repay close attention and reward the reader who is prepared to take the journey with Lyra and Pan and Malcolm across the world and into the unknown.

And the Ocean Was Our Sky Patrick Ness Illustrated by Rovina Cai (2018) Walker Books HB. 160 pp.

In a reversal of *Moby Dick*, the war between humans and whales is told here from a whale's perspective. 'Call me Bathsheba' is the opening line, echoing the famous first sentence in Melville's epic story. Bathsheba
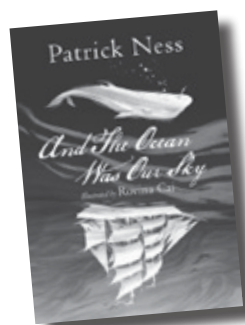
is a young and innocent whale, a junior officer to the relentless Captain Alexandra who, hungry for revenge against the infamous Tom Wicks, is hunting his white hulled ship. The title explains how the human perspective in the ocean in inverted and Cai's haunting and melancholy illustrations echo the sadness in the book as Bathsheba must consider what she values and where the good and evil lie in this world. Patrick Ness has delivered another fascinating text for students to explore.

Fiction for Year 11 and 12

Warlight **Michael Ondaatje (2018) Jonathon Cape 289pp**

In 1945 our parents went away and left us in the care of two men who may have been criminals. p. 5
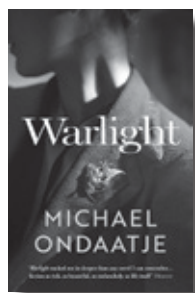
It's hard to think of a more tantalising or intriguing first sentence in a novel. Of course, we must read on; the irresistible power of storytelling propels us into the text and into the lives of fourteen-year-old Nathaniel and his older sister, Rachel, and their extraordinary mother, Rose, and the people she left to protect her children.

Nathaniel and Rachel must look to strangers; Walter, whom they call The Moth, and ex-boxer Norman, the Darter, as their chief guardians. Both men have a shadowy past, linked in some way with their mother who is away, 'Doing something important.' The Darter knows all about fixing races and barging on the Thames and he takes Nathaniel and Rachel on trips along silent waterways and backroads, moving dogs and cargo. Unconventional, sometimes fascinating people, come and go in the Williams' house as the children grow up in post war London with no clear idea of when or if their parents will return. When they find their mother's trunk, which was meant to accompany her to Singapore, the mystery of her life deepens further. A shocking incident in which their lives are in danger sends both children away, in different directions, from London.

When the reader rediscovers Nathaniel at twenty-eight, living in the place his mother grew up, he is trying to piece together his mother's life and death. His job at the British Foreign Office helps him to find out about Rose's story as an intelligence officer during and after the war in Yugoslavia and Italy. It is a story of death and torture, of moral ambiguities and revenge.

Ondaatje is a gifted poet as well as a novelist and his images linger long after the novel is finished. The night river journeys, a dim and darkened London seen by 'warlight,' (as hard to navigate as the memories in Nathaniel's mind), the houses for rent or sale, shorn of furniture, the final moments of Rose; all are indelibly printed on the mind.

A thriller, a spy story, an exploration of memory and fractured family life, of war and unsung heroes, of the corruption of ideals, of innocence and love lost (and found); Ondaatje's novel never disappoints. *Warlight* could inspire students in Year 11 to know more about themselves as well as the characters in this luminous novel.

Changing Gear **Scot Gardiner (2019) Allen & Unwin**

Merrick is in Year 12 and the exams are approaching. The recent death of his much-loved grandfather has left him empty and depressed. His parents are divorced and remarried and Merrick is aching for freedom. He finds distraction in porn and after a party he decides to head off on his bike. He wants to be just anywhere, rather than sitting in a room, studying. His mother thinks he is with his father and his father thinks he is with his mother. He takes some money, a swag and leaves his phone behind. Not far into the journey a busted bike chain slows him down. He meets, Victor, an older, homeless walker, on the backroads. Victor is reserved but helps him when his bike needs repairs and also with some of life's problems. While the bike is being fixed Merrick joins Victor on his hike and their conversations, including some discussion on the problems of porn, are a vital part of his experiences. The girl he meets, the people who help, surprise him. The menace of the homophobic thugs who launch a violent attack on Victor is confronting, but the whole trip is life-changing. Merrick returns home better able to focus on the exams because he knows there is life to live after them. And he gets a letter from that girl.

Scott Garner's author biography explains that he became a writer after a chance meeting with a magazine editor hitch-hiking around Eastern Australia. His vivid evocation of small bush towns, roads and landscape is convincing proof of his writing skills and the growing rapport between the touchy old man and the young man is wonderful to read. The language is frank and

authentic. Some of the best times are when Merrick is off his bike and walking. This novel is for all readers but most especially those young men in Years 9–11.

You can find more information about Scott Garner and his writing on his blog at http://thingsmade fromletters.com/blog/2018/07/04/the-tale-slapped-scot-gardner-on-writing-for-teenagers/

Lanny Max Porter (2019) faber&faber

In a village in Britain an extraordinary tale unfolds. On the surface it's about village life and village people, including some city outsiders and their son, Lanny. But Porter takes readers deep into the landscape and its mysterious past as well as the perplexing present. It's a story that focuses on Lanny, an enchanting, glorious child who goes missing; and the telling is magical. A chorus of voices scatter across the pages, criss-crosssing, doubling up, floating and weaving into each other. Dead Papa Toothwort is listening. He is a creature made of leaves and mosses and rot, a feeder on the life of the village. He has woken from his woodland sleep. And he's listening most intently to Lanny.

Max Porter's use of language and the range of ideas he explores in this slender novel, could inspire students to experiment with their own story telling. Gossip and malice, intolerance and suspicion of the outsider are not new concerns, but Porter's telling of them is different. A wonderful, darkly optimistic adventure is in store for risk-taking readers. At 210 pages not a word is wasted and the narrative moves like that chorus of voices. Not to be missed.

Multimodal texts

Tales from the Inner City Shaun Tan (2018) Allen & Unwin

### *Cicada* Shaun Tan (2018) Lothian Children's Books

Tales from the inner city is an astonishing collection of stories about human relationship with animals, both real and imagined. Each story is accompanied by a mesmerising painting showing humans and animals connecting with one another. Readers will not lightly forget these tales or these illustrations. In a Shaun Tan world, you can go fishing for moonfish from the rooftops of apartments or to court with bears who are suing humans, for crimes under the bear legal code, such as murder and genocide. You can follow the evolution of the dog and human relationship and wash windows on the eighty-seventh floor as crocodiles sunbake behind the frames. You can avoid the last rhino in the world on the freeway and learn of its fate the next day.

Tan says, (in a commentary on *Tales from the inner city*, at http://www.shauntan.net/books/TFIC/TFIC_commentary_by_Shaun_Tan.pdf) that much of his work 'deals with the separation or tension between natural and artificial worlds, provoking a sense of longing for something lost, or something that can't be fully remembered'. Tan's animals don't speak but he says they 'move in and out of the stories as if trying to tell us something about our own successes and failures as a species'. They are beside us as we rush past them on our busy lives. Tan's final story is about the alpha animal, the human being, and what we are doing to our lives and the lives of the other animals we live with on this planet.

Tales from the inner city is a rich text and one that will inspire stories from students about the nature of those relationship we have with animals.

Cicada is a picture book for our times. A better text on being different and alone would be hard to find. A suit wearing cicada works in a nameless, grey office doing data entry. He is bullied and then ignored as he works for 17 years alongside humans, never taking a day off or making a mistake. His life is captured in monochromatic greens and greys. On retirement he goes to the roof to the building and transforms. Like much of Tan's work, both these texts could be used as stimulus for student writing in classrooms from Year 7 to 12.
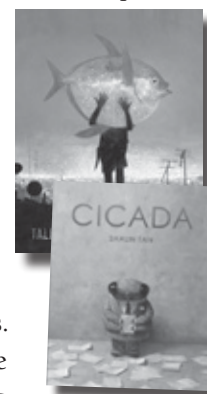
Give Nothing to Racism Directed by Taika Waititi (2017) Video advertisement www.givenothing.co.nz

'*Racism starts small. Sometimes it lives in everyday actions and comments that we laugh off, nod in agreement to, excuse, and therefore accept. But we don't have to. We can stop casual racism from growing into something more extreme. We can give it no encouragement. No respect. No place. No power. We can give it nothing.*'

This short black-and-white video by Taika Waititi supports the New Zealand Human Rights Commission's 'Give Nothing to Racism' campaign. In a series of answers to short, frequently asked questions Waititi asks viewers what they can 'give to racism'. It's

classic Kiwi humour from the creator of *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* and *JoJo Rabbit*. This video could have a place in any classroom from Year 7 to Year 12.

Happiness a film by Steve Cutts (2017) Animated film https://www.shortoftheweek.com/2017/11/26/happiness/

This four-minute film is a savage satire on the dehumanising effects of capitalism and comsumer culture. The rats swarm as they shop, work, travel and follow the money to Bizet's *Carmen Suite No 2 Habanera.* This short film could be an excellent start to a unit on satire in Years 9 or 10.
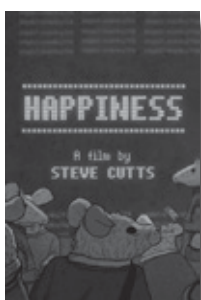
The Death of Stalin directed by Armando Iannucci (2018) Film 93 mins (MA) 15+

When the tyrant Stalin collapses in March 1953 finding a doctor is a problem as all the good ones are dead or in the gulag. After his death Stalin's henchmen, including Beria, Malenkov, Khrushchev and Malenkov engage in a violent power struggle over his succession. In this blackest of black comedies, Iannucci laces the jokes with a paralysing fear. We watch the Central Committee gang twist and turn in their rabid attempts to come out as top dog; Malenkov can't remember who is alive and who is dead. The funeral preparations are hysterical and create uproarious problems as Soviet society threatens to fall apart. A knowledge of the history behind the dictator's life and death does enrich the deadly humour, although historical accuracy cannot be expected. It's bloody, tasteless, toxic and unbearably funny. The MA rating reflects the bloodthirsty nature of the satire because, as the *New York Times* reviewer Anthony Lane says it 'dares to meet outrage with outrage'. A risky, wonderful film to consider in Year 11 for students who may be studying *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in Year 12.

Reference

Creating Micro Stories Erika Boas& Emma Jenkins (2019) AATE

Micro stories (or sudden, quick or flash fiction) are a wonderful way to get students engaged with writing. Micro fiction can range from six words to a thousand words. This excellent text details strategies to get students writing micro fiction and provides examples of short stories to model and inspire students. Ernest Hemingway's 'For sale: baby shoes, never worn' is one of many fine examples. One of the messages of the authors for students is to consider what is not told is as important as what is told. Readers can be led to infer and interpret through their exploration of other writers; and this can be done in a form that seems perfectly suited to the digital age. The flexibility and opportunity to work on a smaller scale will pay dividends for students as they gain confidence and expertise in writing well.

Creating micro stories will be an invaluable asset for secondary English teachers with its clear structure, excellent ideas to use in the classroom, chapters devoted to all the elements of writing fiction and a story index of 47 stories, from students, teachers and well-known authors. These stories, for other students to enjoy and emulate, are highlighted in green boxes in the text and are one of the major strengths of *Creating micro stories*. Highly recommended.

Teenagers and Reading: Literary heritages, cultural contexts and contemporary reading practices Edited by Jacqueline Manuel and Sue Brindley (2012) AATE Interface Series

Teachers will appreciate both the international and Australian research on reading and teenagers in this admirable text. Classroom teachers will find the perspectives on the state of teenagers' reading and the highly practical strategies suggested by teachers, researchers and authors, such as Libby Gleeson, most helpful. Particularly insightful is Jacqueline Manual's chapter on research in Australia and the implications for classroom practice. Her concluding chapters suggest strategies for engaging students in reading, strategies for improving reading comprehension and strategies to support teenagers who experience difficulty with reading. Other chapters promote reading in digital contexts, showcase Indigenous drama and *The 7 stages of grieving*, make observations on senior secondary reading lists, consider using drama to teach difficult texts and provide experiential approaches to reading film. *Teenagers and reading* provides deeply rewarding reading for English teachers.

Happy reading and viewing until next we meet.

AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

AATE OFFICE

General Manager:	Wendy Rush
Office Manager:	Lucy Carberry
Administration:	Jared van Abkoude
Address:	PO Box 3203, Norwood, SA, 5067
	Freephone 1800 248 379 Phone: +61 8 8332 2845 Fax: +61 8 8333 0394
	email: aate@aate.org.au
	web: www.aate.org.au

OFFICERS

President (Acting):   Erika Boas
email: aatepresident@gmail.com

Treasurer: Phil Page
email: page.pp1@bigpond.com

Editor *English in Australia*:   Kelli McGraw
email: kelli.mcgraw@qut.edu.au

Research Officer: Philip Mead
email: philip.mead@unimelb.edu.au

Commissioning Editor: Patricia Dowsett
email: trish.dowsett@hotmail.com

DELEGATES

ACTATE   Rachael Radvanyi
email: rachael.radvanyi@ed.act.edu.au

ETANSW   Susan Gazis
email: susan.gazis@bigpond.com

ETANT   Bruce Cameron
email: bruce.cameron@ntschools.net

ETAQ   Lindsay Williams
email: lindsay@englishteacherguru.com

ETAWA   Claire Jones
email: claire.cj.jones@gmail.com

SAETA   Alison Robertson
email: alisonmrobertson@me.com

TATE   Daniel Howard
email: daniel.k.howard@gmail.com

VATE   Alex Bacalja
email: alex.bacalja@unimelb.edu.au

AATE

English in Australia

Members of Associations affiliated with the Australian Association for the Teaching of English receive the Journal from their association. (Refer to address list below.)

Non-members of affiliated associations in Australia and overseas who wish to subscribe to the journal should contact the AATE office.

Advertising: rates on application to the General Manager, AATE.

Enquiries concerning subscriptions and advertising should be addressed to:

Membership of AATE is available through your state/territory English teaching association.

Readers interested in membership should contact: