

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF EARLY CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION

The constitution of the subject English in New South Wales senior

English syllabus documents 1953-1994

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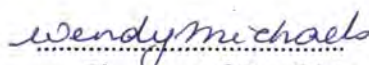


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ABSTRACT

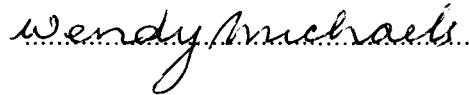
This thesis examines the ways in which the subject English has been constituted in the eleven New South Wales senior English syllabus documents produced between 1953 and 1994, and illuminates patterns and trends within its varying constitutions over that period. The thesis creates a new conceptual framework which helps to reveal the nature of the components of the subject, and how these components are interrelated.

The data analysis indicated that previous ways of describing the subject English have not fully accounted for the complexities of its constitution during this period. Earlier accounts have tended to be simplistic or reductive, or to overlook significant features of the syllabuses such as their differentiated curriculum structures, approaches to the teaching of the subject, ways of positioning the teacher and learner, and the self-justifying discourses of the syllabus itself.

Employing, developing and refining the metaphor of territories in descriptions of the subject, the thesis argues that three distinct kinds of English, labelled unified, stratified and comprehensive, can be identified in the documents. These Englishes are characterised primarily by the ways in which the components of the subject are positioned in relation to the centre and margins of the territory, and by the various elevations, depressions and compressions applied to these components. The metaphor of the territory is extended to that of a series of contour maps to allow for a more multi-dimensional analysis of the subject. These maps show how the colonising culture of the stratified conception of English situated itself in an impregnable position in the territory, expelling rivals and maintaining its dominant position both through the force of the differentiated curriculum structures and through the legitimating discourse used to cultivate consent to, and compliance with, its hegemony. The analysis also indicates that stratified English has not been able to completely expunge its rivals from the territory, some of which have begun to re-situate themselves in the margins.

Certificate

I hereby certify that this thesis has not been submitted
for a higher degree at any other university or institution.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Wendy Michaels", written over a dotted line.

Wendy Faye Michaels

25 January 2001

INTRODUCTION