Text Choice:

Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in English

Tamika Worrell

Bachelor of Arts with Bachelor of Education (Secondary)

Department of Educational Studies

Faculty of Human Sciences

Macquarie University

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ABSTRACT

The secondary subject of English offers a unique context to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives for the benefit of all students through the availability and variety of text choices. Currently, in New South Wales, teachers are mandated to select quality texts that are "widely defined Australian literature, including texts that give insights into Aboriginal experiences in Australia" (NESA, 2019a). There is currently limited understanding of what text choices English teachers make, and how they make these choices in order to teach about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, cultures and histories. Without an understanding of the texts English teachers select and the nature of these choices, it is difficult to evaluate the inclusion of these perspectives. This study aims to address this gap through a qualitative study which will provide a glimpse into the current practice of NSW English teachers text selection choices and processes. This will be carried out through semi-structured interviews with NSW English teachers in Sydney secondary schools.

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

This research was approved by the Macquarie University Human Ethics Research Committee (Appendix 1) Project ID 5331 reference 5201953318957.

(Signed)_____   Date: 6/10/2019

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

The purpose of this thesis is to provide a glimpse into how New South Wales (NSW) English teachers select texts to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and perspectives in Years 7-10, and the text choices they make. This small-scale study aims to form the first step of understanding text selection for this core curricular area, English. This introductory chapter will explore past research in this area and position its relevance to the current field of educational research.

1.2 Research questions

The research questions were developed to align with the aims of the study, and to be achievable within the requirements of the Master of Research degree. From the purpose of this study, the following research questions were developed:

- How do NSW English teachers select a text to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories in Years 7-10?
- What text choices do NSW English teachers make in order to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories in Years 7-10?

These two research questions encompass the two unique aspects of the study, firstly, the process by which teachers select texts, and secondly, the nature of the texts which are chosen to meet the requirements of this curricular area. It was hypothesised that teachers would report an over reliance on, and make a preferential selection of texts which are dominated by Anglo-Australian representations of Indigenous peoples in settler fiction of Indigenous peoples. These texts are present in NSW school bookrooms, and there is also a lack of quantity and variety of Indigenous authored texts.

This study took place entirely on the unceeded and sovereign lands of the Darug people. I acknowledge the strength and resilience of the Darug peoples who were the first group to be impacted by invasion. I have grown up on the Darug lands all my life, away from my ancestral bloodlines, so I thank the Darug Country for nurturing and teaching me.

1.3 Background

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and perspectives form an important learning area for all students to be able to engage in, within the Australian education system. This is supported by the inclusion of the cross-curriculum priority (CCP) "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures" (ACARA, 2015) in the Australian Curriculum, for each state and territory to embed in all subject areas. The introduction of this cross-curriculum priority in the Australian Curriculum placed this content area on the national agenda for all. Building on the goals of the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (2008), the priority was developed to respond to the distinct need to build a society which values Australia's

Indigenous cultures, and to build Indigenous educational attainment (MCEETYA, 2008). This speaks to the significance of this learning area for national education. In addition, Australian educators also need to meet the Australian Institute of Teacher and School Leadership professional standards, which illustrate and define what quality teaching in Australia is (AITSL, 2011). This includes professional capability 2.4 which requires graduate teachers to "Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation in the classroom between Indigenous and non-Indigenous" (AITSL, 2011, p.13).

Australian Indigenous peoples' experiences of education are imprinted with a history of exclusion, racialisation and racism. Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson (2016) identify the experiences of racism for Aboriginal people, noting that these discourses of racism and disadvantage are closely tied to Eurocentric epistemologies that plague understandings of Aboriginal identities. They note that the "insidious effects of racism still plagues the Australian educational research agenda" (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016, p.786). Historically, the Australian education system has perpetuated misconceptions and false histories of Indigenous people, which is a wrong that the contemporary education system needs to right. This project aims to undertake the first steps of disrupting the current discourses of perpetuating misconceptions through gaining an understanding into current text choice practices for the English classroom. Texts and pedagogies for teaching texts can act as a conduit for promulgated deficit discourses on identity which perpetuate historical stereotypical discourses on identity.

In NSW, English remains the only compulsory unit of study in the curriculum throughout primary and secondary schooling (Manuel & Carter, 2017). This positions the subject of English as a

priority area for all students. The NSW K-10 English syllabus states that "across the stage, the selection of texts must give students experience of: … texts which are widely regarded as quality literature; a widely defined Australian literature, including texts that give insights into Aboriginal experiences in Australia" (New South Wales Education Standards Authority [NESA], 2019a). This illustrates that the texts which are selected by English educators must, at some point in the learning Stage, offer insights into Aboriginal experiences in Australia. When considered alongside the cross-curriculum priority which is mandated on a national level, students should be enriched through the study of this curricular area from Years K-10 in NSW. Comparatively, in NSW Stage 6 English texts requirements include "a range of Australian texts, including texts by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander authors and those that give insights into diverse experiences of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples" (NESA, 2017). This highlights a distinct difference between the requirements for junior and senior years by not explicitly including the consideration of Indigenous authorship.

The subject of English naturally lends itself to this curriculum priority area due to the variety of unique and varied texts available to teach. It is important to consider what is meant by a text, and the term 'text' is widely used but defined through a variety of ways. The following definition is from the NSW English K-10 Syllabus Glossary:

> *Communications of meaning produced in any media that incorporates language, including sound, print, film, electronic and multimedia representations. Texts include written, spoken, non-verbal, visual or multimodal communications of meaning. They may be*

extended unified works, a series of related pieces or a single, simple piece of communication. (NESA, 2019b)

This broad definition provides an interpretation of what a text is and moves beyond the historical perception of texts being tangible items, such as classic novels, plays and poetry. This definition highlights the opportunities educators have to utilise varied forms of texts in classroom practice. This study utilised the NESA (2019b) definition, as it is the description made available to NSW educators and aligns with the purpose of the study.

Currently, there is a lack of clarity about the selection process for texts specifically addressing the curriculum priority and syllabus area. Without knowing what texts are being taught, evaluation is more difficult in order to improve pedagogy and practice. Secondary English teachers in New South Wales have the freedom and autonomy to select which texts they teach in Years 7-10, but little is known about the specific texts which are chosen. Text choice plays an important role in gaining student interest and keeping students motivated in the classroom (Hastie & Sharplin, 2012). The syllabus requirement of providing texts that offer "insights into Aboriginal experiences" (NESA, 2019a) is twofold. Firstly, its language is not inclusive of Torres Strait Islander people, who are a distinct group separate from Aboriginal peoples. This creates a homogenisation of Indigenous peoples. This also results in a lack of alignment with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CCP. Secondly, it places the onus on educators to decide what texts provide insights into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experiences in Australia. English teachers in NSW also have access to the document *Suggested texts for the English K-10 Syllabus* (Board of Studies, 2012), which provides a starting point for selecting texts. Although this list is

quite extensive, it is now 7 years old, which means it is overlooks a range of contemporary texts for consideration and includes only texts that offer limited "insights into Aboriginal experiences" (NESA, 2019a), without consideration of Indigenous authorship. It is also not prescriptive for educators to utilise. This study aims to address this gap of knowing what is being taught by forming the first step in assessing the process and outcomes of text selection for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.

1.4 Context

The geographical context of this study is focused in New South Wales, particularly Western Sydney and surrounding suburbs. Western Sydney has the highest population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in all of Australia (Wade & Gladstone, 2019). This places a heightened obligation on high schools within this area to be embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives based on their local communities. This study is contextualised at national and state levels, through the cross-curriculum priority, and NSW English syllabus. As all educators teaching in Australian Schools are professionally mandated to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures throughout all subject areas, it is a clear priority area (ACARA, 2015).

For the purpose of this study, the term 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' has been selected as the preferential term to refer to two distinct groups of Indigenous people to Australia. This term has been extracted from the cross-curriculum priority and applied throughout this study. It is acknowledged that these terms refer to a large range of linguistically and culturally diverse groups

of peoples within these wide categories. The term "Indigenous" is also used throughout, to also refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as a shorthand version as to not overload the text. It should be acknowledged that the NESA terminology on text inclusion per Stage states "insights into Aboriginal experiences in Australia" (2019a), which neglects the inclusion of Torres Strait Islander peoples and histories. For this reason, Aboriginal is used as a singularity when contextualised by the NESA terminology. As an Aboriginal woman from Gamilaroi Country, who grew up on Darug land, I am shaped by my lived experiences, and the experiences which have been passed down generationally in my family. I do not speak for Indigenous peoples, but as an Aboriginal teacher, and an Aboriginal student who did not see themselves reflected in the classroom, beyond the History syllabus and legacies of deficit positioning.

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the topic of this thesis, the research questions which drive it and the background and context which underpin this research area. The background forms an integral component as it positions this study's relationality at both state and national levels. The remainder of the thesis is organised into four chapters. This introduction is followed by a literature review, which positions the urgency and importance of this research to address a significant gap in the literature. Chapter Three illustrates the research design and methodology utilised to carry out the study. Chapter Four and Chapter Five present the results, findings, discussion, limitations and future research possibilities.

CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

In order to understand current text selection processes in NSW for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in English, previous scholarly research in this area needs to be reviewed and critically analysed. This chapter will explore current and historical scholarly literature that contributes to this research area and positions the study as a unique cross-disciplinary contribution to the field. This literature review serves to identify a significant gap in the research and argues for a need for an understanding in the area of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in English. It aims to identify a distinct need for a contribution of this type specifically for the teaching of English, and more broadly, for the education system and for all educational stakeholders.

2.2 Approach

This literature review serves, firstly, to identify the gaps in the research field and to address the processes and issues around text selection to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in English. Secondly, the literature is presented to position current and past research in this field and to consider how it contributes to this study. This approach was deemed appropriate in order to bring together two traditionally separate areas of scholarly research. The first area is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in the curriculum, and the second area is English pedagogy and text choice. The literature reviewed was initially organised broadly into two key

themes (1) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in the curriculum, and the cross-curriculum priority, and (2) English teaching and text choice. These two themes served to capture the two fields of the thesis topic and were established after tagging the reviewed literature to the most appropriate category. After further exploration, the literature was divided into the following themes:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in the curriculum;

- Historical context of English;

- Text selection and English pedagogy; and

- Cross-curriculum priorities.

Any additional literature was then categorised to the most appropriate theme. It is important to acknowledge that these fields of scholarship are problematised by dominant white Anglo-normative voices within a neoliberalist educational context, and where possible, they are identified.

In order to undertake the literature review, a range of search terms was utilised with various search strategies such as Boolean operators, parentheses and truncation. The Boolean operator "OR" was utilised for "Indigenous", "Aboriginal" and "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander". This can be attributed to the variety of existing colonial discourses, which utilise different terms for Indigenous people within different regions and contexts. Boolean operators "AND" were also utilised to ensure searching assisted in finding English subject content alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. As the purpose of this study is to gain an impression of the current practice,

future studies building on this would endeavor to utilise a more in-depth approach to reviewing literature.

2.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and the curriculum

The first section of the literature review focalised the theme "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and the curriculum". This area is a broad, politicised and widely researched conceptualisation. Inclusions were made through the contribution to discussions on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in the curriculum that relate to the English subject area. A significant exclusion to this section is the broad literature on the strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. This well researched scholarly area, whilst important, is only relevant for this discourse when pertaining directly to the benefit of representation in the curriculum and school spaces.

Within the Western history of education in Australia, a national approach to the curriculum is a new frontier in research. This means that there are a range of recent scholarly analyses that have taken place since its conception. Parkinson and Jones (2019) explore what elements of Indigenous education are privileged, and which are marginalised within the Australian Curriculum. The researchers identify a lack of cohesion in rationalising the inclusion of Aboriginal knowledges, histories and cultures in the national curriculum (Parkinson & Jones, 2019). As part of their analysis, they found an Assimilative Monolingual Discourse operant within the English curriculum documents. This assimilative discourse negates Aboriginal students within this system by not considering the role of Aboriginal English, and other Aboriginal languages (Parkinson & Jones,

2019). This contribution assists in showing that Indigenous discourses are silenced within the Australian curriculum, even when present, and particularly in the English curriculum documents.

Within the curriculum and classroom, particular tasks and content for Indigenous cultures and histories have a more intensive cognitive expectations than others. Lowe and Yunkaporta (2013) identified a lack of cognitive expectation for this content through analysis of the first four content descriptions and elaborations for English, History, Mathematics and Science released by ACARA for the national curriculum. They identified that the majority of the cognitive expectation for Indigenous content sat within the primary years, with general infrequency within English Stages 4 and 5. This attributed a low cognitive association to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges throughout the curriculum. This reinforces the dominant discourse of Anglo-Australian perspectives within the Australian curriculum, associating low level cognitive skill engagement with Indigenous knowledges.

Educators' experiences of apprehension towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content within the curriculum is an important area of consideration for English educators. In relation to the AITSL professional standards, Buxton (2018) found that even experienced educators display a lack of confidence when meeting standards 1.4 "Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students", and 2.4 "Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians" (AITSL, 2011, p.13). This is shared in the professional development research into these Standards by Ma Rhea, Anderson and Atkinson (2012), who identified that teachers have feelings of "fear, resistance and concern" (p. 51) for these Standards. These feelings could be applied to the English

syllabus when including texts to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. In order to address potential feelings of resistance, dismissal and apprehension towards the inclusion of Indigenous content, perspectives and knowledge, this study aims to understand current teacher practice.

Apprehension towards the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, histories and cultures is a commonplace theme amongst literature on the Australian curriculum. These feelings of apprehension can stem from a variety of reasons, such as "How do educators embed these perspectives in a way this is not tokenistic?" or "How can non-Indigenous teachers do this when they already feel challenged and have their own biases?" (Nakata, 2011, p. 2). Nakata (2011) positions these questions as ongoing challenges that have existed in Indigenous education discourses for many years. As this apprehension continues in educational contexts, there is a need to ensure teachers become comfortable in this discomfort in order to meet curriculum expectations. Through rethinking how Indigenous content is presented and how students engage with it in the classroom space, it can appear regularly at varying cognitive levels for the benefit of all students (Nakata, 2011). This is particularly true for the benefit of Indigenous students in the classroom. This includes having authentic representations of themselves in the texts which they are presented with in the English classroom.

Exploration of this apprehension forms an important consideration for the impact of meeting professional expectations. Foley and Howell (2017) discuss the cultural awareness discourse for teachers and educators and identify a shortcoming of this training in capturing the historical and political relationship which Aboriginal people are subjugated to with the state, something integral

to developing sufficient understanding and building positive relationships (Foley & Howell, 2017). Similarly to Nakata (2011), Foley and Howell (2017) acknowledge the anxiety of teachers in teaching 'authentically' when it comes to Aboriginal history, acknowledging that authenticity as a teacher is just as important. They suggest (the teacher) not position themselves as the authority or expert, simply as the facilitator of learning (Foley & Howell, 2017). This identifies the problematics of teacher positioning, and the resulting challenges when engaging with Indigenous epistemologies.

As the Australian curriculum is steeped in Eurocentric positioning and values, there is a need to consider a culturally responsive curriculum that challenges the dominant discourses. This dominance of Eurocentric prioritisation continues in many settler states, including first nations Canada and the United States. Ragoonaden and Mueller (2017) explore the development of Indigenous knowledges fusing with non-Indigenous discourses in education for the benefit of Indigenous students. Utilising the term 'culturally responsive', they define a culturally responsive pedagogy as existing in a discourse which acknowledges diverse learners, and the varied cultural value those learners have within the classroom (Ragoonaden & Mueller, 2017). A culturally responsive curriculum in Australia could aid the success and participation of Indigenous students, and contribute to the development of global citizens for all learners.

2.4 Historical development of subject English

It is important to look at the historical developments in Secondary English in order to understand the modern-day landscape we are currently working within. This section will explore the history

of the subject English that has impacted text selection and choice in Australian schools. Dolin, Jones and Dowsett (2017) explore the development of academic literary studies and school subject English since 1945. This historical exploration highlights the challenges which have been experienced by teachers and syllabus writers alike to balance the demands of engagement with a range of literature alongside key academic skills utilised in English, such as critical thinking (Dolin at al., 2017). This is a challenge which continues in English today. Identifying the twenty-year period between 1945 and 1965 when English developed at different paces due to the state interpretation and leadership, Dolin et al., (2017) classified the division of English into two separate study areas: literature studies for advancement of literary skills and basic English for all students to gain key communication skills.

The following period, 1965 to 1985 saw a revamped focus on the inclusion of Australian literature, due to the university trend in focusing on the value of Australian literature (Dolin et al., 2017). They categorise the third era of changing in academic literary studies as 1982 to 2005, which centralised the development and acceptance of literary theory, originating from Terry Eagleton's 1983 text, *Literary Theory*. This era brought sizable changes through the acknowledgement of diverse student cohorts and technological developments occurring at this time. This period led to the questioning of the Anglo-Australian and Eurocentric canon which had been present in Australian schools for many years and the crossing of boundaries of subject English with cultural studies. Dolin et al. (2017) have questioned the lack of literary forms which have been lost amongst the move away from the canon, such as prose and poetry. By accepting the change of what we know to be a text, and the distinct benefits of moving away from the canon of literature primarily dominated by Anglo-normative voices, further growth within subject English can take place.

Similar to the exploration of historical developments in English, the historical developments of text prescriptions in NSW can also be analysed. Manuel and Carter (2017) look to historical prescribed text lists in NSW to understand text progression within secondary English. They identify the continuing positioning of a Western Canon in the form of fiction, prose, drama and poetry, since the first evidence of text prescriptions in NSW in 1911. Since the 1911 text list, the Anglo-normative trend of settler fiction continued with minor amendments until 1943, although texts did change, the type of texts were consistent. They state this pattern changed in 1945 with a new English syllabus document, leading to all secondary subject syllabuses being published individually. The most significant change was the removal of junior secondary English texts prescriptions, now only present in the final year of study in secondary English. This change has continued in NSW with text prescriptions remaining a core component of Higher School Certificate study in English. This is something absent in the junior years in New South Wales, where instead a "suggested texts list" exists.

This syllabus change also promoted an encouragement for wide reading amongst literature, and a recalibrated focus on Australian literature (Manuel & Carter, 2017). This change has continued in Years 7-10 in NSW English with a mandatory study of Australian literature. A focus on Australian literature is reflected in the most up to date NSW recommended text lists (2012). Unchanged since 1953 is the NSW Year 12 assessment format, with the two, two-hour papers remaining the same to this date. Manuel and Carter's (2017) exploration of the history of text prescriptions provides a unique insight into the changes which have occurred in NSW subject English texts. The key changes which occurred in 1945 have continued to permeate and remain present today, such as the

removal of junior text prescriptions. The impact of this is highlighted in the ability for teachers to utilise their skills to create tailored learning programs for their students with texts to complement the syllabus. However, with teachers experiencing feelings of apprehension towards the inclusion of Indigenous content and perspectives and with a lack of quality direction for diverse text choices, the traditional canon continues to be referenced. This leads us back to the question at hand, what texts are English teachers in NSW using to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, histories and cultures, and why?

The year 2012 formed a significant year for English teachers all over Australia, as it marked the first round of implementation of the national English curriculum. The implementation of the national curriculum coincided with the national year of reading, fittingly so, as the new curriculum focused on Australian literature (Mclean Davies, 2012). Mclean Davies (2012) proposes a structured approach for auditing the text choices of English departments, to assess and realign if needed. As in this research project, McLean Davies (2012) stated that in order to assess, there is a need to know what texts are being taught. Understanding what texts are being taught needs to be paired with the rationale and process for the choice. In exploring this process of rationalising choice, Mclean Davies (2012) lists that the rationale can be varied across departments and staff, including factors such as genre, student engagement and text availability. Understanding the rationale contributes to understanding the choices teachers make. The author concludes that moving forward, teachers of tertiary English will need to take time to explore new texts, with a particular focus on Indigenous and Asian texts to align with the national curriculum (Mclean Davies, 2012). This aligns with the aims of this research project, to identify the varied nature of text choice, as well as knowing what is being taught through an auditing process.

2.5 English pedagogy and text choice

This section of the review was categorised as "English pedagogy and text choice" and allowed an exploration of English subject specific scholarly literature that positions this study among other understandings about text choice. There is a wide range of literature, which broadly focuses on the importance of text choice in the classroom. This range extended through multiple subject areas and specialties, such as English as an additional language/dialect (EAL/D) and History but here, it was limited to text choice discourses relating to English pedagogy, with a focus on text selection.

With curriculum change comes material to support teachers in navigating the change. Sykes (2012) provides an example of this in her article "Choosing Literary texts for the Australian Curriculum". She outlines textual resourcing for the cross-curriculum priorities for the Australian Curriculum in 2012, marking the period of transition of inclusion of the new CCPs. This contribution offers a 'tick a box' approach to meeting these priority areas, as opposed to offering ways to meaningfully engage and select texts for these areas but it is relevant as it engaged teachers and English department text selections at a time period of crucial change. This is exemplified through the suggestion of Craig Silvey's *Jasper Jones*, "It ticks off both the Asian and the Indigenous requirements" (p.24). Sykes' (2012) suggestions for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CCP is also reaffirms a reliance on non-Indigenous imaginings of Indigenous people, such as the suggestion of Jackie French's *Nanberry: Black Brother White*. This article forms an important example of the types of scholarly literature designed for teachers to utilise in order to inform their practice. It also aligns itself with the hypothesis of this study, that teachers will report a reliance on Anglo-Australian misappropriations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

There is pressure on English teachers to select texts which meet syllabus requirements, engage students, and align with educational resources. The text choices teachers make play an integral role in ensuring the engagement of students (Hastie & Sharplin, 2012). Without engagement it becomes difficult to ensure learning will take place. With a lack of set texts or syllabus constraints in junior English, the teacher's role of choice is heightened and can be examined (Hastie & Sharplin, 2012). Hastie and Sharplin's study found that student engagement, school context and school belief all played a role in influencing teachers' choice (p.43). Importantly, Hastie and Sharplin identified a need for further research into Aboriginal texts due to the focus present in English in the Australian Curriculum (2012) in order to gain an understanding of text selection for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cross-curriculum priority.

Freida French, 'Telling Stories in Australia: The depiction of Aboriginal people in young adult literature' (2002), offers an important consideration about the inclusion of Aboriginal texts. French explores the prevalence of non-Indigenous people telling "Aborigines" stories (p.16) and the outrage about this in Indigenous communities. French's article centralises that Aboriginal people need to tell their own stories and she uses *Deadly Unna* by Phillip Gwynne and *Dougy* by James Moloney as examples of non-Indigenous misrepresentation of voice and Aboriginal people. French presents a key area of concern about the prevalence of non-Indigenous texts being flagged as Aboriginal. This aligns with the *Suggested texts for the English K-10 Syllabus* (Board of Studies, 2012) list, which tags *Deadly, Unna?* by Phillip Gwynne as offering "insights into Aboriginal experiences in Australia" (NESA, 2019a). This supports a dominant Anglo- Australian discourse through the preferencing of Anglo-normative texts and well-known authors, highlighting the

urgency to understand what texts are being selected to meet Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander syllabus requirements.

Whilst this study focuses on subject English, as it exists within primary and secondary education in New South Wales, the discipline of English also exists within higher education. Collins-Gearing and Smith (2016) offer a higher education perspective on evaluating and indigenising the discipline of English. There is an important consideration to be made when Indigenising this discipline, as the literary and colonial functions are at an intersection, so Indigenising assists in decolonising the subject area (Collins-Gearing & Smith, 2016). Within this process in action at a New South Wales University, the authors identified that the predominantly white-Australian cohort struggled to centre Indigenous texts and perspectives, resulting in their resistance (Collins-Gearing & Smith, 2016). This tertiary perspective provides a useful example to understand the process of centering Indigenous texts, and the scaffolding that is needed to avoid resistance from students, which in a school context could also be extended to a staff consideration.

International perspectives can provide insight into aspects of English pedagogy. Watkins and Ostenson (2015) provide a United States perspective on influences on teachers' text choices. Although an entirely different geographical and cultural context, there are some universally applicable elements that the authors raise, such as the impact and consequence that text selection can have on students. Watkins and Ostenson (2015) identify the trend of relying on the 'classics', a category dominated by Anglo male voices. Although there is a place for texts from the canon, text selection in Australia needs to reflect the student diversity within a classroom and present in the wider Australian nation. As motivation and engagement continue to be significant factors in

text selection, Watkins and Ostenson's (2015) study identified a large range of factors which impact text selection at both the individual and the school context level. One of their participants identified their own role in text selection, stating they need to like a text before sharing with their students (Watkins & Ostenson, 2015). This study provides a useful example of an international context and the influencing factors of text selection on teachers.

Holloway and Grieg (2011) offer an additional and useful international perspective on text selection, from Ontario Canada. In a similar way to Australia, Ontario does not enforce a select list of texts for teachers to select from, leaving significant room for teachers to select contemporary texts (Holloway & Grieg, 2011). Through their in-depth face to face interviews with English teachers, Holloway and Grieg (2011) identified 4 key themes from the factors that influence English teacher text selection. The themes identified included canonisation vs teachers as agents of change, the role of gender, role of sexuality and homophobia and lastly, race and ethnicity issues which shape course design. As this study is methodologically similar to this study, it is a useful example from an international context. Holloway and Grieg (2011) state in their conclusion, "Developing a critical consciousness in students who are preparing to live and work in the 21st century can only happen if the diversity of student populations in terms such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and class see themselves in the materials educators choose to teach" (p.38). This finding shows relevance to the context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content within the English subject area in Australia, moving beyond the need for there to be Indigenous students in the classroom for authentic representations to be included.

Aboriginal peoples have long identified the need for Aboriginal people to be telling our own stories, instead of the appropriation of voices of Aboriginal people found in Australian literature. Leane (2010, 2014 & 2016) represents the problematics of these misappropriated voices of Aboriginal people within settler literature in Australia. By looking at the representation on Aboriginal people within Australia literature an analysis of the forms of power and authority can occur (Leane, 2010). Importantly, Leane (2016) identifies the need for schools to be engaging with discussions of the politics of representations and to draw on the range of contemporary Aboriginal authorship that is available. Leane's work provides an important contribution to this study by encapsulating the misappropriation of Indigenous voices. This study moves to the pedagogical implications for Indigenous authorship in the English classroom and beyond and acknowledges there is an extensive discourse on Aboriginal literature in Australia that was excluded from this study due to its scope. For the purpose of this study, authenticity in text choices in this context is determined by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authorship, rather than non-Indigenous misappropriates which are prevalent

2.6 Cross-Curriculum Priorities

This section will explore the cross-curriculum priorities, with a focus on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures CCP. As discussed in the introduction, the cross-curriculum priorities stemmed from the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008). From this, three areas were selected: "Sustainability", "Asia, and Australia's engagement with Asia" and "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures (ACARA, 2015). This means since the introduction of these priorities, educators have needed to give

attention to these three unique areas, through all subject areas. The CCPs have received a lot of scholarly attention due to the unique nature of the priorities and as a national priority.

Gauci and Curwood (2017) offer a key contribution to the literature through their exploration of English teachers in NSW and the Asian cross-curriculum priority which links to a perspective on the importance of exploring English teachers' interactions with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priority. Their research found that although NSW English teachers see the value in the Asian priority, many felt underprepared and ill-equipped to teach it. An important concern acknowledged by Gauci and Curwood (2017) is the risk of tokenistic and shallow engagement. They address this concern in the following "Though this cross-curriculum priority may encourage English teachers to explore rich literary traditions, compelling text types, and diverse subject matter, there is a risk that such topics are explored in a way that is tokenistic, or otherwise culturally insensitive" (p.164).

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures CCP have been researched in scholarly literature through the lens of subject areas other than English. This is demonstrated in Baynes' (2016) study, through the lens of Secondary Science teachers reacting and preparing for this new cross-curriculum priority in the largely Western curriculum. Baynes (2016) utilised a participatory action research (PAR) cycle with five Secondary Science educators in order to conceptualise personal and professional understandings to this inclusion. Similarly to Buxton (2018) and Nakata (2011), Baynes (2016) through the PAR process identifies feelings of concern with tokenism, and reduction to a 'tick-a-box' exercise, as well as concern for competing epistemologies of western and Indigenous knowledge systems. This work provides an example of

the cross-curriculum priority in discussion being researched through the Science subject area and assists in identifying a need to explore this priority through all subject areas, including English.

Although there is a range of scholarly literature about the enactment of the cross-curriculum priorities, there are also a range of critiques. Maxwell, Lowe and Salter (2018) position the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures CCP as problematising Indigenous education. This problematisation contributes to a historical discourse of attributing blame to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for the gap in educational performance based in Anglo-normative and Eurocentric systems. This blame fails to consider the systematic issues which impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, such as socio-economic status, racism, health and access. Maxwell et al. (2018) offer an important consideration of the cross-curriculum priority, identifying that it both problematises, and then solves the problematisation through the rationale. The authors suggest treating the CCP as an entry point to further explore Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures dialogues in the classroom, whilst also being able to use it to critique deficit positionings (Maxwell et al., 2018). This exploration offers an understanding of the deficit positioning which can underpin seemingly positive language around curriculum expectations.

It is important to consider that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures CCP sits alongside two other priorities, "Asia, and Australia's Engagement with Asia" and "Sustainability". Discussions within scholarly literature have explored the justification of these particular priority areas and whether they are the right choice, or whether further priorities are needed. Ditchburn (2014) argues that these three priorities do not sufficiently capture the

MCEETYA goals, calling for a social justice priority to extend beyond the three current priorities. He states that the inclusion of a social justice CCP would extend itself to priorities marginalised voices which are often "othered" (Ditchburn, 2014). His exploration highlights how a social justice priority could be a beneficial contribution to the current suite of CCPs and contributes to understanding the nature of the priorities teachers see as beneficial for their classrooms.

2.7 Conclusion

This literature review has presented a critical background into the four distinct themes which contribute to the research area of Text Choice and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. These four key areas of Indigenous perspectives and the curriculum, historical context of subject English, English pedagogy and text choice and the cross-curriculum priorities present the current state of research. Importantly, an absence of literature which provides an understanding into the current practice of English teachers selecting texts to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives is evident. Hence, this study aims to fill this knowledge gap by undertaking the first step in understanding the current educational landscape in New South Wales in which English teachers are engaging. By finding out the unknown, further research can take place to offer further scholarly contributions, as well as making suggestions for resourcing and professional development.

CHAPTER 3 - RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Overview

This chapter will outline the research design and methods which were utilised to carry out the research. It will identify the theoretical framework, sampling strategy, participants, data collection methods and analysis approaches, as well as limitations of the study.

The aim of this study was to gain an understanding of how NSW English teachers select texts to teach, and what texts are being selected for embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, cultures and histories. This was guided through the following research questions:

- How do NSW English teachers select a text to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories in Years 7-10?
- What text choices do NSW English teachers make in order to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories in Years 7-10?

This aim and the research questions are contextualised within the area of subject English with NSW schools. These questions have a reliance on the professionalism of the English teachers to engage in personal reflection on their own pedagogical practice into their personal processes for text selection. This has shaped the research method and paradigm.

3.2 Research design

Research paradigm

Qualitative research forms a distinctive research strategy of social inquiry, grounded in qualitative data collection in the form of words and images (Bryman, 2016). Qualitative research offers a holistic approach to investigation and knowledge building, emphasising the role of research reflexivity and processes (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). For this project, qualitative inquiry was justified as the most relevant research paradigm as the study aims to describe and understand the current educational landscape which New South Wales English teachers are engaged with. This approach to knowledge building is further justified through the interdisciplinary nature of this study which qualitative research accommodates.

For Indigenous communities and researchers, institutions remain places which replicate colonial relationships, and research itself is entwined with the political (Kovach, 2009). These colonial relationships within institutions can be challenged by Indigenous ways of knowing and being centralised (Kovach, 2009). There is a space to utilise an Indigenous research paradigm which aligns with qualitative inquiry which involves making a conscious decision to move away from the Western tradition of thought. This decision translates into practice through the use of Kovach's (2009) conversational methodology, "...*conversation is a non-structured method of gathering knowledge. While this may seem like another way of saying interview, the term interview does not capture the essence of the approach*" (p.51). It highlights a need for Indigenous academic voices

to be leading this research area, utilising research approaches from international Indigenous communities.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework positions both the researcher and the research through the selection of an ideological positioning (Holiday, 2007). The theoretical framework of this study will utilise Nakata's (2007) *Cultural Interface* to situate the research, due to the contested territory in which Indigenous knowledges exist within school settings. This study has also been informed by Moreton-Robinson's (2013) *Indigenous Women's Standpoint theory*, which positions the researcher as an Indigenous woman living in colonial Australia.

The Cultural Interface refers to the contested space which exists between Indigenous and Western knowledge systems (Nakata, 2007a). This liminal space does not subscribe to a singular system, it is a curation of interconnectedness, between the social and political, and the various epistemologies that exists on either side (Nakata, 2007a). Nakata (2002) defines this space as "the place where we live and learn, the place that conditions our lives, the place that shapes our futures and more to the point the place where we are active agents in our own lives - where we make decisions - our lifeworld" (p.5). This captures the prevalence of the intersecting binaries of Indigenous and Western knowledges, and how the interface has infiltrated all aspects of life. The Cultural Interface is found on school grounds and continues to be an impeding force as movements towards including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and knowledges within the curriculum grows. For this reason, the Cultural Interface offers a unique and pertinent framework to analyse the data with

consideration of the space in which non-Indigenous teachers participate when engaging in the teaching of Indigenous perspectives. Nakata's (2007a) Cultural Interface framework is illustrated by Thorpe and Burgess (2016) in their study on lecturer pre-conceived notions on pre-service teachers' knowledge of Indigenous studies in a mandatory tertiary course. They identified preconceptions and allowed them to better understand their context and adapt. This study provides a relevant and useful example of the Cultural Interface as a theoretical framework in practice with teachers.

In this study, the Cultural Interface (Nakata, 2007a) refers to the space in which the nine non-Indigenous educators who participated in the research reside. The definition of this space is based on the ways in which these teachers engage with Indigenous knowledges, histories and perspectives within their unique school contexts. It also forms the space in which these teachers engage with Indigenous community members, parents, carers and students. The Cultural Interface (Nakata, 2007a) offers the opportunity to analyse the processes in which teachers engage, the choices they make in this space, and their feelings and emotions within this engagement. Whilst this is an intrinsically contested space, due to the tensions created by the imposing Western binary, it is acknowledged that there are ways to find balance in this space and to overcome the challenges which exist in educational spaces.

As the researcher of this project of this project, I am positioned as an Aboriginal woman, engaging with the academy. In order to inform the theoretical framework and the process of undertaking research and engaging with the academy, Moreton-Robinson's (2013) Indigenous Women's Standpoint Theory is utilised. This offers a unique position of analysis and critique of both colonial

and patriarchal paradigms informed by my own standpoint as an Aboriginal woman (Moreton-Robinson, 2013). This acknowledges that Indigenous women of Australia, although not homogenous, have a shared understanding of intersecting oppressions. Moreton-Robinson (2013) criticises Nakata's (2007) standpoint theory for the lack of consideration to how gender informs Indigenous standpoint. It is for this reason that this study layers both Nakata's (2007) Cultural Interface and Moreton-Robinson's (2013) Indigenous Women's Standpoint Theory. This standpoint theory identifies the social positioning of the researcher and challenges the homogenisation of voice which dominates Aboriginal stories through settler fiction.

3.3 Methodology

Method

This study utilised Kovach's (2009) conversation methodology as an approach to knowledge gathering and data collection. This methodology, when compared to the Western tradition, most closely resembles semi-structured interviews. Drawing on the role of storytelling, which is prevalent in Indigenous cultures worldwide, including my own upbringing, this method aims to allow participants to share their stories of text selection. A semi-structured interview approach for interviewing English teachers that has been utilised by O'Sullivan (2005) and Cheung (2015) offers a method to elicit attitudes, viewpoints and processes from English teachers. The terms conversation and interview will be used throughout to describe the exchanges with participants.

To ensure the aims of the study were being met, a range of subsidiary questions were developed from the research questions to guide the conversations with participants. The interview questions from the guide covered the integral components of the research questions and are found below. The important element was that it was not integral to follow this guide as the study was more reliant on the participant telling the story of their practice. The guide offered a prompt to the research to assist in guiding the participants' storytelling. To do so effectively, it was important to ensure the participants were comfortable with the content.

1. How do you select texts to teach students in Years 7-10?

2. Have you utilised this document before 'Suggested texts for the English K-10 Syllabus' list?

3. Are you familiar with the cross-curriculum priority "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures"?

4. How do you address this priority in the classroom?

5. The NSW English syllabus states that across the stages text should give students experiences of "a widely defined Australian literature, including texts that give insights into Aboriginal experiences in Australia" (NESA, 2019a). What texts to you utilise to meet this requirement in Stages 4 and 5?

6. How do you select texts for this curriculum area?

7. Do you think there are any challenges to meeting this curriculum area in English?

8. Do you have any other comments about this curriculum area within the subject of English, or on text selection?

This guide served as a reminder to cover the key areas of the research study including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures cross-curriculum priority, what texts are being selected and how those texts are chosen. As the conversational methodology relies on the story telling of the participant, the guide assists participants who are not comfortable providing expansive responses. In practice, the interview guide was adjusted between interviews to expand on areas which were overlooked in the interview guide development stage. The full guide which includes probes to prompt participants' storytelling, can be found in Appendix 3.

Sampling strategy

Due to the condensed timeline of this project, a purposive sampling strategy was selected. Purposive sampling draws on specific characteristics of a population, and requests their participation (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). For this study, the population characteristics which were sought are:

- Educators currently teaching at New South Wales public secondary schools;
- First (or primary) teaching area subject English; and
- Minimum of one-year teaching experience.

These parameters ensured that the teachers who were interviewed had sufficient experience to provide in-depth responses to the questions for this study. The parameter of teachers currently teaching in New South Wales Secondary Schools was to ensure comparison could take place

between schools. This also allowed only two levels of ethics approval to be sought, which was integral for the timeline of the project. The first, or primary teaching subject English parameter was to eliminate teachers who may have one English class a fortnight, but who are trained in the humanities. The minimum of one-year of teaching experience was to ensure that the participants had some experience in embedding both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CCP, and the NSW English syllabus text requirements. These limits were captured through demographic questions which were asked before the interview began and can be found in Appendix 3.

The strategy of purposive sampling has the limitation of poor generalisability to wider populations, but this is a limitation which is present in non-random sampling techniques (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). Limited generalisability is justified as the goal of this study is to gain a glimpse into the current practice of New South Wales English teachers, rather than making inferences about a wider population. For this reasoning, it was determined that a sample of nine participants, from a minimum of three schools would be sufficient.

Participant recruitment

Participants were recruited through direct application to the principals of the participating schools. This strategy was to ensure that protocol was followed from ethics, and coercion was avoided by not directly approaching potential participants. Principals of nineteen schools in Sydney were sent an email invitation, a formal letter invitation, Macquarie University Ethics clearance letter (Appendix 1), SERAP ethical clearance letter (if a public school), and participant information and consent forms.

The invitations were sent via email to sixteen NSW public schools, and three NSW non-government schools. Schools were recontacted a maximum of three times via email, and twice via phone call. After this level of contact without response, the schools were considered non-responding. Of the nineteen invitations, responses were received from five of the eighteen total invitations, these consisted of two rejections, three acceptances and thirteen non-responses. As 2019 brought in significant Stage 6 syllabus changes, English faculties were particularly encumbered with a new workload at the time of participant recruitment. Of the two rejections received, one of the schools named the Stage 6 syllabus change as the reason for not participating. Once the schools who agreed to participate were determined, participants at the school were identified through the leadership staff and an interview schedule was established and carried out.

Site A

Site A is a secondary 7-12 coeducational government school located in Sydney, with 1% Indigenous student population as reported on the MySchool website (ACARA, 2018a). The demographic information of the participants is found below in Table 1.

Table 1 – *Site A Participant Summary*

Participant	Helen	Malcolm	Maria
Gender	F	M	F
Age	21-30	21-30	21-30
Total Years Teaching	2	2	1.5
Years teaching at current school	1.5	0.75	1.5

Site B

Site B is a secondary 7-12 coeducational government school located in Sydney, with 3%

Indigenous student population as reported on the MySchool website (ACARA, 2018b). The

demographic information of the participants is found below in Table 2.

Table 2 – *Site B Participant Summary*

Participant	Bianca	Emilia	Imogen
Gender	F	F	F
Age	21-30	31-40	21-30
Total Years Teaching	5	14	4
Years teaching at current school	4	12	3.5

Site C

Site C is a K-12 non-government coeducational school located in Sydney which has a 0%

Indigenous student population (ACARA, 2018c). The demographic information of the participants

is found below in Table 3.

Table 3 – *Site C Participant Summary*

Participant	Juliet	Eleanor	Olivia
Gender	F	F	F
Age	21-30	41-50	31-40
Total Years Teaching	4	23	13
Years teaching at current school	4	1	2

As represented across Tables 1-3, the demographics of the participants were varied. Of the 9 participants, eight were female, one was male, and together they had a range of 1.5 to 23 years teaching experience. Most of the participants six of the nine participants fell into the age category of 21-30 and a median of four ears teaching experience.

Data collection and management

Data were collected during the conversations with participants. Data collection took place on the school grounds at Site A, Site B and Site C with respective participants at a time of their choosing. The interviews were recorded on a digital voice recording device. Consent for this was sought in both the Participant Information and consent forms, as well as verbally at the beginning of each interview. The audio data were transferred from the recorder to a secure folder on the researcher's laptop, which was password protected. The signed participant information and hard copies of the signed consent forms were stored securely according to ethics protocols.

Transcriptions were made from the audio files through the external transcription agency, Rev. Rev guarantees confidentiality through non-disclosure agreements of the staff and organisation, files are also encrypted between start and end points. The audio files were de-identified to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. The written transcripts had any identifying information removed, including references to schools' names and colleague names. Once the transcriptions were made, they were checked against the audio for both accuracy and data saturation. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of both individual participants, as well as their schools. Upon reflection on the process of pseudonymity, it is acknowledged that naming is an

important practice and has significant power attributed to it in both practice, and names selected (Lahman, Rodriguez, Moses, Griffin, Mendoza & Yacoub, 2015). In order to acknowledge this, future practice will allow participants to select their own pseudonym, should they wish to.

Data analysis

Data analysis was guided through the principles of thematic content analysis through the Braun and Clarke framework (2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) provide a detailed approach to thematic content analysis. The core of this approach involves analysis to find themes within the data set, defining a theme as capturing something important about the data, with some level of patterned instance (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Importance is also placed on the role of the researcher, and the range of decisions they will make in before, during, and after analysis. This approach was rationalised through the suitability of this analysis to early career researchers, as it provides a structured guide to analysis. It was also determined as suitable due to the predicted nature of the data, being purely qualitative interview data. As the goal of the research was to describe an area which is traditionally unknown, the thematic content analysis provides an opportunity to offer a rich description of the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

To aid in the thematic content analysis, transcriptions of the interviews were entered into the analysis software NVivo. NVivo served as a tool to organise the data, and analyse it through coding, nodes and categorisation. NVivo aided in viewing patterns in the data and making comparisons within and between the data sets. It also assisted in identifying initial themes from the data and developing and refining these themes.

Ethical considerations

To ensure this project met human ethics research standards, an application was submitted and approved through the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee for Humanities and Social Sciences (Appendix 1). Ethics clearance was also obtained through the State Education Research Applications Process (SERAP ID: 2019179). Participants were provided with detailed participant information sheets to allow them to make an informed and voluntary decision on their participation. It was verbally reiterated that participation is not compulsory, and that consent and participation could be withdrawn at any point. This was reiterated through the Participant information and consent form which is located in Appendix 2. Verbal consent to participate and be recorded was also gained at the beginning of each interview. This ensured that participants are respected as individuals with the capacity to make their own decisions (NHMRC, 2017).

Methodology Limitations

Participant Recruitment and Sampling Strategy

A limitation of participant recruitment was the level of non-responses from participant invitations which made it difficult to proceed with data collection. This was further challenged by the need to access English faculty via the school principals, who are often busy and encumbered with a variety of requests. In future practice, utilising a snowball sampling strategy to connect with interested schools will assist in gaining more participants.

Participant Bias

It is acknowledged that there is potential for participant bias due to this researcher's Aboriginality and a participant's desire to avoid being offensive in their practice and respond in a way that they think will satisfy the researcher. As the researcher is a member of the NSW English Teachers Association (NSW ETA) that many English educators are members of, where I actively share Indigenous content, and identify myself as an Aboriginal woman, there is a possibility of participant bias. Existing relationships with participants at schools due to engagement within the Macquarie University community, or pre-existing professional relationship, also posed a potential for participant bias. This includes a participating school where the researcher had undertaken practicum. To avoid this participant bias in practice, the researcher assured participants that they could speak freely and spontaneously. This also meant it was integral to utilise reflective practice and anonymity to ensure this conflict of interest did not impact data collection and analysis.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the qualitative research paradigm applied in this project, along with the theoretical framework of Nakata's (2007a) Cultural Interface. It explains a step by step methodology, which was utilised to carry out the research, and it has introduced Kovach's (2009) conversational methodology as an approach to semi-structured interviews. The ethical considerations of the study have been identified explicitly, and in relation specifically to participant recruitment and data collection and management. The limitations of the methodology have been both acknowledged and justified.

CHAPTER 4 - RESULTS

4.1 Overview

This chapter will present the key findings of the thematic content analysis of the nine teachers who participated in a semi-structured interview. This analysis was guided by two research questions:

1. How do NSW English teachers select a text to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories in Years 7-10?
2. What text choices do NSW English teachers make in order to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories in Years 7-10?

In order to understand the text selection process, it was important to consider the general text selection process which English teachers engage in, so as to contrast and highlight changes in this process when engaging with Indigenous content. This analysis draws on the theoretical framework of Nakata's (2007) Cultural Interface, and the boundaries and considerations of this space as outlined in Chapter 3.

The thematisation was organised into three significant guiding sections, the first section is text choices, that is, the selections made by teachers. The second section is determinants to text choices, which encompassed all of the considerations made by teachers when undertaking the text selection process, for generic selection and Indigenous specific selection. The final section addresses

professional considerations, which pertains to the considerations which function beyond text choices and selection, but serve an important consideration for the teaching profession.

4.2 Text choices

The category of text choices presents the texts which were named by the educators for meeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, cultures and histories syllabus and curricular areas, and the analysis of this selection. These choices exist within the Cultural Interface, as they are choices of what Indigenous discourses to centre, and which to silence. Each participant presented a unique case of their text choices which varied from individual influences and perceptions to a faculty-based approach. This question linked directly to the primary research question "How do NSW English teachers select a text to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories in Years 7-10?" which was mimicked in the interview guide.

The three participants at Site A offered the smallest quantity of texts of all the participants, presenting only *Hitler's Daughter* by Jackie French and an "Adam Goodes speech", both named by Malcolm. Helen broadly referred to "Indigenous Stories" and Maria, to "Indigenous Poetry. When Helen and Maria were prompted to name a specific text, they were unable to recall any. During the interview, Malcolm reflected on his text choices, "I don't teach Year ten, but Year nine, we haven't done any Indigenous texts yet. Which is weird, now that I think about it". This reflection illustrated that when prompted to reflect, gaps can be identified.

In contrast to Site A, Site B offered a significant difference between text choices of the three participants due to the freedom of choice available. Oodgeroo Noonuccal was the only poet which was named as being present in the programs, and was identified by both Emilia and Bianca. The difference between participants was evident in the data, as well as by the participants themselves with Bianca and Emilia both referring to their colleague, Imogen, as being really interested in Indigenous cultures, and doing more than they were in regards to this area. This positioned Imogen as a unique case within the site. Bianca named the film *One night the Moon*, and poetry by Jeanine Leane. Emilia also identified the picture book *The Rabbits* by Shaun Tan, and an unidentified speech by Stan Grant. In comparison, Imogen named the picture book *My Place* by Nadia Wheatley, poetry by Alice Eather, *Houso Kid* spoken word poem by Laurie May, *Jasper Jones* by Craig Silvey, media articles on racism and Adam Goodes and the sorry speech by Kevin Rudd. This illustrated a significant variability between participants at one school, without any cohesive approach for the inclusion of these texts.

Participants at Site C offered a holistic case of the educators accessing the same wide range of texts, due to the embedding of a dedicated unit in Stage 5 which all teachers utilised, and which had significant resourcing availability. Juliet named the majority of texts, and had come prepared with the Stage 5 unit of work titled 'The Children Came Back', consisting of an assessment that involved students creating a website which represented a timeline of Indigenous literature, centralised around Indigenous authorship. Juliet named Oodgeroo Noonuccal's poetry, Anita Heiss' Poetry, Gordan Bennet artworks, ABC Indigenous website, AIME website, *The Children Came Back* by Briggs, *Took the Children Away* by Archie Roach, *Rabbit Proof Fence* by Phillip Noyce, the Redfern Address by Paul Keating, Blakwords by various authors and the Sorry speech

by Kevin Rudd. Eleanor went on to also name Oodgeroo Noonuccal. Olivia reinforced the impact of the Stage 5 unit of work, and named Tania Major's TEDx speech, the Sorry Speech by Kevin Rudd and the AIME website. There was less engagement with texts at Stage 4, compared to Stage 5. All three participants at Site C acknowledged the importance of Indigenous authorship is text selection, which was not considered by the other six participants.

Table 4 below presents the texts named by the individual participants in context at each of their sites. What is noteworthy is Juliet at Site C, and Imogen at Site B who led the sharing of text inclusions at each of their Sites. Whilst Juliet's texts were embedded within a faculty wide unit, Imogen's were an individually led approach which is significant when compared to Bianca and Emilia. This list identifies a total of 22 texts across the nine participants. 13 of these texts are Indigenous authored, seven are not and two are unidentified. The range of the published year of the texts varied from 1987 – 2016, with a range of 29 years.

Table 4 - *List of text selections named by each site to meet NSW English syllabus text requirement of "insights into Aboriginal experiences in Australia" (NESA, 2019a).*

Site	Participant	Text	Author	Text Type	Year	Indigenous Composer
A	Malcolm	Hitler's Daughter	Jackie French	Fiction	1999	No
A	Malcolm	"Adam Goodes' Speech"	Adam Goodes	Speech	2014	Yes
B, C	Emilia, Bianca & Eleanor	Poetry	Oodgeroo Noonuccal	Poetry	-	Yes
B	Imogen	Poetry	Jeanine Leane	Poetry	-	Yes
B	Imogen	Houso Kid	Laurie May	Spoken Word Poetry	2012	Yes
B	Imogen	Jasper Jones	Craig Silvey	Fiction	2009	No
B	Imogen	My Place	Nadia Wheatley	Picture Book	1987	No
B, C	Imogen, Olivia & Juliet	Sorry Speech	Kevin Rudd	Speech	2008	No
B	Imogen	Poetry	Alice Eather	Poetry	-	Yes
B	Emilia	The Rabbits	Shaun Tan and John Marsden	Picture Book	1998	No
B	Bianca	One Night the Moon	Rachel Perkins	Film	2001	Yes
B, C	Emilia, Juliet	Stan Grant Speech	Stan Grant	Speech	2016	Yes
C	Juliet	Children Came Back	Briggs	Song	2014	Yes
C	Juliet	Took the Children Away	Archie Roach	Song	1990	Yes
C	Juliet	Poetry	Anita Heiss	Poetry	-	Yes
C	Juliet & Olivia	Website	AIME	Website	-	Unknown
C	Juliet	ABC Indigenous	ABC	Website	-	Unknown
C	Juliet	Rabbit Proof Fence	Phillip Noyce	Film	2002	No
C	Juliet	Artwork	Gordan Bennett	Arts	-	Yes
C	Juliet	Blakwords	Various	Varied	-	Yes
C	Olivia	Putting Unity Back into Community	Tania Major	Speech	2011	Yes
C	Juliet	Redfern Address	Paul Keating	Speech	1992	No

4.2.1 Tokenism

Tokenism is operationalised by symbolic and perfunctory action for the sake of appearing to do the right thing. Each of the three participants at each of Sites B and C explicitly mentioned the phrase tokenism or tokenistic, in unique ways relevant to their individual narratives of text selection. Bianca at Site B discussed her school's practice of including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures CCP as a tokenistic, tick-a-box routine. Bianca also stated, in reference to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CCP:

> "I would have used it once or twice when I first designed lessons for a particular unit and then kept those lessons in there just as the staple. God forbid even tokenistic, sort of tick it off. I've done that because there's so much you've got to frigging include and check off that it's just like, "Yep, it's there, it's done".

This quote from Bianca illustrates an awareness of the tokenism involved in her practice, noting the professional difficulties in balancing requirements such as this one. Bianca continues to explore this Anglo-Australian dominant educational discourse which reinforces tokenistic 'tick-a-box' actions, "because I am inexperienced and not passionate and don't have a wide range of resources, you kind of overlap with everybody else that's also trying to do the same thing. Everyone's just trying to tick a box". Bianca notes that texts are already being utilised in other subject areas, making it difficult for student engagement and planning. Emilia at Site B also acknowledges tokenism and views the syllabus text requirements as tokenistic, "...my understanding is that it's one of those things you tick off per stage. Which is sort of tokenistic, but it's there". This identifies

the perception that the nature of the CCP is tokenistic in its application. These participants' judgements portray a low value and priority for this content on the hierarchy of professional requirements.

At Site C, all teachers acknowledged that they had moved forward from previous practice in English which was tokenistic. Juliet at Site C reflected on the English faculty's previous practice, "… looking at it in a tokenistic manner of we've ticked a box, and we can move on." At the same site, Eleanor reflected on this shift "It used to be very tokenistic. I think a lot of people use, say, we're going to do an Indigenous text, let's just put it into this unit, and we'll leave it there". This illustrates a positive example of reflective practice in action, with teachers acknowledging the downfalls in this area, and shifting to a space where genuine inclusion can occur. Olivia at Site C, who is the Head of Secondary English, noted this and reflected on poor practice at previous workplaces, "At my last school I saw Indigenous texts done really tokenistically". Olivia notes that she did not have the influence to change this tokenism at their previous workplace, but were able to do so at Site C. The theme of tokenism is explicitly evidence with the five participants at Sites B and C through the repetition of the term 'tokenistic/tokenistically', signifying an awareness of tokenistic action in the data.

Whilst no teacher at Site A explicitly mentioned tokenism, there were some inferences in their stories which are reflective of tokenism. At Site A, for Stage 4, Helen identified that Indigenous stories were present in the unit "My island home". This unit involved looking at literature from across the States, and unnamed "Indigenous stories" were included in the Northern Territory component of the unit. This placement of unnamed stories relegates and cements Indigenous

people into a longstanding discourse that Aboriginal people are only from the Northern Territory, when the largest population of Indigenous people is in Western Sydney, NSW (Wade & Gladstone, 2019). In regard to that unit, Malcolm stated that "I felt like that was chucked into our unit and it didn't fit in very well. It was like we had to do it". Malcolm's word choice alludes to the tokenistic inclusion being out of his control, with it coming from the hierarchy responsible for programming. Malcolm also exhibits a lack of power in changing this. When considered in the theoretical framework, tokenism aptly reflects the tension and contestation which is prevalent in the Cultural Interface (Nakata, 2007a) as it attempts to include Indigenous knowledges, but western discourses rule as the inclusion becomes a tick-a-box routine.

4.2.2 Non-Indigenous misappropriation

The theme of non-Indigenous misappropriation is defined by the prevalence of non-Indigenous personas and composers misappropriating the voices of Indigenous people. This misappropriation was present in the data through the participants' answers to the question "Do you think non-Indigenous authored texts can offer "insights into Aboriginal experiences in Australia?" (NESA, 2019a). Three of the eight participants who were asked this question stated yes, that a non-Indigenous authored text can provide insights into Aboriginal experiences in Australia. Author Indigeneity was only a consideration of text choices at Site C, whose teachers acknowledged the value that some non-Indigenous authored texts can offer but also noted the reduction in the authenticity and depth of the perspective.

Maria at Site A, on non-Indigenous misappropriations, stated that "I actually find it quite problematic when non-Indigenous identities are constructing texts or attempting to teach a culture that they're removed from, that they don't have exposure to. And I also think that …. there's a huge gap for Indigenous texts". Although she presented a positive sentiment, Maria was unable to name any texts for this content area, let alone Indigenous authored texts. At Site B, Emilia similarly identified this as problematic, she states "I, for a long time, I just assumed that *The Rabbits* of Shaun Tan were from an Indigenous perspective… do you legitimise that perspective, I mean it's better than not discussing it at all, but is it as effective or as valid?". Emilia questions the role of the teacher in validating voices through their text choices. Her assumption of this text being Indigenous authored conveys some of the assumptions which can take place in the Cultural Interface (Nakata, 2007a), conveying the dominance of the western framework, even for Indigenous perspective.

All three participants at Site C consider the authors' Indigeneity as an aspect to their selection and the participants were further probed to understand the development of this position. As discussed, in regard to tokenism, Site C had the resourcing capacity to overhaul their programs and bring in a range of new Indigenous authored resources in a dedicated unit. Whilst an important consideration, this served as an outlier comparatively to the other sites. Olivia discussed this in terms of non-Indigenous authored texts on Indigenous people, "I just don't think they're as authentic and we teach kids to look for authenticity, and to be critical consumers". This notes an awareness of modelling the behaviors encouraged in students. The teachers at Site C saw the importance of this "authenticity" due to the demographics of the students being referred to as "Anglo" and "very heavily white, middle class dominated". Juliet stated "I think our students are

so far removed from the issues that face Indigenous Australians, that it can quite often be that stereotypical view that maybe their parents hold" which is something the Indigenous text unit endeavours to change. Site C's participants convey the distance between their geographical location and school demographic, and the experiences of Indigenous people in Australia. They highlight a reflective teaching philosophy that has moved from tokenism, towards a more genuine approach to textual selection.

4.2.3 The meaning of 'Indigenous texts'

The term 'Indigenous texts' was raised consistently by participants. This term was not used by the interviewer, but was adopted in practice by eight of the nine participants, with only one participant at Site A avoiding the phrase. This is significantly evidenced by Imogen at Site B, "We can choose whether we look at Australian Indigenous texts or if we look at Indigenous texts from around the world. I've looked at international Indigenous texts, but I keep coming back to Australian Indigenous texts for accessibility". When considered alongside Imogen's text choice, a range of non-Indigenous authored texts are placed in this 'Indigenous text' binary. Similarly, is the following example of Malcolm from Site A "There are some amazing Indigenous texts but some that might not be, as well". The use of this term conveys a habit of categorising and labelling, and it speaks to the subjectivity of the NESA text requirements of "insights into Aboriginal experiences in Australia" (2019a).

4.3 Influences on text choices

The influences on the text choices category captured the considerations which the sample teachers presented for both general text selection and text selection for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, cultures and histories. The general text selection process sits outside of the Cultural Interface (Nakata, 2007a), but it becomes active when selecting texts for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. The Cultural Interface (Nakata, 2007a) impacts the determinants on the text selection through the priorities in which teachers make in this process. Whilst there was some crossover in these processes, the influences each category of texts were primarily different. There was also a significant variance between factors at each of the three sites.

4.3.1 Learner Profile

All nine participants acknowledged that the role of students in the class is a consideration when selecting a text for any syllabus or curricular areas in Years 7 to 10. These considerations were coded as "Learner Profile". Learner profile encompasses the needs, abilities and experiences of all individual learners within one classroom that determine choice when selecting a text. When considering the process for selecting a text to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, histories and cultures the learner profile was referred to, but in a significantly lesser extent with only four participants mentioning the learner profile for this content area. These influences on the learner profile included ability and accessibility, literacy, maturity, cultural background, gender, interests and trauma history.

General Text Selection Process:

The interviews began with a question regarding the generic text selection process, with the participants being prompted to step through their text selection practice. Ability as a component of the learner profile was the most significant consideration by teachers at all sites, with all nine teachers referring to the ability of the class, or the accessibility of a text as a factor considered in the process of general text selection. Similarly, literacy level and English level were also a consideration as part of student ability. At Site A, teachers utilised the terms "reachable", "capability" and "level of ability" as a part of the learner profile. At Site A, Maria also considered "level of English" as an ability consideration. Bianca, at Site B, stated that after considering resourcing "I then go off the ability level to have, so I think the students are more capable I will do something that's a bit more rich".

The cultural background of students was a factor of the learner profile considered by two of the nine. For example, Bianca stated "If there's a certain sort of maybe cultural or like nationality majority" this would influence her text selection, naming an example of selecting *Blueback* by Tim Winton due to the large Islander student population in her class. Similarly, trauma background was a minor consideration and was raised by Imogen at Site B and meant that lighthearted texts were prioritised. Gender was also named as a consideration in text selection by teachers at Sites A and B. Malcolm, at Site A, stated that "... I try to put myself in the shoes of a teenage boy". Similarly, Bianca at Site B stated that "If it's more boy heavy, it'll be a text that's got to do with music or bikes or cars. And if it's a bit more girl heavy it will be something more romantic". Student interest and engagement was a less significant component of the learner profile which

influenced general text selection, and was named by 5 of 9 participants. Imogen stated "I look at interest as well, because that's really important. Students need to be engaged in what they're doing". At Site C, two teachers made general references to the role of student interest. Juliet asked, "What did students enjoy?", and Eleanor similarly asked, "What's going to entertain and engage the kids?".

Text Selection Process for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, histories and cultures:

When discussing processes for selecting texts for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, histories and cultures, minimal consideration was given to the learner profile, compared to the general text selection process. When considered alongside the Cultural Interface (Nakata, 2007a), references to the learner profile were minimal, illustrating that learners are positioned differently in the interface. This is seen at Site B, with all three teachers making generic statements regarding their class. Imogen stated, "It's all about the needs of my class", Bianca said, "What's my class like?" and Emilia stated "I would start with my kids". One element of the learner profile specific to Indigenous perspective in the classroom was maturity. Maria at Site A specified maturity as a consideration when selecting texts by predicting how her students would respond to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives through texts. Maria stated, "I often try to avoid serious or even sometimes cultural texts for classes who I don't think will be able to process them in a respectful manner". This inference is that the students of Maria's class would not be respectful when engaging with texts that offer insights into Indigenous experiences in Australia.

Emilia at Site B considered the cultural background of her students, particularly students who are "of Indigenous descent". Emilia stated that she would ask her students who are Indigenous "Do you have any stories that you know of, that you'd like to share of your people". This places the onus on Indigenous students to provide some content for Indigenous perspectives in the classroom. As presented in Chapter 3, Site B has a 3% Indigenous student population. This act would have potential to embarrass the student in front of peers and perhaps to ensure that he or she withdraws from further participation. The teacher's action reflects a lack of sensitivity towards personal feelings that are often applied more generally (Harrison & Sellwood, 2016) in classrooms with Indigenous students.

4.3.2 Personal interest

The personal interest of the teacher was identified by four teachers as an influencer as to why a teacher would either select or avoid texts for both fields of text selection. In the data, it appeared as educators identifying the role of, and content of their interests, and lack thereof which influenced their choices. This was not as pervasive of an influence as some of the other factors, with four teachers across the sites referring to interest.

In regard to the general text selection process, Helen at Site A, and Bianca at Site B identified the role of personal interest, but were self-critical of their positions. Helen stated "If I don't engage with it, then I wouldn't want to teach it... for selfish reasons I'll pick something that I can easily teach, I'm not going to try and make my life harder", identifying this as a strongly personal influencer to text selection, particularly in terms of self-interest . Whereas Bianca positions her

personal interest influence as a bias, "My own personal bias, if I don't like the text then I'm not going to teach it because then it'll just be really, really dry".

The role of personal interest when selecting texts for Indigenous perspectives, histories and cultures was more impactful. Imogen at Site B identified a personal passion for Indigenous cultures, which influenced her pedagogy when including Indigenous perspectives, cultures and histories in the classroom, as well as the quantity and variety of texts utilised to do so. Imogen, on her passion stated, "I think I probably do it more than other teachers, because of my passion" Imogen illustrates an awareness that her behaviour and interest is different to other teachers at her school, and beyond in the wider English teacher profession. At Site C, Olivia, the Head of English, identified a similar passion for encouraging meaningful engagement. She led the invigoration of Indigenous authored texts through the dedicated Stage 5 unit "The Children Came Back". The passion both Olivia and Imogen shared was evident during their interviews, they were both animated and discussed to be sharing their shortfalls and successes within this area, and was further present through their positive body language and facial expressions.

In contrast, at Site B, Bianca identified a lack of interest in this area, "I sound horrible but it's not my interest. I don't really feel passionate to go out actively and find new authors or modern texts that are Indigenous focussed". Bianca does go on to counterbalance this position "When it gets to doing the lesson, I do invest in what I'm saying and I have that moment where you're just like, "Actually, this does have value. I should be teaching this. This is part of my country". Bianca's honesty illustrates that whilst she identifies a lack of personal interest in this area, she does recognise its important role in education. These examples of interest, and lack thereof, illustrate

two components. One, a need to overcome this contested space, and two, depicting a need to move beyond the western binary, these two components interact in the Cultural Interface (Nakata, 2007a).

4.3.3 Resourcing

Resourcing was a significant factor in the text selection processes for six of the nine participants, unique to each school context. The theme of resourcing was defined by the various pathways educators engage with to select texts. Resourcing availability served an important role at Sites A and B. Bianca at Site B identified checking the resources booking sheet as the first step in text selection processes. This is supported by Imogen at the same site who stated "being in public education, and especially in a school in Western Sydney, we can't always afford to buy multiple class sets. So, if something is booked out, or if we just simply don't have it, and I can't get my hands on it, then I would choose the other texts". Helen at Site A expressed a passivity about resourcing, "I'll have a look in our book room and just pick whatever's available".

A lack of power to influence text resourcing was presented at Sites A and C, which saw teachers expressing a lack of individual influence in selecting wider texts for the faculty. At Site A, all three participants were in their first three years of teaching, so they expressed a reliance on the text selection which was undertaken by the Course Coordinator and Head Teacher of English each year. Malcolm at Site A stated, "I'm new to this school, so I don't have as much of an input into texts that I would like to have". This lack of influence is also supported by Maria at Site A who said that they receive a list of twenty texts to utilise for the year and when queried about the source

of this list she stated, "Usually it'd be the course coordinator with some input by our head teacher". At Site C, resourcing decisions were ultimately left up to the Head of Department, with minor discussions taking place with year coordinators. Juliet identified that whilst the English staff are given the opportunity to discuss text selection, final decisions are left up to the Head, and Assistant Head of Department.

Recommendations from colleagues was a resourcing pathway that was suggested by 5 participants. There was equal emphasis on this from teachers who were recent graduates, new to the profession, and those who had over a decade of experience. At Site A, Helen repeatedly identified the role of being a new teacher and stated for general text selection "I'll usually just go off other teachers' recommendations", and similarly did so for Indigenous curricular and syllabus areas. Eleanor at Site C identified word of mouth from colleagues for text selection, as well as professional teaching groups on social media. Two of the three participants at Site C referenced the school librarian as a resourcing influence.

4.3.4 Resourcing guides

Resourcing guides provide an information source about texts and resources to assist teachers in their text selection practice, and have an important role for English teachers in NSW due to the absence of text prescriptions in Stages 4 and 5. The most significant example of a resourcing guide for English in NSW is the *Suggested Texts for the K-10 Syllabus* (Board of Studies, 2012). This document is legitimised by the source of the guide, which was published by the Board of Studies, now known as New South Wales Education Standards Authority (NESA), who host the document

on their website. NESA is the statutory power for government education in NSW. This position of authority legitimises this document as a useful source for educators to access. This is problematised by the content and syllabus prescriptions for texts which offer "Insights into Aboriginal experiences in Australia" (NESA, 2019a) without consideration to the role of Indigenous authorship. In this document, 79 texts in total are tagged as "Insights into Aboriginal Experiences in Australia", and 36 of these texts are present in the Stage 4 and 5 suggested lists across text types, and 31 of them are unique. Of the nine participants, seven were aware of the *Suggested Texts List K-10*, of that seven, five had made use of the document.

Olivia at Site C acknowledged the role of the *Suggested Texts List K-10* as a starting point, but criticised it for a lack of contemporary voices, stating "I read that and I think, "Yeah, but there are better texts out there", she counteracted it this position by acknowledging the benefit of this document to defend text choices to concerned parents. Eleanor at Site C mentioned another resourcing guide, "I will often look at Australian curriculum recommended texts". Imogen at Site B identified using it specifically to find "Indigenous texts" and complemented the syllabus mapping component. Bianca, also at Site B, said she would utilise the document if she was to actively look for an "Indigenous text", which she acknowledged is something she does not do. Maria at Site A, after being presented with the suggested texts list stated it is something she would utilise in the future.

4.3.5 Student resistance

Teachers named student resistance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content as an influencer to their text selection and pedagogical practice. Student resistance is operationalised by the definition of the perception of students' unwillingness to engage actively with this content area. Sites A and C referred to this as an overload of students experiencing this content area through all subject areas due to the cross-curricular nature of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures priority. Bianca at Site B stated in reference to lower ability students, "they do get a bit exhausted about hearing the same, unfortunately, the same sort of story being told" Similarly, Maria at Site A identified student resistance, "it's incredibly problematic that students today don't have a sense or a need or a desire to want to learn about the First people who are inhabitants of the country" Maria further explains this resistance, "when you present two texts to children, one being more of an Indigenous perspective and one not being, they're almost inclined to go to the one that's not Indigenous". The perception of student resistance presented by Maria can contribute to apprehension from the teacher, not wanting to be fighting to teach something students are already resisting. This again, identifies the space of tension which is the Cultural Interface, and its enactments at schools, with tendency for the Western colonial binary to be the preference in the Australian education system (Nakata, 2007a).

4.4 Professional considerations

This section explores professional considerations for English teachers. This category encompasses the codes which fell outside of core sections of text influences, text choices and resourcing.

Professional considerations form an important role in capturing the professional context of each site, and of individual educators. It was operationalised through the definition of profession specific considerations and power structures which influence professional practice.

4.4.1 Fear of doing "the wrong thing"

Fear of doing 'the wrong thing' was presented in reference to teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content only and was identified as an influence on text selection by four participants. This code was operationalised through the definition of a teacher having feelings of anxiety and apprehension when approaching content and texts for Indigenous perspectives, histories and cultures. This apprehension and fear of educators with this content was evidenced n the literature review and has been presented by Nakata (2011), Foley and Howell (2017), Ma Rhea, Anderson and Atkinson (2012) and Buxton (2018). The four participants who raised this were from Sites A and B.

At Site A, Helen presents this fear and apprehension in the form of fear of doing the wrong thing, "I don't want to mess it up, that's kind of what I'm scared of.... I don't want to be offensive or anything like that". She identifies the fact that she is not Indigenous influences her ability to do so. Helen also named the subject area of English affecting this fear "Because with English... You know, everyone's trying to interpret things and students will try to interpret things, but I don't want to point them in the wrong direction, that's something that I'm afraid of doing". Showing similar apprehension, but contrary to the role that subject English plays in this fear is Maria at Site A. Maria stated "...my biggest concern is how do I teach those text types without being culturally

insensitive?" and "It's so hard, because there's so many things that you can and cannot do with indigenous texts. So I feel like I'm a little bit reserved in that sense". Maria then goes on to highlight the beneficial role of English to use what she refers to as 'Indigenous texts', "I feel like if anywhere, I think English is a great place to have these texts and explore them, and really explore them, not just tick off a dot point in a syllabus somewhere" Maria here identifies the strength of subject English for exploring this content with depth, whilst acknowledging the shortcomings of herself and faculty in doing this in practice.

At Site B, Emilia expressed her apprehension for this area in terms of boundaries, "It's one of those areas I don't really know where the boundaries area". The use of the term 'boundaries' identifies a need for further guidelines to approach this area. This is a different experience to Imogen at the same school, who acknowledges the role of fear, her own experiences of fear and how she overcame it:

> "I think the challenges arise from teachers. I think there is fear about teaching Indigenous texts, because there is fear of offending, and I think that there is a lot of reservation that arises from that. They don't want to, I guess push the boundaries… my Prac teacher said to me, "Make mistakes. Take risks. If you offend someone, they'll tell you, and then you change it, and you adapt, and you need to own that mistake, and you need to accept the fact that you're learning as well, and that you are not an Indigenous person..." As soon as I stripped myself of that fear, and I'm not Indigenous, but I'm passionate about Indigenous culture … I started taking risks, I opened myself up... I mean, you're always going to have teachers that aren't willing to strip that fear, and that are so conscious of offense"

The extract from Imogen's interview provides a unique commentary on the professional trend of being fearful when including 'Indigenous texts' when asked of the challenges of including Indigenous perspectives in English. Imogen highlights the practice of overcoming fear in order to teach authentically is an example of personal and professional growth, based on a passionate interest in Indigenous cultures. When compared with the other participants who identified fear and apprehension, Imogen can be seen as a unique example who has been able to overcome this fear.

4.4.2 Professional learning

Professional learning was indicated across the sites as a call for help for educators' shortcomings for the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives, histories and cultures. This theme is operationalised by reference to professional bodies for support as well as a call for resourcing support documents to assist teachers practice. Teachers identified the specific professional resources they would find useful for resourcing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, histories and cultures. 5 participants mentioned professional learning and/or development for this area.

At Site A, Helen identified a lack of preparation for this curricular area in her teacher training, and specific a need for "More sample units of work for all the different stages" as part of professional learning. Similarly, Maria at Site A illustrated a need for a collated resources, "I think I would like for there to be something or someone who you can go, "These are some texts that you must teach", calling for a uniform approach across school sectors for better outcomes . At Site B, Bianca identified an excess of resources directed at Primary School, and identified a desire for a collated

resource of texts which she could pick up and utilise. Of the five participants who specified professional learning and other resources, four of them also identified the significance of not having time to plan and research new units and texts. There was no expression of a lack of capacity at Site C, when compared to Sites A and B.

4.4.3 School governance and responsibility

The role of school governance provides important insight as to what influences the school as well as teachers' practice. School governance was operationalised by the definition that school governance pertains to the structure of the school, it is the set of values, policies and practice which influences the schools leadership and everyday function. The theme of responsibility referred to textual responsibility and was illustrated by teachers expressing a lack of power to influence text selection.

At Site B, Malcolm referred to the population of Indigenous students "There's less identifying students at this school, and it's not as much of a priority from the top down, but I do still build it into my lessons". This makes a direct association that Indigenous perspectives, histories and cultures are associated and justified by the presence of Indigenous students. Whilst this is important, these knowledges and perspectives form important knowledge for all students to engage with, meaningfully. This also identifies a need for this area to be valued on a governance level, to ensure value is attributed by teachers working on the ground level. At Site C, there was a governance expectation to align with both the school ethos, as well as the strategic plan of the school. Olivia stated on text selection "what's the overall moral message, and does that align with

basically what the college wants? You know the type of morals and the ethos of the college" This governance expectation forces an added layer of complexity in the content of texts which can be selected based on religious ethos.

4.4.4 Teacher capacity

Across Sites A and B, all teachers referred to their limited capacity due to the variety and extent of professional expectations they need to balance. Teacher capacity was operationalised by the definition that a teacher's ability to meet all of their professional expectations, and the challenges associated with doing so. Time was the most significant factor of teacher capacity, with four out of six participants identifying that they were time poor, and this contributed to their challenge of meeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, histories and cultures at Sites A and B. This was often paired with an overload of expectations to balance. At Site A, Helen stated that "I don't like to say that I don't have time for it, like everyone should have time for this, but it is kind of hard to find time. If we were given time specifically allocated to address this, then 100% I'd be really enthusiastic about doing that". Very animated, Bianca at Site B stated "So when I do have that spare time, I'm not going to go out and read for the sake of my occupation because that's what I do for most of the year anyways" and that "I'm not having to start from scratch because time is a precious commodity". This consideration was not present in the data from Site C.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the key results of the qualitative study on the choice of texts made by English teachers in the process of choices including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures in three NSW schools. The themes developed from the content analysis data were categorised into three sections, text choices, influences on texts choices and professional considerations. In the following chapter, these themes will be analysed through the lens of the Cultural Interface (Nakata, 2007a), in order to explore the nature and significance of the interaction between Indigenous and western approaches to knowledge and learning.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Overview

This small-scale study has offered a snapshot into understanding NSW English teachers' text selection processes and the choices they make to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, histories and cultures. The results presented in Chapter 4 have highlighted a range of significant themes across the three categories of text choices, influencers on text choice and professional considerations, with varied experiences across the nine participants. This chapter will discuss the impact and significance of each theme, applying the theoretical framework of Nakata's Cultural Interface (2007a). Following this discussion, conclusions to this study will be presented.

5.2 Discussion

All nine participants offered a unique example of professional practice, contextualised to their school site, operating within the Cultural Interface (Nakata, 2007a). As stated in Chapters 3 and 4, the Cultural Interface offers a framework to understand the decisions made by educators within the contested space which is the school site (Nakata, 2007a). This framework has aided in illustrating the significance of the codes, and the implications for the findings to this field of research. Importantly, these findings contribute to understanding this research area of English teachers' text choice practices for Indigenous perspectives, histories and cultures.

5.2.1 Text choices

It was hypothesised that teachers would report a low quantity, and lack of variety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authored texts, with an overreliance on Anglo-Australian authored misappropriations. This hypothesis was accurate for Site A, where teachers were only able to name two specific texts *Hitler's Daughter* by Jackie French and an unspecified Adam Goodes speech, both named for Stage 4. This inclusion sat alongside reference to generic "Indigenous stories" and "Indigenous poetry". The unspecified nature of the majority of these texts conveys a low consideration for this content area, which was attributed by the participants to a lack of consideration in the programs, and their fear and apprehension of doing the wrong thing in this subject area. Jackie French's *Hitler's Daughter,* the only text named, aligns itself with the hypothesis of an over reliance on Anglo-Australian authored misappropriations. Whilst it is acknowledged that other English teachers at this site could be doing further work, the case of Site A as presented by the three participants presents a rather bleak case for authentic voices and the in-depth inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authored texts.

Appropriation of Indigenous voices has long overwhelmed Australian settler fiction. It is important to consider that stories about Aboriginal people written by non-Indigenous people are not Indigenous stories (Leane, 2016). There is a preoccupation to utilise these misappropriated texts to teach about Indigenous histories and cultures, which then overwrite Indigenous histories (Leane, 2016). This misappropriation was present in the data through the participants' answers to the question "Do you think non-Indigenous authored texts can offer "insights into Aboriginal experiences in Australia?" (NESA, 2019a). Three of the eight participants who were asked this

question stated yes, that a non-Indigenous authored text can provide insights into Aboriginal experiences in Australia. Author Indigeneity was a consideration at Site C in the text selection process. They acknowledged the value that some non-Indigenous authored texts can offer, but also a noted the reduction in the depth of the perspective.

The text choices of all sites presented in Table 4 illustrate a lack of standardised consideration of text selections within this content area. Whilst standardised practice is not the ideal solution, revisiting the framework on defining what type of text can "offer insights into Aboriginal experiences in Australia" (NESA, 2019a) will contribute to more meaningful and authentic texts for student consumption. Whilst there were distinct similarities between schools, there ultimately was a lack of cohesion between sites which reflects the lack of a reporting process for knowing what texts are currently being taught. A lack of consequences for not incorporating this text requirement was also identified by Helen at Site A, showing that educators can consider this requirement optional, due to a lack of enforcement. When viewed through the lens of the Cultural Interface (Nakata, 2007a), this perception illustrates the contested space in which Indigenous knowledges exists. This interaction at the interface indicates consequence is needed for there to be respectful inclusion of Indigenous perspectives. A more extensive set of guidelines which could guide and assist educators in selecting texts for this curriculum area would be beneficial, and meet the professional development needs evidenced in Chapter 4.

Whilst participants could identify flaws in non-Indigenous authorship of Indigenous perspectives, this did not equate to considering the author's Indigeneity during text selection for six of the participants. This was exemplified by Maria at Site A, who problematised non-Indigenous

representation, yet could not name any text for teaching Indigenous perspectives. Similarly, Emilia at Site B represented the problematics of non-Indigenous misappropriation of voice, questioning the assumptions she made on texts which appear to be telling an 'Indigenous story'. She had assumed, for example, that the authors of *The Rabbits*, Shaun Tan and John Marsden were Indigenous. This identifies the challenges of author positioning within settler fiction, and the role by which educators need to assess the voices they promote, whilst inadvertently silencing others through their textual choices. Emilia makes the false assumption that a text is 'Indigenous' when it is about Indigenous people. She has not really come to terms with what Indigenous might mean. The kinds of choices made by teachers, such as Emilia, function to silence Indigenous voices, whilst maintaining the power and position of non-Indigenous perspectives in the classroom. This is further exemplified by Malcolm's (Site A) *Hitler's Daughter* by Jackie French. Whilst it could be said that Malcolm, and other educators, utilise texts such as *Hitler's Daughter* to critique author positioning and highlight the role of authorship, it cannot be known from the interviews. This shows an element of disconnect in this study between discussion and practice.

The adoption of the term 'Indigenous texts' by teachers at each site captures the way in which educators treat Indigenous content in the curriculum as a categorical practice to be met. This term was utilised without consideration to what the participants thought an Indigenous text was, but instead encompassed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures CCP and the syllabus text requirement of "insights into Aboriginal experiences in Australia" (NESA, 2019a)'. From the titles named at Sites A and B, it was clear that the label 'Indigenous text' was removed from any consideration of Indigenous authorship. This lack of consideration for Indigenous authorship silences the role of Indigenous people in our own storytelling processes. This is

particularly evident in the presentation of generic and shallow references to text choices, such as "Indigenous stories" and "Indigenous poetry" at Site A. This strips ownership from the authors of these stories, and places texts in a categorical binary, which becomes a tick-a-box inclusionary approach which reinforces normative colonial whiteness.

5.2.2 Influences on text choices

The category of influences of text choice provided a range of interesting and significant considerations for the selection of Indigenous content to teach the subject of English. The responses to generic text selection illustrated a level of passivity and shallow engagement with those factors that influence the inclusion of Indigenous content. The literature illustrates that there are a range of factors which impact text selection for English teachers (Hastie & Sharplin, 2012, Holloway & Greig, 2011). Rush, Scherff and Martorana (2013) identify a particularly relevant factor, which is the role of a teacher's familiarity with a text and their comfort in teaching it. This was identified in the data through the themes of "personal interest", and "fear of doing the wrong thing".

The theme of the learner profile presented distinct differences when comparing general text selection processes with those made by teachers when selecting texts with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content. Teachers selected general texts on the basis of student needs, yet their section of texts with Indigenous content was based on subjective criteria, along with resourcing considerations. This illustrated a distinct shift in process when including texts for Indigenous perspectives. This could be attributed as mimicking the contested nature of the Cultural Interface

(Nakata, 2007a), with an exchange occurring with the Western system and Indigenous knowledge systems, showing a difference in processes when generally selecting texts, compared to selecting texts to meet Indigenous perspectives as depicted in Chapter 4. As demonstrated by the results in Chapter 4, the general text selection process considered more objective criteria such as ability, age, gender, cultural background, literacy levels, student interest and trauma background. In comparison, when dealing specifically with Indigenous content the considerations were limited by general reference to the learner profile, as well as consideration of maturity and the cultural background of class. This suggested the learner profile was not the primary consideration in this text selection process.

Tokenism was presented in three unique ways at each site. Gauci and Curwood (2017) identify English teachers' fear of tokenism and shallow engagement, in the context of the CCP 'Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia'. This fear of tokenism was evident, which can contribute to illustrating a trend with the cultural components of CCP's and the English subject area. Tokenism was present at all sites, firstly, at Site A there was a distinct lack of awareness of tokenistic action, but an awareness that the staff were not doing enough. At Site B, two of three participants identified tokenism in action in their own practice, but had reasoning as to why this was the case. Thirdly, Site C had acknowledged continuing tokenistic practice within text selection and practice, and actioned this through the implementation of a dedicated unit which centralised Indigenous authorship in 2019. They also identified the role of distance, identifying their students are far removed from Indigenous experiences in Australia.

The teachers' personal interest in texts was a consideration in this process. This was problematised when teachers were deterred from selecting texts in which they did not have a personal interest, regardless of cultural importance. This was a factor in text choice considered by Rush et al. (2013) and also evident in the results. The mandated expectation, in order to be done well, requires teachers investing in the content which they are teaching, in order to ensure students are reaching the level of insight needed, rather than engaging on a surface level. Without active engagement and enthusiasm modelled to the students, a lack of interest can have an impact on students not valuing this important curricular area. This was particularly evident at Site B, with one educator illustrating a keen interest, and another at the same site stating it was not their interest. In the same way that a lack of personal interest is problematised, it is personal passion of individual educators which has the power to model authentic learning experiences. This personal passion or drive to include respectful Indigenous perspectives was evident only in two of the nine participants.

Of importance at Site C was a lack of Indigenous peoples and students at the site, meaning that whilst Indigenous knowledges are present alongside the western binary of the Cultural Interface, Indigenous peoples were missing from this interface, whilst Indigenous knowledges were still present (Nakata, 2007a). A significant factor for consideration in this process was the availability and access of text resources. Teachers were aware of the variety of texts available to meet this resourcing area, but this awareness did not translate into influencing textual selection. Similarly, resourcing availability had a significant role in schools accessibility to texts, particularly at Site B where participants identified the challenges of funding availability of a Government school based in Western Sydney. This is something which was not a factor for Site C, potentially highlighting the government versus a non-government divide in funding capacity. This division is particularly

important due to the significant positive practices which were present at Site C, identifying the teacher capacity and the limits of resourcing of some government schools.

The resourcing guide *Suggested Texts for the K-10 Syllabus* (Board of Studies, 2012) presented a problematic inclusion of Indigenous perspectives, as evidenced in Chapter 4. Ultimately, the core of these problematics stems from the NSW English Syllabus, and the requirement of texts that "offer insights into Aboriginal experiences in Australia" (NESA, 2019a). This requirement firstly excludes Torres Strait Islander perspectives, histories and cultures, something which has historically been evidenced in policy and educative spaces. Secondly, it places ownership of interpretation with the educator, allowing them to define what text can offer insight into Aboriginal experiences in Australia. The S*uggested Texts for the K-10 Syllabus* (Board of Studies, 2012) presents 36 texts tagged to "offer insights into Aboriginal experiences in Australia" (NESA, 2019a) in Stages 4 and 5. Of the 36 texts, 31 were unique texts. Of these 31 texts, 14 were authored by Indigenous people, leaving 13 non-Indigenous authored texts, and four unspecified. This models to educators that non-Indigenous authored texts are appropriate to meet this text inclusion.

In the Cultural Interface (Nakata, 2007a), Indigenous content reflects the dominant Western discourse taking priority over Indigenous knowledges. It is further reflected by the teachers' expectation that a student would rather study a text which is not Indigenous. This feeds into an attribution of this content being of low value. The perceived nature of student resistance to this curriculum area was also presented as a consideration for text selection, with teachers identifying that they would have to work even harder to engage students in this area. This was acknowledged to be a result of the cross-curriculum nature of this content area, with all subjects being mandated

to include this content. This could be conceived as a projection of teacher insecurity within the area. It could also be complicated by students' lack of engagement due to the modeling of teachers' lack of interest in this area.

5.2.3 Professional considerations

Fear of doing the 'wrong thing' was a significant consideration for four of the participants. This apprehension and fear limit educators from engaging with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander texts (Nakata, 2007a). Through not engaging with this content due to fear, teachers were silencing Indigenous voices and avoiding the opportunity to promote Indigenous discourses in their classroom. Not being Indigenous contributed to this fear as well as to the discomfort experienced by some in including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. Professional learning is needed in order to build teachers' confidence in engaging with this area, through meaningful resourcing pathways which engage with Indigenous knowledges.

The theme of School Governance and Responsibility illustrated the structures in place in schools which can impede, or support the embedding of Indigenous perspectives. It was evident from the results that if a school did not value or prioritise these inclusions at the top level of the hierarchy, then it would impact how teachers value and prioritise Indigenous perspectives in the classroom. This reflects the dominance of Western discourse in some schools, which in turn minimises the inclusion of Indigenous ways of knowing and being in those contexts (Nakata, 2007a). This problematisation attributes an additional layer of complexity in how teachers resource this curricular area, placing the onus on school governance structures to support this inclusion. As

evidenced at Site A, a lack of hierarchical support and prioritisation of this area results in teachers being able to excuse their own shortcomings in this area. This suggests that top down support is needed to motivate respectful and effective learning experiences in this area.

Teacher anxieties and insecurities about professional capacity and support for professional reflexive practice were evident in the results, and formed the most significant professional development consideration. This was particularly evident in the Government schools. Leggett (2016) argues that Australian teachers are overworked and undervalued, and the trend of having larger classes results in more time spent teaching, with less time to prepare. This position aligns with the concerns expressed by teachers regarding their capacity, identifying a lack of professionally allocated time to explore Indigenous contemporary texts. Whilst this is a significant concern that impacts multiple facets of the teaching profession, there is still a prioritisation process in place which identifies what teachers can find time for.

5.3 Limitations and future research

As this was a small-scale pilot study, the most significant limitation of this study was the small sample size of nine participants across three schools. Although this was justified through the short 10-month timeline of this research project, it is acknowledged that this limits any generalisability to a wider population of NSW English teachers. For this reason this study is positioned as a pilot to a significantly larger scale study of a wider sample of NSW English teachers. This larger scale study would utilise a mixed method approach of questionnaires and in-depth interviews with a wider population of English teachers. It is envisioned that a professional learning resource would

accompany this study in order to aid and assist educators and meet the needs which they have identified here.

An additional limitation of this study was the lack of exploration and analysis of the text choices presented by teachers. This is justified by the scope and priority of this study to provide a glimpse into the current practice of NSW English teachers. While this study was able to make some minimal analysis of text choices, future research should endeavor to explore texts further for their characterisation, focalisation and positioning of Indigenous voices. There was also a considerable gap in the participants stories, and their practices. This could be addressed in future research through utilising a range of data including classroom observation and program analysis to convey a holistic picture of text selection processes.

There were additional considerations which were captured in the data which fell outside of the guidance of the research questions, including the role of programming, and the extent of the inclusion of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CCP. It is acknowledged that the breadth of the questions which captured this data extended beyond the core of the research questions, and this is an error of a beginning researcher which on reflection will be improved in future practice. Whilst the data collected were useful, it was not within the scope of the study to include it. Future research would be expanded to include the CCP considerations further, and seek to evidence educators' qualitative data with additional supporting documentation, such as their programs.

5.4 Conclusion

This small-scale research project has illustrated a snapshot of the practices of nine NSW English teachers in their text selection process to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories. The three participating schools offered a unique context that influenced teachers' perceptions and experiences. When compared, each site offered three distinct levels of engagement with this curricular area. Site A illustrated minimal engagement and text selection, Site B identified some important considerations, but were specific to one passionate teacher, and Site C offered thorough and in-depth engagement specified around Indigenous authorship and effective learning. The educational reality of the Cultural Interface (Nakata, 2007a) highlights the difficulty that teachers face in knowing what constitutes multiple Aboriginal identities, and how these might be represented in classroom discourse for mostly non-Indigenous students. They too are caught between two systems of knowledge and two ways of thinking and learning.

In answering the first research question "How do NSW English teachers select a text to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories in Years 7-10?" a variety of considerations were taken by the participating teachers. The results conveyed an overall lack of standardised practice across the three schools when selecting texts to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. Although each site had similarities within the school, each teacher had their own self-motivated and individual criteria for selecting texts appropriate for teaching Indigenous perspectives. The primary factors presented in the results were personal interest, learner profile, resourcing pathways, fear of doing the 'wrong thing', teacher capacity and

school governance as determinants of this text selection process. A tokenistic approach to selection, was reflected in shallow engagement and consideration for this syllabus area.

In answering the second research question, "What text choices do NSW English teachers make in order to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories in Years 7-10?" the participants at each site offered a variety of texts being taught to meet Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. These text choices were present in Chapter 4, Table 4. Whilst there was some cross-over in text choices, there was variance within and between sites. Of the total 22 texts named by the sites, 13 of these were authored by an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person. Of the total of 22 texts named by schools, 12 of these were identified by Site C. This reflected the prioritisation which Site C gave to Indigenous texts and authorship. The problematics of these choices can be attributed to the language of the syllabus text requirements (NESA, 2019a) and the modelling of non-Indigenous authored texts in the S*uggested Texts for the K-10 Syllabus* (Board of Studies, 2012).

This thesis has offered a glimpse into the current text choice process of nine NSW English teachers when embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. It illustrates an overall subjective approach influenced by resourcing, colleagues, school contexts and learner profiles. This study has identified the future research needs of this field to further understand the practices of textual inclusion in this important curricular area. Further research should endeavor to develop professional learning resources that could assist educators in their text selection practice.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Ethics Approval

Human Sciences Subcommittee
Macquarie University, North Ryde
NSW 2109, Australia

MACQUARIE
University

28/05/2019

Dear Associate Professor Harrison,

Reference No: 5201953318957
Project ID: 5331
Title: Text Choice: Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in English

Thank you for submitting the final version of the PICF for records.

I am pleased to advise that ethical approval has been granted for this project to be conducted by Associate Professor Neil Harrison, and other personnel: Dr Kerry-Ann O'Sullivan, Tamika Worrell.

This research meets the requirements set out in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007, (updated July 2018).

Standard Conditions of Approval:

1. Continuing compliance with the requirements of the National Statement, available from the following website: https://nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2007-updated-2018.

2. This approval is valid for five (5) years, subject to the submission of annual reports. Please submit your reports on the anniversary of the approval for this protocol. You will be sent an automatic reminder email one week from the due date to remind you of your reporting responsibilities.

3. All adverse events, including unforeseen events, which might affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project, must be reported to the subcommittee within 72 hours.

4. All proposed changes to the project and associated documents must be submitted to the subcommittee for review and approval before implementation. Changes can be made via the Human Research Ethics Management System.

The HREC Terms of Reference and Standard Operating Procedures are available from the Research Services website: https://www.mq.edu.au/research/ethics-integrity-and-policies/ethics/human-ethics.

It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to retain a copy of all documentation related to this project and to forward a copy of this approval letter to all personnel listed on the project.

Should you have any queries regarding your project, please contact the Faculty Ethics Officer.

The Human Sciences Subcommittee wishes you every success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Naomi Sweller

Chair, Human Sciences Subcommittee

The Faculty Ethics Subcommittees at Macquarie University operate in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007, (updated July 2018), [Section 5.2.22].

Appendix 2: Participants' Information and Consent Form

Department of Educational Studies
Faculty of Human Sciences
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY NSW 2109

MACQUARIE
University
SYDNEY·AUSTRALIA

Phone: 04 24760937
Email: tamika.worrell@ mq.edu.au

Supervisors' Names & Titles: Associate Professor Neil Harrison and Dr Kerry-Ann O'Sullivan

Participant Information and Consent Form

Name of Project: Text Choices: Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in English

You are invited to participate in a study on text choice in the English Classroom. The purpose of the study is to investigate how teachers make text selections to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in the English classroom, and what choices they make. This will be investigated through in-depth interviews with English teachers who have a first teaching subject of English, at least 1-year experience in the classroom who are teaching at least one class of years 7-10. This study aims to provide a glimpse into the processes that English teachers undertake to select texts for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories and an understanding of what texts are being taught to meet this curriculum priority.

The study is being conducted by Tamika Worrell, contact details: 0424760937, tamika.worrell@mq.edu.au, Department of Educational Studies. It is being undertaken to meet the requirements of the degree Master of Research in Human Sciences under the supervision of A/Prof Neil Harrison, neil.harrison@mq.edu.au and Dr Kerry-Ann O'Sullivan, (02) 9850-8702 kerryann.osullivan@mq.edu.au.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to partake in a 40-minute interview. We will record this interview for later typing up and analysis, but you can choose whether to have this done. This interview will ask questions about what texts you teach in years 7-10, and how you select these texts. This interview will be conducted by Tamika Worrell, and will be conducted on your school grounds at a location of the participants choosing. Participants will be rewarded with an Indigenous authored text to utilise in the classroom.

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of this study are confidential, except as required by law. No individual will be identified in any publication of the results. The data gained from this study will only be accessed by the researcher, and her supervisors. The results of the data can be made available to you on request in a summarised final report, by contacting the researcher.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to participate and if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence.

I, _____ have read and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

I have read, or have had read to me, the information sheet about the research, and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. YES / NO

I have been given a cop of this form to keep YES / NO

I agree to participate in the research. YES / NO

I understand that participation is voluntary and that I am free to stop at any time, without giving a reason and without my employment being affected in any way.
YES / NO

I understand that all information will be confidential and my name or other personal details will not be included in reports or publications. YES / NO

I am happy for my interview to be recorded. YES / NO

Participant's Name:_____
  (Block letters)

Participant's Signature: _____ Date:_____

Investigator's Name:_____
  (Block letters)

Investigator's Signature:_____ Date:_____

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics & Integrity (telephone (02) 9850 7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

(INVESTIGATOR'S [OR PARTICIPANT'S] COPY)

Appendix 3: Interview Guide

Demographic Questions:

- What age bracket do you fall into: (21-30, 31-40, 41 – 50, 51-60, 61+)?

- How long have you been teaching in NSW High Schools?

- Is English your primary teaching area?

- How long have you been teaching at this particular school?

1. How do you select texts to teach to students in Years 7-10?
   Probe:
   What process do you go through when you select a text?
   Why would you select one text over another?

2. Have you utilised this document before '*Suggested texts for the English K-10 Syllabus'*
   list? *Show print out*
   Probe:
   Have you seen this document or heard of this document before?

3. Are you familiar with the cross-curriculum priority "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
   Histories and Cultures"?
   Probe:
   From the Australian curriculum, it is one of three priorities which need to be embedded in
   all subject areas.

4. How do you address this priority in the classroom?
   Probe:
   Through what texts and resources?

5. The NSW English syllabus states that across the stages text should give students
   experiences of "a widely defined Australian literature, including texts that give insights
   into Aboriginal experiences in Australia". What texts to you utilise to meet this
   requirement in stages 4 and 5?

6. Do you think a non-Indigenous authored text can "give insights into Aboriginal
   experiences in Australia"?

7. What process do you go through to select texts for this curriculum area?
   Probe:
   What factors do you consider in selecting a text for this priority?

8. Do you think there are any challenges to meeting this curriculum area in English?
   Probe:
   Do you think it is easy to meet this priority in English?

9. Do you have any other comments about this curriculum area within the subject of English, or on text selection?