

*Routledge Critical Studies in Asian Education*

# **LITERATURE EDUCATION IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC**

**POLICIES, PRACTICES AND PERSPECTIVES  
IN GLOBAL TIMES**

Edited by

Chin Ee Loh, Suzanne Choo and Catherine Beavis



# Literature Education in the Asia-Pacific

The continual rise of English as a global lingua franca has meant that English literature, both as a discipline and as a tool in ESL and EFL classrooms, is being used in varied ways outside the inner circle of English. This edited collection provides an overview of English literature education in the Asia-Pacific in global times, bringing to international attention a rich understanding of the trends, issues and challenges specific to nations within the Asia-Pacific region. Comprising contributions from Australia, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Vietnam, the collection addresses the diversity of learners in different national, cultural and teaching contexts. In doing so, it provides insights into historical and current trends in literature education, foregrounds specific issues and challenges in policymaking and implementation, presents practical matters concerning text selection, use of literature in the language classroom, innovative practices in literature education, and raises pressing and important questions about the nature, purpose, and importance of literature education in global times.

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in Global Times

Edited by Chin Ee Loh, Suzanne  
Choo and Catherine Beavis

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# 1 Globalizing literature education in the Asia-Pacific

## Remapping the boundaries

*Chin Ee Loh, Suzanne Choo and Catherine Beavis*

The act of remapping pushes us to rethink the ways in which Literature education is understood. Jerry Brotton (2012), in his thesis on the history of the world as understood through maps, reminds us that “maps offer a proposal about the world, rather than just a reflection of it, and every proposal emerges from a particular culture’s prevailing assumptions and preoccupations” (p. 438). The attempt to redefine the boundaries for conversations about Literature education is an attempt to interrupt common assumptions that individual readers may hold about Literature education, as situated in their own contexts of language and learning. Remapping is a way to rethink the “imagined community” (Anderson, 1983) of scholars, educators, and students of Literature education and to encourage deep and complex dialogue about Literature education in a global world.

Asia-Pacific countries include Australia (population: 24.13 million), China (population: 1.379 billion), India (population: 1.324 billion), and the ten ASEAN nations that include Indonesia (population: 261.1 million), Philippines (population: 103.3 million), Singapore (population: 5.607 million), and Vietnam (population: 92.701 million) (World Bank, 2017). The region includes more than half the world’s population and contributes significantly to global economic output and growth. What makes Asia-Pacific all the more interesting is the diversity of languages, cultures, and religions that make up the region. While English serves as one of the *lingua francae* for communication in the region (for example, it is the working language of ASEAN) and is perceived as an important global language (Graddol, 2006), it is only one of many languages in the region. The place of English may also differ based on the different historical contexts of each country – English serves as an official language in former British colonies such as Australia, India, Malaysia, and Singapore, but in countries with other colonial histories (e.g., Vietnam under the French and Indonesia under the Dutch), English is learnt as a foreign language.

This book redraws the map of Literature education in English by placing the Asia-Pacific region in the centre and bringing to the fore the different histories and developments of Literature education in this region. Geographical boundaries insist on recognizing differences within the diverse multilingual and multicultural region to reframe Literature education as a multifaceted subject that is taught across a broad range of contexts and across different historical and

political terrains. This reframing requires the reader to bear in mind that every chapter needs to be read with its context in mind, to understand that there may be different definitions or operations of seemingly unproblematic terms such as reader response or cultural capital. Rather than glossing over differences, it is important to ask why the differences exist and to understand how particular historical, policy, and practice contexts have contributed to the evolution of Literature education in each specific context.

To clarify, in this book, we employ the term ‘literature’ when we refer to literary texts and we capitalize the term when referring to Literature as a subject taught in schools or colleges.

The chapters in this book explore the place of Literature education in a globalized world and the globalizing of Literature education in the Asia-Pacific. Broadly, research into the teaching of Literature in this region – the role, nature, and significance of Literature education – and how that has been inflected by past and present contexts and times remains largely unexplored, an issue that this book addresses. Most pressingly, the place and purpose of Literature education, in contrast to the growing pervasiveness of English as a global language, is potentially under threat, as the drive to maximize communication and functionality in economic and social circumstances takes centre stage. Taking the metaphor of mapping, this book sets out to remap Literature education in three dimensions: curriculum boundaries, texts, and pedagogy.

## **Where do we situate Literature? remapping curriculum boundaries**

In tracing the history of English Literature education, it becomes clear that its emergence could not have occurred without globalization as a catalyzing force. Although one could argue that the global impulse to explore, trade, and conquer new territories has occurred throughout history, the role of British colonial empire in establishing and maintaining the values of colonial culture effectively marked the establishment of a global culture (Thomas & Thompson, 2014). During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, political, economic, and technological advances effectively strengthened transnational networks and so fuelled the colonizing expansion of Empire (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, & Peraton, 1999).

Not surprisingly, the end of the British Empire and the corresponding assertion of independence by formerly colonized countries following the end of the Second World War meant that English Literature education could no longer retain its privileged position. Towards the end of the twentieth century, globalization intensified not via the imperialistic tendencies of empires, but through the large-scale shift towards democracy or semi-democracy in countries throughout Asia, Latin America, and Europe. The end of the Cold War secured the ideological dominance of liberal democracy, creating a climate favourable to global interchange and exchanges. Concepts such as global society, global village, and globalism dominated intellectual discourse, perpetuating the view that “peoples

of the world [were being] incorporated into a single world" (Albrow & King, 1990, p. 9), that there was an "intensification of social relations throughout the world" (Giddens, 1990, p. 64), and that there was both a "compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of world as a whole" (Robertson, 1992, p. 8).

Remapping the boundaries of English Literature education in the Asia-Pacific entails a shift from Western-centric to more global and inclusive ways of perceiving the subject. In a survey of scholarly discourses on Literature education, we observe that influential debates have been predominantly written by scholars situated within countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Broadly, such discourses tend to focus on issues of canonicity as well as the ideological forces that drive the production, circulation, and legitimacy of literary texts for study in schools and colleges (Applebee, 1993; Guillory, 2003). In contrast, in the Asia Pacific region, discussions about where English Literature education should be situated within the curriculum have also tended to be connected to English as a Second or Foreign Language programmes, where Literature is often perceived as a tool for English language learning, rather than a subject to be studied in itself.

Instead of narrowly examining Literature as a subject bound to language learning, as such positioning implies, this edited volume seeks to explore a broader range of issues such as: Where do we situate Literature in the curriculum? Whose Literature counts? What is the role, nature, and purpose of Literature? What are Literature's links to national culture and identity? These questions lie at the heart of many chapters here that explore complex issues about which cultures and their cultural texts as well as which ideologies are valued.

In a number of chapters, English Literature education's situatedness or place in the national curriculum is tied to its economic value, particularly its connection to the instrumental value of English as a language of commerce and means for economic mobility.

In Chapter 4, "Literature in English Language Learning in China in Tertiary Education", Geoff Hall and Qian Yang provide a broad historical overview of the fall and rise of Literature in mainstream English language learning materials and instructional methods in China, where English is learnt as a foreign language. Literature's tenuous place in English language teaching in that country, Hall and Qian argue, reflects the function-culture dichotomy, where views of language are largely instrumental: Culture in the form of literature is often excluded from teaching approaches and instructional materials. The presence of literary stylistics at the tertiary level has barely influenced the teaching of English as a foreign language at the grass roots level and Literature is still seen as a language tool, rather than a subject that allows for "cultural learning or personal development" (p. 55). At the same time, Hall and Qian suggest that globalization has brought about a quickening pace of English language learning and that more Chinese students are accessing literature through private schools and university curricula. There is increased interest in the Humanities and for some institutions and students, Literature education is not mere language accessory, but worthy of study in itself.

In Hong Kong, the instrumental view of English language learning has led to the limited role that Literature plays, as Michael O'Sullivan observes in Chapter 5, "Changing the 'Success Narrative': English Literature Can Help Broaden Hong Kong Students' Perceptions of Education." Unlike in mainland China, English is the medium of instruction in a number of schools in the former British colony (Nunan, 2003). One reason for Literature's marginal place in Hong Kong is the perception that it is a subject largely limited to elite English 'literate.' O'Sullivan argues that Literature education can play a greater role in a society where 'success narratives' are defined by a student's ability to achieve the kind of education that would bring about maximum economic benefits. For O'Sullivan, education should engage students in discussions of local issues, civic mindedness, mindfulness, and family and societal values, to imagine how society might be different. The narratives ingrained in literature are a way for students to learn empathy and to imagine other worlds (Bruner, 2002) and O'Sullivan suggests that greater student engagement in English Literature (and other literatures) is a way to encourage students to think beyond narrow-minded, economically driven, and competitive success narratives to re-imagine more meaningful and personal success narratives for themselves. He thus makes a case for the value of Literature in a global age as a subject for connection and for the re-imagination of the self and the world.

As in China and Hong Kong, policymakers in India have become increasingly concerned with the development of human capital, with the result that acquisition of language for pragmatic uses overshadows other aims of English education, such as the development of critical literacies. In Chapter 6, "English Literary Studies in India: Between Critical Thinking and Instrumental Drives," Subarno Chattarji highlights how globalization has reinforced the value of English as subject that can enhance the communicative effectiveness of individuals, enabling them to compete more effectively in the global economy. As a subject, English then becomes a means to an economic end, rather than a platform where students can engage actively and critically in social, cultural, and global issues. Chattarji suggests that the subject can play a role in rejuvenating the Humanities if it focusses on critical thinking and diversity, rather than mere instrumentality.

That English should not to be taken for granted as a medium of instruction is highlighted in Chapter 10, "Problems and Issues in Teaching Literature in English in Philippine Secondary Schools," where Lalaine F. Yanilla Aquino discusses the place of literature in a country where English is taught as a Second Language and used as a medium of instruction. She reminds us in her historical overview of the development of Literature instruction in English in the Philippines that the choice of language, the kinds of texts chosen, and ways of reading are conduits for ways of thinking (Collins & Blot, 2003). Literature education is intricately bound up with language learning and cultural acquisition, and the vacillating policies regarding the medium of instruction and texts to be taught that she documents reflect indecision about how language, texts, and identities should be viewed and enacted through the curriculum. Aquino welcomes the inclusion of Twenty-First Century Literature from the Philippines and the

World, a core course in Senior High School, but worries that the goals might be undermined, were it to be taught by language rather than Literature teachers. Ultimately, teacher education, instructional materials, and other resources, she argues, should be improved in order for Filipino children to engage with both their nation and the world through the comparative lenses of this new course.

The push to globalize the curriculum should not mean discounting the place of the nation, as Chin Ee Loh argues in Chapter 14, “The Poetry of Place, the Place of Poetry: The Promise and Perils of a Place-Based Literary Pedagogy in the Singapore Literature Classroom.” She examines place-based literary education as it is enacted in preservice teacher education at the National Institute of Education in Singapore, arguing that the attention to place – both local and global – can lead to socially and ecologically meaningful discussions of the individual and society’s connection to the urban environment. Drawing on a case study of pre-service teachers participating in a learning journey in the city centre, she argues for the centrality of place in Literature education, and the centrality of literary texts to students’ understanding of place. Literary texts serve to mediate students’ historical and emotional understanding of place by providing perspectives of places through stories of the past and present. She argues for creative production as a necessary part of Literature education and argues that ‘place-conscious’ pedagogies (Gruenewald, 2003) in the Literature classroom have the potential to develop students’ awareness of themselves as both national and global citizens.

### **What constitutes literature? remapping texts**

Across the chapters described, the authors encourage the expansion of curriculum boundaries to cope with the demands of globalization, even as they highlight the emergent tensions that inevitably arise as boundaries are pushed. A central tension concerns what constitutes Literature, or more precisely, what texts should be included for study in the curriculum.

For many of the countries represented here, the shadow of colonialism and its active presence, whether now or in the past, create difficult tensions around the place of the body of literature brought with that heritage, and a literature of their own. These are the tensions between canonical literature (literature in ‘The Great Tradition’) and contemporary literature, as well as between national literature and world literature, that run through many of the chapters, both those discussing countries where English is a first language – as in Australia – and those discussing countries where Literature teaching and education were imposed as part of the agenda of colonization, and/or taught only to the elite, and worked as a marker for this elite. While most (but not all) of the countries represented here were subject to colonial rule, with the high culture of the colonizer embodied in and represented by the canonical literature of that empire, colonizing Empires were not exclusively British. In Vietnam, for example, France was the colonizing Empire; in Indonesia, Dutch colonization till 1945 preceded Independence.

Striking a balance in Literature education between canonical literature (the literature of Empire) and the literature of one’s own country, however, is no



simple matter, nor is national identity itself something unitary or readily defined. Cultural and ethnic diversity, gender-, class-, and race-based discrimination and how these are represented and read are all also pressing questions for many of the authors here, with implications not only for which texts are set, but also for how they are taught, what work they are seen to do, and for whom this work is done.

In remapping texts in the Literature curriculum, two central concerns emerge across the chapters in this book. The first concern deals with individual and national identities: Texts from which cultures, which heritage and which countries should be chosen for inclusion, in what combination, and why?

In Chapter 2, “Literature in subject English in Australia: purpose, identity and mode,” Catherine Beavis connects changes in text selection to shifts in conceptions of learning, pedagogy, and priorities from the late 1960s. The emergence of popular and non-print texts as worthy of study is linked to debates about ‘relevance,’ student-centred teaching, and the emphasis on language, literacy, and communication in English curriculum at that time, alongside more traditional literary forms. This chapter points to the ways in which the explosion of national writing and film-making in the 1970s resulted in a greater assertion of Australian, rather than primarily British, identity in texts set for study. The inclusion of these texts is seen to be reflective in turn of the role that English as a subject, and the study of texts in particular, was believed to play by teachers, educational institutions, and authorities in constructing national identity. The chapter points, too, to the inclusion of films, television plays, oral documentaries, and graphic novels as indicative of the significance of multimodal texts alongside print in contemporary times.

In Chapter 3, “Re-forming the Nation: Curriculum, Text Selection and Asian Literature in subject English in Australia,” Larissa McLean Davies and Lucy Buzacott turn to “the absence of Asian Australian voices in national conversations, particularly those which take place in classrooms across Australia.” They consider the interrelationships between such absences and public discourses and policy, the experience of text, perspectives conveyed to young readers about ‘who’ is Australian, and rights to belonging and identity. The chapter closes with a recognition and endorsement of the emphasis on diversity of both focus and form in texts chosen for study in the current *Australian Curriculum: English*, but an insistence, also, on the need for significant resourcing and support for the vision of the curriculum to be realized.

In Chapter 12, “Reclaiming Southeast Asia: Cultural Engagements in the Philippine Tertiary Classroom,” Lily Rose Tope examines how one fundamental result of colonialism was its elevation of Western culture and concurrent neglect of local and regional traditions. In particular, Southeast Asian literature is absent from the English Literature curriculum in Southeast Asian countries despite the political and economic interconnections among these countries. In the Philippines for example, even national authors only gained acceptance years after their books were written. One major obstacle that postcolonial countries have to grapple with concerns the shackles of colonial literary standards that continue to be used to determine the literary value of other world literature and its consequent inclusion in the curriculum. In a society schooled to appreciate literature from

the West, the question is whether it is possible for local and regional literature not to be measured against Western canonical standards, whether it can be appreciated on its own terms, and whether alternative literary criteria can be established that do justice to their aesthetic quality.

The second concern deals with how ‘Literature’ is defined. What forms of literature should be studied and in what mode, taking into account the pervasiveness of multimodal texts in our times? What is the relationship between canonical literature, local literature, and popular culture? Here, questions arise about the importance of each, what they ‘deliver’, and how they should be approached in the curriculum.

Unlike in Australia, in Indonesia, the issue of text choice is closely intertwined with language. This is in particular connection to what counts as a national language, as Silvia Hoffert writes in Chapter 7, “Neo-Colonialism and the Writer’s Identity in Creative Writing.” In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language, rather than as a first language. Hoffert addresses the close interrelationship between what she terms ‘national culture’ and identity, with Literature – or the absence of it – playing a pivotal role. Hoffert raises questions about the place and nature of popular culture and the juxtaposition of popular texts against those traditionally defined as Literature and, in this instance, finds popular texts significantly lacking when they effectively take the place of more formal and highly valued literature. Hoffert contrasts the use of literature and other mechanisms of Empire to create particular sensibilities in Dutch Colonial times, with concerted efforts in the Post-Independence period (1945 to the early 1960s) backed at the highest level by President Soekarno to promote ‘identity in culture’ and the importance of Indonesian literature in the promotion of Indonesian nationality (Situmorang, 1963). These initiatives in turn are contrasted with those of contemporary times, of which she concludes that ‘the nation has instead been overshadowed by . . . neocolonialism, which entails Eurocentrism and more recently Americentrism’ and the pervasiveness of popular culture and Teen Lit amongst young people, in place of a national culture that might have been. Following Fanon (1961, 2014) and anchoring her chapter in the analysis of the writing and reading preferences of tertiary students undertaking English Literature courses at two Indonesian universities, she views the development of postcolonial sensibilities as crucial to the development of national culture. Accordingly, she argues strongly for greater emphasis on formal Literature education as a central impetus to the valuing and awareness of national culture and identity.

Literature’s connection with language is similarly discussed in Chapter 11 “Teaching Literature: Teaching Identity: Language, Pedagogy, and Building a Nation through Texts and Textbooks.” Here, Priscilla Cruz analyzes the use of textbooks and language pedagogy in the formation of national identity in the Philippines. Cruz takes as her starting point Anderson’s notion of imagined communities (1983), where ‘print capitalism’ and the publication of books in vernacular languages is seen as playing a key role in binding people to these communities, with fiction “seep[ing] quietly and continuously into reality, creating that remarkable confidence of community in anonymity which is the hallmark

of modern nations” (Anderson, 1983 p. 36). Using Systemic Functional Linguistics, through a fine-grained analysis of literary passages of three textbooks set for Filipino students in state-run high schools, Cruz demonstrates ways in which these texts align readers with the values these texts present through the use of interpersonal attitudinal meanings, classified into groupings of ‘affect,’ ‘judgment,’ and ‘appreciation’. In such an enterprise – the use of literature and school systems to build community – the selection of texts becomes crucial. Cruz contrasts the limited range of textbooks available to students in local, government schools, with the wider choice available to students in high-fee-charging schools, noting in passing the greater access to English more generally available to students in private schools and the corresponding differences in opportunities available. She focusses her analysis on government-provided textbooks to look explicitly at the ways in which texts chosen promote particular ideologies as desirable features of a shared national identity.

The role of texts in shaping attitudes and notions of national identity and the ways in which Literature achieves this is taken up, paradoxically, through the short film. In Chapter 15, Dennis Yeo discusses the role of film in “The Asian Short Film in the Literature Classroom.” Yeo’s is the only chapter to deal exclusively with multimodal texts – with film – as non-print form. He reminds the reader that in Singapore, only prose, poetry, and plays are regarded officially as Literature in current educational policy and curriculum. Yeo explores the opportunities short films provide for the inclusion of locally produced narrative voices and experiences in a context otherwise overwhelmed by Hollywood, and at the same time, explores ways of empowering students to develop critical and resistant readings to the dominant discourses of these films, through close analysis using literary and media techniques. He argues that the short film lends itself to the teaching of literary structures and strategies that may then be transferred to the formal study of literature.

## **How do we teach literature? remapping pedagogy**

Beliefs about the role and value of Literature education inform curriculum and text selection and these are subsequently concretized through pedagogical strategies in the classroom. When English Literature was first introduced to public schools in England in the nineteenth century, pedagogical approaches were predominantly didactic in nature. A common approach to teaching at the time involved training students to appreciate the stylistic qualities of the text and imitate these in their own writing, to memorize biographical details of well-known authors, and to understand key moral messages in texts as explicitly highlighted by teachers (Michael, 1987; Richardson, 1994). The appreciation of aesthetic qualities in texts and the inculcation of moral values have traditionally been key cornerstones informing the objectives and pedagogical approaches to teaching literature. Yet, these goals are not neutral. As Kress (2002) describes:

Earlier conceptions of [the curriculum subject] English had unquestioned foundations in aesthetics and ethics; the former explicitly through the

literary canon, the latter less explicitly through notions of ‘taste’ and of literary ‘sensitivity’ – the mark of the cultured, refined individual. . . . The notion of aesthetics as enshrined in the literary canon presented itself self-evidently, neutrally, about the ‘best’ in literary (or other artistic) endeavor. It left the source of the judgements that led to canonization largely implicit, and disguised the fact that its aesthetics were the result of the exercise of power in matters of value over long periods.

(p. 21)

Such didactic approaches to teaching literature, as described above, were also introduced in colonized countries. These served to reinforce the position of the colonizer as teacher, authority figure, and purveyor of culture, while colonized subjects remained in the position of learner, passively subordinate, and whose own cultural identity was then silenced.

In recent decades however, the spread of progressive education around the world, including countries in the Asia-Pacific, has influenced more constructivist and student-centred approaches to teaching literature. Questions about how Literature should be taught have been subject to debate. In a number of chapters in this collection, authors explore various approaches that can empower active learners with the autonomy to transact critically and creatively with texts.

In Chapter 9, Jia Wei Lim examines how personal response is framed within assessment practices in Malaysia and evaluates the potential alignment of different conceptions of literature with the Education Blueprint’s aims for Malaysian students to be globally competitive. Her discussion of personal response demonstrates how the ostensibly uncomplicated concept of personal response can be differently understood and enacted in the perception and objectives of studying literature. She cautions against an undifferentiated understanding of personal response, suggesting that stakeholders need to come to common understandings of key concepts such as personal response. Furthermore, she points to how Literature education can contribute to the project of cultivating a globally literate citizen by encouraging greater “understanding, awareness and acceptance of others in this globalized world.” To do so, she argues that conceptions of Literature education need to break away from the subject’s associations with proficiency and enjoyment to make explicit the aims of globalization in literature instruction.

In Chapter 13, “English Literature Education in Vietnam and the Potential of Appropriating Reader-Response Theory in Global Times,” Ha Thi Thu Nguyen discusses the potential of reader response in Vietnam to challenge instrumental aims of language teaching in an examination-oriented system. In Vietnam, English is taught as a foreign language and teacher-centred pedagogies are preferred, despite current trends in second and foreign language study towards communicative language teaching and learner-centred approaches. Nguyen points out that the teaching of Vietnamese literature focusses on acquiring academic knowledge of literary classics, making correct interpretations, and learning the moral aspect of the texts. This explains the prevailing attitudes that are transferred to the teaching of English language and literature in Vietnam, alongside the residual colonial mindsets and the ideological linguistic operation of

globalization that favour particular Englishes over others. Nguyen points out that reader response theory can increase “students’ capacity to respond to cross-cultural texts and can also be used to promote international engagement” through the valuing of different perspectives. Nguyen’s view of reader response includes a critical dimension where students must also learn to evaluate texts and their own responses to it. The ability to deal with ambiguity and to engage with difference is an important disposition for global engagement.

Aside from reader-response criticism, poststructuralist and ethical criticism are other pedagogical approaches that problematize the stance of appreciation and encourage more critical evaluations of bias, representations of cultural groups, and value systems in texts. These pedagogical approaches empower students with the capacity to consider implicit sub-texts underlying the choice of words, figurative language and other stylistic techniques utilized in texts and encourage students to engage in ethical reasoning as they consider whose values are privileged and whose are silenced, as well as what historical, social, political, and economic contexts inform particular values and beliefs propagated through literary texts studied in the classroom. Two chapters in this book explore the kinds of cosmopolitan and ethical pedagogies that can empower students to handle the complexities of our global age.

In Chapter 8, “Positioning Approaches to Teaching Literature in English in Malaysian Secondary Schools,” Wei Keong Too focusses on English Literature’s break from colonial practices during the postcolonial period. He highlights a shift towards cosmopolitan approaches to teaching literature that emphasize the exploration of human concerns through the inclusion of local, regional, and international writers and diverse themes. Such cosmopolitan approaches seek to develop in students a sense of empathy towards others. This cosmopolitan shift, however, is still at a nascent stage as the majority of English Literature curricula and assessment forms in Malaysia continue to support state-sanctioned values and national goals not concerned with such directions. The spread of a cosmopolitan curriculum, argues Too, depends largely on the degree to which policymakers, educators, and scholars continue to reinforce the importance of a de-parochial education.

The importance of a cosmopolitan Literature education that intentionally equips students to engage with ethics has become vital as the world becomes more interconnected and racial, religious, and other tensions shift to the foreground of global politics. In Chapter 16, “Globalizing Literature Education in Singapore: Reviewing Developments and Re-envisioning Possibilities for the Future,” Suzanne Choo highlights the need to position English Literature education such that it becomes more responsive to present day global conflict. In its philosophy, pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment, English Literature education should equip students to engage with ethics and apply ethical criticism to the critical reading of texts. This could involve historicizing texts to study the relationships between texts and their social, economic, and political contexts, as well as interrupting a text with another from an alternative culture so that students perceive issues from a variety of viewpoints. Through such strategies,

engagement with literature then becomes a means of developing dispositions of hospitality towards cultures and values, particularly those that may be different from our own.

## Implications

The future of Literature education, and the ways in which it changes and grows in global times, are some of the great questions facing teachers, writers, and scholars alike. The metaphor of remapping suggests that the vision of Literature education in a global age requires a re-visioning of the role of Literature education on a global stage. Expanding the boundaries of Literature education involves acknowledging diversity and complexity in the ways Literature is understood and taught in different contexts. Being aware of the complications of curriculum, texts, and pedagogies both within and beyond the nation is a first step towards an inclusive understanding of what constitutes Literature education and the different ways of enacting it.

While the edited collection highlights differences across contexts, it also brings up common issues and tensions across different contexts. Chapters in this collection touch on multimodality from time to time, whether through attention to film and digital texts or through the evocation of oral texts from earlier times. Differently inflected, debates about the affordances of language and print, and the differing directions of gaze and outcome that Kress (2003) alludes to in contrasting print and visual text, and the shift from ‘literacy’ to ‘design’ have implications for the future of Literature education, and for what gets valued, and how. Also of concern to many writers in this volume is the question of ‘which language?’, and the cultural baggage different languages carry with them when English is contrasted with local languages. What counts as literature is another issue to which many chapters continually return. Should Literature be about studying canonical English texts or popular culture texts, texts about the nation or texts about the world, print or other forms of multimodal texts?

Central to the whole discussion, and of overriding significance, is the place of Literature education today. What should be the role of Literature education – does it merely serve the instrumental value of language learning? Is it the outgrowth of outworn or previously oppressive or elitist cultures of Empire that we can now discard? Does it still have a place in an interconnected, volatile, and uncertain world in the twenty-first century? To what extent can Literature education be connected to twenty-first century competencies and dispositions? In what ways can an education in Literature equip students to become more aware of issues of violence facing their world and how can it empower students with the kinds of critical, hospitable, and empathetic sensitivities to engage with diverse and conflicting worldviews and beliefs?

Yale University’s Professor Harold Bloom (2015), well-known for his book *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*, quite recently remarked the following in an interview: “Reading is not in that sense a democratic process. It’s elitist. It has to be elitist” (p. 52). While the study of literature has historically

been introduced in formerly colonized nations as elitist and exclusionary, such a view no longer holds any water. The chapters in this volume essentially call for greater democratization of Literature education both in relation to the inclusion of voices that have been marginalized as well as the push for more reader-centric, dialogic pedagogies that give students greater agency.

In this networked global world of mass migrations and mass media, there are ever greater opportunities for connections as well as misunderstandings between individuals and nations. In the same way, there is a tendency to homogenize education objectives across contexts and assume that terminology and ideas mean the same and carry equal weight across contexts. This edited volume is a reminder that educators themselves must continually situate their understanding of Literature education within particular socio-historical and cultural contexts as well as learn from other contexts. To do so, we need to continually remap, and as such, rethink the boundaries of Literature education in a global world.

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## 2 Literature in subject English in Australia

### Purpose, identity and mode

*Catherine Beavis*

In reading and viewing, with both literary and non-literary texts, we will want to develop a sense of the complexity of the world and its contingency. We will do critique, but we will also be looking out for the ways in which texts open up meaning and promote attachment to the world.

—(Misson, 2012, p. 34)

English as a subject seems perpetually to undergo revision and review of its nature, definition, and purpose. Definitions are notoriously elusive. The term works as a complex signifier that:

refers both implicitly and explicitly to at least three matters: “English” as the school subject, English as the language and hence as both the principal medium of instruction and learning and a central mode of communication and semiotic practice, and “English” as a national(ist) quality (“Englishness” – Doyle 1989, Morgan, 1990) implicated in issues of colonialism and imperialism.

(Green & Beavis, 1996, p. 7)

In accounts of English as curriculum subject, these three dimensions: English as curriculum subject, English as language and medium, and English as the vehicle of “Englishness” are interwoven and conflated repeatedly, with “Englishness” in particular historically introduced and embodied through the literature set for study. Literature, in turn, reflects inextricable interrelationships between texts, identity, and subjectivity, and the cultivation of dispositions, attitudes, and values. Retrospective perspectives on texts set for study as part of English in Australia since the 1970s show three intertwined patterns – questions about what it means to be Australian, who is “Australian,” and what constitutes Australian identity in increasingly global and complex times; pedagogical imperatives to build close connections between students’ worlds and texts chosen for study, and third, an increasing broadening and shifts in mode, from language to multimodality and from page to screen. All three shifts, but shifts in mode particularly, have ramifications across these dimensions, complicating and challenging constructions of

the subject, the predominance of print modes, and the choices and consequences of texts set for study. They reflect not only a response to the changing nature of texts and literacy, but a review once more of the subject's very purpose, and the purpose of literary study, in an age of increasing fragmentation, globalization, hypernationalism, and "fake news".

In Australia in 2010, a national curriculum for English – the *Australian Curriculum: English* (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2010) – was introduced across all states and territories. In this subject, literature takes a prominent role, as one of three interwoven strands – language, literacy, and literature. "Literature" is defined to include a broad range of texts and text types, including film and multimodal genres. In all states and territories, this means film and multimodal texts in English are expected to be studied in some form. This chapter traces the growing presence of such texts as part of English as a Secondary school subject in Australia in the period 1970 to 2016; continuity and change in the nature and purposes of literature set for study over this period; and students' engagement with literature.

To do so, it calls on two sets of data: articles published from 1970–2016 in *English in Australia*, the journal of the Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE) and the *ALIAS* (*Analysis of Literature in Australian Schools*) database, compiled by Dolan and Yiannakis (Yiannakis, 2014). *English in Australia* provides a forum encompassing research, arguments, and accounts of practice relating to the teaching of English across years 7–12, with AATE comprised of member English teaching associations in all states and territories. As such, it provides a window into English teaching across the years of secondary schooling in Australia during this period – years 7–12. The *ALIAS* database, by contrast, focusses specifically on the Senior Secondary Years. It itemizes texts set for study in the post-compulsory years as part of the Examination system (i.e., the lists of approved texts from which teachers would make appropriate selections), "based on all available syllabi, reading lists, examination papers and subject manuals and/or handbooks from 1945–2005 for Western Australia, New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria" (Yiannakis, 2014, p. 110). It provides a detailed snapshot of the specificities and priorities in centrally mandated lists for text selection in Year 12 English over 60 years.

## Context

To understand the emergence of film and media texts within English in Australia, three features are worth noting. First, while recent developments including the introduction of National Curriculum provide a degree of national uniformity, school education formally remains a State, rather than National responsibility. Second, while the ways in which subject English has been constructed in different states has varied historically, literature has always been an integral part of English in each case. (In some states, an additional subject focusing specifically on literature is also available in senior years). Third, as elsewhere, the senior secondary years mark the point at which selection for tertiary entrance occurs.

The high-stakes nature of the senior secondary curriculum and examination system, accordingly, makes it both a very visible point for observing curriculum change, and a place where traditional notions of disciplinarity are likely to be most strongly defended, if change is posited, and most on view.

### *Formations of English, literature and literacy in English Education in Australia*

The history of English Education in Australia has been well documented, with significant historical curriculum research highlighting key features of the growth, composition, and shape of English as a school subject in different states (Green & Beavis, 1996; Green & Cormack, 2008; Selleck, 1982; Dowsett, 2016). As state-based education systems developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, slightly differing versions of “English” evolved with respect to literacy, literature, grammar, and the like. In each state, English occupied a central place in the curriculum. All drew heavily on English, Scottish, or Irish traditions and resources, most with a concerted emphasis on the inculcation of morality, religious values, and “good character” alongside basic competencies (Green & Beavis, 1996; Selleck, 1982). Reading, writing, spelling, handwriting, and grammar played an important role in the primary years especially, with literature also an important part of English in both primary and secondary schools, albeit used and configured differently in each context.

For the purposes of this chapter, there are three main implications here. First, literature in some form has been an integral part of English as a curriculum subject in Australia from the outset, and continues to be so. Second, “Literature” – historically the “great tradition” of the English canon – is deeply implicated in the formation of subjectivity and nationalism, such that changes in the focus and choice of texts are seen to have ramifications for values and national identity. Third, the forms of literature that have been valued historically have been in print or oral form – in the main, novels, short stories, drama, and poetry. The ways in which literature is defined, the relationship between “literature” and “text”, and the expansion of texts in the *Australian Curriculum: English* to include multi-modal forms, reflect and are consistent with ongoing contestation and debate about the nature of the subject that have characterized it in Australia and internationally for many years (Dixon, 1991; Goodson & Medway, 1990; Green & Beavis, 1996; Mathieson, 1975; Peel, Patterson, & Gerlach, 2000).

### **The growing place of media and popular culture texts in English in Australia**

While the presence of mass media and popular culture in young people’s lives had been noted from the mid-1960s, the predominant trope (e.g., Hansen, 1961) had been to regard such texts with disdain. By the late 1960s, however, views of media, technology, and popular culture were beginning to change. Technological innovation and the increasing presence and popularity of media technologies