English Teachers and the Asia Literacy Priority:

Is it really a priority?

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I declare that this thesis is a product of my own research. Its contents have not been previously submitted for a degree at any other tertiary institution.

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Abstract

The recently developed Australian Curriculum consists of eight Learning Areas, seven General Capabilities and three Cross Curricular Priorities. Negotiating all three dimensions is challenging for learning area and discipline specialists particularly when no system level accountability exists for two of the three cross curriculum priorities. Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia, one of the non-assessed Cross-Curricular Priorities, is expected to be delivered by teachers in all learning areas. However, in an environment where the numbers of students studying Asian languages is in decline, it is often through the compulsory subject of English that students are exposed to Asian peoples and cultures.

This study highlights how policy is enacted. It reveals how Asia Literacy becomes a personal choice for English teachers and considers the complex issues impacting both its adoption and assessment in secondary school settings. It also exposes how the intersection of Asia literacies and the key element ‘intercultural understanding’ within the General Capabilities is reinforced. The findings examine text choice and consider how teachers access professional development without the impetus of cogent policy.

Findings also reveal where the new curriculum and associated documentation can be conflicting regarding the provision of parameters and expectations about the enactment of Asia Literacy. In this atmosphere of educational uncertainty and within an already packed syllabus, the voices of four high school English teachers provide insight into their lived experience of negotiating Asia Literacy in culturally diverse classrooms.
The research clarifies how the broader educational sector can support teachers including reinforcing the need for Asia Literacy to be prioritised in a wider range of regulatory and professional documentation. In these ways, the stated aim of using policy to create a more prosperous nation that engages in building strong relationships with Asia can be better realised.
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Chapter 1 Introduction

This research explores how four English teachers in independent high schools in Western Australia are negotiating the implementation of the cross curriculum priority of Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia as stipulated by the Australian Curriculum (AC, 2015). It focuses on how these English teachers are attempting to make meaning of the task of broadening intercultural understanding about Asia in their own classrooms. This study will share the voices of the English practitioners, highlighting how a particular aspect of a mandated policy has been interpreted and enacted. Through this, a brief yet varied vignette is provided of how parts of the Australian Education system are responding to the demand for an Asia literate work force. From this study, recommendations and suggestions for future research will be generated.

This introductory chapter will clarify the relevant specific terminology of ‘Asia Literacy’ and ‘Intercultural Understanding’. It will outline the historical antecedents leading to the status of Asia Literacy in the curriculum. The current structure of the Australian Curriculum will be explained and a brief summary of the place of Asia Literacy in relevant professional documents will be provided. Reactions from professional organisations to this new iteration of Asia Literacy will be summarised. In addition to this contextual information, I will explain my personal context before drawing together the rationale of why I believe this research is important.
1.1 Clarification of Terminology

Asia Literacy.

Before discussing how teachers are negotiating the implementation of the cross curriculum priority of ‘Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia’ (AC, 2015), it should be noted that this research will often use the term ‘Asia Literacy’ as a useful shorthand for the full iteration of the priority. The term ‘Asia Literacy’ has been a descriptor in Australian discourse for over twenty years (Singh, 1995a, Fitzgerald, 1997). However, both its imperfections and utility should also be acknowledged. The Asia Literacy Teachers’ Association of Australia (ALTAA) defines the term as representing “the capacity to reflect upon and explore cultural differences in the Asian region. It is the ability to understand Asian cultures and gain knowledge about Asian people and their histories” (ALTAA, 2016).

However, as Salter (2013) notes, the term also has ambiguous boundaries. This is both in terms of what is represented by ‘Asia’, a term that has its basis as part of a European construct of the world, as well as the idea of what defines this specific sort of cultural literacy. The authority controlling the Australian Curriculum advises that “Asia can be defined in geographical terms, but it can also be described in terms of cultural, religious, historical and language boundaries or communities” (ACARA, 2015). However, the document does not advise what the identifying commonalities are but merely attempts to focus practitioners: “while it includes West and Central Asia, in Australian schools, studies of Asia will pay particular attention to the sub-regions of North-East Asia, South-East Asia and South Asia” (ACARA, 2015).
While we can arrive at a workable geographical definition is also important to note that the term can also be problematic (Salter, 2013, 2014). ‘Asia’ is a term that has its basis as part of a European construct of the world (Said, 1978). The categorizing of geographical and cultural spaces as ‘Asian’ on the basis of a set of shared identifiers was not something that originated within what is designated as Asia. From a post-colonial perspective, in trying to increase a specific sort of cultural literacy about a defined ‘Asia’ space, it is important to acknowledge that the term itself originates from a Eurocentric view of the world.

The purpose of this research is not to argue for a redefinition of terms but it is important to note its limitations and acknowledge its currency: ‘Asia Literacy’ is widely used both in educational and wider public discourse. It is also useful in the context of this document as a more condensed descriptor to represent the full curriculum priority of ‘developing the knowledge and understanding of Asian societies, cultures, beliefs and environments’ (ACARA, 2015). Another useful brief definition in an Australian educational context comes from Leong & Woods who define Asia Literacy for Australians as “going beyond the ‘us’ and ‘them’; to have the skills to critique ideological norms that define the ways in which Asia is represented and spoken about” (Leong & Woods, 2017, p. 370). This links Asia Literacy more directly to the idea of intercultural understanding.

**Intercultural Understanding.**

It is also necessary to consider the term, ‘intercultural understanding’ in the context of this document and its iteration in the curriculum. The Australian Curriculum also lists ‘Intercultural Understanding’ as one of the seven General Capabilities (AC, 2015) and teachers are expected to teach and assess all seven of these within the specific learning area
content. Through the lens of this intercultural understanding, the ideology promoted about Asia Literacy is not suggesting the simple learning of facts about Asia in the English classroom but looking at how students value and empathise with other cultures as well as critically evaluating their own and other cultures’ perspectives and practices (AC, 2015). While this research project does not seek to have a strong focus on the General Capability of Intercultural Understanding, as its remit extends beyond Asian cultures, it certainly acknowledges that English teachers are expected to approach Asia Literacy from this ideological standpoint. It became a frequent aspect of the discussion with the teacher participants who considered it as part of their responses.

It is now important to explain the historical context and process that saw Asia Literacy come to have a more prominent place in the current Australian curriculum rather than view it as a sudden inclusion.

1.2 Historical Antecedents Leading to the Current Syllabus

The national curriculum, required to be implemented in the Western Australian English Curriculum by 2015 (SCSA, 2014a), designed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), was the first national document to formally state Asia Literacy as a priority in a defined syllabus. However, the call for Australia’s students to become more Asia literate is not new and as early as 1969 the Auchmuty Report (1969) called for Asian studies to be given parity with studies of Europe. Henderson (1999, 2007) also notes that between 1969 and 1994, 40 government and non-government policies, documents, committees, working parties and organisations “explored aspects of the need for Australians to learn Asian languages and cultures” (Henderson, 1999, p. 61). However, while
many of these policy documents outlined strategies to increase Asia Literacy or set goals such as a desired percentage of students to be studying Asian Languages (Rudd, 1994), none of them articulated a set curriculum that prioritized or required Asia Literacy to be taught to all students.

In the past, there had also been encouragement specifically for English teachers to use texts from or about Asia through such initiatives as the Access Asia Voices and Visions series (DEST, 2004) distributed to all secondary schools. Clear statements were also made in the Melbourne Declaration on Education Goals for Young Australians, (MCEETYA, 2008) which affirmed the importance of Asia Literacy in the education system and broader workforce. It argued that “Australians need to become ‘Asia Literate’” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4) and in the same year the Federal Government (ALP, 2008) established the National Curriculum Board. This body drove the creation of the new Australian Curriculum that for the first time on a national level, “set the expectations for what all Australian students should be taught” (ACARA, 2015). The curriculum was “designed to meet the needs of students by delivering a relevant, contemporary and engaging curriculum” (AC, 2015) based on the educational goals of the Melbourne Declaration. From as early as 2010, iterations of the new curriculum marked a key shift where Asia Literacy was now flagged as one of three cross-curricular priorities.

The date for full implementation of the curriculum in July 2015 (SCSA, 2014a) for the compulsory Learning Area of English therefore marked the first time that Asia Literacy was a priority for all students as stated in a legislated mandatory syllabus. However, what did
the structure of this curriculum actually look like and how did the nominal ‘priority’ of Asia Literacy have a place within it?

1.3 How Asia Literacy is Structured in the Curriculum

This section investigates how curriculum documents and regulatory processes represent Asia Literacy in their scope. The overall structure of the Australian Curriculum will be detailed before narrowing the focus to how Asia Literacy is represented in the mandatory English learning area content descriptors in the Year 7-12 syllabus. The auditing process for this syllabus is also worthy of scrutiny. The place of Asia Literacy in other relevant professional documents will be considered. These include the content elaborations in the Year 7-10 English syllabus and the Year 11 and 12 syllabus statements. The Year 11 and 12 English learning area external examinations and documents regarding teacher registration and professional standards are also examined.

The overall structure of the Australian Curriculum.

Figure 1 acts as a brief reminder of the structure of this new Australian Curriculum. It outlines the eight Learning areas including English as well as the seven general capabilities and clearly affirms the status of the three cross-curriculum priorities.
While this study could digress into the semantic intention of the word ‘priority’ in the context of the curriculum, the ACARA website clearly states that, “The Melbourne Declaration identified three key areas that need to be addressed for the benefit of both individuals and Australia as a whole.” ACARA (2016). Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia is clearly identified as one of the areas that ‘needs’ to be addressed. The choice of the word ‘need’ does at least imply a certain ‘mandatory’ connotation in the way it allocates importance. The website goes on to state that “Cross-curriculum priorities are addressed through learning areas” (ACARA, 2016). However, there is also a note that, “They will have a strong but varying presence depending on their relevance to the learning area.” (ACARA, 2016).
The mandatory English content descriptors in the Year 7-12 syllabus.

While this research will explore how English teachers have prioritised Asia Literacy in practice, it is necessary to further interrogate the English syllabus to understand the presence of Asia Literacy within its scope. The Australian Curriculum (AC, 2018) outlines that content descriptions describe what is to be taught and what students are expected to learn in each learning area. This includes knowledge, understanding and skills described in year levels. Thus, the content descriptors form the mandatory part of the English syllabus. Figure 2 and 3 highlight the mandatory subject content in the English Learning Area in Year 7 to 12.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 7</th>
<th>Examining Literature: Understand, interpret and discuss how language is compressed to produce a dramatic effect in film or drama, and to create layers of meaning in poetry, for example haiku, tankas, couplets, free verse and verse novels.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 8-10</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2: Summary of Asia Literacy related content descriptors in the English Learning Area in Year 7-10 (SCSA, 2018a)*

| Year 11 | English Foundation: Nil  
|          | English General: Nil  
|          | English ATAR: Nil  
|          | Literature: Nil |
| Year 12 | English Foundation: Nil  
|          | English General: Nil  
|          | English ATAR: Nil  
|          | Literature: Nil |

*Figure 3: Summary of Asia Literacy related content descriptors in the English Learning Area in the four main courses in Year 11-12 (SCSA, 2018b)*

On this basis, an English faculty could choose only to study a haiku in Year 7 as an example and still completely meet their obligations to include Asia Literacy in the curriculum.
for six years of English study from Year 7 to 12. They could also omit the study of a haiku as it is cited as an example only.

**Syllabus and school auditing processes.**

Teachers and English faculties are also obliged to meet a range of other regulatory requirements and processes. These include Syllabus Delivery Audits (SCSA, 2018c), School Moderation Visits where there is a Documentation Review (SCSA, 2018d) and independent schools are required to go through the processes involved in School Registration (DES, 2018). However, in terms of curriculum delivery, all of these regulatory processes only audit the delivery of mandated subject content. Their parameters to check course and assessment outlines and general curriculum delivery do not seek to provide feedback on whether any of the cross curriculum priorities are being addressed beyond their inclusion in the subject content descriptors. Again, none of the major auditing processes require English teachers to address Asia Literacy beyond the possible inclusion of a haiku in Year 7.

**The content elaborations in the Year 7-10 English syllabus and the Year 11 and 12 syllabus statements.**

In addition to curriculum priorities and syllabus outlines, key questions arise that explore the scope of support for Asia Literacy in the current secondary context.

1. What other syllabus documentation do English teachers have access to in Year 7 to 10 that could encourage them to consider Asia Literacy as a ‘need’ to prioritise as part of their curriculum?
It is important to further interrogate the Year 7-10 content elaborations in the Australian Curriculum. These give suggestions as to how the subject content can be realized in the classroom. Elaborations do not form part of the mandated content but are optional and are provided to give teachers ideas about how they might choose to teach the content (AC, 2018). Figure 4 highlights the elaborations concerning Asia Literacy that exist in the Year 7 to Year 10 English syllabus.

| Year 7 | 1. Drawing on literature and life experiences to create a poem, for example: ballad, series of haiku.  
2. Exploring languages and dialects through building webcam relationships with schools across Australia and Asia.  
3. Exploring traditional stories from Asia and discussing their engaging features, for example use of the oral mode, visual elements, verse, use of puppets to convey the narrative. |
| Year 8 | 1. Exploring examples of Singlish (Singapore English) from a Singlish dictionary |
| Year 9 | 1. Reviewing historical fiction or nonfiction written by and about the peoples of Asia.  
2. Analysing literary texts created by and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (including documentaries, picture books, print texts and other multimodal texts) and also texts including film produced by and about peoples of Asian background, and considering the different ways these texts represent people, places, things and issues. |
| Year 10 | 1. Exploring models of sustained texts created for persuasive purposes about a challenging or complex issue from other cultures, including Asia. |

*Figure 4: Summary of Asia-Literacy content elaborations in the English Learning Area in Year 7-10 (SCSA, 2018a)*

2. How is the ‘need’ for Asia Literacy also documented and represented in the Year 11 and 12 English syllabi?

Each course makes a generic statement about Asia Literacy under the heading of Cross Curriculum priorities. Figure 5 reinforces that they essentially suggest that teachers can choose to include Asia Literacy content through their choices of texts and activities:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General statement for all 4 individual courses</th>
<th>The cross-curriculum priorities address contemporary issues which students face in a globalised world. Teachers may find opportunities to incorporate the priorities into the teaching and learning program for the [English ATAR, General English, Literature, Foundation] course. The cross-curriculum priorities are not assessed unless they are identified within the specified unit content.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Year 11 and 12**  
• ATAR English  
• General English  
• Literature | There are strong social, cultural and economic reasons for Australian students to engage with Asia and with the contribution of Asian Australians to our society and heritage. It is through the study of texts from Asia that a creative and forward-looking Australia can engage with our place in the region. Through story articulated in a range of media, students may be provided with opportunities to develop understanding of the diversity of Asia’s peoples, environments and traditional and contemporary cultures. Texts relevant to this priority are included in the suggested text list (or in the prescribed list for Literature). |
| **Year 11 and 12**  
• Foundation English | There are strong social, cultural and economic reasons for Australian students to engage with Asia and with the contribution of Asian Australians to our society. It is through the study of texts from Asia that students can engage with our place in the region. Through story, students may be provided with opportunities to develop understanding of the diversity of Asia’s peoples, environments and cultures. |

*Figure 5: Summary of Asia Literacy related statements in the English Learning Area Syllabi in Year 11-12 (SCSA, 2018b)*

These statements in Year 11 and 12 focus heavily on the rationale for Asia Literacy and that choice of text will be an important vehicle to encourage the Asia Literacy curriculum priority. However, there is no mandated requirement to choose a text from or about Asia. This is in contrast to the requirement in the subject of Literature which obligates teachers to study at least one Australian text in each pair of units (SCSA, 2018f), though there is no curriculum priority of ‘Australia’ which acts as a basis for this mandate.
The Year 11 and 12 English learning area external examinations.

Teachers can also be encouraged to value Asia Literacy through the inclusion of specific content in examinations and externally set tasks. While I am not suggesting that teachers should merely teach to the examination, the presence of Asia Literacy content in examinations could encourage teachers to see it as a valued aspect of the courses. Figure 6 highlights the presence that Asia Literacy has had in these externally set assessment pieces and examinations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foundation English</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General English</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATAR English</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>*Not yet held</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>*Present</td>
<td>*Not yet held</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 6: Summary of Asia Literacy related content in English Learning Area external examinations and tasks in 2016 - 2018 (SCSA, 2018e)*

The introduction of new courses in Year 12 in 2016 reflected the new Australian Curriculum in practice for the first time at that year level. No Asia Literacy content appeared in any question in each of the four English courses designed for Australian students in that year. The 2017 Literature examination did feature a text that represented an Asian setting. In one section of the examination, students had a choice to respond to one of three texts. One of these three texts was from a prose text by an Australian author. However, the persona in the text did reflect from the perspective of an Australian what it was like to live in Bali, Indonesia and they drew comparisons between their experiences there and their experiences in Australia. Prior knowledge of the Asian context of the prose passage was not a
requirement of the students who needed to demonstrate they could give an interpretative reading of the text.

It can be noted that while there is scant mandated Learning Area subject content in English requiring Asia Literacy, there are some instances within the documentation and processes that teachers work from that give them encouragement to value and see Asia Literacy as important beyond the statement of the Asia Literacy priority itself. This contextual knowledge about how Asia Literacy is represented in both the mandated compulsory component of the curriculum and the additional voluntary component can certainly inform our interpretation of how English teachers are negotiating this priority. How would English teachers interpret sets of documents that on one hand stated Asia Literacy as a priority, yet on the other hand gave teachers choices to ignore it?

**Teacher registration and professional standards.**

It is also useful to reflect on how Asia Literacy is valued in the process of teacher registration and performance appraisal. We have seen that while Asia Literacy is a curriculum ‘priority’ it does not make much of an appearance in the mandated subject content of English. However, does the process of performance management and teacher registration acknowledge Asia Literacy as a priority and thus encourage individual teachers to develop their skills and abilities in this area?

In order to teach the English curriculum in Western Australia, all teachers must be registered with the Teacher Registration Board of Western Australia (TRBWA, 2018a).
Graduate teachers may be provisionally registered but to move to the category of fully registered teacher, an individual must be deemed proficient at the Professional Standards for Teachers in Western Australia (TRBWA, 2018b). These standards were approved in 2012, after the introduction of the available drafts of the Australian Curriculum, and are based on the National Professional Standards for Teachers in 2011 (TRBWA, 2018c) (AITSL, 2018a).

The Professional Standards for Teachers are described as “a public statement of what constitutes teacher quality. They define the work of teachers and make explicit elements of high-quality teaching in 21st century schools that will improve educational outcomes for students” (AITSL, 2018a).

What place is Asia Literacy given in this document which is about “defining the work of teachers” and improving educational outcomes through high-quality teaching? The place of Asia Literacy in this document has been silenced. In contrast, the curriculum priority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures (AC, 2015) has been given prominence through a number of categories but is especially featured in Teacher Standard 2 regarding Professional Knowledge of “Know the content and how to teach it”. Professional Standard 2.4 is explicit:

2.4 Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians

Figure 7: Australian Professional Standard for Teachers 2.4 (AITSL, 2018a)
Given that teachers are encouraged as part of their development to move through the Career Stages (AITSL, 2018a) for each standard from ‘Graduate’ to ‘Proficient’ to ‘Highly Accomplished’ to ‘Lead’, there is an incentive for teachers to develop their skills and knowledge for this curriculum priority. However, the curriculum priorities of ‘Asia and Australia’s Engagement with Asia’ and ‘Sustainability’ (AC, 2018) are not mentioned explicitly nor are they grouped in any generic mention of the curriculum priorities. As a result, through the main process of becoming registered as a teacher there is no explicit encouragement to become more proficient at the practice of Asia Literacy in the classroom.

Teachers who are already fully registered must also complete the reregistration process involving 100 hours of professional learning every 5 years that are directly related to the Professional Standards (TRBWA, 2018d). Therefore, the renewal of registration process for experienced teachers also silences Asia Literacy.

These registered and experienced teachers are also encouraged to use the Professional Standards for Teachers in their performance appraisals and are used as the basis of the Teacher Self-Assessment Tool (AITSL, 2018b). This tool is designed to help all teachers in Australia review their practice and plan their professional development (AITSL, 2018b). The nationally approved tool for performance appraisal for experienced teachers, which also signposts their appropriate professional development, continues this silencing of Asia Literacy. It does suggest that the status implied in the word ‘priority’ in the Australian curriculum is not actually matched by the documents created for teachers to reflect on their own practice.
In this regulatory environment where the Asia Literacy ‘priority’ is often ignored, it will be interesting to note how English teachers value any relevant professional development. How did they interact with external agencies in their quest for this professional learning and what needs, external support and information did they identify as assisting their practice of Asia Literacy?

Teachers may have also been aware of the reactions to the position of Asia Literacy within this new curriculum. Responses to Asia Literacy as a curriculum priority occurred within professional organisations such as the Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE) and were also discussed in the broader media. It is useful to consider these contextual reactions to Asia Literacy, not only as they formed part of the context in which teachers were operating but also because they indicate some of the issues that the four teachers considered in their conversations.

1.4 Contextual Reactions to Asia Literacy

There was criticism early on that Australia’s Asia Literacy imperatives formed part of a neo-colonial enterprise (Singh, 1995b), based largely on the premise of economic advantage. It had also been noted that while increasing Asia Literacy was supposed to act as a solution to Australia’s economic problems, framing it as a ‘problem and solution’ approach continued to act in a way that promoted the ideology of an Asian ‘other’ that we needed to know for our own advantage (Salter, 2013). Some organisations have also argued against increased Asia Literacy, claiming that Australia already has the human capital it needs and it is not necessary to upskill the population in this way in order to reap the economic benefits that can come from increased economic links to Asia (Herscovitch, 2013).
Its inclusion in the national curriculum has also been a source of contention in the media (Topsfield & Knott, 2014). Being described in print journalism as “damned cross-curriculum priorities that must be met”, and as “impenetrable” and positioned as part of “half-baked” fads (Sloan, 2013), served to raise the public profile of this aspect of the curriculum. In response, the chairman of the government body responsible for the national curriculum (ACARA), noted the controversy and attempted to defend and explain the use of the cross curriculum priorities by providing exemplars of their efficacy (McGaw, 2014).

Concern about the cross curriculum priorities, including Asia Literacy, was also present within educational organisations. Issues were raised about the volume of material in the new national curriculum: some state education bodies argued that the cross curriculum priorities were adding to the complexity of content delivery and were providing difficult and conflicting challenges for teachers (QCAA, 2011). The Australian Government Department of Education (AGDE) acknowledged that ‘teachers are finding it difficult to implement the Australian Curriculum and cover all the content’ (AGDE, 2014, p. 7). The new Australian Curriculum did not only mandate changed learning area content, but teachers were also being asked to undertake a change in pedagogical practice. The three cross curriculum priorities were identified as a key site for practitioners to undertake this change to the way they teach (SCSA, 2014b).

The level of support for teachers and how they strove to negotiate the implementation of the curriculum was also another aspect of the reaction of educational bodies to the new curriculum. How the priorities interconnected with subject content and general capabilities (QCEC, 2011) and how they could be incorporated without being tokenistic (Facchinetti,
2012) were identified as areas of further clarification for educators. While some professional bodies supported the notion that the cross-curriculum priorities address important issues, they acknowledge that teachers still needed more time to determine the best ways to incorporate these into their programs (AATE, 2014). It was also acknowledged that practitioners’ own education history may give them little preparation for the appropriate incorporation of Asia Literacy into their teaching practices (Milner, 2011).

In summary, by 2015 Asia Literacy had a place in the curriculum that had developed from a process lasting many decades. It had the nominal status of a ‘priority’ in the curriculum, yet the actual structure of the curriculum and its associated regulatory documents gave English teachers a lot of choice about where, how and if they would choose to include Asia Literacy. I found it an interesting idea to examine how English teachers were negotiating this priority in practice. How were English teachers negotiating a set of documents in a context where there was debate about the importance of Asia Literacy? However, before I explain the rationale of this research in more detail, I should also here explain the ‘I’ representing my own personal context as an English teacher and begin to acknowledge how it has shaped this study.

1.5 My Personal Context

My own interest originates from my professional context as a Faculty Head of English in an independent school which entails my responsibility for leading teachers through the educational changes outlined in the new national curriculum. During 2013, I had finished trialing the use of Mao’s Last Dancer (Cunxin, 2003) with my Year 10 class as I was considering its use as part of a desire to promote Asia Literacy for all Year 10 students in
2014. I thought that I had taught the text well and, apart from the student who had placed my photo in a collage on the cover page of his assignment about great world dictators, I thought that the text had also been well received by the students.

However, on reflection, I realised that while I had facilitated the learning of some contextual knowledge about Asia to this group of Year 10’s, I had not really taught the text in a way where I had promoted intercultural understanding about Asia. Had I indeed even reinforced an ideology that encouraged students to see an Asian culture and society as inferior to their own? As an English teacher, I had not been trained to teach Asia Literacy but I came to understand that my text choices and the way I structured my approach would have an effect on the way that students developed their understanding. It was at this point that the desire for further research was initiated.

I do acknowledge the challenges to teachers and education systems of introducing Asia Literacy to a busy curriculum but my own worldview is aligned with the Australian curriculum: that we should value understanding and being able empathise with people from other cultures. I will explain my own values in more detail and how this has shaped my construction of this research project in the methodology section. However, it is important to acknowledge these contextual factors that situate and initiated the research.

I did consider whether there could be value in one practitioner investigating the experiences of others. Groundwater-Smith and Mockler’s (2006) notion is that educational research should not be for its own ends. Their case for valuing the findings of practitioner researchers, as opposed to a focus on perpetuating the voices of the tertiary sector, is strongly
based on the idea that education research should be a vehicle for change in practice. In the same way, Natalier (2013) argues that a key role of educational research is a desire to inform public policy and improve practice in the field. The desire of researchers to change public education policy and practice should reside firmly in a moral and ethical framework according to Hostetler (2005). Personally, I felt that there could be value in the research of analyzing the experiences of other colleagues with Asia Literacy. The value could lie in revealing and coming to a better understanding of what was happening to fellow practitioners in their classrooms.

Given the historical antecedents, the scope for individual interpretation within the Australian Curriculum and the contextual information, I believe the research into how English teachers are negotiating Asia Literacy is worthy of merit and investigation. I considered it valuable to hear the voices of colleagues who would be willing to share their own negotiation of Asia Literacy in English classrooms. This allowed me to hear the perspective of my teaching peers, one which was often largely silenced in public debates, as they undertook and discussed their experiences of this new curriculum.

1.6 Rationale

The aim of the research was to discover how the curriculum priority of Asia Literacy is being interpreted and negotiated by English teachers. Hearing practitioners’ voices about these mandated changes provided a useful insight into how this particular education policy has been enacted in practice. Possible outcomes from this research include assisting teachers to identify what will help them implement curriculum change by recognizing the difficulties
and barriers that are currently occurring. However, if teachers have experienced success then it will also allow for an exhibition of their practice and conditions under which this occurred.

On a broader scale, the outcomes of this research offer recommendations that may enable systems, sectors and individual schools to better target their resources to assist teachers. This includes the form and content of professional development, how any time allocated to Asia Literacy should be invested and an evaluation of successful pedagogical practices.

However, the stakeholders of this educational change are not confined to those who inhabit the classroom: it is made clear that Asia Literacy can have a broader social impact that works to build the ‘social, intellectual and creative capital’ of a more prosperous nation (ACARA, 2016). The Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008) acknowledged that ‘Australians need to become ‘Asia literate’, engaging and building strong relationships with Asia.’ For these reasons, investigating how English teachers are approaching and experiencing the initial implementation of Asia Literacy is also worthy of review and consideration.

Another contextual factor signaled the subject area of English as an increasingly important site for Asia Literacy in Western Australia. The numerical decline of Australian students studying Asian languages (Dabrowski, 2015) is relevant to the context of the research. Figure 8 highlights that the number of students studying the available Asian languages through to Year 12 level in Western Australia is decreasing despite the increase in the school age population.
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<td>Total of Chinese/Indonesian/Japanese</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>416</td>
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*Figure 8:* Number of students in Western Australia studying an Asian language as their second language (SCSA, 2017).

As the sole compulsory subject from Year 7 to 12 in the curriculum, the learning area of English has a special opportunity to reach all Western Australian students. If students are not becoming Asia literate through studying Asian languages, English will be the likely site for a significant proportion of student learning and reflection on cultural encounters with Asia through texts produced by and about Asian peoples and cultures.

This introductory chapter has sought to explain the context of this research and clarify the relevant terminology. It has outlined the relevant historical background to Asia Literacy, clarified its place in the structure of the curriculum and has explained my own personal context. It has also sought to highlight how initial questions have been formed through the circumstances of a change in the curriculum. A key aspect of this has been to highlight possible tensions within the curriculum documentation which teachers are required to interpret. This gives further impetus to the rationale of researching how English teachers are attempting to negotiate Asia Literacy.

The next chapter will function as a review of the Literature and highlight how there is still a need for more information about the actual enactment of the practice of Asia Literacy in the English classroom.
Chapter 2 Literature Review

Acknowledging other voices in the discourse.

The previous chapter provided a situational and historical context for the research into how English teachers are negotiating Asia Literacy in the recently introduced Australian curriculum. It defined the key terms and explained the structure and nature of the curriculum documents. I also explained my personal context and how I came to be involved in this particular discourse and provided a rationale for why this research has importance.

This literature review chapter is framed from two complementary organising concepts. Firstly, how academic voices have examined the place of Asia Literacy in the curriculum from a theoretical standpoint. This includes the review of arguments that Asia Literacy has a place in the English curriculum, the proposed models of this placement and how Asia Literacy in English acts as a vehicle for intercultural understanding.

The second organising concept revolves around the review of the enacted practice of Asia Literacy in English. This includes considering teachers as those that enact policy, opinions regarding the current teaching approach of Asia Literacy in English and reviewing studies that feature the actual Asia Literacy practice of English teachers. A summary of these two organising concepts is then provided which focuses on how the current research reinforces the need to answer questions raised.

The literature review is therefore constructed to give an understanding of voices that are contributing to the discourse of Asia Literacy before moving to the discussion of its
enacted practice. However, the use of this structure also serves to highlight the lack of practitioner voices in the current discourse and further promotes the significance of listening to those currently engaged with negotiating Asia Literacy in English classrooms.

2.1 Asia Literacy’s Place in the English Curriculum

The inclusion of the Asia Literacy priority in the national curriculum seems to be driven by both cultural and economic forces: students are to be equipped with the skills, knowledge and understanding to support Australia’s prosperity in a globalized world (ACARA, 2016); additionally, the more holistic aims of creating a better society are also mentioned. A few commentators have argued that Asia Literacy in the curriculum is superfluous as Australia already has the skills it needs to interact with Asia (Herscovitch, 2013) but limited evidence is offered to support this position. However, since the development of the current Australian curriculum, many academic position papers have argued that Asia Literacy should be given prominence with specific reference to the English Learning Area.

Even while the Australian Curriculum was still at the drafting stage, the 2008 National English Curriculum: Framing Paper (ACARA, 2008) highlighted a place for Asia Literacy in its proposals. It emphasized how Australia’s increasing ethnic diversity and the increasing geopolitical and economic importance of Asia engendered “a variety of cultural, social, and ethical interests and responsibilities” (ACARA, 2008, p. 7). This highlighted the idea of teachers not only needing to meet the students’ interests but also evoked the concept of needing to meet a responsibility on a national level. The paper also spoke about these responsibilities including “the entitlement of all young Australians to develop an awareness
of the literary traditions and expressions of other nations in the Asia Pacific region” (ACARA, 2008, p. 7).

The semantic choices of this framing document for the English curriculum, supported by the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008), highlighted the lifting of importance of Asia Literacy in English from that of being a possible optional focus to one that argued for its necessity. While neither of these documents form part of the syllabus and English teachers were not required to negotiate the framing paper documentation, the terminology of ‘responsibility’ and ‘entitlement’ clearly reflects the extent to which Asia Literacy was being promoted as something not just worthy of attention in English, but an endeavour of personal and national importance for students. Certainly, English teachers in this study reflect awareness of this idea of Asia Literacy as being part of a national enterprise. Their expressed thoughts and the conversations which relate their decisions about classroom practice may highlight the extent to which these practitioners share this sense of responsibility.

Once the curriculum was published for use in schools, other academic voices also contributed to the argument that the English curriculum should embrace Asia Literacy. Hassim outlined that the “nexus between English, Asia perspectives and intercultural understanding” (Hassim, 2013, p. 8) is important and he acknowledged Hamston’s argument that English has a great potential to assist students to engage with Asian cultures and peoples (Hamston, 2012). Moult (2012) also detailed how the subject of English allows students to deepen their understanding of the world including Asia through text and comparative analysis. This is echoed by others in the idea of literature in English as a site for “showcasing cultural diversity and developing Asia Literacy” (Henderson, Allan & Mallan 2013 p45).
has also been highlighted that English was a subject in the first phase of implementation (ACARA, 2014) of the new curriculum and thus it is significant for English teachers to come to terms with the cross curriculum priority of ‘Asia Literacy’ as they are among the first to attempt to develop and embed it in their teaching.

While various sound ideological and economic reasons for the inclusion of Asia Literacy in the English curriculum exist, it is not the main purpose of this research to argue for it in a theoretical sense. However, it is important to acknowledge the academic voices arguing for its inclusion as part of a post-colonial paradigm that views Australian education as needing to explore beyond the traditional Anglo-centric model that had previously operated. In the context of this research the voices of the English teachers in focus will also join this discussion and reflect their own feelings and decisions about the importance of Asia Literacy specifically within the English curriculum.

As outlined above, much current research broadly argues for the inclusion of Asia Literacy in English. However, some researchers have become more specific to propose idealised models about how this should occur.

2.2 Proposed Models of Asia Literacy

Kathe Kirby, Executive Director of the Asia Education Foundation argues what an English curriculum should look like as part of an Asia literate national curriculum (Kirby, 2009). Students are to develop an understanding and appreciation of a range of Asian contemporary and traditional texts. This includes becoming familiar with literary traditions,
canons, worldviews and traditional and contemporary writers from a range of Asian countries. However, her proposal is not limited to textual knowledge but the idea of a text as a vehicle for the intercultural understanding of both traditional and current Asian cultural contexts is also foregrounded. Her idea of Asia Literacy also encompasses a greater appreciation of Australians of Asian heritage. The perspective she offers not only details this broad spectrum of understanding but the idea that students will also be “creatively inspired by the great literary traditions and dynamic popular cultures of Asia” (Kirby, 2009, p. 24).

The Australian Curriculum (AC, 2018) makes it clear that in the English curriculum students “can explore and appreciate the diverse range of traditional and contemporary texts from and about the peoples and countries of Asia, including texts written by Australians of Asian heritage”. Interestingly Kirbe’s (2009) model sees a narrower definition of ideal texts coming from a range of Asian writers and representing the worldviews and traditions of Asian cultures. The Year 11 and 12 syllabus statements (SCSA, 2018b) also support Kirbe’s (2009) narrower definition that it is the study of texts from Asia that assist Australia to engage with the Asian region.

Hassim (2013) outlines a model that is more focused on intercultural understanding where the perspectives of other cultures are foregrounded. He goes even further, suggesting that ideally Asia Literacy should merge with the General Capability of Intercultural Understanding (AC, 2018) in such a way that it becomes transformative for the student in a personal sense and then that can lead to practical social action where students are encouraged by the curriculum to be proactive in promoting broader societal change. Hassim argues that many iterations of Asia Literacy in schools are merely “additive” or contributory where
teachers contribute content about Asia into the curriculum or add multicultural themes and perspectives to the curriculum but do not actually promote critical thinking about cultural differences. It is this critical thinking he sees as necessary for intercultural understanding. Many others have highlighted models of Asia Literacy in English that include a focus on or are centred around intercultural understanding, though there are differences in ideology and emphasis that occur.

### 2.3 Asia Literacy in English as a Vehicle for Intercultural Understanding

The concept of Asian ‘otherness’ or ‘difference’ for Australian students is a common thread mentioned throughout the literature. Cole & Bui (2007) argue that English teachers should avoid discussing certain controversial topics such as illegal immigration so that a sense of the “other” (p. 30) is not created in the classroom. They clearly argue that teaching Asia Literacy “should at all times avoid any possibility for generalisation or stereotypical representation” (Cole & Bui, 2007, p. 30) of Asian-Australian identities. They also advocate a direct comparison between Asian and Australian culture in texts to find similarities rather than differences. However, Hassim (2013) in contrast argues that students need to move “beyond mere discussions of ‘difference’ and ‘sameness’” (p. 12). He argues that Asia Literacy should promote intercultural understanding and empathy for the perspective of others rather than using it as a vehicle to analyse similarities and differences.

Henderson and Jetnikoff’s (2013) examination of Asian identities in film in the context of the new Australian English curriculum also provide solutions to address the notion of how ‘Asia’ can be constructed as the ‘other’ or a place of difference in Australian culture. Henderson, Allan & Mallan (2013) also acknowledge the potential for literature to reproduce
clichés about other cultures and that teachers need to consider that learning experiences should avoid stereotypes. In contrast, while Moul (2012) acknowledges that certain texts such as Kipling’s ‘Mandalay’ (1892) promote a colonial world view that positions Asia as the ‘other’, there is still a celebration of the inclusion of Kipling’s poems for Year 4 study even though these texts have long been read through a post-colonial lens as representative of British imperialism (Foster & McChesney, 2003; Varley, 1953). Indeed, then British Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson’s recent recitation of lines from the poem on a visit to a temple in Myanmar in 2017 was seen as insensitive and inappropriate (Booth, 2017).

Overall, the common approach in the discourse is that greater intercultural understanding (Henderson & Jetnikoff, 2013, Jetnikoff, 2013) rather than mere exposure to Asian texts is the appropriate model for the English curriculum. The centrality (Hamston, 2012) of this intercultural understanding is to specifically progress beyond seeing Asia in terms of cultural stereotypes in the classroom. However, while Cole & Bui (2007), Kirby (2009), and Hassim (2013) outline best practice exemplars of an idealised version of Asia Literacy and include proposed ideological standpoints with which to approach this curriculum priority, more detail is needed about how this is to be enacted in a realised setting.

The conversations held with the English teachers in this research also reveal their ideological understandings of the way Asia Literacy can be taught in English, yet they also grapple with the reality of what the enacted practice of it actually looks like. For example, the use of texts as a way of transforming perceptions of Asian stereotypes can be proposed but how have practitioners gone about negotiating this? What are their reflections on how this has been transferred into classroom practice and been received by students? How would
teachers actually be negotiating these issues of intercultural understanding in practice? Would these teachers choose to avoid certain topics as suggested (Cole & Bui, 2007), be sensitive to how their lessons may promote or challenge stereotypes (Henderson, et al 2013) or create empathy (Hassim, 2013) in their classrooms? Would they see intercultural understanding as central (Hamston, 2012) to Asia Literacy?

This research attempts to explore the classroom reality of a new educational policy. While the inclusion of Asia Literacy in the new Australian Curriculum has been detailed and the appropriate style of its delivery been argued by academic voices, it is important to acknowledge that educational policy regarding the curriculum will be realised and practiced by those delivering it directly to students.

The Enacted Practice of Asia Literacy in English

2.4 Considering Teachers as those that Enact Policy

Research in the field of policy implementation highlights that newly legislated education documents do not automatically translate into a recognised homogenous practice. A national curriculum may have been legislated and enacted by regional authorities, but it is a dialectical process (Ball & Bowe, 1992; Ozga & Lingard, 2007) where the documentation may only have a loose relationship with the actual work of teachers. This ‘infidelity’ of policy in its implementation (Ozga & Lingard, 2007) can occur due to the varying nature of classroom practices as well as the polysemic nature of education policy texts. Recognising that policy enactment is largely undertaken by school teachers and principals (Ledger, Vidovich & O’Donoghue, 2014) rather than the centralised education authorities, provides a further reason for investigating how individual English teachers are removing the Asia
Literacy policy ‘from its pedestal’ (Vidovich, 2007, p. 285) and negotiating its use in practice.

Bowe, Ball and Gold (1993) suggest that policy implementation is not a simple step by step matter of the production of a policy text that then becomes implemented and then undergoes evaluation. It was argued that policy implementation was a process involving the context of influence, the context of text production and the context of practice. Ball’s (1994) later work then adds the context of outcomes including the context of political strategy to capture the implications of policy enactment.

Ball, Maguire, and Braun (2012) also suggest that “the teacher is enrolled into grand political narratives of policy which link their classroom work with students to the processes of globalization and national economic competitiveness” (pp72-73). It would be interesting to consider the extent to which English teachers feel ‘enrolled’ in this process with regards to the policy of Asia Literacy which is often linked to Australia’s geopolitical future. How English teachers are negotiating Asia Literacy can also be viewed as an example of educational policy being a process (Ball, 2012) involving the creative agency of teachers (Ball, 2015). However, this research does not seek to prove any particular ideological standpoint with regard to theories about policy implementation but rather draws on policy to frame the responses of English teacher participants. More detail about the structure and processes of this study is provided in the subsequent chapter on methodology.
Other academic voices have also explored their perceptions about the way they consider English teachers are negotiating Asia Literacy as a realised practice. This has included a variety of case studies, exemplars and general research.

2.5 Opinions Regarding the Current Teaching Approach of Asia Literacy in English

Academic research has highlighted some assumptions about the current group of English teaching professionals in Australia. Hamston (2012) highlights that the choice of content for English teachers happens locally rather than at a national level and that practitioners will largely rely on what they enjoy, what is familiar, the ease of access to available materials and what they perceive will lead to success. She contends that this approach to content choice often denies students appropriate access to Asia Literacy. Moult (2012) contends that teachers hold a largely Eurocentric view and while no sources are referenced, argues that 25% of Australian schools do not include Asia Literacy and another 25% are only doing so superficially. Yet, it is implied that a causal factor of these statistics is that there is not enough current guidance for teachers about Asia Literacy. While my research does not seek to quantify a percentage of teachers who hold particular views or judge which proportion are covering Asia Literacy in a superficial manner, it would be insightful to talk to current practitioners to see their reflections on the issues above. Do they feel they are covering Asia Literacy in depth? Are familiarity and access to resources examples of factors that have influenced their professional choices with regards to Asia Literacy content and what are their reflections on the nature and effectiveness of any professional guidance received?
Henderson, et al (2013) and Henderson and Jetnikoff (2013) argue that the teaching profession and curriculum in Australia is also Eurocentric or Anglo-centric and that such a worldview often results in Asia being regarded as the ‘other’. Henderson, et al (2013) propose therefore that teachers do not possess “the skills to utilize cultural frameworks as conceptual tools to teach about the nations and cultures of Asia” (Henderson, et al, 2013, p. 44). Talking to a group of English teachers may not provide enough evidence to conclusively support or challenge this assertion. However, it could examine the priority, status and delivery of Asia Literacy in the English curriculum by practitioners who were not selected on the basis of their skills or knowledge with regards to Asia Literacy. Furthermore, having conversations with English teachers would allow an exploration of their decisions and give them the space to reflect upon their own level of confidence and whether they felt they were already prepared, or trained or guided with the appropriate knowledge in their negotiation of Asia Literacy. The voices of teachers may also provide insight to how their worldviews are shaping their teaching of Asia Literacy. Indeed, they may also offer to explicitly share their worldviews and reflect on how these are involved with their own pedagogical decisions.

Hassim (2013) outlines a continuum of development for educators to undertake a required shift to a transformative based approach that features intercultural understanding. While the idea of Asia Literacy being transformative is not unique (Henderson et al, 2013), Hassim proposes that most Australian schools have not progressed far along this continuum from learning basic factual content about Asia to his idealised endpoint of seeing it as a vehicle for social transformation on a national level. However, his article does suggest that English educators are amongst the group committed to Asia Literacy through reference to the statistics in a government commissioned study (Halse, 2013). It is useful to note that the surveys used to collect these statistics were in fact distributed to educators in all learning
areas on the basis of connection to existing Asia Education Foundation (AEF) networks. While Halse (2013) acknowledged that many teachers had no formal training in Asia Literacy, over one third of respondents were current teachers of Asian languages. This sample of respondents is less likely to be representative of the general population of English teachers who may be unaware of the AEF or who at least are not prioritising an involvement with the organisation.

In contrast, Albright, Knezevic and Farrell (2013), highlighted that developing and assessing students’ appreciation of Asian and Indigenous texts was listed as the least important topic in English teachers’ assessments of their professional learning needs for the new curriculum. Henderson et al. (2013) suggested that teachers may see the Asia Literacy priority as marginal due to the lack of detail about how it can be articulated with the subject content. Hearing the voices of English teachers in this study may demonstrate how they prioritise Asia Literacy in practice and whether they had sought any relevant professional development or training. It may also reflect whether they feel they are teaching content about Asia that is only increasing factual knowledge or whether they view Asia Literacy as a means for broader social change?

Henderson, et al (2013) argue for the inclusion of Asia Literacy, with a particular emphasis on intercultural understanding, in the subject areas of English and History. They contend that the Asian-Australian Literature and Publishing Project, led by Henderson, Borchert and Mallan, available through the AustLit (2016) website, provide the resources to allow this to happen. The argument outlines that access to appropriate resources is an integral part of achieving success and that their own AustLit resource can help avoid potential
pitfalls and help achieve the aim of intercultural understanding. This is not only through the provision of teaching resources but a compilation of a Critical Anthology of 35 journal articles that can model ways of critically engaging with texts.

In the same spirit, Hamston’s (2012) article gives many suggestions about texts from and about Asia and Asian people and how these can be used to engender increased Asia Literacy through the lens of intercultural understanding. Some of her work with the AEF is showcased in the article and it outlines many exemplars of texts and resources that are appropriate from Year 1 to 10. Her article certainly implies that the lack of availability of resources should not be cited as a factor for English teachers to steer away from including Asia Literacy in their practice. Teachers in Western Australian high schools have online access to these resources and her article outlines how these texts can meet specific English learning outcomes in the Australian Curriculum. Listening to English teachers in this research project could provide an insight into practitioners’ own perceptions of their needs to effectively teach Asia Literacy. Are they aware of these or other published resources and if so would they find them useful in the formats as explained?

Much of the relevant literature about Asia Literacy in English, whether a position paper or based on action research, attempted to provide exemplars of what should or could be happening in the classroom on a practical or ideological level. Cole & Bui (2007) aimed to foster English teachers’ facility with exploring Asian-Australian identities by relating their experiences in teaching two novels. Henderson and Jetnikoff (2013) and Jetnikoff (2013) outline an idealized philosophical worldview from which to potentially approach the teaching of film and drama texts, before then examining in more practical detail a set of
understandings about the themes and characters which could be communicated to junior secondary students. Hamston (2012) and Henderson et al (2013) attempt to outline where and how resources can be accessed. Hassim (2013) also provides two AEF sourced case studies of intercultural understanding involving Asia in the learning area of English. These are upheld as a pedagogical framework for success and indeed Hassim’s case study from Banksia Park allows the student and teacher voice to be heard directly through detailing the decisions made and the issues encountered.

However, this recent published literature about Asia Literacy in Australian English classrooms could be seen as didactic, either making statements about how Asia Literacy should be happening or providing what are regarded as best case exemplars. These exemplars often feature advice and support from university staff or from those directly involved with institutions promoting Asia Literacy. There seems to be less actual evidence of how practitioners are independently approaching the task of Asia Literacy in Australian high schools. This gap in the literature suggests a need to investigate what is currently happening in English classrooms and explore what issues practitioners may be encountering and listen to their voices with regards to what support they are seeking. This research project is attempting to highlight how English teachers, who may have never been trained to teach Asia Literacy, are undertaking this cross curriculum priority in practice. Other more recent research has also begun to include a focus on Asia Literacy as an enacted practice.
2.6 Studies Featuring the Actual Asia Literacy Practice of English Teachers

Some researchers have attempted to focus more on Asia Literacy in terms of how it looks in a realised pedagogical setting. Albright et al (2013) used Smith’s (2005) institutional ethnography to create an appropriate focus on the work site and to acknowledge the relationship between policy texts and the reality of practice. That study also used Bourdieu’s (1990) field analysis to allow a more detailed consideration for the competing viewpoints that exist as policy is enacted in the field. My research also attempts to have a conversation with practitioners and focus more on their own responses to the relevant policy documents and understand how their interpretation of it has evolved their own iteration of an enacted practice of Asia Literacy.

Salter (2014) investigates through constructivist methods how practitioners are negotiating Asia Literacy in one school. The choice of this school is accounted for through its own identification as a leader in curriculum, and that Asia Literacy had been made explicit in its policies published to the community in which it was located. While the research does investigate publically available comparative school data on government websites and analyses the school’s own website as a promotional tool, most data seems to have resulted from a series of semi structured interviews with three school leaders: the principal, the deputy principal and the assistant deputy principal who had been assigned a role specifically involving Asia Literacy. The article certainly foregrounds the principal’s voice but while the voices of the other two participants are present, it is unclear whether they were interviewed separately or whether they knew their responses would be kept confidential. The research specifies how the principal is the driving force behind the vision for Asia Literacy and has
enacted change, but it isn’t clear if the dependent employment situation and power relationship between the participants has been considered.

The principal’s use of Cunxin’s (2003) metaphor: frogs down a well escape to see the outside world, as a way of explaining Asia Literacy, is utilised by Salter (2014) more widely. Directly, it refers to the principal’s own way of explaining ‘down the well’ representing ‘narrowness’ and ‘escaping from the well’ as broadening student cultural understanding through Asia Literacy. However, to use this metaphor as a unifying lens for the contributions of the other participants may not allow as much space to interpret their voices as separate from the principal. The metaphor was also used as a narrative to understand and describe the school’s own Asia literacy processes and the broader debate about the nature of Asia Literacy. This was convenient in unifying meaning from the data and it was a vivid way to describe how the principal regarded the process of Asia Literacy in his school. However, in some ways it could be considered as limiting as it created a narrower binary interpretation of the participants’ responses rather than searching for the complexity of their different perspectives. Here, I have to admit my own perspective: while finding the principal’s recount of the schools’ experiences worthwhile, my own position as an English teacher engendered a desire to know what was actually happening in the classrooms.

While my own research will attempt to make meaning from how participants are negotiating Asia Literacy, I wish to value the complexity of individual voices and thus embrace the variances that may exist from a range of different English teachers. I have also chosen to have a conversation with practitioners who are negotiating Asia Literacy in their own classrooms, rather than those in schools who are having to consider how they summarise
and represent the work of others from a more remote position of seniority. In this way, I hope to listen to recounts of enacted practice directly without having it reported through the filters of specific line managers.

Gauci and Curwood (2017) also consider the enacted practice of English teachers with regard to Asia Literacy. While they initially used a quantitative survey of 82 English teachers throughout New South Wales which focused on the attitudes of those teachers towards Asia Literacy, they then subsequently invited 7 of those initially surveyed to participate in a semi-structured interview to participate further in the analysis of the quantitative data. These surveys were advertised to all sectors: independent, government and Catholic not only through email but through English teacher Facebook and Twitter groups. While this would have achieved a more random sample of participants, it is worth considering that individuals interested in Asia Literacy could be more likely to choose to reply and consider giving their time to the interview.

The study did outline interesting findings that touched on how teachers perceived the rationale for the place of Asia Literacy in the curriculum and how they defined the concept of Asia. It found that while teachers valued Asia Literacy they felt did not feel adequately equipped to deliver it in a way that promoted deep understanding. While many of these issues were also encountered and discussed by the group of English teachers in this study, there were some differences in the process and structure of the study. The seven teachers interviewed may have been influenced by having the interview structured around the existing quantitative data. The sociocultural methodology outlined by the study sought to verify the quantitative data through the qualitative interviews. This certainly produced a richly
interesting set of information. The quantitative data could thus be interrogated, explored and expanded upon through interview with a selection of the respondents. However, by presenting the participants with the data as a basis for discussion it is reasonable to consider that their reflections may have formed attempts to explain, justify or provide a rationale for the results of the quantitative data rather than draw on their own experiences as a primary basis for exploration. In a sense, their voices act to verify and personalise the numbers.

While my research touches on many of the similar issues in Gauci & Curwood’s (2017) study, this project seeks to have a conversation with practitioners about their own practice rather than use them to participate as ‘co-analysers’ of existent quantitative data that summarised the practice of others. I want to listen to my peers as the central voices who have some control to explore their own possibly divergent ideas rather than use them to explain, justify, summarise and rationalise grouped findings.

Academic voices have been considering the place of Asia Literacy in the Australian English Curriculum. This has started to include some references to what English teachers can, should and actually are doing in their classrooms. However, more research is needed into how Asia Literacy is actually enacted by practitioners who have not been chosen due to any perceived expertise or stance about Asia Literacy. The potential gap between what is suggested as the idealised practice of Asia Literacy by academic and institutional voices and what might be happening in Australian classrooms as English teachers attempt to negotiate a policy, provides rich scope for exploration.
2.7 Summary and the Need for Further Investigation.

This review has highlighted questions about the negotiation of Asia Literacy in the English curriculum that has arisen out of the current literature. It demonstrates there is a broad consensus in the theory that Asia Literacy has a place in English that should be viewed through the lens of intercultural understanding. There has also been discussion about Asia Literacy as an enacted practice in English classrooms. However, this has often relied on using case studies of role model exemplars, the filtering of classroom practice through line managers or using teachers to provide commentary on existent data. The research highlights a lack of a certain voice in this discourse: those practitioners who are making decisions about how Asia Literacy will be negotiated for their own students. My research will attempt to listen to these voices by pursuing the questions that the literature review has highlighted:

- What value, importance and priority does Asia Literacy have in the curriculum for English teachers?
- How do they see this reflected in their classroom practice?
- What are the influences, barriers or challenges are facing teachers implementing Asia Literacy?
- Which resource materials and policy texts are being used and how are these being accessed?
- How do teachers develop transformative and stimulating teaching situations that challenge narrow or stereotypical depictions of Asia?

This chapter has outlined and evaluated the literature regarding the place of Asia Literacy in the subject area of English. It has highlighted the need for further research into how English teachers are negotiating Asia Literacy and has shown more specifically how
particular questions could be further investigated by having conversations with classroom practitioners.

The next chapter will outline how this research project was structured to investigate these questions. It will outline the methodological underpinnings of the research as well as providing a decision trail (Koch 2006) about how I set about to have conversations with four teaching colleagues in an attempt to find out how they were negotiating Asia Literacy in their classrooms.
Chapter 3 Methodology – Explaining my voice and decisions

The previous chapter reviewed the literature that contextualised this particular research, investigating how English teachers are negotiating the cross curriculum priority of Asia Literacy in Australia. This chapter outlines the methodological framework underpinning the approach to the research. It explains, through looking at the decision trail (Koch 2006), the methodological choices including the selection of participants and the coding of data.

The chapter begins by outlining the theory that acts as a foundation to the research. This includes the methodological paradigms and an explanation of how Constructivism, the concept of Verstehen, and Grounded Theory informed and underpinned the process. It explains the theoretical integration of policy implementation theory and the bioecological model.

Secondly, the chapter details the practical approach of the method. This includes the nature of the interviews, the use of different question styles and the formation of specific interview questions. It then outlines the selection of participants and explains how these interviews were sourced and conducted. The relationship of each participant with the researcher is acknowledged. Then the processes of making meaning from the collected data is clarified at the end of the chapter.
Theory

3.1 Methodological Paradigms

The approach to the research project acknowledges several complementary methodological approaches. However, I begin by recognizing my own paradigmatic framework within which all these choices operated. My professional context during the extent of the entire research project was as a teacher and Head of Faculty in the English Learning Area at a metropolitan Secondary School in Perth, Australia. With the introduction of the Australian Curriculum occurring during my tenure, I was therefore responsible not only for my own engagement with Asia Literacy but also for leading a group of colleagues through their engagement with it as well. My interest grew through the reflection about my own enactment of Asia Literacy in the units of work that I and my colleagues had designed. This consideration of my experiences was focused on the improvement of how I was implementing Asia Literacy in my own practice. In this sense, while this research investigates how other English teachers were negotiating Asia Literacy, it also stems from my own personal journey with it.

I also had to question why I had chosen Asia Literacy as a focus of research and not another cross curriculum priority such as Sustainability or the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. It certainly isn’t the scope of this research to argue a ranked importance of the relative merits of the three priorities. However, I should rather disclose my own position about the value I place on Asia Literacy in the curriculum: as something at least worthy of attention in my own practice and therefore by extension worthy of attention in my research.
Post-colonial paradigm.

Valuing Asia Literacy in this way also places this research in a post-colonial paradigm that accepts that the study of English in Australia can progress beyond the traditional Eurocentric literary canon that saw a preponderance of white Anglo-centric voices as the most worthy of focus. The paradigm recognises the importance of Australia’s continued negotiation of our economic and cultural relationships with our own geopolitical region. The methodology embraces intercultural and ethical understanding (ACARA, 2015a) as part of the educative process and values the way Australia is attempting interaction with a broader diversity of cultures (Henderson & Jetnikoff, 2013).

From personal experiences to research.

As stated, my own professional journey with Asia Literacy encompassed a wish to find out how colleagues were negotiating the same policy. This affected the methodological decision to consider a means of researching where the voices of these teaching peers would be valued. I was not looking to deductively prove a particular theory about Asia Literacy or the implementation of policy. Rather I wanted to listen to my colleagues as fellow ‘conversation partners’ (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). This would entail making meaning from their own words and engaging with their own narratives about their particular Asia Literacy journey. Maintaining trust and fostering rapport would also be an integral part of the process.

This idea of interviewees or participants as ‘conversation partners’ (Rubin & Rubin, 2011) was an important influence on the methodological approach of this research. It would entail that I would not only listen to my peers but in addition I would also be open to their questions and offer information myself as part of a reflexive conversation. This style of
responsive interviewing (Rubin & Rubin, 2011) would also acknowledge the relationship that already existed between researcher and participant. An approach that valued these conversations in the context of a professional relationship, allowing for a meaning to be made from within them rather than applied to them, was an important factor in considering how Asia Literacy was being negotiated by others. Respect and acknowledgement for the voices of these peers was an important part of the methodological paradigm.

I therefore chose a methodological approach where meaning would need to be made inductively or constructed from the conversations that I intended to have with my colleagues. This constructivist approach could allow for a more open exploration of my research question of how English teachers were attempting to negotiate Asia Literacy.

3.2 Constructivism

The intention to find out what English teachers were doing in practice meant that a constructivist approach that considered the voices and lived experience (Mertens, 2010) of these colleagues would be an integral part of the methodology. The constructivist worldview would also allow for a diversity of my peers’ understandings and the existence of multiple realities (Patton, 2015). I wanted to explore teachers’ own evaluation of the importance of Asia Literacy and evaluate their perceptions of the difficulties they faced and listen to their own recommendations for further progress. This desire to make meaning of how English teachers were negotiating the particular phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011) of the new requirement for Asia Literacy, additionally defined the research as constructivist. Qualitative constructivist research was also appropriate as I wished to use open ended questions to understand the complexity (Cresswell, 2014) of
teachers’ responses as to how and why they were incorporating Asia Literacy into their classroom.

Social constructivism (Patton, 2015) also aligns with an acknowledgement of my own subjectivity (Cresswell, 2014) and an awareness that I constructed the meaning I made through my interaction (Mertens, 2010) with teaching peers. This suited the notion that the participants were going to be fellow teachers who were facing the same professional questions that I had faced when first negotiating Asia Literacy. These participant conversation partners would also be aware of my current role as English teacher and Head of Faculty which could also shape their responses. Rubin & Rubin (2011) outline clearly that people are often more willing to talk to you if they know you, including where you live and work and what the project is about. While this research would have formally identified roles of ‘researcher’ and ‘participant’, in a very real sense the participants would be those who would be willing to be conversation partners where they could share their professional experiences with a colleague.

This research was centred on the voices of the conversation partners. Its ideological approach was constructivist where the voices of these conversation partners would be considered in order to formulate meaning. This idea of voice and being empathetic to the teachers’ voices was also central to the research approach. Helping to define this desire to listen to and value the voices of these collegial conversation partners was the concept of ‘verstehen’.
3.3 Verstehen

Verstehen was a useful concept to explain this particular contextual situation of how the constructivist research was operating. Verstehen describes how we make meaning through understanding the actions of others (Travers 2013). Implied within this is the notion of empathy for those whose responses we are studying. As a fellow practitioner in the English classroom it highlights my own decision to foreground and value my colleagues’ professional involvement with the new curriculum. The concept of verstehen was important as it encapsulated how I was going to attempt to understand my colleagues from their own perspective (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2010). It also highlights the idea that I am listening to teachers relating their choices from their own lived experiences which occur in this specific context (Spencer & Snape 2003). This allows not just for understanding of the resultant data but an attempt to understand the teacher’s own interpretative framework (Hennink et. al 2010). In a sense, it allows me not only to understand how teachers are negotiating classroom practice but also to understand how they conceptualise Asia Literacy.

With regards to the methodology, I have outlined the paradigmatic environment of the research and explained how its constructivist nature shaped its initial planning and approach. This constructivist approach would foreground the voices of my conversation partners. In addition, the concept of verstehen embodied the empathy and value I would attempt to place on their reflections of their own experiences of negotiating Asia Literacy as English teachers.

However, I now began to consider finding a more specific methodology which would guide the more practical aspect of the construction of the research project. I needed to find a methodological approach that was constructivist in nature and would allow the voices of the
conversation partners to be foregrounded in an empathetic way. My research into methodological processes had suggested Grounded Theory (Birks & Mills 2005) would meet these conditions and be suitable for enabling meaning to be made from my colleagues’ voices.

3.4 Grounded Theory

**Grounded Theory process.**

While my investigation of literature had found different emphases on the nature of Grounded Theory (Charmaz 2006, Hennink et al., 2010, Walter, 2013, Cresswell, 2014, & Marshall & Rossman, 2016), I regarded Birks & Mills’ (2015) explanations the most succinct for outlining the nature of the broad discourse that this theory encompassed. Grounded Theory has its basis in the notion that theory is ‘grounded’ in the data collected by the researcher rather than the data being used to test an existing theory. This grounded theory that emerges from the data can then be integrated into known theoretical frameworks. Birks & Mills (2015) also explained how a researcher’s philosophy underpins the methodology of Grounded Theory, which in turn leads to the application of Grounded Theory methods. Birks & Mills (2005) encapsulated these methods through a defined process which provided a pathway to find meaning from the voices of my conversation partners. How I proceeded to utilize the steps of this process will now be outlined.

Firstly, the initial coding and categorizing of the data (Birks & Mills, 2015) began after the first interview. There was the concurrent data collection and analysis which saw each new conversation with a teacher affect the way that I considered the new and pre-existing conversations. Analytical memo writing accompanied the whole process of coding
where I was able to annotate the transcripts and make additional notes. This helped to distill ideas and aided in the consideration of emerging themes as well as the eventual findings.

Theoretical sampling, explained by Birks & Mills (2015) as the researcher deciding to actively focus on the collection of certain types of data, encouraged me to direct the subsequent conversations to focus more on certain types of questions. The comparative analysis was also undertaken using colour coded highlighting on transcripts as this more easily allowed me to see patterns between conversations.

Birks & Mills (2015) also highlighted the concept of theoretical sensitivity: the idea that self-knowledge as a researcher needs to be acknowledged in the process. This aspect of Grounded Theory also acknowledges that while the voices of my conversation partners are foregrounded, the findings from the information transcribed are not purely the result of giving voice to these participants. It recognises that as a researcher, I am the one selecting, editing and using participant information to form a meaning. As Birks & Mills (2015) highlight, it is essential in Grounded Theory to have an understanding of your own philosophical viewpoint. This allowed me to recognise how as a researcher I brought the lens of my own philosophical standpoint to the data generated. Grounded Theory therefore also described the methodological process of acknowledging the influences of my own post-colonial paradigm and my own contextual experiences as a teacher who is also negotiating Asia Literacy.

Furthermore, Birks & Mills (2015) explain the later stages of coding and identifying categories from the data which for me began after the final conversation took place. This facilitated the discussion of emerging themes that ran as common thread through them all. These later stages of advanced coding of the conversations also assisted me in the way I
considered and then subsequently presented the conversations as narratives. This storyline technique of presenting the data as a narrative (Birks & Mills, 2015) allowed for the complexity of variations in the conversations to be heard.

The rigorous process of verbatim transcription, coding, description and analysis “provide[d] an approach through which theory could be built up from careful observation of the social world.” (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005, p. 265). This process acknowledged the circular process of the way the findings were analysed. Analytical concepts were largely constructed inductively from the findings (Charmaz, 2006).

The use of Grounded Theory allowed for a flexible exploration of the issues surrounding the implementation of Asia Literacy, rather than trying to pre-empt responses or setting out to prove something about the way Asia Literacy was being enacted in classrooms. It was a methodological framework that enabled me to explore the meanings I had made with the conversation partners that had agreed to be part of my research. Grounded Theory allowed me to arrive at a number of themes which evolved from the research.

The final step in Grounded Theory: theoretical integration (Birks & Mills, 2015) allowed me to consider these themes more deeply and link them to the contextual situation of all of the conversation partners: how they attempted to negotiate the cross curriculum priority of Asia Literacy within the Australian Curriculum. These themes could be discussed and considered as emergent from the conversations. However, Grounded Theory could not completely describe how I made meaning when finally interpreting the information and considering the final step of theoretical integration (Birks & Mills, 2015). At the theoretical
integration stage I began to see how other ways of making meaning could be applied to the conversations I had experienced.

**Theoretical integration- policy implementation theory and bioecological model.**

Although Grounded Theory suggests the process of meaning is to be informed by the findings inductively (Hennink et al., 2010), at the final stage of theoretical integration, I also interpreted the conversations through other already known existing theories (Birks & Mills, 2015). How could inductive research coexist with a deductive mindset? Birks & Mills (2015) acknowledge that using known theoretical frameworks does have some practical value in Grounded Theory especially with regard to the later stages of the Grounded Theory process that is focused on interpreting and integrating the findings. The relation of existing theories to Grounded Theory research is able to add “explanatory power” (Birks & Mills p. 13) when discussing the findings.

Therefore, I should also acknowledge other ‘meaning making’ frameworks that I applied when finally integrating the findings. Ball’s (1993, 2012) policy implementation framework and Bronfenbrenner’s (1979, 2004) bioecological model were useful known frameworks that assisted me to theoretically integrate the findings and make meaning, especially when considering how the conversation partners were interacting in the broader educational community.
Ball’s policy implementation framework.

Other studies regarding Asia Literacy in the Australian Curriculum (Albright et al., 2013) had used Ball’s (1997) British research of how policy changes are negotiated in practice to inform the meaning made of collected data. Salter (2014) also acknowledges the discourse of policy enactment in her case study about Asia Literacy, though this focuses on school leaders rather than individual teachers as the driving force for educational change. However, I did not want to deductively use Ball’s policy implementation theory (1993, 2012, 2015) to structure the research as it would have limited the scope for how empathetic meaning could be made of my conversation partners’ voices.

Yet policy implementation theory was a useful tool at the later theoretical integration stage, as the research was focusing on how teachers were negotiating a change in policy. Using a lens that also reflected on how practitioners were evaluating, interpreting and applying their understanding of policy, provided a useful conduit for considering their negotiation of Asia Literacy. Ball’s (1993) theories surrounding policy implementation reflect on the ongoing tension between policy intention and how it is enacted by teachers in practice in the field. His (Ball, 2015) later work still acknowledges the creative agency of teachers in enacting policy but also more clearly identifies how the definition of policy itself is problematic and that policy may be better defined as a process subject to interpretations (Ball, 2012). For my research, the relationship between stated policy and its interpretation by my conversation partners can be useful as a framework when coming to a theoretical understanding of the conversations.
**Bioecological model.**

Similarly, I also utilised Bronfenbrenner’s (1979; 2004) bioecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) to consider the theoretical implication of the findings at a micro personal, meso faculty, exo systemic and macro nationwide level. The later (Bronfenbrenner, 2004) additions to this model acknowledge the principles of process, person and time as contributing factors.

However, it should be noted again that I did not use Bronfenbrenner’s (1979, 2004) model as a theoretical foundation for organising the structure of the research. Indeed, it has been argued (Tudge, 2009, 2016) that many who cite Bronfenbrenner as the theoretical foundation of their work do so inappropriately and fail to consider the major components of the theory in their methodology. My study only seeks to acknowledge the Bronfenbrenner model as a useful tool for coming to a theoretical understanding of how the negotiation of Asia literacy at the personal level of the teacher, was part of a system of social organization that existed at the faculty of English level within schools, within a state education system, in response to a new national policy.

The theories of Ball (1993, 2012) and Bronfenbrenner (1979, 2004) therefore do not compete with Grounded Theory (Birks & Mills, 2015). At the theoretical integration stage of Grounded Theory, they are a known ideological framework that can be alluded to in an attempt to understand the four conversation partners’ attempts to negotiate Asia Literacy. They do not replace the constructivist findings that have emerged from the conversations but allow for a particular lens to be applied to understand how teachers are operating within a broader educational context.
The methodological approach seeks to acknowledge a richness of influences and opportunities to form meaning. It can be summarised spatially in the following figure to highlight how these processes work in a complementary manner.

**Figure 9: Summary Diagram of Methodology**

Research was conducted with conversation partners as a fellow practitioner.

Research operated in a post-colonial paradigm which valued intercultural and ethical understanding.

**Constructivist Approach.**

Made meaning from the data of teachers’ own voices in an empathetic way: *verstehen*.

**Data Collection, Coding, Analysis: Grounded Theory.**

**Theoretical Integration: Ball’s Policy Implementation Theory & Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological Model**

The diagram (Figure 9) acknowledges how the background paradigm and my own values enveloped my constructivist approach. Grounded Theory also acknowledges being sensitive to these background influences (Birks & Mills, 2015). The approach was constructivist and attempted to make meaning from the data. However, in partnership with this, the concept of *verstehen* highlights how meaning was made in a way that still
foregrounded and was empathetic to the voices of the four teacher participants. The research valued the way that these conversation partners had made meaning of their engagement with Asia Literacy. Nestled within this approach was the practical way the research project was designed. Grounded Theory was employed as the guiding structure of the research process. However, at the final theoretical integration stage of Grounded Theory the findings also lent themselves to be considered through other lenses: policy implementation theory and a bioecological model of change.

I have outlined the main methodological underpinnings that consciously influenced the design and construction of this research into how English teachers are negotiating Asia Literacy. The practical decisions made as part of the method can now be clarified. The design of the project was constructivist in nature so that meaning could emerge from the conversations. The practice of being empathetic to the voices of the conversation partners was also a key aspect in the planning of how the research would be carried out.

**Practical Approach**

3.5 The nature of the interviews

As previously outlined I knew that I intended to have conversations with fellow teacher-practitioners in order to ascertain how they were negotiating Asia Literacy in their teaching practice. I had planned that these conversations would occur as interviews with each individual teacher as I thought that qualitative research featuring in depth interviews was a useful way to collect rich and informative data. Such interviews catered for a wide range of different styles of questions (Travers, 2013) which was fundamental to elicit a full exploration of how Asia Literacy had been negotiated from the perspective of my colleagues.
An in-depth interview was the most appropriate format for this as it also allowed the conversation to be guided by general themes (Travers, 2013) and was open to explore issues as they were raised by my peers. I felt that this would allow a more responsive conversation (Rubin & Rubin, 2011) which would encourage the participant to be more empowered in expressing their opinions about their own lived experience (Travers, 2013) of curriculum implementation.

This idea of interviewees as conversation partners would also guide the practical structure of the interview. While I would ask questions and listen to answers, as a conversation partner and fellow practitioner I would also answer their questions about the same issues and offer information about my practice with regard to Asia Literacy. I felt that this would be necessary to help my fellow colleagues feel comfortable (Rubin & Rubin, 2011) and would also be part of my being emotionally aware during the interview. This would attempt to ensure that my colleagues did not feel that they were being judged by me but were sharing their experiences at the same time I was sharing mine. To highlight my own experiences would allow me not only to develop rapport (Aston, 2001) but further engender a sense of “trust and mutuality” (Aston, 2001, p. 147).

Another advantage of having an extended conversation as a method of information collection was that as part of the interpretative process, aspects of discourse and conversation analysis could be applied (Jacobs, 2013, May, 2010). This would allow consideration of how the use of language by the teachers reflected their own attitudes to Asia Literacy as well as reflecting on the gaps and silences inherent in their explanations. Hesitation, and tonal changes could also be useful for ascertaining meaning from the responses. The way that the
conversation partners gave voice to their engagement with Asia Literacy would be useful in addition to the content of the data.

Deciding to have a conversation was also a response to knowing what findings already existed in the area of how English teachers were negotiating Asia Literacy. Albright, et al (2013) using a quantitative process, discovered that only 41% of English teachers identified assessing students’ appreciation of Asian and Indigenous texts as important whereas Gauci and Curwood’s (2017) survey resulted in the assertion that 78% of the New South Wales English teacher participants thought that their students should have an understanding of Asia Literacy. However, my research aimed to access richer and more nuanced information than finding a percentage on a numerical spectrum. A quantitative survey may have reinforced or challenged these earlier findings about the percentage of teachers in a population that valued Asia literacy or how they ranked or prioritized it among other factors, but I wanted to allow for a richer exploration of the complexity of their experiences. I wanted to add a qualitative dimension to the issues raised in these studies by listening to the voices of the teachers.

It should be noted that Gauci and Curwood’s (2017) study also partly used qualitative methods to investigate 7 English teachers’ experiences of Asia Literacy as part of a mixed methods design. This was done using the initial quantitative survey results as a basis where teachers were invited to participate in the discussion and analysis of the quantitative data collected from a larger group of teachers. In contrast, my research attempted to use the teacher’s own practice and viewpoint with regard to Asia Literacy as a starting point to develop questions. This would allow an investigation into interview questions that could be
posited by me but also give room for teachers to explore particular aspects of their own practice rather than focus their discussion as being an explanatory vehicle about pre-existing data.

### 3.6 Different Questioning Styles

This section attempts to explain some of the different questioning styles planned for use in these conversations with colleagues. In-depth interviews allow the space for a variety of different styles of questions (Travers, 2013) to come up in a conversation. These included descriptive questions which would ask teachers to describe and share how they made decisions about the Asia Literacy content of particular lessons, text choices or units of work. These types of questions also would also work in tandem with opinion and feeling questions so that the cognitive/emotive evaluations of their decisions could be explored. The descriptive and opinionative questions could also be used to reflect on their perceptions of student responses to the enactment of their decisions in the classroom.

In tandem with this, value based questions would attempt to ascertain the importance the teachers placed on Asia Literacy. In addition, knowledge questions could determine the extent of my colleagues’ understandings about Asia Literacy and their access to relevant source material. ‘Posing the ideal’ (Travers, 2013) questions could attempt to evoke what practitioners saw as desirable to achieve success in their negotiation of Asia Literacy. For all of these questions it would be important as a conversation partner to listen actively in order to follow up (Rubin & Rubin, 2011) in a way that focused on eliciting deeper and complex understandings from my colleagues. In this way, the interview was not designed to be a
rapid-fire interrogation about Asia Literacy but a conversation between colleagues that allowed them to negotiate and explore their experiences with me.

I have outlined the basis of my decisions to use an open-ended and semi-structured interview to have a conversation with my teaching peers. In practice, this would mean that some guide questions would be planned in advance, while still allowing room for spontaneous questioning on the day to allow these four colleagues to fully explore the topic (Travers, 2013). This brought me to the next stage of my decisions: what questions would I plan in advance to guide but not stifle my teaching peers’ sharing of their experiences of Asia Literacy in their classroom? How could I ask questions that would support the concept of verstehen: being empathetic to the voices of my colleagues and consider the way they had made meaning of their own situation?

3.7 Formation of Specific Interview Questions

I knew that I wanted to explore the central research question:

*How are English teachers negotiating the cross curriculum priority of Asia Literacy?*

To consider this, I knew from the review of literature that I wanted to further explore:

- What value, importance and priority does Asia Literacy have in the curriculum for English teachers?
- How do they see this reflected in their classroom practice?
- What are the influences, barriers or challenges are facing teachers implementing Asia Literacy?
• Which resource materials and policy texts are being used and how are these being accessed

• How do teachers develop transformative and stimulating teaching situations that challenge narrow or stereotypical depictions of Asia?

• What have been the outcomes of trying to implement Asia Literacy?

Yet I knew that if a conversation with my peers was to be effective, I could not simply use these questions in this format as a way of encouraging a professional discussion that allowed their voice to be foregrounded. I was aware from researching the different question types (Travers, 2013) that I could use a range of inquiry styles to approach the interview. However, if I wanted to engage with my teaching peers as conversation partners (Rubin & Rubin, 2011) then I needed to design the guide questions in such a way that the types of questions and the way they were being asked didn’t make them feel like they were being interrogated. Having empathy for my colleagues in a formally recorded interview situation needed to be reflected in any preplanned questions so that my teaching peers did not feel that I was questioning their efficacy as educators. If teachers were being generous enough to give me their time, I wanted to evoke an understanding of how they were negotiating Asia Literacy, not establish the discussion in the style of a performance appraisal.

The following categories of questions outline what I had planned before the first interview took place. However, I intended to allow each conversation to progress reflexively in response to the answer offered. These questions could act as a guide to stimulate discussion but could be asked in a differing order also depending on the direction of the
conversation. I was also open to the idea that my colleagues’ responses could diverge onto these topics of their own volition without my direction.

I planned descriptive guide questions to begin each interview with my peers:

- to describe a little bit about themselves in terms of their teaching career
- to describe their current position, classes and school in general

These questions could be useful as a way to initiate the conversation but could also be used to elucidate the narrative within the data when presenting the findings later on. Other descriptive guide questions included:

- to describe their use of texts and learning activities involving Asia Literacy in the programs they taught
- to describe the way their school or faculty made decisions in their programming about Asia Literacy
- to describe the way their students responded to the activities they planned about Asia Literacy
- to describe any professional learning courses they had experienced about Asia Literacy

These types of questions would allow them to recall and recount their enacted practice in a way that did not presuppose strong judgements from me about their decisions.

Knowledge based questions would also be useful in ascertaining some of the processes involved with how my teaching peers were negotiating Asia Literacy. However, I would not be trying to test or evaluate my colleagues’ knowledge of ‘Asia’ as a concept.
While Gauci & Curwood (2017) had set out to understand how English teachers defined Asia, it was not my purpose to make qualitative or quantitative judgements about the level of their expertise about Asia. Certainly, an incidental byproduct of the discussion may reveal my colleagues’ own knowledge and understandings of Asia and their own self-perceptions of their knowledge, confidence and preparedness to enact Asia Literacy. However, my research was designed around listening to the voices of colleagues, not calling them in so I could grade them on their own Asia Literacy.

Knowledge based questions included:

- asking what they knew about the cross curriculum priorities in general and how they came to these understandings
- asking what they knew about where to find texts and resources involving Asia Literacy
- asking if they had gained any knowledge about Asia Literacy in their own schooling, teacher training or professional learning after their initial qualification as teachers

Opinionative and values based questions could also touch upon their emotional responses. This gave my conversation partners opportunities not just to recount and describe processes but further empowered their voices to make more evaluative comments on their negotiation of Asia Literacy. These sorts of questions included:

- how they felt students responded to content involving Asia Literacy
- their own feelings and opinions about their delivery of Asia Literacy activities and any resulting situations that arose in the classroom
• their own feelings and opinions about the Asia Literacy materials and resources they were using
• how they valued the importance of Asia Literacy’s place in the English curriculum
• their opinions and feelings about any challenges they faced or successes they were happy to share

Posing the ideal (Travers, 2013) style of questions were designed to allow my colleagues to explore what they wanted, what they believed they needed or what they judged were their biggest obstacles in their enactment of Asia Literacy in the classroom. These sorts of questions included:

• what factor they would find the most useful to assist them in implementing Asia Literacy in their classrooms
• asking them to pinpoint obstacles or barriers in their implementation of Asia Literacy
• asking them to consider what specific resources, materials or processes would be ideal in developing their understandings about and practice of Asia Literacy in the classroom

Part of the notion of Grounded Theory (Birks & Mills, 2015) is also to acknowledge that data collection from earlier interviews could inform the practice of later interviews. Further questions could therefore evolve in the professional conversations held after the first interview. While I have described the process of the formulation of indicative interview questions, the next step is to explain the procedure of finding and selecting my four conversation partners.
3.8 The Selection of Peer Conversation Partners

From my own anecdotal experience as an English teacher in Western Australia, I was aware that not all high school English teachers in the state would profess to have a comprehensive understanding of Asia through their own heritage or study of an Asian language or culture. A new generation of English teachers trained after the publication of the new curriculum may have experienced some acknowledgment of Asia Literacy as part of their preparation for teaching. However, for at least some of the current practitioners who qualified before the existence of the current curriculum, Asia Literacy was not a factor in their training. Indeed, current teacher education and available professional development in the state may still not adequately address the needs of teachers to successfully negotiate what is required. This aspect of the population’s experiences was something that I also wished to explore.

My literature review had already examined that previous research had often involved case studies around assumed best practice with Asia Literacy (Cole & Bui, 2007), or participants sourced through Asia Literacy networks or those who had already participated in voluntary surveys centred on Asia Literacy (Gauci & Curwood, 2017). Research had also been conducted by those receiving assistance in their delivery of Asia Literacy from those in the tertiary sector (Hassim, 2013). Therefore the intent of this research was to not include proficiency, interest or expertise in Asia Literacy as a factor in the selection of conversation partners.

My decision was also to invite participation from English teachers in a number of locations which is in contrast to the research where a single school or classroom is used as a
case study (Cole & Bui, 2007, Hassim, 2013, Salter, 2014). Salter (2014) explicitly acknowledges that the purpose of her case study is to explore how national policy regarding Asia Literacy is interpreted and influenced by local contextual factors in one school rather than seeking to create a generalisation. However, my research was going to involve having a conversation with four peers from three different locations which was to allow for a broader picture of how the phenomenon of Asia Literacy was being negotiated. While Salter (2014) states that her, “study explores how Asia Literacy is represented by leaders [and] how espoused policy is translated at the school site” (p. 149), there seems to be a focus on the voice of the principal at the expense of the other school leaders who were actually managing the implementation of Asia Literacy at the school. It is also unclear whether these leaders were interviewed separately and whether the information remained anonymous as there was an evident unequal power relationship and dependent employment situation. It was for this reason I wanted to interview my peers individually and confidentially to attempt to reduce any perceived need to make statements in order to satisfy colleagues and line managers. I also wanted to choose participants that were delivering the curriculum in the classroom in practice rather than administrators or managers who were more removed from direct pedagogical instruction. In this way, I sought to go beyond examining how Asia Literacy was being represented by leaders at a site but closely talk to those who were negotiating to deliver it in classroom practice.

3.9 How Interviews were Sourced and Conducted

**Ethical clearance.**

I sought ethical clearance to contact and interview participants who were working or had worked in the independent sector in high schools in Western Australia since the
introduction of the Australian Curriculum. Once the relevant applications had been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Murdoch University, I began the process of inviting fellow teachers to participate in a conversation.

Sourcing interviews.

Although I had taught English for over 25 years, I had most recently worked in the independent sector, and through meetings and professional development courses I interacted with an established large professional network of colleagues. Contact for this project initially occurred through professional associates in the English network of the Association of Independent Schools in Western Australia (AISWA) of which I am a member. Quarterly meetings and AISWA Head of English Faculty group mailing lists allow for regular communication and contact with my colleagues in other schools. These I have not been constructed for the specific purpose of evaluating or building Asia Literacy and thus were an ideal avenue to source participants who were not specifically chosen for their Asia expertise, but who were willing to be conversation partners (Rubin & Rubin, 2011) about how they have approached Asia Literacy in their school.

Potential participants were contacted by email. They were advised that being involved in the research may assist reflection on their own practice as well as provide feedback as to how they were negotiating the Asia Literacy priority. They were notified that participation in a recorded interview of up to an hour could also be listed for their professional learning hours for their teacher registration. A certificate would also be presented that would reflect the time taken and which particular professional teaching standards (AITSL, 2018) were being addressed through their involvement. Participants knew
that their privacy was to be protected through the anonymizing of data and by the use of a pseudonym to represent their voice in the findings. It was made clear to participants that they did not need to have a particular level of expertise in order to be involved. However, it is conceded that agreeing to participate may have denoted a willingness to engage with the Asia Literacy priority, as teachers who did not see its value could be perhaps less likely to offer their time.

Those who agreed to participate.

A total of eight participants were initially contacted in three AISWA schools. In one location, three people were contacted. Of these three, one did not reply. One replied that due to time and workload constraints they would not be able to participate. Another replied that they would be able to participate but suggested a time about a term away when they thought they would be more able to spare the time.

At another location, four people were contacted. Two replied that they would be able to participate but in one or two months’ time when some of their work deadlines had passed. Two other teachers at that location did not reply by email but asked that a message be passed on that due to time and workload constraints they were too busy to participate. I therefore had found three conversation partners from two schools who were willing to participate in my research. I then sought permission from the two school principals involved for their staff to participate in the research so that formal permission letters could be signed by both principal and teacher participant before the discussion was to take place.
The eighth person to be invited to participate in my research was an English teacher at my own school. This particular interview was designed as a pilot interview in order to determine the efficacy of the questions and to consider what may need to be adjusted before the other conversations were to take place. Permission from both principal and participant was sought formally and given and this particular conversation was able to happen fairly immediately after the initial invitation. As with the other participants, my relationship with this participant will need to be further clarified. I will also explain the decision to use the data collected as part of a pilot interview.

Each of these four conversation partners were able to choose the time and location of the interview to minimise disruption to their professional and personal lives. All four people chose times after the end of the school day and three chose their own school as the location with the fourth choosing to meet in a meeting area at my school as a convenient location between their own school and home. As part of the invitation to participate, my colleagues were also invited to bring along any of their current programming, task or lesson material to assist them to elaborate on specific examples. Two of the four participants took this opportunity to bring their own documentation. However, only one participant looked at the documentation during the interview and this was only briefly. All participants referred to their current working memory and knowledge of their programs that they were operating from at the time. Only one of the two participants that brought documentation offered to leave a copy of this written data which had been referred to in the discussion.

Therefore, these four colleagues were not randomly selected but directly invited. Their acceptance of the invitation determined their selection as conversation partners in
investigating how English teachers were negotiating Asia Literacy in practice. However, identifying and clarifying my own relationship with each professional colleague is also necessary. It is important to delineate this pre-existing relationship before the presentation of the findings as it is a factor that contributes to a fuller understanding of this research.

3.10 My Own Relationship with each Conversation Partner

While I wanted the voice of each teacher to be heard as part of the research, I must acknowledge that their prior knowledge of me as a colleague could certainly shape how they have represented that voice to me. This certainly can be viewed as a limitation of the study and this will be further acknowledged and explored when considering the limitations of the project in the discussion section. However, I see it as an important strength of the research that their participation in the study was not necessarily based on their own valuing of Asia Literacy but could be seen in the context of an existing professional relationship.

Each conversation partner is introduced below using a pseudonym.

Louisa.

Louisa was in her second year of her teaching career at the time of interview. Aside from time spent on teaching practicums, Louisa’s then current school was her first tenured position. It was a single sex, high fee paying, independent secondary boys’ school. Louisa worked in the same faculty as myself and being Louisa’s current line manager, I was highly aware that there was a power relationship involved in the interview. However, Louisa had mentioned an interest knowing the general area of my research and had volunteered to be interviewed as she stated she was interested in undertaking further study and that she wished
to participate in the research process for her own experience. The conversation with Louisa had been used as an initial trial to consider the effectiveness of the guide questions. However, the success of the interview had revealed much valuable information. Louisa had also felt comfortable enough in the interview to voice her direct criticisms of the current practice regarding Asia Literacy both within the faculty and the school. While the intention had been to use the interview with Louisa as a pilot interview only, upon reflection, I decided to proceed with representing her voice as part of the research. Louisa had read the transcript and had subsequently consented for it to be used in the research. Before the completion and submission of the research, Louisa resigned her position in order to travel overseas. She continued to give consent for her conversation to be used as recorded in the transcript with no changes.

Kathryn.

Kathryn had been teaching for a similar amount of time to myself: almost thirty years. We had worked together in a school over a decade ago and had maintained professional contact through English Network meetings. I had no prior knowledge preceding the interview that before I met Kathryn, she had experience teaching English in Asia at an international school. I was aware that Kathryn had extensive teaching experience at government, Catholic and independent schools in Western Australia. She was currently working as a Head of English Faculty at an independent coeducational secondary school where she had been for five years. The school was located on the suburban fringes of the city. While there was no direct or overt power relationship of being a line manager to this participant, Kathryn may have been aware of my own values and attitudes developed from previous conversations as a colleague and may have shaped her answers accordingly.
Florence.

Florence had been teaching for five or six years and had completed her teaching training in the United Kingdom. She had initially worked as a teacher for a short time in the England before continuing the main part of her teaching career in Australia at her current school. Florence had been working at the same coeducational secondary school as Kathryn for about 4 years. I had previously had contact with her twice only. Once was by phone on behalf of a colleague who was required to complete small group moderation for an English course between both of our schools. The other occasion was through a shared professional development course. I was aware that there was a power relationship between Florence and Kathryn, who was her line manager, and had organized to contact and schedule the interview with each participant separately on separate days. The interviews also took place in completely separate locations. I had thought it worthwhile to consider different voices and perspectives from the same school where possible. Interviewing both Kathryn and Florence had enabled this to happen.

Hugo.

Hugo had been teaching for approximately 12 years. We had previously been colleagues at the same school approximately five years prior to the interview taking place. Since that time, we had maintained professional contact on only two occasions. This had been by phone and email with regard to sourcing and using an external marker and through contacting him when an applicant had listed him as a referee. Hugo had been working for around five years in his current position at an independent secondary high fee paying girls’ school in the more established suburbs of Perth. His prior teaching experience had been working in the independent sector in Western Australia in boys, girls and coeducational
secondary schools. Again, while there was no overt current power relationship between Hugo and myself, as a previous colleague he may have been aware of my own values and attitudes on relevant topics and this may have shaped how he represented his voice or ideas on subjects in the interview.

I was extremely grateful that four teaching colleagues had offered their time to discuss their negotiation of Asia Literacy. None of the conversation partners had been selected because of any perceived stance about Asia Literacy. I had contacted them as representatives of an English faculty at their school. I had chosen their schools to find out how teachers in two or three different schools with different demographics were negotiating Asia Literacy in their particular context. However, this information about the pre-existing professional relationship as stated may be useful in considering their voices as represented in the findings. Additionally, while I have stated that I had previous knowledge of the four conversation partners, it is also obvious that they had previous knowledge of me as a practitioner.

This next section of the methodological process is to explain the practical steps I would take in handling the data from the four audio recordings and deciding how to present it in the findings. This was the process of arranging it in such a way that it would be more meaningful and concise than a verbatim script.
3.11 From Verbatim Script to Presentation in the Findings.

Transcription.

The conversation partners were made aware as part of the invitation that their voice was going to be recorded. From the recording made of the interview, the data was going to be prepared as a verbatim transcript. I had been encouraged to transcribe the pilot interview myself and had found it an invaluable exercise in allowing me an intimate understanding of the text that I had participated in creating. While I had the opportunity to outsource the transcription of the remaining recordings, I still opted to transcribe them myself as a way of coming to a much richer in-depth and first-hand understanding of the text created.

Each transcript was then emailed to the participant for review to ensure they felt the document was an accurate record of the conversation that took place. They were also given the opportunity to amend, clarify, add to or delete any part of their conversation. The transcription of Louisa’s interview occurred before the conversations with the other three colleagues took place. Kathryn’s conversation occurred a few weeks before the discussion with Florence but the audio recording of Kathryn was not transcribed until after the conversation with Florence. These two conversations were then transcribed before the final opportunity to have a conversation with Hugo occurred.

Coding process.

The coding process, as described in the methodological theory earlier in the chapter, also influenced the practical step of how I would present and order the findings. The final coding process which involved re-engaging with the transcripts as individual stories was
where I not only reconsidered how I was defining the themes but concurrently was where I would come to a decision about how I would represent the voices. In order to allow each distinct voice to be heard, I would decide to present each conversation partner individually. This would allow a story or narrative to be presented for the voice of each of the four teachers.

In the process of presenting the voices I would select and reorder the information in each conversation so that the emerging themes would be represented in the same order in each narrative. Conversations often go between topics and ideas and then return to them after asides and digressions in a non-linear way. By reordering the narratives slightly to keep thematic information more tightly together it would be more conducive for later analysis. In this way, the findings could not only try to be an empathetic representation of the voice of each conversation partner but could also be more readily accessible when grouped around a common set of themes. As a result, rather than just a chronological recount of the conversation as it happened, the information in the findings would be more easily facilitate the analysis and theoretical integration embodied in the processes of Grounded Theory (Birks & Mills, 2015).

**Consideration of theories within the analytical process.**

Once the four conversations had been represented as narratives, I would then begin to discuss, analyse and integrate the findings that had been produced as a result of the Grounded Theory model (Birks & Mills, 2015) in order to develop my understandings (Hennink et al., 2010) of the information. I would also then consider the final stage of theoretically integrating what I had recorded and produced as the findings into known models of analysis:
policy implementation theory (Ball, 1992, 2012) and the bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 2006).

This chapter has outlined the main theoretical underpinnings in the methodological approach to the research. It has then narrowed to look at the research design to clarify the decision trail regarding the practical method of constructing questions and the sourcing of participants and the process of creating findings. It also suggests how the findings were presented so as to facilitate the discussion and analysis. The next chapter will present the voices of the four conversation partners.
Chapter 4 The Voices of my Colleagues

The previous chapter outlined the methodological theory involved in the study. It also explored how this underpinned the research design and methods used to source and interview conversation partners. It explained the process of how the information was initially recorded as a verbatim transcript through to being presented in this chapter as a set of four narratives.

This chapter engages with the concept of *verstehen* by providing a sense of the voice of the teacher and making meaning through considering and having empathy for the way the four teachers themselves have understood their situation. The conversations have been represented as four narratives depicting the individual voice of each teacher and includes direct italicised quotes from the recorded conversations to allow for a sense of the individual who is speaking. At times, the information is also paraphrased to allow for a greater clarity of meaning and to avoid repetition. The information has also been reordered slightly to follow the pattern of a common set of themes or organising ideas that were present in all four conversations. This ordering has occurred during the later stages of Grounded Theory (Birks & Mills, 2015) in order to facilitate the analysis and discussion that will occur in the next chapter.

The emerging themes will be presented after the narratives at the end of this chapter. This structure attempts to reflect the nature of the inductive process of Grounded Theory (Birks & Mills, 2015): the voice of the conversation partner is foregrounded first and then the themes are subsequently considered as emergent from the information.
Louisa was sharing her experiences during the second year of her teaching career. She valued Asia Literacy but did not see it as any more important than the other priorities. She also felt she was not confident in her own personal knowledge in applying it in the classroom and reflected that it was something she was subconsciously shying away from. She valued Asia Literacy as something she would like to develop further knowledge about along with “sustainability and the indigenous” but also identified a preference for further knowledge about more subject specific English learning area content which was described as more “meaty”. She felt that it was more important for her as a teacher at the beginning of her career to develop expertise in the English area than increase her confidence with Asia Literacy.

She identified that while some choices were available, at times the study of particular units of work at her school involved a mandatory focus on Asian texts or content. Because of this, she felt at times that she had done “too much stuff on Asia”. This was especially noted in her Year 9 class where because they had “done three units of work that featured Asian texts or Asian representation” she felt it “was too heavy on Asia and there was not enough variety in the course”. Louisa felt that her current programs needed to feature indigenous representations a lot more. She felt more confident doing this. She also identified that her programs should include the concept of sustainability as a greater focus but was concerned about how she could do this while keeping the assessments focused on English content. Louisa had noted that other teachers in the faculty had similar experiences and concerns and were and were reducing some of the Asian content for to attempt to create
Louisa felt that at her school they did “a pretty good job at teaching representations of Asia or Asian literature” compared to other schools where she had completed practicum placements or had contact with professional colleagues. Though she noted that students could learn about Asian perspectives in a “more authentic way”. However, she stated it was an area of her “own teaching repertoire that needed work” as she felt “more comfortable teaching indigenous representations” because of her “personal background growing up in Australia” and it being “a personal interest”.

Louisa reflected that over the previous year or two she had constructed “quite a few” resources and tasks that centred on Asia. She reflected on the Year 8 task where “they have to base a short story on an event in Asian history”. She had chosen the 2004 tsunami in Phuket, the 2011 tsunami in Japan, the 2002 Bali bombing in Kuta and the yearly event of Chinese New Year as well as the Songkran festival. She noted that she did consciously decide to choose “more celebratory event[s]” of Chinese New Year and the Songkran Festival as the other events she had in mind from her own knowledge were all “kind of more disastrous” or “negative events in history” and she wanted to give her students the option of doing “a more light-hearted happy event”.

She noted that most of the students chose the tsunamis or the Bali bombing due to their own knowledge and “conversations they had with their parents at home”. However, she identified that the few students who chose the Songkran Festival and the Chinese New Year...
Year “wrote really well because being a 12 or 13 year old…it was much easier for them to imagine themselves at either of those events”. She said the students in Year 8 had the option to write from an Asian or Western perspective about the event. Louisa reflected that there were not many Asian students at the school but having Asian students in her Year 8 class was “great because there was times throughout that unit of work when they could share their perspective on those particular events”. She noted that she was “conscious of them [Asian students] feeling comfortable” and if it was going to be a problem she “would have changed the topics or texts”. She reported that she had “a conversation with them prior to starting the unit of work just to let them know that we were going to be looking at particular things” but that they “were fine” and that they “did feel comfortable”.

She noted that in the study of Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China (Chang, 1991) it was kind of a Cinderella story but in the Chinese context. She felt it was “interesting for the students to see that it wasn’t just a Western fairy tale and how that manifests in different cultures”. She stated that she was looking forward to studying Mulan (Coats, 1998) as “it is quite a progressive text that looks at gender binaries in the Chinese context and how they are challenged and so I really like that portrayal of Chinese culture and women challenging those stereotypes”.

However, for the Year 9 task students had to research events to do with Tiananmen Square and then had to construct a narrative from an Asian perspective about this event which she said, “they found quite difficult”. She felt this was due to not only
the difficulty of writing from any perspective that was not your own but also adopting an Asian perspective which “is very foreign to them especially if they haven’t been to those countries”. She also noted that it was difficult “doing something like Tiananmen Square which has been so…concealed” but thought this was “great because they found it interesting as they were rediscovering part of history that had been hidden”. She noted that there were no Asian students in this class. She also reflected that for the Year 9 task she had a more able group of students so “they did very well” doing “lots of their own research” and noted “they knew the politics and historical context very well”.

With the study of The Adventures of Tintin and the Blue Lotus (Hergé, 1990) she noted the context of “the conflict between the Japanese, Chinese and the Americans - the Western World – around World War Two”. She outlined that the class “look[ed] at the way that Japanese characters have been vilified mainly through their physical traits” and how the “representation…reflects the time in which it was written and who the author of the text was”. She also noted that in Year 9 for a feature article task, she had also used the news story about the “Bali 9” about the nine Australians convicted in Indonesia for attempting to smuggle heroin out of that country in 2005. She noted that after this particular unit of work her “Year 9’s felt like they had done so much stuff on Asia” and she had felt the same. She said that when she asked for written feedback, “they expressed that they felt like they had done a lot of work on Asia that year and in future they would suggest not doing Asia for either Tiananmen Square or the Bali 9”. She stated that she agreed and outlined her intention to change the program the next time she taught it.
Louisa identified that teaching the Year 10 documentary, Change My Race (2013) was “quite difficult” and sometimes “quite uncomfortable to negotiate”. Again, she noted she had a private conversation with the Asian students in the class before studying the text to ensure they would be comfortable with the text and topic. She summarised that the text was “looking at the phenomenon of young Asian women seeking out plastic surgery to look more Western” and that “most students haven’t heard of that happening before and so are quite shocked by that but when you have Asian students in the class it can be quite uncomfortable for them because we’re talking about racial traits that most Asians exhibit and comparing them to the way Western people look”.

However, she noted that she had taught that unit of work twice and students have “never been irresponsible about the conversations that they’re having or how they’re approaching the text”. She felt “the students are quite conscious of different people making up the class” and that she had “not explicitly had the conversation with them about being racially sensitive going into those units of work because I haven’t felt like I needed to”. She also felt on both occasions “the boys have always approached it with a level of maturity that has allowed us to really interrogate the ideas from all perspectives”. Louisa did reflect that the documentary was Australian and “so a Western perspective and we do interrogate that idea when we study the text as well of it being through a Western lens”. She noted that “the host of that text is a mixed-race Chinese Australian woman so…a particular perspective”.

When considering how she approached Asia Literacy in general, Louisa noted that she tended “to always teach Asian representations or their involvement in Australian society in particular ways. So I think without intentionally doing so I always look at Asian people through this construct of the outsider...and them coming to Australia and fitting into our society and not vice versa”. She also noted that “repeatedly look[ed] at them as refugees again coming into Australia as being repressed in some way in their home country”. This included “their countries being less progressive or less liberal in their political systems” and that she was “always focusing on their ability to assimilate”.

She recognized that schools “are stretched to the limit so it’s hard to add in new programs and events” but it would be nice to do “some kind of Asian festival or themed event or opportunity for students to learn a little bit more about the Asian perspective in a more authentic way”. She felt that delivering “the Asian perspective in an authentic way is problematic and that’s what I grapple with in my units of work”. Louisa noted “always being unsure about whether I’m portraying things in the right light and trying to be culturally sensitive and all of those things”. She reflected that she did discuss with classes that they were often viewing non-Asian perspectives about Asians and thus they could consider “how accurate those portrayals can be of a voice that is not the authors”.

Although completing her teacher education post the introduction of the Australian Curriculum, Louisa felt the priorities were not emphasized in her training compared to other aspects and judged that she was “not well trained on how to implement the general capabilities and priorities”. She felt that with regards to Asia Literacy her “knowledge
was slowly developing” and that it was an area the school could be doing some work on. She also thought that having “experience and being able to experiment more”; having “more time to create new units of work” and “more time to collaborate” would be additional factors in improving her approach to Asia Literacy. She acknowledged however, that “like most places we’re very time poor so it’s hard to put those times away”.

Louisa mentioned that she had not attended any professional development about Asia Literacy but that “if she saw one advertised” she acknowledged it would be beneficial for her to attend. She also felt that with regard to text choices as she was “quite young in her teaching career [she] tended to just go with the texts that other more experienced teachers have taught” and noted that she was influenced by the decisions of other teachers “who had been teaching [the course] for a few years”. She identified she would like professional development about “building [her] bank of texts that [she] can draw on”. Currently, she felt that when she did get to make choices about texts that she will just “research and go off what [she] finds are the most accessible…things that have the most information on them”. She also thought the professional development could be helpful if it also encompassed “other teachers’ input about on some of things that they teach or ways of approaching Asian representations and things they have done in the past”. This could include “resource sharing” and “talking through successful units of work”.
Kathryn.

Kathryn was an experienced Head of Faculty who had been teaching for over 25 years. She felt she was not particularly aware of the cross curriculum priorities but understood that it meant a greater use of Australian texts focusing on the indigenous in addition to more attention to Asian texts. She considered that there was an equal emphasis at her school between the 3 cross curriculum priorities but did identify that the new curriculum involved a greater emphasis on Asian texts than previously. She felt she needed to monitor the programs and texts fairly closely and had initially written all of the programs at the school and had made the decision to build in Asia Literacy. It was made clear that programs at her school are audited and reviewed regularly to allow for the whole faculty to reflect about how the cross curriculum policies are being met. Kathryn thus felt it was being considered and valued as part of the programming. She felt her staff were keen to teach Asia Literacy and did not have issues with the level of their contextual knowledge or their approach to it.
Kathryn did not think Asia Literacy was a “key factor”. She felt it was “a political decision...that the Australian Curriculum is seen to incorporate Asian texts because that is good on the world scene”. However, Kathryn saw Asia Literacy as a useful vehicle to allow students to deconstruct texts and be more critical viewers of text. She then felt this allowed them to be more critical and mature in their understanding of the world. She identified Asia Literacy as being part of developing student general and cultural knowledge to be broader. She valued this and thought that “the broader their general knowledge the more capable they are”. She thought that while it was a political decision to include Asia Literacy, it was still “interesting because if you have a greater understanding of different cultures then the world is a more peaceful place”. She thought that “ignorance was quite dangerous” and so felt that it was “good that it [Asia Literacy] was in there” but that “it wouldn’t be [her] number one priority”.

Kathryn noted that when she arrived at the school some years ago as a new Head of Faculty, the school was fairly new so there were no programs. Thus, she had written all the English programs in a way that included some form of Asia Literacy in each year level especially from Year 7 to 10. These had then been refined and reviewed by herself and the faculty staff in the subsequent years.

She was able to individually reflect on some of the texts and tasks used in different year groups and how the students had responded. In Year 7 she noted the students had studied three texts in Year 7 with Asian content. More specifically, in the study of Trash (Mulligan, 2014) she thought it was “a real eye opener for students” to follow the story of a young boy who lives on a dumpsite in Asia. She felt that Camel Rider (Mason, 2014)
about two boys meeting up in the context of war in the Middle East was well received by students who “really love it”. For Year 9 she had just bought Lion: A Long Way Home (Brierley, 2016) but the students had not studied it yet. Kathryn also recounted that the students “were really keen to have all that knowledge” contextually about China when they studied the film version of Mao’s Last Dancer (Scott, 2009) in Year 10.

In Year 11 she explained that the students studied the documentary, Molly and Mubarak (Zubrycki, 2003). She also noted that the students studied The Kite Runner (Hosseini, 2003) in Year 12 which she thought worked particularly well when it was paired with the documentary Land Mines a Love Story (O’Rourke, 2005). She outlined further that with these two documentaries “the first time they watch [them], which is just for entertainment, they have one set of ideas and then when we slowly deconstruct it and analyse it they can see how it is a construction and just a selection of detail. And they learn…with those two documentaries they had no idea about Afghanistan. Half of them didn’t know where Kabul was”. Kathryn recounted how the students initially “sympathised with the characters but then when we have a look at it and deconstruct it and look at the poor beggar ladies wearing gold bracelets, and they have television in their house and these types of things, they tend to become more of a critical viewer”. She explained the students were “really keen” in their response to these two films and that the films were an excellent vehicle to broaden their general and contextual knowledge beyond the world of the text.
When reflecting overall about the approach to Asia Literacy and Asian texts Kathryn felt that the staff in her faculty including herself were not uncomfortable about it due to any perceived lack of contextual knowledge and were “absolutely keen”. She acknowledged that some of the representations of Asians in texts revolved around an identity of being the victim but that it was not so straightforward as for example in the documentaries studied “the Afghans also planted land mines as well” so it is not all “the Russians and the Americans came in and dropped the bombs” as there are “equal sides to it as well”. She felt Asian students in the school were a small minority of the total population but they “seem to be really happy that we value that” when studying a text from their own cultural background.

Kathryn reflected on her experiences of her time teaching in Malaysia at an international school and considered if this shaped her current teaching. She noted that the entire population of the international school were Asian but that no Asian texts were studied as part of the syllabus. She reflected that the students were studying using the British Cambridge courses and that all texts chosen were reflective of the traditional English canon and included texts from Shakespeare. However, she felt that her experiences teaching in Asia had given her “not a lot but a little snippet of the Chinese culture and understanding”. She noted three races: Chinese, Malays and Indians and considered her developing her understanding of how these groups sometimes interacted with each other. She felt that some aspects of her time in Asia were “quite an eye opener”. She felt that “all of that you bring into your teaching” regarding her experiences of living and working in Asia.
Kathryn felt that as an individual she had also developed her understanding of Asia Literacy through reading and research. She also noted that she had attended two professional development sessions about Asia Literacy and that each staff member in her faculty had also done professional development about it also. She said she encouraged her faculty to “come to the table with some new texts and new books” as part of their collaborative planning. While stating that staff did have some choices, she also acknowledged her role as Head of Faculty in monitoring the decisions about texts and programs to avoid “mistakes” being made and finding texts chosen that were not “suitable”.

Kathryn felt that what would be helpful with Asia Literacy would be a “list of recommended texts with a synopsis about each one and also the suggested year groups”. The availability of having resources was also mentioned. She thought if there was such a website it would be “fantastic” as teachers are “so busy it’s really difficult to take the time to look at lots of texts and read lots of texts”. She said that in general she went on the net and visited generic teacher focused websites. She was not aware of any Asian focused websites that teachers could visit and had not heard of the Asia Education Foundation website.
Florence had been teaching for five or six years and worked in the same faculty as Kathryn at a coeducational independent school. Florence felt that Asia Literacy was being considered in her faculty at the school but that there was a lot more scope for a deeper engagement with it. She judged that at times, especially in the past, it had been “dry and tokenistic” and questioned how deep the engagement was. She felt the English faculty valued Asia Literacy and was improving how they dealt with it. However, there was no sense that how and where the cross curriculum priorities, including Asia Literacy, were being addressed was audited or recorded by the faculty. Florence thought that there could be value in auditing where Asia Literacy was encompassed. She felt that they would do “something Aboriginal and something from Asia” every year but that “sustainability could be hit a lot more”.

She stated that it was “great” that students were learning about Asia but that the teaching programs had not been doing enough even just with providing contextual information. She felt it was important to develop student “wider contextual understanding” about Asia in addition to studying Asian texts or representations. She thought that they were beginning to address the issue that some programs in some year groups needed “to do more for Asia, rather than it [being] so tokenistic and so shallow”. However, she did identify that it was important for teachers to value Asia Literacy and that if you “don’t believe in it and you’re not invested in it” then it will be just another thing that you feel you must do and will be “tokenistic and pointless”.
Florence identified that she loved Asian texts and was able to name several that particularly enjoyed including the sub-genre of Studio Ghibli films. She identified that she “really enjoyed” studying those sorts of texts and “to be able to weave those kinds of texts in, to give a wider understanding. [then] that opportunity should be taken if you can”. She felt that discussing topics encountered through Asia Literacy was “valuable” for students as it was “giving them an insight” and exposing them to opinions and perspectives which they may have not heard before. She considered this part of what education was about: students being able to hear new perspectives and opinions and making their own judgements about them.

Florence also identified that it was “so relevant and…so important to teach about tolerance and kindness and love” in the context of news reports about “boat people” and that she still found it “shocking” that people thought that term [boat people] was “socially acceptable”. She felt it was part of her job to teach intercultural understanding and that Asia Literacy was a vehicle which allowed this to happen. She also considered it was important that Asian and non-Asian students studying Asian texts could see that Asian students “are part of modern Australia” just as much as those individuals reflected in texts representing Australia’s more traditional cultural heritage. She felt that studying texts that reflected “Australia’s changing cultural identity” are “way more valuable”. The relevance of texts “like your typical Banjo Paterson text” were brought into question.

She identified that studying Asian texts was “so valuable but then it makes [her] question as well…why is Asia” the focus of study. She identified its significance to
Australia economically and strategically but felt there were “other cultures as well of value” that were being ignored. However, she felt it was important to choose texts that students could “engage with” and that it was “probably time” to remove some texts that were from the canon or a “traditional English text” which had “had their day in the sun”. She summed it up by saying that it was about having more diversity in what we are studying with the students. That while “I do definitely value doing those Asian texts… I do think there is room for other areas”. She felt that students were already too exposed to American texts and that the English faculty was valuing Asian texts and giving them the “platform [they] need”.

Towards the end of the conversation, Florence “wanted the interview to note” that without the impetus from the curriculum to study Asian texts, she may have reverted to Disney films. She felt that the value of Asia Literacy being “more of a significant priority” was that “the world is getting smaller and we would hope as educators we are encouraging children to travel and that we are encouraging them to be a part of the wider world instead of just this island of Australia which is so isolated”. She acknowledged that there were economic difficulties preventing people from travelling but found it disturbing that there were people that had not even left their city let alone their country. She felt it was a valuable “part of her job” to make students see the outside world and “countries that are potentially on their own doorstep like Indonesia” and that teachers are “giving them that key…to open the lock”.
Though Florence worked at the same school and faculty as Kathryn, she was able to provide her perspective on how she approached Asia literacy with individual tasks and texts in her own classes. In addition, she broadly considered how the negotiation of Asia Literacy was taking place as she had experienced it.

Florence outlined how in Year 10 she had introduced the text *The Adventures of Tintin and the Blue Lotus* (Hergé, 1990) so that it could sit alongside a presentation on an Asian country/culture of their choice. She felt in the past on this topic the students had been presenting information “about one part of Asia, but [she] was thinking that’s not enough. We need to show them firstly where Asia is, give them a selection of countries…discuss some events that have happened, look at a variety of texts where ever possible”. She thought this “would be more enriching” rather than just getting the “assessment out of the way and move onto [the next bit of content]”. She felt students were “happy” to do this task and feedback had been positive. She reflected that students were positive to learn new contextual information: they were “super excited as they think like…what! Mongolia is in Asia?! And they are really surprised! What? India is in Asia?”

Florence outlined how her Year 12 General English students had studied *The Rugmaker of Mazar-e-Sharif* (Mazari & Hillman, 2010). She enthusiastically reflected that it was “awesome” and “the kids just love it”. She felt that it taught the students “to be very mindful about refugees and migrants and I think that’s been a real focus that I’ve enjoyed teaching and making them aware of”. She outlined how she found the terminology of “boat people” shocking and “inappropriate” when she herself had first
heard it after migrating to Australia. She then explained how she used the text and her experiences to “talk to kids about that element of immigration and refugees and stuff in terms of the language that we’re using and how it’s disassociating people with the experiences that they’ve had and the trauma that they have experienced”. She stated that part of the study of the text involved researching the “Australian government’s stance on immigrants and refugees and the way they are treated and they have to combine that with their knowledge of Najaf, the main character”. She outlined her stance on events in the text and in Australian society: that Najaf was “a really good guy” who has to “escape to Australia” but who “ends up in a detention centre so again we discuss language…and that it’s not illegal to seek asylum. It is illegal to traffic humans and then well who is being punished...why do we call it a detention centre? ...Is what we’re doing... legal by United Nations standards? Possibly not. It’s opening out those discussions that are so relevant now...” She then explained that the resulting task required students to “persuade the immigration department to accept Najaf into Australia. Even though we know at the end [of the text] they do”.

Florence also acknowledged that sometimes discussions on texts like these generated resistance or controversy in the classroom. She cited the example of a reaction to her speech involving “detention centres and how it was inappropriate to be treating people like that, and how ‘boat people’ is not an appropriate term to use even if your parents use it”. She said that “one of the boys did say if you don’t like it you can go home” which she found did “upset” her and thought it was “very confronting”. However, she stated that she did not feel “nervous” about things like that as those discussions were part of being an English teacher. She felt that the child “that said that awful thing about
me going home...is entitled to his view so at the end of the day it’s about having a space where everybody can be heard, whoever’s voice it is”. Florence felt that she would not let the presence of certain students in the class affect her choices of text. She acknowledged that her discussions might challenge the views of students’ parents and grandparents but that it was important to allow students to hear these new perspectives and form their own judgements.

Florence spoke positively about students with an Asian background being able to add their perspective when studying texts from their own cultural background. She cited an example of a female student in Year 10 being “happy to” explain Asian cultural references when they studied Bend it Like Beckham (Chadha & Nayare, 2002). She noted that the student being in her class made her “more cautious about what I said to make sure I had it right out of respect for her and her culture”. She said the student “loved the film because it was a good representation...of the culture” and when the student had to explain cultural jokes to the rest of the class, she “very much enjoyed doing it”.

Florence felt that the faculty did attempt to consider Asia Literacy but they were in the process of attempting to explore it with “more depth”. She acknowledged that while the overall programs don’t change much year to year, there were many opportunities to include Asia Literacy. She thought staff could refine tasks and texts used each year in a process of annual review but stated the need for staff to be flexible. She was very positive in her tone and felt there was “so much opportunity” to do Asia Literacy and the “scope”
to learn about it “is awesome”. However, she did acknowledge that a lot of events discussed are “predominantly negative” and involve discussions about war. She thought that in the future she might like to do more anime films as the students “love that kind of stuff”.

Florence remembered no Asian texts forming any part of her training through either studying them in her own high school or while training to be an English teacher at a university in the United Kingdom. She had attended an “engage with Asia” professional development session about two years prior to the interview and described it as “awesome” where they were given resources and options to use. She described it as “helpful” and while the biggest issue with Asia Literacy had been finding resources she now felt “there is quite a lot there...you just need to know where to look for it”. However, she thought that some of the websites for Asia Literacy were not that well managed. She did identify that she thought the most valuable thing would be having a suggested text list for Asia focused texts. This was especially with regards to specific Year 11 and 12 courses but also being able to see that there are so many options “rather than having to hunt...all the time for things”. She felt that currently it was made hard to find the resources and that it took time that was difficult to find.
Hugo had been teaching for approximately 12 years and said he was aware of the cross curriculum priorities and especially noted the priorities of Australian texts and Indigenous Culture coming to mind first. He also noted trying to embed Asian texts into the curriculum as a listed priority. He did not mention sustainability until he was reminded of it later in the conversation. He felt that his school was doing far more on the Australian indigenous aspect than Asia Literacy or sustainability. He did feel that with assistance it could “be beneficial…to integrate not only the Asian literature but also indigenous and...sustainability as well”.

Hugo could only identify one Asian text that had been in a unit in a previous year but this had now been taken off the program when it had been rewritten. He felt that when this text was studied with a particular class, it had been engaging and useful and that it was “helpful in enabling low ability kids to empathise with the experiences of others”. He thought it was valuable in bringing to light “prejudices they have without maybe even realising that they have them” and that they can consider “more than just their parents’ opinions”. He also considered that “it was really helpful” in making the students “form their own opinions” and having “more empathetic” viewpoints.

Hugo felt that while there was no direct opposition to using Asian texts or having Asia as a focus of study, he cited that English content was “number one”. He thought that it was “not that we’re not willing to access new things” but that “you know the texts that work” and that you stay with what is “tried and true”. He stated that he would like “to
think that we do follow the Australian Curriculum...and are aware of...embedding those things into our curriculum” but that when “you’re under pressure and you’re trying to get things done and you want kids to gain particular skills it probably does go down the priority list and you do prioritise skills over those sorts of things”.

When considering Asia Literacy in his classroom practice, Hugo was able to outline his approach to only one instance of Asia Literacy occurring in a previous year. He explained that currently there were no Asian texts or content in any of the programs that he was teaching in four different year levels.

Hugo outlined that the study of The Happiest Refugee (Do, 2013) in Year 10 in the previous year went “really well”. As previously stated, he studied it with a low ability group of students and thought it was “such an accessible novel” that worked with that class. He thought that because Ahn Do was “a bit of a comedian” and due to the way that “he writes about serious issues is quite light” the students “really enjoyed” the text. He felt this meant the students “could have a bit of a laugh but also think about some of these issues”. He stated that the students “did really become engaged in the issue...of asylum seekers and those sorts of things” and it allowed the students “to empathise with the experiences of others”. He explained how the text evoked controversial discussions through it outlining “some of the things that they learn at home”.

Hugo outlined that while he was not aware of any students at the school who would be refugees there “was a significant amount of Asian students...at least 10% of the
student body would be Asian”. However, he recounted that no Asian students were part of the class when he studied The Happiest Refugee (Do, 2013). He felt that this “made for...a bit of a different dynamic” because “if we’re talking about the concept of the ‘other’ when we’ve got people of those sorts of cultural backgrounds in the classroom” it would be different but that in this particular class it was a “unique environment...where we were purely looking at it from a ...you know...Australian perspective”.

Hugo felt the faculty prioritized looking at the Indigenous Australian aspect rather than Asia Literacy or sustainability. He said the process was that each program was reviewed by an individual within the faculty on a regular basis every one or two years and then the responsibility to look over all of the programs would be the Head of Faculty. He felt that it was “a little bit uneven in the way we go about it, I think because it’s so much easier in our culture to access texts involving Indigenous people as opposed to Asian texts which maybe are not as easy to come by or as accessible or people are not as familiar with them”. He did acknowledge that in the programs “we get to choose our own [texts]” and that “especially [in] Year 11 and 12, you’ve got complete control over the texts you use”. However, he felt he was not familiar enough with any Asian texts “to use them effectively”. He reiterated at the end of the interview that the issue of not using any Asian texts “is definitely related to accessibility” and “familiarity of those texts and how they can be practically used in a classroom”. He felt that sometimes “I feel like it’s a bit, a little bit forced” where you have “got to do this Asian text, so let’s do this Asian text instead of it integrating seamlessly into a program”. He acknowledged that “any help doing that sort of thing would be beneficial”.

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Hugo had a memory of studying one Asian text in university about Asian families migrating to Australia but identified that teaching Asia Literacy had not been part of his training in a formal sense. He recounted that he had never attended any professional development about Asia Literacy in his career and that he did “not recall ever seeing any specific professional development about that”. He thought it would be “more difficult to access than other things”. He thought that some professional development would be useful in assisting him to become more familiar with Asian focused texts but that “to [him] it seems it’s not widely available”.

Hugo also was unable to recall any websites or places where he could research or find information about Asia Literacy. He thought if he did some investigation he could “probably find some stuff” but “wouldn’t be confident”. He reiterated that having professional development would be helpful to explain “some really great texts to use, how they can be used” and “targeted specifically” to different year levels. He also thought they could incorporate how to teach these texts in relation to the terms used in the glossary of the English syllabus from Year 7 to 12.

This finishes the section where the four narratives of the conversation partners are presented. The narratives were presented to follow the pattern of a common set of themes that were present in all four conversations.
Common emerging themes as an organising sequence.

This chapter presents the findings from the four conversations held with colleagues. It attempts to foreground and represent their voice in their engagement with Asia Literacy. It tells each story as a short narrative structured around three common themes: Asia Literacy as a priority, the enacted practice of teaching Asia Literacy, and practitioner search for support with Asia Literacy. These three themes emerged from the participant voices and act as a framework for their presentation.

The next chapter will discuss these four conversations. It will examine the three presented themes in order to explore how English teachers are negotiating Asia Literacy. These three themes include teacher perceptions about the value of Asia Literacy; how Asia Literacy is being enacted in classroom practice; and teacher perceptions about how they have interacted with the broader educational sector in their negotiation of Asia Literacy. The discussion will consider the negotiation of Asia Literacy through the lens of policy implementation theory (Ball, 1992, 2012) and Bronfenbrenner’s (2006) bioecological model. It will also consider the limitations of the research project.
Chapter 5: Discussion

The previous chapter has sought to engage with the concept of ‘verstehen’: that is to provide a sense of the voice of the teacher and make meaning though considering and having empathy for the way the teachers themselves have made meaning of their situation. To achieve this purpose, a short narrative was presented of each teacher’s voice which was sequenced around three emerging themes. These three emerging themes were subsequently presented: Asia Literacy as a priority, the enacted practice of teaching Asia Literacy, and practitioner search for support with Asia Literacy. These three themes assisted in the exploration of the central research question of how English teachers are negotiating Asia Literacy.

This chapter analyses the four conversations, also drawing on the contextual information in earlier chapters. It outlines, clarifies and discusses the three themes emerging through the Grounded Theory process. It also views the conversations through Ball’s policy implementation theory and Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model. Finally, it considers the limitations of this research.

5.1 Themes Emerging through Grounded Theory

Using Grounded Theory process (Birks & Mills, 2015) some of these themes began to emerge when initially transcribing Louisa’s conversation. As each subsequent conversation was transcribed, the notation and memo writing process confirmed the presence of these common themes. Subsequent comparative analysis (Birks & Mills, 2015) using colour coding for each theme made it easier to distill them into these three concepts. While I had initially considered separating the enacted practice of Asia Literacy from student engagement
with it, the practice of Asia Literacy in the classroom seemed a shared experience between teacher and student and seemed more naturally to fit into one shared theme centred on practice. The decision to order the conversation findings was structured on these emerging themes and thus I have used these concepts as a way to sequence each of the four conversations. Further specific information relevant to each theme will be discussed as part of the clarification section.

**Clarification and discussion of themes.**

Each of the three themes can be explained and considered in more detail. Firstly, each theme will be clarified. This should also act to highlight their emergence from the data and function as a prelude to their discussion.

### 5.2 Asia Literacy as a priority

**Clarification.**

All four conversation partners made statements about how they value Asia Literacy and from this I was able to consider how these teachers actually prioritise it both theoretically and in practice. Statements were overtly made with regard to its importance: whether it is “priority number one” or considered less important than the subject content of English. However, the conversations also provide direct or indirect justification about why it is important. Therefore, because of the way this theme emerged from the findings, I will be able to discuss not just the extent to which the four teachers prioritise Asia Literacy but why and what this means for their practice.
Discussion.

The introductory section of this research highlighted that while there may be a stated cross curriculum priority of Asia Literacy, there are only a few instances within the documentation and processes that teachers use that give them encouragement to value and see Asia Literacy as important. As a result, each individual English teacher may not only have a stated opinion about the importance of Asia Literacy but they have some scope to reflect this in the way they make their own choices about enacted practice.

How the four conversation partners are valuing Asia Literacy and considering its importance:

Hugo’s practice of not including any Asia Literacy content in any of his current courses may suggest that he is contradicting one of the aims and priorities of the Australian curriculum and that he does not value Asia Literacy. However, in terms of following the requirements of the Australian curriculum, his practice is perfectly compliant in a regulatory sense. His assertion that English content “is priority number 1” merely reflects the practical reality of the document he is obliged to work from. Hugo acknowledges that it could be beneficial to integrate Asian literature. This is reflected in his recounted experiences of embedding Asia Literacy which allowed the students to empathise with the experience of others and had value in highlighting pre-existing prejudices. He seems to understand the potential importance of Asia Literacy in generating intercultural understanding and does not directly criticise its inclusion in the curriculum. However, Hugo’s statement that under the pressure of completing the functions of his teaching position, the Asia Literacy priority “goes down the list” effectively shows he does not treat it as a priority. He does not dismiss its potential value and importance in a theoretical sense, but his classroom practice shows him
firmly committed to the mandated aspects of the curriculum. In this way, there seems to be a sense that Asia Literacy is an optional extra rather than an integral part of the curriculum. However, this interpretation of the Australian Curriculum still meets regulations.

Louisa, Kathryn and Florence can be seen to value Asia Literacy more than Hugo, if considering the frequency of it in their classroom practice was utilised as a means to measure their sense of its importance. Louisa, Kathryn and Florence have allocated considerable time to locating resources, shaping the units of work themselves, preparing and teaching the individual lessons as part of the delivery of curriculum and then reflecting and changing their practices as a result. However, to come to an even deeper understanding of its value for these teachers, we need to interrogate their thoughts and feelings about Asia Literacy further, rather than only counting the amount of times an Asian text or representation was studied.

Louisa, Kathryn and Florence directly or indirectly also communicate a sense of its theoretical importance. Louisa’s sense of its value is highlighted through the reflection and care she takes in her approach to Asia Literacy. She is concerned that she wants to represent things in a culturally sensitive way and makes it clear that she would value further professional development in the area. Kathryn and Florence are more direct in valuing Asia Literacy as a means for engendering intercultural understanding. Kathryn values it as a way of combating ignorance and helping to bring about a peaceful world and Florence was passionately emphatic in seeing it as a way to bring about “tolerance and kindness” and exposing students to new perspectives. Florence’s several comments about Asia Literacy’s importance centre around it also being important as part of the personal development of the student.
While all four teachers spoke about the content descriptors involved in their teaching of Asia Literacy, Kathryn also specifically outlined Asia Literacy as a valuable way of allowing the subject content of the English learning area to be taught. This was highlighted through her identification of Asia Literacy as useful in allowing students to be more proficient at deconstructing texts in general as well as becoming more critical thinkers. All four teachers touched on aspects of the General Capability of Intercultural Understanding (AC 2018) as a facet of Asia Literacy but Kathryn’s comments show a theoretical understanding that Asia Literacy is also a means for delivering the English curriculum in an effective way.

This highlights the idea that, at times, some of the conversation partners saw Asia Literacy as a competing interest for the subject content of English. Hugo and Louisa’s statements occasionally portray Asia Literacy as a separate entity with Louisa identifying English content as “more meaty” than Asia Literacy and wanting professional development about English content first. Hugo also identifies Asia Literacy as something that could not be prioritized over the need to teach other English based skills. While all four speakers actually recount examples of where they have taught a unit featuring Asia Literacy as a means of delivering the content descriptors of English, there is still a more acute sense for some that Asia Literacy is an extra factor that should be included as an addition to the curriculum rather than a vehicle through which content descriptors can be taught. This could be due to their self-acknowledged feelings of lower confidence with Asia Literacy and thus to include it means an addition to their workload to have to replace their current resources through a process of research and synthesis of information to format its use for the classroom.
While Hugo’s practice suggests he has not prioritized Asia Literacy, he doesn’t
directly question its value or importance in contrast to Kathryn, Florence and Louisa. While
these three teachers give Asia Literacy more time in practice they also display a level of
skepticism about Asia Literacy and its place in the classroom. Louisa’s feeling that both she
and the students had done “too much stuff on Asia” reflect that she considered its importance
was overplayed at times and she had made plans to reduce the amount of Asian related
content in subsequent years. She had also felt that the other curriculum priorities could also
be foregrounded. Louisa’s comments that at times Asia Literacy could be done in a more
authentic way actually suggest its importance to her as it reflects her idea that if it is to be
done, then it should be done properly.

Similarly, Florence’s comments that sometimes the enactment of Asia Literacy can be
“dry and tokenistic” suggests that she feels it is of enough value to be done in a more
authentic and enriching way. However, Florence does directly question “why Asia?” when
considering its status as a priority in the curriculum. She conjectures that it is likely to do
with Asia’s strategic and economic importance to Australia but also notes that there are other
cultures worthy of focus. Likewise, while Kathryn acknowledges that Asia Literacy has
value, she considers its inclusion in the curriculum was more for political than pedagogical
reasons.

When considering the overall importance and value of Asia Literacy for the four
conversation partners we must look at it in the context of what the curriculum asks them to
do. All four teachers have valued it more than the minimum requirement obligated by the
Australian Curriculum. Kathryn, Florence and Louisa’s efforts to negotiate Asia Literacy for their students show a real attempt to consider the optional suggestions in the content elaborations and at times explore well beyond them. Even Hugo’s use of the Ahn Do (2013) text in a previous year goes beyond what is mandated. In this sense, all four teachers have a created a practical reality that reflects that for them, Asia Literacy has at least some importance. Yet for all four teachers there is also a sense that while it has value it is not a high priority. Kathryn feels it is not a “key factor” and not her “number one priority”, Louisa sees English content as “more meaty”, Hugo states that English content is “number one” and will not prioritise it above required English skills and while Florence sees its value she also notes that other cultures that have value are not singled out in the same way.

5.3 The Enacted Practice of Asia Literacy with Students

Clarification.

Each conversation partner was able to outline at least one lesson, class activity or text featuring an attempt to negotiate Asia Literacy in practice. While the conversations recounted what their negotiation of Asia Literacy entailed in their classrooms, it is not my purpose here to provide a tabulated summary of who did what Asian related text or unit of work with what year group. It was more insightful to consider the issues that each conversation partner raised in their particular practice of Asia Literacy. Issues raised included the concept of intercultural understanding in practice and the representations of Asia and Asian people. Other issues include using texts from Asia as opposed to texts about Asia or about Asians’ experiences in an Australian context. Student engagement with Asia Literacy and how students with Asian heritage may have responded to learning activities
involving Asia Literacy were also issues that featured. Overall, this theme covered the
organising idea of an enacted reality of Asia Literacy.

**Discussion.**

*The concept of intercultural understanding in practice.*

Louisa has directly outlined her concerns of “*always being unsure about whether I’m
portraying things in the right light and trying to be culturally sensitive and all of those
things*”. This desire to be “*culturally sensitive*”; at the very least suggests the notion that she
is aware that Asia Literacy can act as a vehicle for intercultural understanding through the
decisions she makes in the classroom. Her discussion of her use of the novel, Wild Swans:
Three Daughters of China (Chang, 1991), highlights the idea that she is attempting to provide
fresh perspectives for students so that they can see how a well-known fairytale might
*manifest in different cultures*. Her analysis of the presentation of the documentary Change
My Race (Punchard 2013) also highlighted her sensitivity to interrogating the ideas from all
perspectives but she does acknowledge that the text was constructed largely from a Western
perspective.

Kathryn, Louisa and Hugo also make statements in reference to the texts and units of
work that they have taught which suggest a level of awareness of how intercultural
understanding interacts with Asia Literacy. Kathryn highlights how Molly and Mubarak
(Zubrycki, 2003) and Land Mines a Love Story (O’Rourke, 2005) were excellent vehicles “*to
broaden their contextual knowledge beyond the world of the text*”. She also speaks about
how Asia Literacy can combat ignorance and encourage critical thinking. Florence argued
that her class discussion about the terminology of “*boat people*” in news texts allowed
students to hear new perspectives and make their own judgements. Florence was also enthusiastic in seeing Asia Literacy as a means for promoting tolerance and kindness for other cultures. This included a sense that Asia Literacy could be a “key” to unlock a greater understanding of the students’ world beyond the isolation of Australia. Hugo also reflected that his teaching of Asia Literacy through The Happiest Refugee (Do, 2013) allowed students to have more “empathetic viewpoints” and to reconsider their own possible prejudices.

However, some conversations partners more specifically targeted aspects of Intercultural Understanding through considering how Asia and Asians were represented in their lessons and whether this perpetuated stereotypes or focused on the negative.

**Representations of Asians and Asia.**

Louisa questioned her own approach and thought she might need to teach Asia Literacy in a more authentic manner as she felt she always unintentionally taught Asian representations in particular ways. This included looking at “Asian people through this construct of the outsider…and them coming to fit into our society and not vice versa”. She noted also that she “repeatedly looked[ed] at them as refugees” or as “being repressed in some way in their home country”. Kathryn also acknowledged that in her practice some of the representations of Asians in texts also revolved around an identity of being the victim, though for her she suggested that was not one sided as Asians were also represented as perpetrators of crimes as well as the victims of it.
Louisa also commented that her practice of Asia Literacy often showed representations of Asian countries in a comparative sense to Western countries rather than coming to an understanding of their culture on its own terms. She reflected that she ended up showing representations of Asian countries or cultures as “being less progressive or less liberal in their political systems” and this was part of her concern that she was portraying things “in the right light”.

However, Louisa did not think all of her studied representations of Asia were “negative”. Her choice of Mulan (Coats, 1998) is defined by her as “a progressive text that looks at gender binaries in the Chinese context and how they are challenged and so [she] really like that portrayal of Chinese culture and women challenging those stereotypes”. However, by her own definition this text would construct Asia through a Western perspective rather than being from the traditional or contemporary writers from the range of Asian countries to which Kirbe (2009) refers.

Louisa also noted that while many of the Asian events she referred to in her teaching were “kind of more disastrous” or “negative events in history” she had tried to counter this by giving her students the option of doing “a more light-hearted happy event”. This was reflected in her decision to ask students to research the Songkran Festival and Chinese New Year. Louisa is also trying to draw the attention of her students to the idea that nominally Western texts may represent Asians in stereotypical ways. This was done specifically through her guided analysis of Tintin and the Blue Lotus (Hergé, 1990) and Change My Race (Punchard, 2013). She also reflects that she guided classes to understand that they were often
viewing non-Asian perspectives about Asians and thus they could themselves reflect “how accurate those portrayals can be of a voice that is not the authors”.

While Louisa’s teaching of Asia Literacy does not encompass many of the Asian authored texts imagined by Kirbe’s suggested version of Asia Literacy (2009), and while it may not be fully transformative leading to direct social action as outlined by Hassim (2013), there is a genuine attempt to reflect on how her practice of Asia Literacy may be interacting with intercultural understanding. There is also certainly an attempt by Louisa to reflect on and make changes to her teaching repertoire as there is a stated feeling of not being confident about whether she is teaching things “in the right light”. However, there is the evidence that she is trying to engender in her students the critical thinking required for intercultural understanding through her teaching of Asia Literacy.

Florence also consciously grapples with the idea that her practice of Asia Literacy focuses on “predominantly negative” aspects. Many of her discussions that focus on the attitudes implied in intercultural understanding revolve around her students studying representations of Asians as refugees. The one Asian text that Hugo was able to recall using also looked at representations of Asians as refugees. Both Hugo and Florence clearly outline that they are certainly trying to promote the empathetic aspects of intercultural understanding with these representations. Florence’s assessment task of asking the students to also write letters as though they were writing to the immigration department is also part of this desire to encourage empathy. It can also be considered in terms of trying to encourage the students to see how they could bring about transformative social action (Hassim, 2013). However, on the basis of her experience so far, Florence has reflected that she may look to alter her
practice away from the representations of war and negative events to include Studio Ghibli or other forms of anime films.

For some of the conversation partners, the choice of texts and assessment tasks create a conscious direction as to what representations of Asia and Asians are communicated to the students. There seems to be an acknowledgement by most conversation partners that the majority of representations of Asia and Asians tend to be negative in some way. Some teachers have also gone further and have outlined how they have also sought to make their students consciously aware that they are getting a particular representation of Asian peoples and cultures. As part of this discussion it is also useful to reflect on whether the conversation partners are using texts from or about Asia in their practice.

*Texts from Asia or texts about Asia.*

The Australian Curriculum (AC, 2018) makes it clear that in the English curriculum students “can explore and appreciate the diverse range of traditional and contemporary texts *from and about* the peoples and countries of Asia, including texts written by Australians of Asian heritage”. Interestingly Kirbe’s (2009) model sees a much narrower definition of ideal text coming from a range of Asian writers and representing the worldviews and traditions of Asian cultures. The Year 11 and 12 syllabus statements also support Kirbe’s (2009) narrower definition that it is the study of texts *from* Asia that assist Australia to engage with the Asian region. While it is not the premise of this research to police the boundaries of what can be considered Asian, Louisa’s own comment that she asks students to be aware that they can reflect “*how accurate those portrayals [of Asian people and cultures] can be of a voice that is not the authors*” is at the very least instructive. We can at least consider the ramifications of
what it means to look at representations of Asia and Asians by those who are not a part of that culture or who don’t produce texts for that culture.

Australians of Asian heritage may also be producing texts which are sometimes defined and even categorised by schools as “immigrant narratives” (AC, 2018). These may be instructive about “how Australia engages with Asia” (AC, 2018) on a personal level but perhaps they reinforce the narrow representations of Asia that concerned Louisa: Asian people represented through “the construct of the outsider, them coming to fit into our society, them as refugees, being repressed, looking at their ability to assimilate”. Are there other representations of Asia and Asians being studied by these conversation partners that are authored by Asian voices that are not revolving around their interaction with Australia or other non-Asian countries? On the basis of these four conversations it seems that texts from Asia seem to be either not studied at all or are only forming a small basis of the material that teachers are considering as their basis for Asia Literacy. There is certainly a suggestion by two of the teachers that they wish to address this through studying Asia Literacy in more “authentic ways” or even in the selection of texts such as Studio Ghibli films which are not necessarily produced for non-Asian audiences.

The reasons that Asian authored texts that feature Asian worldviews and are part of Asian literary and cultural traditions (Kirbe, 2009) are not studied as much by these teachers could be manifold. Interestingly Hugo is the teacher who makes direct reference to the idea that while he acknowledges these texts exist and could even be useful in his practice, he does not find them accessible and is not confident to teach them. Louisa, too states her lack of knowledge causing less confidence in her negotiation of Asia Literacy. Is it for this reason
that the four conversation partners’ practice of Asia Literacy features a heavy use of texts about Asia but very little or no use of texts from Asia?

Regardless of the answer we can at least consider that the practice of Asia Literacy for the four teachers revolves around the concepts of intercultural understanding. However, this is done principally through looking at images of Asia from a Western perspective or through the lens of Asians who are having to interact with or negotiate a Western society. This is not to argue that intercultural understanding or Asia Literacy is somehow negated by these choices or that Asia Literacy conducted through a Western lens is invalid, but it is interesting to acknowledge it as a principal feature of how Asia Literacy is being negotiated by these four conversation partners.

**Student engagement.**

The conversation partners also considered the experiences of how students responded to the practice of Asia Literacy delivered in the classroom. It must be acknowledged that the information collected about student reactions to their experience of Asia Literacy is done through the filter of their teacher. The intent is not to suggest that these descriptions in any way form a comprehensive or valid study of student reactions to the delivery of Asia Literacy as part of the curriculum. It is also not part of the remit of this research to focus on the study how of students are negotiating Asia Literacy. However, in considering how these four teachers are negotiating Asia Literacy it is useful to reflect on their perceptions of how students have received their lessons and how this in turn has shaped or altered their delivery of this curriculum as a result.
Many of the four conversation partners reported the enjoyment and engagement of students to their lessons and texts featuring Asia Literacy. Hugo noted the students in his class had really enjoyed The Happiest Refugee (Do, 2013) and had become very engaged in the issue of asylum seekers. Similarly, Kathryn thought her students were very keen in their response to two documentary films. Florence had also reported that “the kids just love” The Rugmaker of Mazar-e-Sharif (Mazari & Hillman, 2010). While these are teacher perceptions of student reactions to their curriculum choices, it does at least suggest that teachers are feeling that at least some of what they had planned to negotiate for Asia Literacy is being well received in the classroom.

Many of the conversation partners also recorded student reactions specifically in terms of their appreciation of increased contextual knowledge about Asia. This included the desire of Kathryn’s students to have more information about China while studying the film version of Mao’s Last Dancer (Scott, 2009). Florence also thought that students had a positive reaction to learning new contextual information and were surprised to fill gaps in their knowledge about Asia. Louisa thought the study of the events at Tiananmen Square was “great because they found it interesting as they were rediscovering part of history that had been hidden”. This does seem to reinforce the idea that using text is an excellent way of increasing knowledge about Asia. Or indeed as the Year 11 and 12 syllabus (SCSA, 2018b) recognises that it is through ‘story’ that students develop an understanding of the diversity of Asia’s peoples, environments and cultures.

Louisa also noted students’ empathetic responses to situations involving Asia Literacy. The example was given about the sensitivity shown to others when studying
Change My Race (Punchard, 2013) in Year 10. Hugo also directly notes the concept of student empathy in his students’ reactions to Do’s (2013) text. Thus there is also some evidence of students’ reactions to their experiences of Asia Literacy aligning with the empathetic values embodied in the concept of intercultural understanding.

The idea of controversy also appeared in some of the conversation partner’s accounts of their students’ reactions. Hugo noted how his study of Do’s (2013) text generated controversial discussions which highlighted the students’ own prejudices. This was seen as part of the process of their increasing awareness of forming their own opinions independently of their parents. Florence also acknowledged that discussions generated resistance or controversy in the classroom. The example of the students telling her she could “go home” if she did not like the terminology of ‘boat people’ was used as an example. However, both teachers seemed to view the controversial nature of such student discussions as a positive aspect for student learning. While some of the student reactions could be seen as negative responses to the texts or concepts featuring Asia Literacy, Florence was specific that negotiating student reactions in discussions are “part of being an English teacher”. She thought it was positive for students to have exposure to new perspectives and that students are entitled to have and express their views. Florence clarified further that the presence of dissenting students in the class would not affect her choices of texts; suggesting that she would not avoid choosing Asia related material to avoid controversy.

Louisa also outlined where some reactions expressed how students were challenged by the practice of Asia Literacy in the classroom. She noted that her Year 9 class found it difficult to write from an Asian perspective when researching events concerning Tiananmen
Square, especially for those that had no direct experience of being in an Asian country. This same class also reported a feeling of saturation with Asia Literacy: they had done “so much stuff on Asia”. They had also expressed in written feedback that Asia Literacy should not be used as the basis for the context of some of the assessment tasks in future.

Her plan to address their feedback was to reduce the amount of Asia Literacy content in the program in future years. She was clear that she agreed with their judgement that Asia Literacy featured too heavily in the program. It must be said this was not a teacher reaction to any perceived controversy about Asia Literacy, but is expressed as part of a desire for greater balance between all three curriculum priorities. However, at the least it does show how student reflections can be seen to shape how teachers intend to negotiate Asia Literacy in future iterations of their programs. It also suggests that teachers will seek to modify the aspects of their programs they have control over in order to ensure student engagement.

**Asian students and their reactions to Asia Literacy in the English classroom.**

Another factor for all four conversation partners was their consideration of how any Asian students in their classrooms responded to the delivery of Asia Literacy. Kathryn noted that while Asian students in the school were a small minority of the population she perceived they had a “happy” reaction that a text from their own cultural background was studied.

Hugo noted that while there was a significant number of Asian students in his school, none where present when studying Do’s (2013) text. However, he did outline how he felt their presence would have changed “the dynamic” of the negotiation of Asia Literacy. He
related that having no Asian students in the class meant an “Australian perspective” of events was foregrounded. He stated that the presence of Asian students would have created a difference: as “if we’re talking about the concept of the ‘other’ when we’ve got people of those sorts of cultural backgrounds in the classroom it would be different”. Hugo did not infer in his tone that this was a positive or negative for the students, but it reflected his understanding that he and/or the students may have approached discussions differently had students of Asian background been present.

It is not in the scope of this research to offer a full and detailed semiotic analysis of the concept of ‘Australia’ and ‘Asia’ and the ‘other’, and the idea was not explored further as part of the conversation but it is useful to note Hugo’s awareness of the concept of the ‘other’ and the possible idea that an Australian perspective may be perceived as precluding an Asian perspective. However, there is not enough information in the conversation to make assumptions on behalf of Hugo. The intent of the conversation seemed to suggest rather that Hugo would have been aware of the possible presence of Asian students as a factor that would have shaped the delivery of curriculum.

Louisa and Florence give specific examples where they identify the perspective of Asian students as an influencing factor in their negotiation of Asia Literacy. While Louisa reflected that there were not many Asian students at her school, she valued their presence in her Year 8 class as they could share their perspective on events in Asia. Florence also spoke positively about students with an Asian background offering their perspective when studying Asia related texts; specifically citing the example of a female student in Year 10 enjoying
explaining Asian cultural references and jokes to the rest of the class when they studied Bend it Like Beckham (Chadha & Nayare, 2002).

The examples cited by these two teachers seem to suggest that it was an enriching experience for students and their classmates in addition to their teachers. However, there is also an attempt on behalf of these two teachers to be respectful and sensitive to what the ramifications of their negotiation of Asia Literacy may be for students with an Asian background. Florence notes the Asian student being in her class made her “more cautious about what I said to make sure I had it right out of respect for her and her culture”. Louisa also details her efforts in approaching the relevant tasks in a sensitive and more collaborative way due to the presence of Asian students. With both Year 8 and Year 10 students, Louisa goes to the effort of having “a private conversation with the Asian students in the class before studying the text to ensure they would be comfortable with the text and topic.” The potentially controversial topic of young Asian women having plastic surgery to look more Western is acknowledged as potentially uncomfortable for Asian students. Louisa is clear at two points in the conversation that she would have made changes to the topics or texts if she perceived a problem. She reported that the Asian students said they did feel comfortable and that the students as a group are “quite conscious of different people making up the class” and that she had “not explicitly had the conversation with them about being racially sensitive going into those units of work because I haven’t felt like I needed to”.

Again, it was not in the scope of this study to directly source Asian students’ reactions to verify this aspect of how their teachers had negotiated Asia Literacy. The focus of the study is to foreground the voice of the conversation partner in their attempt to negotiate this
curriculum priority. However, the presence of students who have an Asian background and their reactions to their teacher’s negotiation of Asia Literacy has clearly been a specifically stated influencing factor on at least two of the conversation partners. All four teachers also show an awareness of the potential presence of Asian students in their classes as something to consider. In a very direct sense Cole & Bui’s (2007) advice that English teachers should avoid discussing certain controversial topics such as illegal immigration so that a sense of ‘otherness’ is not created in the classroom has been ignored by all four conversation partners. However, for those with Asian students in the classroom there seems to have been a real attempt to sensitively handle issues and make professional judgements that attempt to value Asian students and not ignore them. In their attempt to genuinely create positive experiences for their students, the practitioners also discussed their search for support in their negotiation of Asia Literacy.

5.4 Practitioner Search for Support with Asia Literacy

Clarification.

This theme emerged from the four teachers’ discussion of factors outside the classroom environment. This also allowed me to hear teacher perceptions of current wider systemic factors about the way this aspect of the Australian Curriculum has been delivered by the broader education sector. Many of the four teachers’ comments about this aspect of Asia Literacy not only stemmed from being asked ‘posing the ideal’ type of questions (Travers, 2013) but also through raising a number of issues of their own volition. Factors arising for this theme included Asia Literacy seen as an individually driven endeavour, supported by faculties rather than at the whole school level. The conversation partners’ initial teacher
training and their access to professional development, texts and resources were also reoccurring factors.

**Discussion.**

*Asia Literacy as an individual endeavour supported by the faculty rather than at a whole school level.*

There is a real sense in the four conversations that Asia Literacy is an individual undertaking within a teacher’s own classroom. All conversation partners speak about getting to make individual text choices. They may be getting some support from their colleagues, but they all speak of their need to find resources on an individual basis. It could be considered that for these four teachers the negotiation of Asia Literacy is an individual exercise. There may be differing levels of direction about Asia Literacy from faculty constructed programs but they have a reasonable level of autonomy in how they deliver the Asia Literacy content for their students.

While the impetus to undertake Asia Literacy seems to stem from the individual teacher, the support within the school for Asia Literacy also seems to exist and be driven at a faculty level. Many conversation partners note that the Head of Faculty has ultimate responsibility for programs and that in many instances program writing is a collaborative process. Louisa also speaks about following the lead of more experienced teachers and will make decisions partly based on their recommendations. All four conversation partners speak about following and modifying common programs and there is some sense of these teachers sharing programs and ideas and reflecting on them together.
None of the conversation partners suggested that any emphasis about Asia Literacy was being created by those in senior leadership positions at their schools. Louisa felt at her school they did “a pretty good job at teaching representations of Asia or Asian literature” compared to other schools but noted that it was not always ‘authentic’ and the school could be doing more work on it. However, she gave no specific examples of things happening outside her faculty at any time and it is unclear whether her discussion about the ‘school’ at that one point implied any curriculum areas beyond her own faculty. Louisa also wanted more time to create new units of work and collaborate but acknowledged that her workplace conditions meant that she was “time poor”. She judged that this was similar to most schools and did not single out her own school as unusual in not providing this time.

Hugo and Kathryn did not discuss how any other of the faculties at their school had approached Asia Literacy and Florence specifically said she could not speak for other departments about how it was being ‘done’. This certainly suggests that for these four teachers, Asia Literacy is not being directed in a hierarchical sense through existing power structures within the school.

**Initial teacher training.**

Louisa was in a unique situation compared to the other conversation partners as she had completed her teacher training at an Australian university during the time the Australian Curriculum was being made publicly available (ACARA, 2014). All other conversation partners had either trained overseas or had completed their training prior to the announcement of the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008) and subsequent introduction of the Australian Curriculum on a schedule from 2011 to 2015 (ACARA, 2014).
Despite Louisa’s tertiary study being concurrent with the introduction of the Australian Curriculum, she reflected that “the priorities were not emphasized” in her teacher training and she judged that she was “not well trained to implement the general capabilities and priorities.” Kathryn did not mention anything about Asian texts forming any part of her own training, though Hugo recalled one Asian text in university about Asian families migrating to Australia. However, he identified that teaching Asia Literacy had not been part of his own schooling or tertiary training in a formal sense. Florence reflected that she had no formal experience of Asian texts either in her own schooling or her teacher training in the United Kingdom.

It may not be surprising that the two conversation partners who were trained in Australia prior to the release of the new curriculum had not mentioned Asia Literacy as something they themselves had studied. Asia Literacy’s increased status within the curriculum had only been given greater prominence with the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008) and formalized into the new curriculum document by 2011 (ACARA, 2014). It may also be unsurprising that Florence’s education experiences in the United Kingdom had also given her no experience of Asia Literacy. Louisa’s comments could be construed as more unexpected. It shouldn’t be suggested that the anecdotal evidence of one newly graduated teacher could be used to generalise about the effectiveness of the tertiary sector at preparing students for this aspect of the new curriculum. However, it is clear that Louisa, like the other three conversation partners did not feel that their initial training prepared them to teach Asia Literacy in a specific sense. It is useful to consider what other sources of support or information the four conversation partners used in their attempt to negotiate Asia Literacy in the English curriculum.
Access to professional development.

As outlined in the introduction, the place of Asia Literacy in associated teacher registration documents has been silenced, in contrast to the curriculum priority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures (AC, 2015). Despite this regulatory environment where the Asia Literacy ‘priority’ is effectively ignored, the four conversation partners did seem to value relevant professional development.

Louisa notes that a useful way to develop her expertise in Asia Literacy would be through time to collaborate with other staff but notes that this time is very hard to find in schools. However, she also explicitly notes that it would be beneficial to attend professional development about Asia Literacy “if she saw one advertised”. She clearly identified that part of this professional learning should include information about building the bank of texts that she can draw on through resource sharing. She also wanted it to encompass other teacher developed units of work that they had taught and how they had decided to approach “Asian representations”. Louisa had not attended any professional development about Asia Literacy and said that when making choices about texts she currently did her own research and used what was “the most accessible”.

In contrast, Kathryn had attended two professional development courses about Asia Literacy and as Head of Faculty had noted that each staff member in her faculty had done this also. She felt that her knowledge of Asia Literacy had also developed through her own reading and research. She was also the only conversation partner who had spent time working in an Asian country and acknowledged that she brought these experiences into her teaching about Asia. Florence worked in the faculty where Kathryn was her line manager.
and also mentioned that she had attended professional development that had focused on Asia Literacy. She was positive about these experiences and felt they were useful. She felt finding resources to use for Asia Literacy was difficult but had become more proficient at knowing where to look.

Hugo’s experiences with professional learning were more reflective of Louisa’s: he had not attended any professional development about Asia Literacy and had not seen any advertised. He thought it would be useful in regard to becoming more familiar with relevant texts but felt that such courses would be difficult to find and to him were not widely available.

Given the lack of impetus from the regulatory authorities in regard to professional learning about Asia Literacy, it is perhaps surprising that two of the four conversation partners had actually sourced and attended professional learning. The other two teachers had also expressed an interest in attending Asia Literacy related professional development if it was offered. The teachers are also quite specific in outlining their needs for text based information as part of this professional learning.

**Individual access to texts and associated resources.**

Aside from professional development, there was also evidence given about how the four conversation partners had interacted with online resources and other materials in their quest to enact Asia Literacy. Louisa was unaware of a specific place where she could find relevant resources about Asia Literacy. She thought she may have been given some material
at university but could not recall it. She was unaware of the Asia Education Foundation but as previously mentioned was keen for information from teachers about texts and approaches that had been successful.

Kathryn was also unaware of the Asia Education Foundation website but similarly to Louise, wanted text based information with annotated lists appropriate for different year groups. Florence seemed to be aware of a website that was relevant to Asia Literacy but specified it was not well managed. She also had a similar want for a text list annotated for appropriate year levels. Hugo confirmed the idea of not being able to easily access texts appropriate for negotiating Asia Literacy. He felt that help accessing texts would be beneficial but could not recall any website where he could research or find year level appropriate information on Asia Literacy.

While the experiences of these four conversation partners should not be generalised to represent the population of English teachers in Western Australia, there certainly seems to be some commonalities. All four teachers have expressed a desire for more easily accessed information about appropriate and relevant texts that they could use for Asia Literacy at different year levels. This desire was uniformly expressed in response to a posing the ideal type question (Travers, 2013) where teachers were asked what they would find most useful to assist in their negotiation of Asia Literacy. As a fellow colleague, I had expected the idea of needing more time to feature more prominently in the responses to this question. The idea of time saving is definitely implied in the ease of access to information about relevant texts and all four conversation partners mentioned the idea of being busy, not having enough time or needing time to collaborate. However, the creation of a list of texts by an external agency,
not existing at their school, which could assist their negotiation of Asia Literacy was far more prominent as a key resource that they identified as lacking.

Teacher reflections about Asia Literacy have revealed that rather than existing as a school wide priority, it is a somewhat individual endeavour, sometimes in cooperation with their faculty colleagues. While the regulatory environment does not encourage professional learning about Asia Literacy, some seem to be able to locate relevant professional development courses but at least two of the teachers feel it is not well advertised. Online resources about Asia Literacy also seem difficult to locate or unwieldy to negotiate and a desire for improved relevant, specific text based information is shared by all four conversation partners.

This chapter has so far discussed the three main common themes that emerged using the process of Grounded Theory: Asia Literacy as a priority, the enacted practice of teaching Asia Literacy and practitioner search for support with Asia Literacy. These themes emerged as a result of the transcription, coding and comparative analysis processes inherent in Grounded Theory. This approach also served to be empathetic to the voices of the four conversation partners and value their comments as practitioners. I now seek to consider how the four voices can be interpreted in the light of the theories and structures outlined in Ball’s policy implementation theory (Ball, 1994, 2012) and Bronfenbrenner’s (2006) bioecological model.
5.5 Ball’s Policy Implementation Framework

The four conversations in this research can be considered in terms of a model of influence, text, practice and outcome (Ball, 1994, 2012). The way these four English teachers negotiated Asia Literacy reflects the tension between policy intention and how it is enacted by teachers in practice in the field (Ball, 1993). It could be seen how the different teachers experimented with varying components of the policy and choose to use or ignore aspects of it yet all while fulfilling their regulatory requirements.

When considering the relationship between text and enactment, there is an evident tension within the ‘text’ itself: the Australian Curriculum and the supporting documentation for teachers. While I had used these documents regularly myself in my own practice, reflecting on the four conversations highlighted inconsistencies. The Australian Curriculum (AC, 2015) clearly outlines three ‘priorities’ and the terminology of ‘priority’ suggested to teachers that these should be foregrounded in classroom practice. Yet as discussed earlier, the ‘priority’ of Asia Literacy is actually not prioritised in the subject content learning area of English in Year 7 to 12. It is also largely silenced in all the supporting documentation regarding syllabus audits, learning area examinations and Professional Standards documentation which is used to guide teachers’ registration and professional development.

Therefore, English teachers have a great deal of freedom in their choice to engage with Asia Literacy. The internal inconsistencies in the documentation mean that teachers could even forego as little as mentioning a haiku in Year 7 or in contrast, create every task with an Asian focus. Both approaches will still meet all regulatory requirements. This implies that those actively negotiating Asia Literacy in their classrooms, or using Ball’s
(1992) terminology, considering the text in its context and enacting it in practice, are doing so in a somewhat voluntary capacity. Certainly the experience of Kathryn and Florence suggest a decision to engage with Asia Literacy has been made by, and is supported within, the English faculty. Louisa seems to be engaging with Asia Literacy also through her negotiation of faculty based programs. All three of these conversation partners are making their own creative decisions to amend and negotiate Asia Literacy on an individual and learning area basis. Ball (2015) acknowledges this creative agency of teachers in their evaluation and interpretation of policy. However, Hugo’s then current negotiation of the Australian Curriculum should not be seen as a refusal to follow policy. His explanations make it clear that he will still construct lessons that comply with the mandatory elements of the English curriculum.

While we can consider how the four conversation partners have negotiated the policy text in the context of their own practice, we can also consider the findings in terms of the context of outcomes to which Ball (1994) refers. It is interesting to reflect on Kathryn’s comments in the light of Ball, Maguire & Braun’s (2012) statement that teachers are ‘enrolled’ as part of political strategies which are linked to global economic imperatives. She clearly feels aware of this ‘enrolment’ in that the positioning of Asia Literacy as a policy ‘priority’ is a “political decision” rather than a quest for pedagogical improvement. Florence also questions “why Asia”. In contrast, Hugo clearly states that he wants his students to be skilled but focuses on the mandatory English content as outlined in the curriculum as his ‘priority’.
How teachers evaluated, interpreted and brought their creative agency (Ball, 2015) to the negotiation of Asia Literacy as a curriculum policy has been a key focus of this research which is reflected in the findings. Ball, Maguire and Braun’s (2012) acknowledgement that policy is a process subject to interpretations rather than a fixed statement is also a useful conduit to consider the findings of the research into how English teachers are negotiating Asia Literacy. Each of the four conversation partners have made conscious decisions about how they have enacted the policy document to include or exclude Asia Literacy. In all four cases, the individual teacher or at least the fellow teacher-creator of the faculty programs they are using, have been the creative agent to drive their negotiation of this policy. Senior management structures and other external education agencies seem to play a very small role in determining the direction of how Asia Literacy is enacted in practice for these four teachers.

The discourse of policy enactment can thus be a useful tool to acknowledge when considering how English teachers are negotiating the Asia Literacy priority. While this research project has not been established as a deductive tool to test and evaluate this theoretical model, it can be useful to consider the findings through the lens of Ball’s (1992, 2012) policy implementation theory. Ball’s work recognises the ‘voice’ of the teacher as a main agent (Ball, 2015) of the interpretation of policy. This research project has also sought to foreground and be empathetic to the voice of the teacher and indeed it can be considered that these four teachers have been the main ‘agents’ in their own negotiation of Asia Literacy.
5.6 Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological Model

Considering Bronfenbrenner’s (1979, 2004) bioecological model was another lens through which meaning could be made of the findings. Again, while this research project did not attempt to use Bronfenbrenner’s model as a theoretical basis for the structure of the project, the model did provide a framework for considering how the curriculum policy of Asia Literacy was negotiated by the four conversation partners. Teachers are part of wider systemic educational structures and it is useful to consider how the personal negotiation of Asia Literacy could be interpreted in light of their relationship with social structures (1979, 2004) described by Bronfenbrenner.

Bronfenbrenner’s model considers human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) in terms of the levels of micro, meso, exo and macro. Like Ball’s (2012) work, Bronfenbrenner also acknowledges the contextual factors of processes, people and time as influencing how development and change occurs. Using this model, we could ascribe a teacher’s:

- personal classroom negotiation as the micro level
- function within the learning area faculty of English as a meso level
- position within a school as an exo level
- relationship with a state educational regulations and a national Australian curriculum at the macro level

Considering this model as a lens for how Asia Literacy is being negotiated by teachers brings several factors into clearer perspective. This research project focused on the level of
the micro and attempted to clarify four individuals’ personal negotiation of Asia Literacy with the students in their own classrooms. However, the four conversation partners also considered how this enactment of this policy worked in relationship with the meso level. It was clear that they felt directly influenced by the English faculty they worked within.

Louisa followed mandated faculty programs and was specific about following the advice of more experienced teachers. Florence and Kathryn spoke about the creation of faculty programs including Asia Literacy and Hugo clearly outlined that programs were the responsibility of program writers and reviewed by the Head of Faculty. While all four participants referred to being empowered to make their own choices about texts and content at least some of the time, it was clearly outlined they operated as part of a team of teachers. It certainly gives the sense that while choices about Asia Literacy may be individual, they are also occurring very much as part of a professional grouping of teachers at the faculty ‘meso’ level. The influence of this level could be seen to vary between teachers: Kathryn as the Head of Faculty speaks about creating all the programs initially before they are reviewed whereas the recently graduated Louisa feels more bound to follow the lead of other teachers. While this research has not set out to investigate the relationship between the micro and meso level, it is interesting to consider how teachers are at least influenced by their immediate faculty environments in their negotiation of Asia Literacy.

When considering the broader exo level of the school environment, there seems to be a less obvious connection. When asked, none of the teachers spoke about any cross curricular programs with other faculties about Asia Literacy and none spoke about school wide activities and events, though Louisa did express a wish for this to happen with the
possibility of a school wide “Asia themed event”. There was also no mention from any of the four conversation partners that the senior management within the school was in any way involved in an attempt to drive or hinder any impetus about Asia Literacy within the faculty or classroom. It can be surmised that for these four teachers a gap existed at the whole school ‘exo’ level in the enactment of the Asia Literacy priority.

It is also useful to consider the research findings at a macro level. The Australian Curriculum attempts to “help all young Australians to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens” (AC, 2018). It is said to outline to “teachers, parents, students and others in the wider community what is to be taught and the quality of learning expected” (AC, 2018). Given this scope, the Australian Curriculum can also be interpreted as a national statement of Australian values and attitudes through what it valorises. It also attempts to position Australia in a global community and explicitly states that “the priorities provide national, regional and global dimensions” (AC, 2015). At least some of the four conversation partners are also aware they are operating in this ‘macro’ environment and are making their own judgements about it. Kathryn is clear when she reflects that Asia Literacy’s place in the curriculum is a political decision for the world stage rather than a pedagogical one. Kathryn is also aware of Asia Literacy’s potential as a vehicle for “tolerance” and intercultural understanding to make the “world a more peaceful place” and Florence is also passionate that Asia Literacy will assist students in being less isolated as Australian citizens. Louisa and Hugo also subscribe to the idea that their creation of experiences of Asia Literacy in the classroom has allowed those students to be more empathetic and tolerant. They are thus also at least participating in communicating and engendering a set of values and attitudes within the broader Australian ‘macro’ level community.
However, considering how teachers at a micro level are then immediately interacting with the macro state and national level also clarifies the negotiation of Asia Literacy. The conversation partners are directly interacting with syllabus documentation produced at the state macro level which was also seen to silence Asia Literacy that was stated as a priority in a nationally produced curriculum. Despite being flagged as a pedagogical priority and a ‘need’ to ensure a ‘high quality’ workforce at a macro level (MCEETYA, 2008, AC, 2015), the state and national level support structures effectively ignore it. This tension with the documentation therefore exists at a macro level and it seems that teachers at the micro personal level, supported within meso level faculty structures are the ones left to resolve this through their own personal negotiation of Asia Literacy. All four teachers also requested more specific assistance in terms of providing resources that they thought could be available and produced by this macro level. While Ball (2015) considers teachers as the prime creative agents of change, when one considers the findings through the lens of Bronfenbrenner’s (1979, 2004) model, this idea is reaffirmed: that much of the drive for choosing to engage with and negotiate Asia Literacy is occurring at the personal micro level.

Bronfenbrenner’s (1979, 2004) bioecological model was a useful conduit to consider and come to an understanding how these four conversation partners were attempting to negotiate Asia Literacy in the English curriculum. It acknowledges that teachers operate in a broader regulatory space beyond the ‘micro’ classroom level and interact with structures, systems and policies at a meso, exo and macro level. It also highlights how Asia Literacy for these four conversation partners is negotiated more as a direct relationship between the micro and macro levels in the Australian education system and they are left to independently negotiate an inconsistent message about ‘priority’ of Asia Literacy that exists at macro level.
The chapter now moves from discussing the meaning made from the four participant voices featured in this research to identifying the limitations of this study.

5.7 Limitations

One potential limitation is my own pre-existing professional relationship with each of the four conversation partners. Ethically, I needed to make this relationship clear when discussing the methodology of the research project. Yet, in a sense, my own existing professional relationship makes me even more vigilant about representing their voices as accurately as I can. I wished to ‘do justice’ to my colleagues’ opinions and thoughts. My conversation partners may also have felt pressured to give answers that they felt were more ‘valuable’ based on their knowledge of me. This can be ameliorated to a certain extent by clearly outlining the pre-existing relationship but it is also clear that the four conversation partners all had very different conversations and expressed different opinions.

That the interpretation of findings is subjective is an important point to acknowledge within any constructivist research. However, this isn’t necessarily a limitation if a clear decision trail (Koch, 2006) can be provided whereby the researcher’s methodological choices and other influencing factors are made clear. There is also the possibility that there could be a response bias, as the four teachers agreeing to speak about Asia Literacy may be predisposed to speaking about it in a particular way. However, at least these teachers were not chosen on the basis of any connection to Asia Literacy. It was also at least apparent that there was not a singularity of response to many aspects of the negotiation of Asia Literacy.
The study also aims to find out how a smaller population of English teachers in three schools are negotiating Asia Literacy, so care must be taken before extrapolating any findings to the larger population of all English teachers. Talking to more teachers in a wider range of schools in different areas could also have given a broader sense of how Asia Literacy is being enacted. Hearing the experiences of English teachers in rural or remote areas or in a wider variety of urban areas would also be enlightening. However, the research aims to give four teachers their voice in a richness of detail rather than abbreviate and reduce their contribution for the sake of being more representative.

This chapter has considered whether teachers see Asia Literacy as a priority and has explored the issues of how it is enacted in practice including how and where teachers are accessing support. The chapter also sought to understand how teachers are the primary agents of change (Ball, 2015) through looking at policy implementation theory. It explored how Bronfenbrenner’s (1979, 2004) bioecological model could provide a lens to consider how the different hierarchical levels within the education system influenced the negotiation of Asia Literacy for these teachers. Possible limitations of the research were also raised. The next chapter provides a conclusion to the research and considers possible recommendations arising from these conclusions.
Chapter 6 Conclusion

This final chapter synthesizes the findings and outlines recommendations for teachers and education sectors. The findings presented and analysed in the previous chapter are based on the voices of four high school English teachers who provide insight into their lived experience of negotiating Asia Literacy in culturally diverse classrooms.

Synthesis of findings and associated recommendations are offered in terms of each of the emerging themes: Asia Literacy as a priority, the enacted practice of teaching Asia Literacy and practitioner search for support with Asia Literacy. The conclusions and recommendations presented in this chapter are empathetic to the voices of the four teachers and are influenced by Ball’s policy implementation theory (1994, 2012) and Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model (1979, 2004) to add depth and structure to the recommendations, future research possibilities and final thoughts.

6.1 Synthesis and Recommendations

Asia Literacy as a priority.

These four conversation partners were not chosen to be part of the research due to any professed interest or expertise in Asia Literacy. In practice, all four teachers had made an effort to include Asia Literacy beyond the regulatory minimum, yet all ranked it below English subject content and some saw it as competing for attention with English content rather than a means through which it could be achieved. Therefore, it was clear that all four teachers valued Asia Literacy to some extent theoretically but none tended to accord it the status of a ‘priority’.
The four conversation partners’ negotiation of Asia Literacy is also a product of the nature of the regulatory environment that they are required to work within. It is clear that there is an opposition between the status of ‘priority’ in the more generic sections of the Australian Curriculum and then its ensuing absence in the practical details of syllabus and other supporting professional documentation that teachers are required to use. While previous studies have attempted to numerically count percentages of teachers valuing Asia Literacy, this research has attempted to explore how different teachers prioritise it theoretically, how this is enacted in their practice and how this is then negotiated in a particular regulatory environment. This highlights that there is a complex relationship between how teachers are acting as agents of change (Ball, 2015) with regard to a policy that has internal contradictions.

A recommendation for regulatory authorities who wish English teachers to see Asia Literacy as a priority could be to foreground it in a number of ways. This could include through specific notation at a national level in teacher registration documentation (AITSL, 2018a) and through more explicit details in syllabus and other supporting documentation at both state and national level. A syllabus could require that at least one text from or about Asia could be studied from a list of texts in the same way that Australian texts are currently foregrounded. In short, if teachers are to value Asia Literacy, they need to see it valued in their regulatory environment. Currently, it is largely silenced.

The enacted practice of teaching Asia Literacy.

While other research has outlined an idealised version of Asia Literacy (Cole & Bui, 2007, Hassim 2013, Jetnikoff, 2013) designed to show best practice exemplars, this research
aimed to highlight how four English teachers not selected for Asia Literacy expertise were negotiating it in their classrooms. In the available space of this research I am not able to account for every comment by the four conversation partners and do not want to be reductionist in the way their voices are represented. I think it is important as part of Grounded Theory (Birks & Mills, 2015) to let the broadness and complexity of their voices speak. Yet, there are some conclusions that can be drawn from their practice as described.

It was clear that all four teachers had some level of conscious understanding that Asia Literacy is a vehicle that can allow intercultural understanding to be explored with students. The four conversation partners all related details of where it had been used to create empathy and tolerance. There was an awareness that the way they are negotiating Asia Literacy is one where they are asking their students to not just know facts about Asia but must consider how they interpret the world around them and have a deeper understanding of cultural attitudes and beliefs. Yet it was also clear that some felt that this intercultural understanding was somewhat limited and did not always challenge students to consider an Asian perspective but sometimes merely reinforced their own ‘Australian’ perspectives.

This idea was also embodied by most of the teachers considering the representations of Asia and Asian people that were being communicated to students. Some felt that the representations often focused on the negative and perpetuated stereotypes of Asian people as victims or as ‘outsiders’ to Australian society that were negotiating their own assimilation. This also brought text selection into focus in that the choice of text was influential in evaluating how Asia Literacy was being enacted. Considering the examples of the four
teachers as a whole, there were few texts created by Asian authors about Asia being utilised by the participant teachers.

The four conversation partners also recounted how students engaged with their delivery of lessons involving Asia Literacy. Overall, there seemed to be a sense of success on behalf of the teachers where the students’ reactions and discussions suggested that they had engaged well with the tasks. Some staff should be acknowledged for their efforts at persisting despite having to manage difficult or controversial conversations. Credit must also go to the teachers who took the time to ensure students with Asian heritage were made to feel comfortable, included and valued as part of the negotiation of Asia Literacy.

Considering the four teachers’ practice in total, we can see even from Hugo’s single example, that the subject of English can be an excellent means for students to develop their understanding of Asia and Australia’s Engagement with Asia (AC, 2015). They are all deserving of congratulations for going beyond the possible Year 7 haiku.

Recommendations can be made for teachers who wish to better engage with Asia Literacy in their classroom practice. The link between Asia Literacy and Intercultural Understanding can be made much more explicit in syllabus and professional documentation. This can be done in such a way that teachers are made consciously aware that teaching ‘Asia’ should go beyond reinforcing existing stereotypes through text. As part of this, teachers can also remember to make it explicit in the classroom that texts are only one example of a possible multitude of representations about a people and a place, as indeed Louisa has done.
Teachers may also need to include texts that feature prominently in the Asian culture they are drawn from rather than rely too heavily on what is the most accessible to them.

**Practitioner search for support with Asia Literacy.**

The experience of four teachers at three schools was not intended to be used as a broad generalization about how all Australian English teachers were accessing resources and support. However, there were some commonly expressed elements in how they interacted with the broader educational sector beyond their classroom. Asia Literacy did not seem to be part of a whole school undertaking or priority at any of the three schools and it was largely negotiated by individuals within a faculty. It suggests that the priority of Asia Literacy is not a priority for school administrations who leave the negotiation of this aspect of pedagogy to be undertaken individually.

These individuals expressed different degrees of feeling prepared to negotiate Asia Literacy. None expressed their readiness through their initial training, despite Louisa qualifying to teach after the introduction of the Australian Curriculum (SCSA, 2014a). Some teachers had accessed relevant professional development but two of the conversation partners had not done this and seemed unaware of where to locate or how to access appropriate courses. All teachers expressed a wish for better support information about Asia Literacy, mainly in the form of more accessible annotated text lists that gave suggestions about what texts to use along with accompanying pedagogical resources.
If Asia Literacy is truly to be a priority, then education authorities need to prioritise more professional development about Asia Literacy and publicise it more successfully and widely for existing teachers. It may also need to feature more prominently in teacher education courses for those who are still training. Another recommendation is that teachers will need more explicit assistance in their choice of materials through the provision of easily accessible and user-friendly information about possible text choices.

It is also clear that Asia Literacy is largely silenced in the regulatory professional documentation (AITSL, 2018a). Teachers are not being asked to reflect on their delivery of two of the three priorities in their self-reflection as part of the teacher self-appraisal tool (AITSL, 2018b). Again, if Asia Literacy is to be a priority for teachers, a recommendation is that it needs to be valued by the regulatory authorities who could include it as part of the professional standards for teachers (AITSL, 2018a).

**Policy implementation theory lens.**

Ball’s (1994, 2012) policy implementation theories foregrounded how teachers have a central role in the interpretation of policy as enacted practice. The description of teachers as creative agents of change (2015) reflected the four conversation partners’ roles in how they undertook the negotiation of Asia Literacy. However, Ball’s (2015) concepts also encouraged me to celebrate the work of these four creative teachers. While Hugo may be seen to have done comparatively little in terms of Asia Literacy, he has attempted more than the minimum and his actions are motivated by his desire to focus on the skills he believes the students need. Louisa, Kathryn and Florence’s efforts at negotiating Asia Literacy with
varying levels of faculty support should also be championed as works of creative agents (Ball 2015).

Policy implementation theory as a lens has reinforced and clarified the findings from Grounded Theory (Birks & Mills, 2015) that it is individual teachers, rather than the provision of external and often contradictory documents, that are bringing about the changes that were envisioned in the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008). If we recognise that it is the individual effort and work of the practitioners that brings a policy into its realization, then funding and resources can be better targeted at meeting their needs. The teachers themselves have suggested what would aid their building of confidence and expertise at enacting Asia Literacy. Reflecting on the findings through considering Ball’s (2015) policy implementation theories, suggests a recommendation that efforts by regulatory bodies to aid the negotiation of Asia Literacy in English classrooms must rely less on position statements and more on engagement with directly fostering enacted practice.

**Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model lens.**

Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model (1979, 2004) provides a conduit to highlight the gaps in the educational sector in the process of enacting Asia Literacy. For these four teachers, Asia Literacy as nationally published in the Australian Curriculum (AC, 2015) at the macro level has largely not been supported by other documentation and policy at the macro, and exo level structures of state education authorities and school administrations. It only begins to be considered at the micro level of the individual teacher and their interaction with the closest meso level structure at the faculty level.
Bronfenbrenner’s (1979, 2004) model more sharply brings into focus the findings evolved from Grounded Theory (Birks & Mills, 2015) that better intermediate structures and practices must be established if Asia Literacy is to be prioritized. It champions the efforts of practitioners who are doing much of the work of realising Asia Literacy in a regulatory environment that largely silences it. However, it also suggests, that at least for these four teachers, more effort is needed at whole school and systemic level if the work of these teachers is to be valued and further developed. If Asia Literacy is not part of the compulsory subject content, and teachers perceive their voluntary choices to use Asia related material is not successful or relevant, then what is the future of this cross curriculum ‘priority’?

6.2 Future Research

This research has attempted to explore the issues surrounding the negotiation of Asia Literacy in the English classroom by exploring the practice of four conversation partners. However, further research would be beneficial to explore some of the gaps highlighted in this study. Research that focuses on case studies of individuals could examine what modes and methods of assistance were most effective at developing teacher confidence and efficacy in their delivery of Asia Literacy. Individual case studies could also focus more broadly at how teachers were negotiating the integration of the three-dimensional curriculum. This would allow investigation of how they were processing the intersection of learning area content, general capabilities and cross curriculum priorities.

Future research could also consider how teachers were negotiating Asia Literacy in the public or Catholic sectors to consider what system level initiatives were operating in those domains. Further investigation could also attempt to ascertain how those in rural or remote
locations were undertaking Asia Literacy in the context of the different challenges that those environments can engender.

Salter’s (2014) research considered how school leaders in one site attempted to facilitate Asia Literacy. However, this school publicly self-identified as having “taken a leading role in the region to engage students with Asian culture through its involvement in the AEF Access Asia initiative” (Salter, 2014, p. 147). My study attempted to listen to teachers who were not selected on the basis of their Asia Literacy expertise. It would be useful to go further and develop a broader view of whole institutions, rather than only single teachers, which were also not selected on the basis of their Asia Literacy expertise. In this way, it could allow exploration as to how school leaders at various levels negotiated their role in the fostering of Asia Literacy at an institutional level and explore the enactment of this cross curriculum priority beyond the realm of classroom practice.

The gap between the policy document and enacted classroom practice seen in this study suggests that further research could seek to investigate the role of universities and other organisations in their provision of skills and information to practitioners. While the AEF (2013) produced a discussion paper promoting what should happen to create an Asia capable school education workforce, how this is being enacted in teacher training courses in Australian universities would be worth exploring by listening to the perspective of both the providers and students within these courses. Additionally, how professional development is funded, publicised and delivered to existing practitioners is also worthy of further study. In these ways, it can be explored how Asia Literacy is being prioritized and negotiated by
structures and organisations that are established to support and develop current and future
teachers.

6.3 Final thoughts

I consciously started this journey of the negotiation of Asia Literacy in my own
practice through reflecting on my shortcomings in how I used Mao’s Last Dancer (Cunxin,
2003). However, a side effect of this study has been the change in my own practice of Asia
Literacy. It is by no means mentioned as an exemplar for others to follow and I readily admit
my own lack of knowledge and expertise in Asia Literacy. Yet by the end of this research I
found that I did have the confidence to attempt different sorts of texts that looked at Asian
societies from a non-Western perspective. Aravind Adiga’s (2014) The White Tiger set in
India and Andrea Hirata’s (2014) Laskar Pelangi, Indonesia’s best-selling novel, were two
texts that I used with older students as they prepared for their examinations in the courses
leading to university entry. It was a challenge to use texts that I had never studied, written by
authors I didn’t know, set in places I had never visited and in cultures of which I had little or
no experience. Although there was an absence of external assistance or a regulatory
prerogative in my professional environment I found myself immersed in the literature of
Asia. While not seen as "priority number one" for many English teachers, I would
recommend it as a journey our whole profession should prioritise so the students we teach
can begin to understand and negotiate their position in the world.
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