Navigating the contested terrain of subject English in the New Zealand secondary school curriculum

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education, the University of Auckland, 2024.

Abstract

This research investigates subject English's changing purpose and the complexity of the subject in the secondary school curriculum in New Zealand. The landscape of subject English in New Zealand has undergone substantial changes in the past few decades, particularly with the notable shift from a focus on prescribing specific content in the national curriculum to an emphasis on knowledge that resonates with student experiences. This shift has led to a destabilisation of knowledge within the curriculum, as seen in the 2007 version of The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) (Rozas Gòmez, 2020). This thesis highlights the continuing tension between 'traditionalism' and 'progressivism', specifically focusing on The Refreshed New Zealand Curriculum: Te Mātaiaho (Ministry of Education, 2023b). I employ qualitative directed content analysis as a method through a social realist approach, emphasising the significance of knowledge types and knowledge structures in curricula. I use this theoretical standpoint to explore discourse changes and hypothesise challenges Te Mātaiaho may present for the teaching and learning of subject English. By focusing on the tensions between 'traditionalism' and 'progressivism' in the context of Te Mātaiaho, the research contributes to the broader discourse on curriculum development and educational reform in New Zealand. There are three significant findings in this thesis: Te Mātaiaho predominately features socio-cultural knowledge as opposed to subject-specific knowledge; a process of recontextualisation has created a model of subject English that is aspirational and regulative as it aims to create students who have certain values rather than provide students with academic knowledge (or epistemic knowledge); and the Ministry of Education has given teachers of subject English a complex interpretative task to detect the subject-specific knowledge in Te Mātaiaho which raises concerns about equitable implementation across New Zealand. The findings of this study are expected to provide insights for educators and curriculum developers to inform future strategies for curriculum design and potentially other educational contexts facing similar challenges.

Acknowledgements

This thesis owes its completion to the invaluable support, guidance, and motivation my supervisors, Associate Professor Graham McPhail and Dr Alexis Siteine, provided. Their unwavering assistance, despite their own commitments, involved extensive feedback on numerous drafts, instilling in me the belief that these discoveries held significance even when I struggled to see beyond the data and the challenges of research. Graham, I am grateful for your continuous challenge to critically question my findings throughout my endeavour to complete this thesis, your time, your invaluable sharing of knowledge, and your meticulous proofreading. Alexis, your belief in this project and generous sharing of knowledge, time and experience were instrumental in this undertaking. It has been a great privilege to be under their supervision.

Acknowledgement also goes to my dedicated colleagues whose tireless efforts positively impact students' lives every day. I aspire that this work can contribute to your noble pursuit of serving our students better.

My dedication to delivering exceptional education to my students has been the driving force behind this work. I am indebted to their continual surprises and inspiration—may education continue to empower them, and their endeavours beyond education be triumphant.

Lastly, I extend my deepest gratitude to my partner Nick and my family, whose unwavering support and encouragement have been my pillars throughout this journey. I have experienced various challenges and successes, yet with the support of those mentioned above, I have been able to transform ideas into a tangible achievement that illuminates the accomplishment of my research. This accomplishment is not solely mine but a shared success with all who contributed their time and wisdom.

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1   Introduction

The contested nature of subject English is evident in the many attempts to define what it is. The need to define subject English "is an itch some of us cannot help scratching" (Medway, 2005, p. 19). Medway (2005) highlights the ambiguity of the term "English" within the curriculum, suggesting that it fails to communicate the subject's unique qualities. This lack of clarity leads to multiple interpretations and debates about what constitutes knowledge within the debate, how the subject should be taught, and the overarching purpose and values subject English should uphold.

The subject's place within the curriculum is rife with nuanced layers of argument, such as those proposed by Christie and Macken-Horarik (2009) in *Building Verticality in subject English*. The evolution of education and the various models of English that they describe infer that the purpose of subject English oscillates between purposes such as developing knowledge about the study of canonic texts, studying cultural texts for personal growth, and learning about grammatical structures, semantics, semiotics, phonetics and linguistics. My experience teaching subject English indicates that it is not ideologically neutral; perhaps this is why it is so difficult to define. I propose that it is difficult to define because of its roots in socio-cultural use in everyday life for English speakers. A problem arises when attempting to define what subject English is, as imposing a definition creates the possibility that we may exclude some components and over-emphasise others. For example, is subject English about giving ākonga socio-cultural or subject-specific knowledge, or both?

1.1   Introducing the context

In 2019, the Ministry of Education recognised the need for a new curriculum by instigating a 'Curriculum refresh' process. One reason for the refresh was that The New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) generally did not produce equitable outcomes for all ākonga (Chamberlain et al., 2021). Te Mātaiaho – the draft curriculum document for testing – was released in March 2023 with a revised subject English curriculum. The Ministry of Education claims this document signifies a shift to a "broader definition of what literacy and being literate is" (Ministry of Education, 2022, p. 15). While being literate is vital, studies conducted and funded by the Ministry of Education have suggested that the new curriculum must reflect a bicultural New Zealand (Chamberlain et al., 2021). This thesis takes

'knowledge' as its key area of investigation to ask what types of knowledge are visible in the current New Zealand curriculum re-design: Te Mātaiaho.

The range of perspectives and models presented throughout this thesis are indicative of the continual and ongoing re-evaluation of the complicated tapestry of English in secondary school education. This study aims to provide insight into the ongoing debate surrounding the purpose of the subject by examining sections from the new draft. In my literature review, I use Christie and Macken-Horarik's (2009) models of English to clarify the somewhat elusive nature of the subject, which can essentially be summarised as a dichotomy between 'traditional' and 'progressive' approaches to curriculum and pedagogy.

Despite decades of research, the purpose of subject English continues to be debated among scholars (see Locke, 2007; Rozas Gòmez, 2020; Ward, 2021). The consensus in the literature reviewed in this thesis is that different versions of secondary English have taken precedence at different historical moments. Although there are many studies, the purpose of subject English remains equivocal. The literature encourages the necessity for ongoing debate, and this is evident with the evolving purpose of subject English, particularly in New Zealand as we see a cultural shift in the policy discourse that shapes our curriculum.

1.2   Purpose of the research

Christie and Macken-Horarik's (2009) study on the evolution of subject English suggests a conflict between English as a subject that explores language and English as a subject that explores literature. Christie and Macken-Horarik (2009) also propose a typology that explores the models of English to ascertain the subject's history and the play of ideology in the curriculum. These authors highlight the subject's history to support curriculum developers and encourage teachers to think critically about the constructions of subject English in curriculum and policy documents; their model acts as a critical thinking tool. I have used their typology in this thesis as a starting point to think critically about New Zealand's construction of subject English, focusing on the types of knowledge present in the construction of New Zealand's refreshed curriculum, Te Mātaiaho (see Chapters 4 and 5).

1.3   Rationale

The contested nature of subject English in educational contexts is a multifaceted issue shaped by historical, cultural, and pedagogical factors and is a complex topic to explore. This

research highlights the societal and dispositional aspirations associated with the English curriculum and deepens our understanding of this complex subject.

My identity – as a New Zealand-born, Pākehā, female, millennial, teacher, and researcher – influences the trajectory of this research. As an educator specialising in teaching subject English within New Zealand's high schools, I feel a sense of belonging or 'insider' perspective, granting me a perceived authority to investigate and comment on the purpose of the subject. Acknowledging these identities, I am conscious of their limitations. Although my approach to educational policy as discourse utilising a conceptual approach aims to mitigate bias, my bias inevitably shapes my data gathering and interpretation. To counterbalance these limitations, extensive reading on national and international education systems, as evidenced in my literature review, has been undertaken, as well as robust discussion has been had with my supervisors.

1.4 Research questions

This thesis explores how the discourse surrounding the subject of English has evolved and its impact on developing curriculum documents in New Zealand and the research is guided by the following overarching research question:

- To what extent is specialised subject English knowledge explicitly incorporated into the English learning area in Te Mātaiaho: The Refreshed New Zealand Curriculum?

The above question will be examined through the following sub-questions.

- o What type of knowledge discourse is visible in subject English as proposed in Te Mātaiaho: The Refreshed New Zealand Curriculum?
- o What implications does the extent of knowledge discourse visibility have for implementing subject English curriculum?

1.5   Thesis Outline

This thesis addressed the questions outlined above. Following this introduction, the thesis is divided into five chapters.

- **Chapter 2** presents a review of the literature pertaining to the influences on the English curriculum. This chapter traces the development of and debate around subject English, as well as how it has been framed in educational and political discourses.

- **Chapter 3** presents the research methodology and the research methods.

- **Chapter 4** presents the findings of this study, dividing them into knowledge discourses and concepts.

- **Chapter 5** discusses the research findings by drawing on different explanatory concepts.

- **Chapter 6** brings the thesis to its conclusion. There are three significant findings in this thesis: Te Mātaiaho predominately features socio-cultural knowledge as opposed to subject-specific knowledge; a process of recontextualisation has created a model of subject English that is aspirational and regulative as it aims to create students who have certain values rather than provide students with academic knowledge (or epistemic knowledge); and the Ministry of Education have given teachers of subject English a complex interpretative task to detect the subject-specific knowledge in Te Mātaiaho which raises concerns about equitable implementation across New Zealand.

Having introduced the research project, the thesis will now present a literature review.

2   Literature Review

2.1   Introduction

This study contributes to the research on subject English in the New Zealand curriculum and provides insights into the ongoing debate about the subject's purpose. In this literature review I utilise Christie and Macken-Horarik's (2009) models of English to illuminate the elusive nature of subject English. I conclude by suggesting that most debates can be summarised as essentially dichotomies of 'traditional' and 'progressive' curriculum conceptions that compete for dominance.

2.1.1   Subject English curriculum

English is a big subject that has always been primarily contested and elusive in the school curriculum. The subject of English has historically been a focal point of contention and elusiveness within the school curriculum (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009). This literature review presents an overview of subject English's history, purpose, and contested nature in the secondary school curriculum providing a wider context from which to analyse the current refresh of English in New Zealand. The first section explores the genesis of English as a school subject and gives context to the concepts elaborated in this review, which denote the history and purpose of subject English. This section explores the literature of Locke (2002; 2007; 2010; 2015), Rozas Gòmez (2020), Grace (2017), and Ward (2021) to evaluate the contestation over the evolving purpose of secondary school English in the curriculum in New Zealand. In this section, I include the work of Christie and Macken-Horarik (2009), who, while writing from the perspective of Australia, note the influence of English models in that country, which are also common to the New Zealand context.

Together, this literature suggests there has been a shift from 'traditional' views of the subject which I will term 'progressive'. A functional language study approach represents a 'traditional' view of knowledge in subject English. This refers to the direct teaching of basic skills such as spelling, grammar, syntax, and linguistic practices. This knowledge tends to be taught through rote learning and drill activities, whereas a 'progressive' view takes a student-centred view of pedagogy and content, such as supporting students to become 'meaning-makers' by having input in the content they learn and how they learn it.

'Traditionalism' and 'progressivism' represent two poles on a continuum in which there are many views about what subject English should be and what type of outcomes it should provide for students. Christie and Macken-Horarik (2009) offer a similar perspective to Locke, Ward, Grace, and Rozas Gòmez in identifying that there is tension between 'traditionalism' and 'progressivism'; however, where Christie and Macken-Horarik's work is situated in the Australian context, the work of Locke, Ward, Grace, and Rozas Gòmez is situated in the New Zealand context. I use the literature of these scholars to conceptually evaluate the history and influence of 'traditionalism' and 'progressivism' on subject English. I also draw on Christie and Macken-Horarik's models of English, which are summarised and grouped into the beginning of the two subsections, 'traditional models of English' and 'progressive models of English'. Using Christie and Macken-Horarik's terminology, what I refer to as 'traditional models of English' include basic skills, cultural heritage, and functional language studies, whereas 'progressive' models of English include personal growth and critical literacy.

The second section of the review further addresses the contested nature of the purpose of English in the curriculum in more depth. First, I examine the value shift of subject English in the secondary school curriculum (particularly the 2007 New Zealand Curriculum). Then, I give context to the development and structure of the refreshed New Zealand curriculum, Te Mātaiaho. The literature in this section refers to matters pertaining to value shifts within New Zealand and how the discourse of culturalism intersects with the evolving content and purpose of subject English. This review's final section addresses the gaps in the literature and proposes an area for further research.

2.2   Traditionalism versus Progressivism

In this section, I briefly explore the evolution of subject English drawing on Christie and Macken-Horarik's model of English (2009). Christie and Macken-Horarik (2009) state that the history of subject English currently makes it difficult to define. They do not offer a conclusive definition, but rather, they propose six models that indicate the varied influences on the subject and the various forms it takes (see Table 1). This provides a reference point for my analysis in the thesis.

Literature review

Table 1 *Models of English (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009)*

	Basic Skills	**Cultural Heritage**	**Personal Growth**	**Functional Language Studies**	**Cultural Analysis/ Multiliteracies**	**New Literacy Studies**
Object of study	Language as spelling, phonics, sentence grammar (focus on language parts)	Language as Art and civilising cultural artefact (focus on whole literacy texts)	Language as instrument of self-expression (focus on self using language)	Language as system and as text: register and genre (focus on language variety)	Language as infinite number of texts (focus on language-related cultural practices	Language as 'situated' in diverse literary events and modes (focus on difference)
Semiotic practices	Mastery of discrete language skills	Language of artistic and symbolic control	Language as personal self-expression	Language for engagement with texts in contexts	Language for critique and subversion	Language for localised events and modes of exchanges
Gaze	The ideal knower is accurate in standard written expression	The ideal knower values and admires the literary canon	The ideal knower values the self in writing as a journey of personal discovery and who responds sensitively to texts, literary and non-literary	The ideal knower recognises language as a system and text and uses this knowledge to write texts and to evaluate those read	The ideal knower values and practices critique of texts	The ideal knower celebrates differences between texts

The next section elaborates on 'traditional' and 'progressive' models of subject English to understand more thoroughly the subject's genesis.

2.3   A Traditional Model of English

'Traditionalism' in education embodies an approach that upholds teaching techniques, curriculum, and values by focusing on maintaining established knowledge and teacher-centred pedagogy within the classroom. A 'traditional' approach prioritises structured classrooms, teacher-led instruction, and memorisation of facts. Educationalists who advocate for 'traditionalism' emphasise that this approach has the potential to instil foundational knowledge and discipline. At the same time, critics point out potential drawbacks in nurturing critical thinking and adaptability to contemporary challenges. The 'traditional' models of English (basic skills, cultural heritage, and functional language studies) are summarised and grouped below.

2.3.1 Basic skills

The basic skills model refers to subject English as a response to the educational needs of marginalised populations in the nineteenth century (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009). Initially, when the subject emerged in the curriculum, it adopted the basic skills model, which focused on developing students' fluency and understanding of common forms of language. This conception of the subject included grammar and spelling to improve citizens' capacities to read and write. Basic skills development became a significant part of subject English, which derived from the need to instil basic literacy competence in citizens of colonial countries and at 'home' in England (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009). This involved drill and rote learning pedagogic approaches for basic skills content. This model of subject English brought a degree of social governance to the children of the lower classes as curriculum policy regularised and dictated the basic skills citizens needed to participate in society. Further, the teaching and learning of basic skills paved the way for creating and reinforcing social order. In the nineteenth century as students were taught grammatical content through rote learning in the hopes of cultivating literate citizens who could use their basic literacy to participate in religion and realise their civic responsibilities (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009).

In terms of 'traditional' basic skills in subject English, Snook (1989) notes that "'basic' is not a neutral term: it is a value judgement about what is important" (p. 226). A 'traditional' view of subject English suggests that visible knowledge, such as basic skills, is what is valuable. A 'traditional' model of English infers that subject English's purpose is the acquisition of discrete language skills, which is evident in models such as basic skills and functional language studies. This approach was seen as a tool to assist with building a national identity by instilling the content required to master linguistic skills such as reading and writing. Being proficient in these skills was seen as fundamental to a nation's economic success (Grace, 2017; Ward, 2021).

2.3.2 Cultural heritage

As the twentieth century progressed, Christie and Macken-Horarik (2009) argue that subject English underwent a paradigm shift from the basic skills model towards what they term a twentieth-century cultural heritage model. This model of English finds its roots in the influential ideas of figures like Matthew Arnold (1896), a poet and school inspector who believed that exposure to 'great' literature held a civilising potential, and F.R. Leavis (1933;

1934; 1965), a literary critic who believed that exposure to 'great' literature could impart universal truths. Arnold thought texts were powerful tools that could evoke social order. Arnold's philosophy that texts held a civilising influence inferred that texts promote social regulation of classes and contribute to creating the social stratification he thought society required to be successful (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009).

Similarly, Leavis (1933; 1934; 1965) believed the function of English was teaching close reading of texts to foster sensibility and awareness of culture. This construction aligns subject English with the study of canonical literature, viewing it as a repository of cultural and literary heritage. This model emphasised the transformative power of literature and culminated in highlighting 'great' literature's capacity to influence all citizens through canonical literature, positioning canonical literature as a tool for developing citizens who conform to the binds of social stratification (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009). Although this approach was available to all students, the ability or inability to understand 'great' literature created a divide between the 'can' and 'cannot' (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009).

The 'traditional' cultural heritage model dominated subject English policy in New Zealand in the early twentieth century (Ward, 2021). New Zealand children were to learn English culture through literature and to speak with received pronunciation – the most formal and prestigious form of spoken English – despite their antipodean location (Ward, 2021). A 'traditional' view of the cultural heritage model is that the purpose of English as a subject is to acquire cultural knowledge, subsuming literature as a means to an end rather than an entity (Rozas Gòmez, 2020). In this model, literature provides access to a higher purpose, such as creating sensibility amongst citizens, rather than the text existing purely as a piece of literature. While the cultural heritage model was meant to provide all students with the same language and skills, it has been widely criticised as privileging middle-class language and culture through canonical texts determined by policymakers (Clark, 2001). The dominant content of the curriculum was viewed as a study of a 'traditional' body of literature or a canon of esteemed works such as Shakespeare, Chaucer, and Keats (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009). Locke (2010) identified a concern with canonical literature, namely, the question of who determines what constitutes as a canonical text? If the answer is a powerful social elite or policy developers, the canon can become oppressive and irrelevant to other groups (Locke, 2010, p. 90). Despite these concerns, this model persists, supported by those who argue that subject English is important for fostering a certain national identity.

2.3.3   Functional language studies

In the late twentieth-century, a model of functional language studies was developed that emphasised language's socio-cultural functions. Christie and Macken-Horarik (2009) state that Halliday's *Introduction to Functional Grammar,* published in 1985, significantly impacted the construction and implementation of this model of English. Unlike other models, such as cultural heritage, Christie and Macken-Horarik (2009) state that this model revisited the value of teaching explicit knowledge about language from the basic skills model. However, a divergence from the basic skills model involved content focused on how language works in texts rather than content on language in isolation to texts to master discrete reading, written, and verbal skills. Unlike basic skills, this model recognised that subject English equips students with an informed understanding of language systems beyond grammar. Students use language to decipher the meanings and perspectives in a text rather than only learning about language to increase basic proficiency in reading, speaking, and writing. This model indicates that the awareness of grammatical structures in speech and writing determines a student's success in subject English. This model's ideal pedagogic subject position reveals a shift from that of the basic skills model. The prerogative of the functional language studies model is to develop students' linguistic capabilities by analysing and critiquing the texts that highlight language's power rather than solely developing a student's competence in grammar and spelling through rote learning. Literature lurks in the foundations of this model but with a focus on a text creator's language choices and grammatical structures in texts rather than a student-centred approach, which emphasises the student as a meaning-maker. This differs from the personal growth model (outlined below), which advocated for the text as a tool for personal empowerment and rejected explicit language teaching. Instead, this model shows a re-emergence of the importance of critiquing and understanding the effects of language construction in literature, which was absent from the cultural heritage and personal growth models.

The functional language studies model extends beyond mere analytical importance; it embraces language as a subject of study for teaching and learning rather than as a tool that develops basic competence in written and spoken English that is prominent in the preceding basic skills model (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009). In this functional language approach, language is regarded as a social semiotic intricately involved in structuring human experiences, as it is through language that people develop their interpretation of the world. Teaching systemic functional grammar can enrich discourse within subject English,

nurturing a deeper understanding of the intricate relationships between language, texts and meaning (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009). Functional language can reinvigorate subject English education by offering new perspectives and lenses through which the subject can be observed, rendering the purpose of subject English what Christie and Macken-Horarik (2009) state is more visible and robust. This perspective can strengthen the discipline and may pave the way for a deeper exploration of the role of language in communication and meaning-making (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009).

2.3.4 Summary

A 'traditional' model, such as basic skills, lacks focus on decoding texts and focuses on an instrumentalist approach of developing specific skills for the benefit of the economy and as a means for social governance (Rozas Gòmez, 2020; Locke, 2007; Medway, 2005). Critiques of the 'traditional' model of subject English have arisen, suggesting that a focus on basic skills may lead to neglecting critical thinking and deeper engagement with texts (Rozas Gòmez, 2020). Critics argue that literacy skills, while essential, need to be developed within the context of meaningful knowledge acquisition (Grace, 2017). According to Rata (2015; Lynch & Rata, 2018), meaningful knowledge acquisition provides disadvantaged social groups with powerful conceptual knowledge that can empower students rather than substitute students' everyday knowledge for academic knowledge (Grace, 2017). Elements of a 'traditional' model of subject English – such as focusing on linguistic and grammatical content – serve as a tool to empower students beyond their own experiences (Grace, 2017). Ward (2021) also suggests that 'traditional' skills content serves as the foundation for broader learning across curriculum subjects. While there is a recent revival in the need for teaching basic skills, Ward (2021), Locke (2000; 2005; 2007), and Rozas Gòmez (2020) argue that it should not be at the expense of comprehension and expression through both language and literature curriculum content.

The 'traditional' model of subject English rooted in providing cheap, efficient education for the working classes raises "questions about whether this model is appropriate to equip all students to be successful in the twenty-first century" (Ward, 2021, p. 51). This overview of the literature suggests that the basic skills model is ineffective because of the goal of conformity through the acquisition of basic skills; if anything, the literature stipulates that the need for social governance through basic skills content hinders higher-order thinking.

2.4   A Progressive Model of English

Progressivism is an educational movement initially most influenced in the twentieth century by the educational theorist John Dewey (1938). As a philosophy, progressivism provides a framework that educators and institutions can interpret and apply in various ways, allowing for diversity in teaching methods while emphasising core values such as learner-centred approaches, critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Progressivism is rooted in the belief that education should focus on the needs and interests of individual students by encouraging them to explore and engage with their environment (Muller, 2001). At its core, progressivism is a set of beliefs and principles guiding educational practices. As a theory, like social constructivism, progressivism maintains a view that learning occurs through social interaction, for example, constructing knowledge through collaborative group efforts.

The 'progressive' paradigm – personal growth and critical literacy – evolved in response to the changing socio-cultural and educational landscapes. The notion that grammar has a limited impact on student writing quality paved the way for an ideological shift in the purpose of subject English from 'traditionalism' to 'progressivism'. A 'progressive' model of English is "concerned with the individual growth of each student" (Locke, 2015, p. 209). Further, a 'progressive' ideology questions the efficacy of grammar in developing critical and global citizens (Locke, 2015). The absence of explicit grammar instruction in The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) (Ministry of Education, 2007, see 2.6.1 below) reflects a general marginalisation of 'grammar teaching' and explicit knowledge about language in favour of personal growth and students' personal language choices (Rozas Gòmez, 2020; Locke, 2002; Locke, 2015).

More recently, since the 1970s, the definition of subject English in the 'progressive' paradigm has been intertwined with discourses as various ideologies – culturalism and social constructivism – profoundly influence its purpose and development in the school curriculum (Locke, 2002). As indicated later, culturalism is the underlying belief system in this 'progressive' model of subject English in the refresh as it emphasises the role of culture as an organising force in society and, therefore, in the curriculum. Culture is defined by Spencer-Oatey (2008) as a "fuzzy" set of collective beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviours shared by a group of people; these shared elements shape how individuals in a group perceive and interact with the world around them (p. 2). Social constructivism is a theory about knowledge, specifically, 'what we learn' (discussed further in the personal growth

section). The way in which these discourses are intertwined with the purpose of subject English is elaborated on in the models of English relevant to the influence of each ideology.

The 'progressive' models of English – personal growth and critical literacy – are summarised below.

2.4.1 Personal growth

Christie and Macken-Horarik (2009) suggest that the personal growth model gained traction in the United Kingdom post-World War II. The personal growth model prioritises individual language development while de-emphasising direct language instruction. 'Progressive' approaches in subject English challenge 'traditional' models, such as basic skills and functional language, which view explicit language knowledge as a tool for thinking beyond personal experiences (Halliday, 1985; Grace, 2017). Instead, in the personal growth model, subject English is regarded as a vehicle for learner empowerment by fostering personal discovery and students "use [of] their 'own' language for self-expression" (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009, p. 162). In related 'progressive' models of subject English, this focus on the learner is also known as 'pupil-centredness', 'learner empowerment', and more recently, a focus on the students, as referred to by Mutch (2017), is believed to be realised through a pedagogy of 'inquiry learning'.

In these 'progressive' models, the student uses their interpretations of the language in a text to negotiate and produce meaning. The underlying theory that influences this 'progressive' approach is social constructivism. McPhail (2017) argues that there is a central misunderstanding within social constructivism around distinguishing between two types of constructivism—psychological and social. Psychological constructivism refers to how students learn as individuals (and 'construct' their own versions of knowledge they encounter), whereas social constructivism refers to how and what knowledge is constructed in the world collectively and handed down. Where the two types become confused, teachers can misunderstand and expect students to 'construct' knowledge on their own in pedagogies with minimal guidance (Kirschner et al., 2006). In turn, this distinction relates to misunderstanding categories of knowledge and their different affordances for education: everyday knowledge (social and cultural knowledge) and academic subject-specific knowledge (McPhail, 2017, p. 30). This differentiation pertains to the contrast between knowledge that is systematically organised and acquired through structured teaching, such as in subjects like Mathematics, versus knowledge obtained through personal experience,

"like recognising family members, riding a bicycle, or driving a car" (McPhail, 2017, p. 30). Another result of the misunderstandings surrounding the concept of constructivism is the idea that humans can construct knowledge, which can be imperfect and based more on personal views than facts. As a result, knowledge can be viewed as equally valuable, a concept known as 'relativism' (McPhail, 2017). In education, this idea suggests that students' everyday knowledge "is important not only for boosting their self-esteem but also as a source of knowledge content for the curriculum" (McPhail, 2017, p. 31). In placing the student at the centre of the encounter with language, this progressivism positions students as meaning-makers and teachers more as guides. The 'progressive' personal growth model presents a very different purpose for subject English from 'traditional' models—such as basic skills, cultural heritage, and functional language studies. This view is that language is a tool that paves the way for exploring diverse ideas and perspectives about the world as it emphasises students as "meaning-makers" who actively negotiate and generate their own meaning from texts (Rozas Gòmez, 2020, p. 35).

The personal growth model of subject English in the mid-twentieth century epitomises a 'progressive' approach wherein students embark on a personal journey of discovery by constructing knowledge that is thought to be relevant to their everyday experiences. This idea diminishes the emphasis on 'traditional' knowledge, such as literature, and skills such as spelling, grammar, and reading, in favour of a 'progressive' curriculum aimed at constructing a student's personal or cultural identity (Siteine, 2018). While this approach advocates for personal empowerment and autonomy, Christie and Macken-Horarik (2009) suggest it may disadvantage students who lack the basic skills and knowledge from 'traditional' models of English.

As personal growth models of English gained traction, early 'progressive' scholars such as Dixon (1967) thought teaching grammar to be redundant and outdated as narrative knowledge became more explicit. The importance of explicit language instruction is a polarising view in 'progressive' paradigms, as teaching grammar is said to prevent students from using their 'own' language for self-expression and personal discovery. Ward (2021) states that deeming grammar redundant and outdated in a personal growth model means disadvantaged students may not have access to the powerful knowledge[1] required for higher education and professional careers, entrenching class inequalities (Gibbons, 2014). Rata

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[1] *Powerful knowledge*, as coined by Wheelahan (2007), refers to knowledge that is considered valuable because of its distinction from everyday experience, its specialist nature, its systematic structure, and its generalisability. I explain this further in Chapter 3.

(2015) argues that it is necessary to develop skills and powerful knowledge that "transcend the limits of culture" (p. 115). By assuming students have a tacit understanding of skills such as grammar, Rata (2015) suggests that political ideology favouring students as 'meaning-makers' undermines the importance of 'traditional' knowledge in curriculum development. This lack of 'traditional' knowledge – such as explicit knowledge about language content – disadvantages students who may yet possess the basic skills to develop 'progressive' knowledge, such as becoming critical 'meaning-makers' and understanding diverse perspectives beyond their own cultures, as students do not have the tools to "transcend the limits of culture" (Rata, 2015, p. 115).

2.4.2   Cultural analysis - Critical literacy

As scholars use both the terms cultural analysis (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009) and critical literacy (Locke, 2002 Locke, 2007; Rozas Gòmez, 2020), for ease of understanding, I will henceforth refer to this branch of progressivism as critical literacy.

In the late twentieth century, a critical analysis model emerged that favoured multiple readings of texts, particularly encouraging developing awareness of and enabling critique of dominant discourses and perspectives present in language (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009). Unlike the cultural heritage model, this model shuns the literary canon in favour of multimedia texts (e.g., film, graphic novels, speech, static images); this is viewed as a postmodern approach to subject English (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009). Postmodernists' approach is to question how traditions and popular culture texts can be valorised as literary texts. This model provides students a range of texts to analyse, allowing them to engage critically with a variety of cultural values and ideologies presented within the texts.

This influential critical literacy model has made its mark in New Zealand's secondary English education in that it enables teachers to "address the literacy needs of their culturally diverse classrooms" (Locke, 2007, p. 96). Due to a focus on multimodality, this model downplays the significance of a 'traditional' language model and suggests that functional grammar is redundant (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009). Multimodality refers to the communication practice in which modes such as textual, aural, linguistic, spatial, and visual resources create a message. The variety of text types is dominant to emphasise this model's central purpose: to evoke an understanding of the diversity of literacy practices such as media, digital, and critical literacy.

A critique of this model suggests it can fail to make available the tools students need to be successful users of English in favour of their *personal responses* to the cultural ideology and values presented in the text (Grace, 2017). The critical literacy model rejects the inclusion of the tools students need to analyse language and develop their linguistic skills; students are expected to have acquired these skills naturally (Grace, 2017). For example, Locke (2010) found that a gap in explicit knowledge about language content persists in schooled English when conducting multiple readings of a text, particularly in writing about the readings, where the 'traditional' label 'writing' has been replaced by a more 'progressive' label of 'creating' (Locke, 2010). The critical literacy model lacks focus on writing and grammatical skills in favour of reading and 'progressive' ideology. An issue that Christie and Macken-Horarik (2009) emphasise is that this shift towards students as 'meaning-makers' and 'meaning-creators' overlooks the 'traditional' linguistic skills vital to promoting higher-order thinking in which students can become critically savvy as they comprehend and interpret visual and verbal texts. A 'progressive' approach to the subject of English, such as critical literacy, supposes students use their experiences to become 'meaning-makers' (Rozas Gòmez, 2020). With the 'progressive' paradigm's objective to create 'meaning-makers', it is difficult to understand how a 'progressive' model empowers students to see "beyond their everyday lives" if they draw only from their own experiences to make interpretations (Rozas Gòmez, 2020, p. 36).

2.4.3 Summary

The subject English curriculum acts as a conduit for intellectual growth and empowerment by integrating elements of 'traditional' and 'progressive' models of English to continuously evolve to align with societal needs and aspirations. In the context of the 'traditional' models of English, the purpose of subject English is to foster literary analysis and language skills. In the context of the 'progressive' subject English models, the purpose of subject English transcends 'traditional' literary analysis and language skills; it embraces cultural richness, social awareness, and the ability to engage with diverse perspectives through the analysis of texts. However, what 'progressive' models of English tend to overlook is the notion that students need explicit knowledge about language, such as grammar, to become effective 'meaning-makers', successfully become socially aware and engage with and critique diverse perspectives. A 'progressive' approach allows students to uncover embedded interests and ideologies, thus understanding how texts construct versions of reality; however, students

need the linguistic and analytic tools from 'traditional' models of subject English before they can become 'critical' readers and well-versed in uncovering embedded ideologies in texts (Locke, 2015).

The next section shifts from a review of models of English to a review of literature about curriculum reform.

2.5   Curriculum

Before addressing New Zealand's curriculum refresh, it is important to note that curriculum is not neutral; it is acknowledged as a means to shape social and economic outcomes (Apple, 1979). This section explores the research of various writers – Locke (2002; 2007; 2010; 2015), Ward (2021), and Rozas Gòmez (2020) – within the discourse on subject English education in New Zealand to give an overview of the curriculum debate and provide context for the curriculum refresh. Michael Apple (1979), a globally influential figure in debates about curriculum, urges for a critical examination of educational content, its origins, whose perspectives are represented, and the societal groups it benefits. Even though Apple's (1979) ideas were expressed decades ago, his inquiries into what knowledge is taught, whose knowledge is privileged, and whose interests it serves remain pertinent in New Zealand today. These concerns around the nature of curriculum, its origins, and whose interests it serves to hold particular significance in New Zealand, given persistent worries about significant disparities in educational attainment (Mutch & Tatebe, 2017; Chamberlain et al., 2021) and previous curriculum policy in New Zealand (Locke, 2002; 2007; 2010; 2015; Ward, 2021; Rozas Gòmez, 2020). These researchers emphasise the critical need to acknowledge that the educational material, knowledge, and skills being taught are not neutral (Rozas Gòmez, 2020).

2.6   The 2007 New Zealand Curriculum

The introduction of The New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) aimed to align our education system with the perceived rapid changes in the global social and economic landscape (Rozas Gòmez, 2020). The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) was structured to prioritise school autonomy and integration with the world outside the educational sphere through the acquisition of transferable generic skills (Rozas Gòmez, 2020). This curriculum was founded on constructivist learning methods and student-centred

teaching philosophies, along with a vision statement outlining the societal objectives of education (Johnston, Hipkins & Sheehan, 2017).

An emerging trend in the 'progressive' curriculum field is the expectation that subject English plays a pivotal role in developing critical and global citizens; this is a notable theme in subject English curriculum development, particularly in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century, recognised by scholars such as Locke (2002; 2015) and Rozas Gòmez (2020). According to Locke (2007; 2010; 2015) and Rozas Gòmez (2020), the social vision of The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) is to foster global and critical citizens and students who are actively involved in society; however, both scholars suggest that the curriculum offers insufficient detail about the content knowledge which enables this form of citizenship to be developed. While "literature" is still an object of study in The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC), there is a lack of specificity about the explicit knowledge about language needed to become a critical and a global citizen as grammar, for example, is "minimally referred to" (Locke, 2015, p. 209).

According to scholars, the issue of a lack of congruence in terms of what the purpose of subject English is lies in the fact that the term 'texts' can be interpreted differently in The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC). This lack of congruence means students across New Zealand have unequal access to powerful knowledge through texts, which can increase their cultural capital (Rozas Gòmez, 2020; Locke, 2010). Cultural capital, a term coined by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1977), encapsulates the accumulation of skills, knowledge, values, and behaviours to reveal one's cultural competence or social status. Ultimately, the lack of congruence with the purpose of subject English is to the detriment of students having access to the powerful knowledge which Rata (2015) refers to as essential for being extended beyond the one's culture. Further, there is a lack of agreement on what literature and language empower students when subject English knowledge is being constructed in and with the curriculum. Rozas Gòmez (2020) reflects this sentiment by stating that The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) "offers insufficient direction in terms of what content should be taught" (p. 67). What is missing from The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) is the emphasis on developing critical literacy (Rozas Gòmez, 2020) by giving students access to powerful knowledge, such as teaching explicit knowledge about language.

In the next section, I outline the framework of the Te Mātaiaho curriculum and give an overview of the research conducted by Wood and Aitken (2023), who were commissioned to explain why a curriculum refresh was needed (see section 2.6.2 below).

2.6.1   A refreshed curriculum

The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) garnered substantial support in schools; however, concerns emerged regarding its 'openness' and lack of specific guidance on content selection (Wood & Aitken, 2023). By 2019, the Curriculum, Progress, and Achievement Ministerial Advisory Group highlighted worries about inconsistent coverage of essential learning areas within the curriculum (Wood & Aitken, 2023). The Advisory Group also noted a lack of clarity regarding the learning all students should receive, resulting in unequal access to diverse learning areas within The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) (Wood & Aitken, 2023). Concerns were also raised about the inadequate recognition of mātauranga Māori knowledge within the curriculum, despite the significance of the Treaty of Waitangi and schools' apparent obligation to incorporate Māori perspectives into their plans and policies (Wood & Aitken, 2023).

The emphasis on competencies and skills, initially outlined in DeSeCo (OECD, 2005) and adopted in The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC), was reconsidered in light of the OECD Learning Compass 2030 (see OECD, 2018), suggesting a re-evaluation towards disciplinary knowledge (Wood & Aitken, 2023). Consequently, by 2019, there was significant momentum to address these weaknesses in The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) (Wood & Aitken, 2023). A task force was established to provide initial guidance on enhancing curriculum coherence, integrating procedural and substantive knowledge, identifying essential learning, and emphasising student progression (Wood & Aitken, 2023). This resulted in an Understand–Know–Do model to outline the 'learning that cannot be left to chance' (Wood & Aitken, 2023).

The initial proposal in 2019 suggested that the Te Mātaiaho curriculum should clearly outline the "learning that cannot be left to chance" (Ministry of Education, 2021), implying that the previous curriculum did leave too much to chance. In 2022, the phrase "learning that cannot be left to chance" changed to the "learning that matters", referring to the progress outcomes students are expected to meet in each learning area of Te Mātaiaho (see figure below).

Literature review
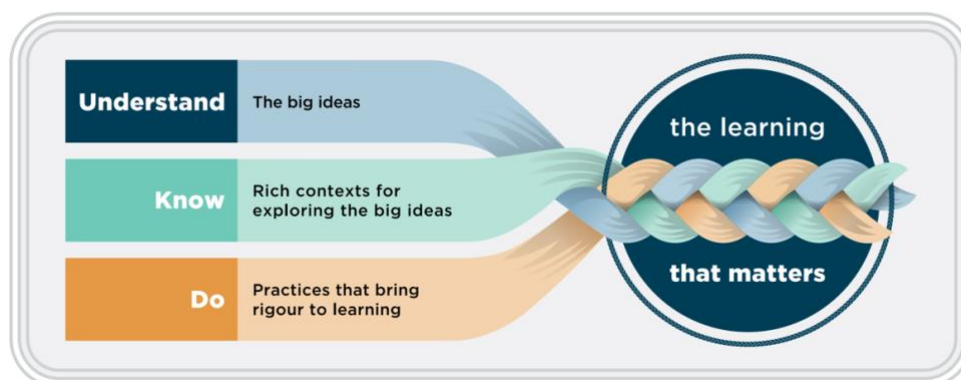
According to Wood and Aitken (2023), the model from the British Columbia Curriculum introduced in 2018, known as the Know–Do–Understand framework, follows a concept-based approach to learning driven by competencies—and this had a significant impact on the framework of the Te Mātaiaho document. The British Columbia Curriculum model emphasises the integration of Content (Know), Curricular Competencies (Do), and Big Ideas (Understand) in an attempt to facilitate more profound learning experiences (Wood & Aitken, 2023). These concepts shaped New Zealand's Understand–Know–Do model, albeit with some alterations in the interpretation and definitions of these terms.

Every learning area of Te Mātaiaho has a purpose statement and overview of the structuring of content using the Understand–Know–Do framework. The framework is outlined as follows by the Ministry of Education (2023b):

i. *Understand (The 'big ideas')* – "At the heart of each learning area is a unique set of big enduring ideas that all ākonga can relate to and access" (p. 23). Big ideas are the subject or socio-concepts which can be linked to a learning area.

ii. *Know (Context)* – "Contexts enable the illumination of these big ideas and bring them to life". (p. 23)

iii. *Do (Practices)* – "Ākonga develop practices that enable them to think and act as 'experts' within each learning area and across the learning areas (e.g., as an artist, a social scientist, or a storyteller)". (p. 23)

Each part of Understand–Know–Do framework is designed to weave together to form "the learning that matters" (Ministry of Education, 2023a p. 23). The concepts in the Understand section are designed to guide the key focus of chosen topics and to add substance to the 'big ideas'. Wiggins and McTighe (2005) state that a framework structured around

'big ideas' combines "a cluster of ideas that are more than facts, definitions or concepts" (p. 6). Further, big ideas can "provide an organising framework for curriculum design and pedagogy by providing the 'conceptual velcro' of a topic by bridging discrete knowledge and skills to form a larger intellectual frame" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 6).

The Ministry of Education (2023a) suggest that the 'big ideas' provide insight into the "learning that matters" and underpins the Understand–Know–Do framework (p. 5). Then, to make the 'big ideas' practical and to demonstrate their knowledge (Know), students are to employ various methods and strategies (the Do) to demonstrate their knowledge and what they understand (Ministry of Education, 2023a). As students deepen their knowledge, it is claimed that the Understand–Know–Do framework enhances their grasp of fundamental concepts and refines their application of methods. This framework aims to allow students to leverage this learning to gradually explore more intricate subject matters as they progress through school (Wood & Aitken, 2023).

2.6.1.1 *Understand–Know–Do in subject English.*

The Ministry of Education states that the subject English learning area is to develop students "understanding of big ideas as they employ the practices of English to interpret and create texts. In doing so, they both draw upon and further develop their knowledge" (Ministry of Education, September 2023a, p. 2). The Te Mātaiaho curriculum document states that:

> *Much of the learning in English is iterative and recursive; throughout the schooling pathway, all students continue to build on the knowledge and practices that they develop in the early phases of the curriculum. This means that it is important for teachers to refer to earlier progress outcomes when designing learning experiences and to provide students with opportunities to revisit learning over time.* (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 2)

The subject English learning area, as with all learning areas in the refreshed document, is expected to utilise what is termed the 'Understand–Know–Do' model of learning, which aspires to evoke a continuous and cumulative learning process where students can progressively advance their understanding and application of concepts and skills throughout their educational journey (see Ministry of Education, 2023b, p. 18). In Chapter 4, I look in more detail at sections of the draft subject English curriculum to consider what models of thought, philosophies, and approaches, as outlined in this literature review, are present in the draft document.

2.6.2   Summary

The literature reviewed here suggests that this definition is often contested in 'traditional' and 'progressive' paradigms as the subject often falls victim to being politicised and reconceptualised by policymakers to fit the social vision of the "government of the day" (Whitehead, 2007, p. 161). However, as Christie and Macken-Horarik (2009) argue, the lack of functional language teaching in 'progressive' models means the acquisition of the skills needed to make meaning from texts is often left to chance. Locke (2007) agrees with this point when he acknowledges that explicit language instruction, such as grammar, has disappeared from the classroom, meaning texts are not as effective as they could be in providing windows into different places, times, and cultures. This further infers that 'progressive' models view the language skills of 'traditional' models as a human instinct, meaning humans are supposedly born with an encoded blueprint of linguistic knowledge (Rozas Gòmez, 2020). The notion that humans are encoded with a blueprint of linguistic knowledge is an area that warrants further investigation in the New Zealand curriculum; in particular, what types of knowledge are visible in the current curriculum design cosmos.

3   Methodology

3.1   Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology used in this research project. Fairclough (2010) defines methodology as more than a description of data gathering and analysis; it is a theoretical process that constructs "an object of research" by integrating relevant theoretical perspectives and frameworks (p. 225). As such, this chapter situates the research methodology within the realist paradigm, which assumes that "reality exists independently of our perceptions of it" (Khanna, 2019, p. 152), and utilises a qualitative approach to data analysis.

In light of this understanding, the chapter begins by outlining the "object of research" (Fairclough, 2010, p. 225); this is the visibility of types of knowledge of subject English within New Zealand's refreshed curriculum and the discourse that shapes this knowledge. The second section describes the philosophical framework, and positions the research within a realist paradigm. In this paradigm, concepts serve as analytical tools to explain the object of research. The following section outlines the qualitative design and strategies used for collecting, recording, and analysing data. Finally, ethical considerations, as well as validity and reliability, are addressed.

3.1.1   The object of the research and its context

The object of research refers to subject English in the refreshed New Zealand curriculum and its associated discourses. The intention of examining the discourse of subject English in the curriculum means not simply accepting that which appears to be obvious about the refreshed curriculum policy but using methods to reveal the socio-concepts (such as progressivism, constructivism, and culturalism) which inform the current subject English discourse. The object of research warrants further investigation because of the contested nature of subject English and what constitutes as specialised subject English knowledge (Rozas Gòmez, 2020). Social realists suggest that subject knowledge refers to the specialised and systemised knowledge in a particular area or field (Young & Muller, 2013). In subject English, this encompasses a variety of areas such as literature, writing, grammar, or specific literary genres. Recent curriculum trends have conflated this notion of specialised subject knowledge with progressivism relativism, such as reducing academic knowledge instead of socio-cultural

knowledge or everyday knowledge (McPhail et al., 2023). Socio-cultural knowledge refers to understanding the interconnectedness between society and culture, which includes grasping the customs, traditions, values, and behaviours within a specific society or across cultures. This type of knowledge involves acknowledging and valuing societal diversity, history, and politics. Social realists argue that socio-cultural knowledge lacks the affordances of systemised disciplinary knowledge and that socio-cultural knowledge is insufficient alone to enable students to think critically about society and culture (see Young & Muller, 2013).

At the heart of this research is an analysis focused on sections of the subject English learning area proposed in Te Mātaiaho. These sections are: '*Purpose statement for English*', '*Overview of English*', '*Phase 4 years 9 and 10 progress outcomes by the end of Year 10*'. The pre-existing concepts of 'progressive' and 'traditional' models of English are used to analyse and theorise the empirically obtained findings drawn from data analysis. In line with a realist methodology outlined below, several disciplinary concepts are used as explanatory tools to explain what I found in the data and the concepts (e.g., McPhail & Lourie, 2017). The concepts that have particular relevance include Basil Bernstein's work on knowledge differentiation, such as: Bernstein's (2000) recontextualisation, and knowledge discourses and knowledge types. I also refer to Michael Young's (2008a; 2008b) 'powerful knowledge' to support the discussion on knowledge differentiation.

3.1.2   *A realist ontology*

A realist ontological approach posits that there is an objective reality that exists independently of our perceptions and it is "founded on the belief in a world that exists independently from our knowledge of it" (McPhail & Lourie, 2017, p.2). This ontology emphasises the notion that our knowledge of the world is an attempt to understand and describe a pre-existing reality rather than to construct it. In this qualitative approach, I utilise a realist ontology that typically starts by considering the descriptions provided by individuals as a fundamental aspect of comprehending the phenomenon being studied and then emphasises the significance of using concepts to enable a deeper understanding of empirical data (McPhail & Lourie, 2017). A realist qualitative research design proves effective for this study, as it allows mapping components that influence subject English reality, spelling out the relevant objects, structures, mechanisms, and conditions that influence the discourses surrounding subject English curriculum (Hoddy, 2018, p. 112).

I draw on concepts about knowledge from the social realist paradigm, which suggests that entities may exist independent of our awareness of them and how reality is relative to how we subjectively perceive it (Khanna, 2019). Social realism aims to analyse observable social realities, often focusing on empirical data, but more importantly, with a focus on *explanation*, on the often unseen causal mechanisms at work 'behind the scenes' (Moore, 2007). Social realists argue that the most significant form of educational inequality is the lack of access to knowledge (Rata, 2015). In line with this argument, the literature reviewed previously indicates that there needs to be a greater consensus regarding the nature of the content knowledge needed to foster both personal and critical development in the subject English curriculum. Using a realist lens allowed me to consider the phenomena circulating subject English curriculum by considering concepts such as knowledge structures, knowledge types, knowledge discourses, and the underlying mechanisms (e.g., ideological influences) reflected in the content of the Te Mātaiaho curriculum document. The social realist research approach allowed for linking data and theory, which uncovered the underlying concepts that inform the Te Mātaiaho curriculum policy document.

A realist lens, combined with directed content analysis, brings understanding to how and why the purpose of English is socially produced while also related to fundamental causal mechanisms that may not be possible to ignore (e.g., the epistemic structure of English as a subject). Further, analysing documents through content analysis supports the semantic and latent coding of the Te Mātaiaho document to bring to the surface the changing landscape of subject English by investigating the various interacting factors in the complex curriculum system.

As the interpreter of data in the Te Mātaiaho document, I have outlined the analysis process rigorously and as transparently as possible by justifying my approaches within the realist paradigm.

3.1.3   Conceptual methodology

In line with the realist ontology, this research adopts a conceptual methodology derived from realist and social realist concepts. A conceptual methodology employs disciplinary concepts to critically analyse and evaluate findings from an empirical study (Sankey & Nola, 2007). Realism recognises the importance of acknowledging disciplinary concepts, both in studying the world and in understanding it (see McPhail, Ormond, & Siteine, 2023). This method involved choosing concepts from the literature that then offer 'best fit' conceptual tools for

analysing and explaining the findings in the data. The various models of English from the literature are positioned as concepts within 'traditionalism' and 'progressivism' and suggest that the type of knowledge presented in a curriculum is important in revealing the purpose of the subject English curriculum. From here, several fundamental concepts, such as knowledge differentiation, knowledge discourses or knowledge types, and recontextualisation, serve as the theoretical foundation for the arguments developed in the thesis. In line with upholding rigour in the research process, a brief overview of this thesis' theoretical basis is essential; therefore, the concepts used are summarised below.

3.1.3.1 *Knowledge differentiation.*

The concept of knowledge differentiation allows for a clear distinction between social and academic (epistemic) knowledge (Siteine, 2018). Social realists of education have adopted this framework to elucidate the differentiation of knowledge (Siteine, 2018). The concept of powerful knowledge can also help us critically consider the arguments about content and knowledge types. Powerful knowledge, as coined by Wheelahan (2007), refers to knowledge that is considered valuable because of its distinction from everyday experience, its specialist nature, its systematic structure, and its generalisability. Young (2008a) further developed this concept by stating that powerful knowledge can grant individuals who possess it intellectual power over those who do not have access to this type of knowledge. Powerful knowledge offers more dependable insights and fresh perspectives on understanding the world (Young, 2008a). Acquiring such knowledge equips learners with the tools to participate in higher-order debates such as those in politics and morality (Young, 2008a). Social realists like Young and Muller (2013) argue that every student should have the right to access this knowledge, emphasising that it is a matter of social justice. Ultimately, powerful knowledge is useful in this research as the content of the subject English curriculum is contested.

Perspectives rooted in social realism suggest that when it comes to knowledge, not all forms of it provide the same learning opportunities (Moore, 2007, 2013). This perspective argues that knowledge is a product of social and historical contexts without dismissing the potential for objective truth (Moore, 2007). Social realism departs from the idea that academic knowledge favours conservative powers by suggesting that granting equal access to academic knowledge through curriculum aligns with 'progressive' ideals and supports democratic principles (Rata, 2017). One of the central points in the social realist perspective is the importance of ensuring every student has access to academic knowledge. This is seen as a

matter of social justice, demanding a rebalancing between the socio-political aspects and the knowledge-based dimensions of education (see McPhail et al., 2023). 'Knowledge-that' (propositional knowledge) is the knowledge of something (Ryle, 1946, as cited by McPhail et al., 2023). 'Knowledge-that' relates to information that can be articulated as statements or propositions, which can be verified as either true or false. On the other hand, know-how-to (procedural knowledge) refers to knowing how to do something with 'knowledge-that' or the knowledge of something (McPhail et al., 2023). This type of knowledge involves skills, techniques, or abilities that enable someone to execute specific actions. McPhail et al. (2023) draw on these two concepts referred to by Ryle (1946) to emphasise the importance of the distinction between knowing facts and knowing how to use that information in practical situations. A fundamental idea presented by social realists is that linking propositional knowledge (knowledge-that), and procedural knowledge (know-how-to) is highly likely to result in deep learning when a student is able to comprehend the connection between these two types of knowledge (Winch, 2017; McPhail et al., 2023).

3.1.3.2 *Knowledge discourses or types [vertical and horizontal discourse].*

Bernstein (2000) defines two knowledge types: vertical discourse and horizontal discourse. Vertical discourse is described as hierarchically organised, as in the sciences, and is developed through specialised language; here, access to the meanings condensed within the specialised meaning is through a process of systematic elaboration of terms through a hierarchy of conceptual levels (Bernstein, 2000). Two knowledge structures are found inside vertical discourse—horizontal and hierarchical (or segmented). All vertical discourses are specialised compared to the horizontal discourse of everyday knowledge. On the other hand, horizontal discourse is divided into context-specific segments where the content of one segment does not necessarily relate to another and is developed by an individual's social and experiential understanding. Horizontal discourse is acquired informally through interactions within their community and family. Academic knowledge, however, is gained through structured content and exists in vertical discourse (Bernstein, 2000). English as an academic discipline is a vertical discourse with a horizontal knowledge structure as it encompasses various potential approaches or paradigms as explored in the literature review. A horizontal structure raises questions, then, about which segments should be included in a curriculum that prescribes the knowledge "that matters" when teaching subject English.

Further, Bernstein's (2000) conceptualisation of instructional and regulative discourse refers to the fundamental distinctions in how knowledge discourse operates within social contexts. According to Bernstein (2000), instructional discourse primarily concerns itself with transmitting knowledge and skills by guiding individuals in the acquisition of specific competencies within a given domain and is characterised by the focus on instructions. In contrast, regulative discourse as "the moral discourse which creates order, relations and identity" (Bernstein, 2000, p. 32). McPhail et al. (2023) explain that regulative discourse functions symbolically, not only dictating what should be valued but also projecting visions of and for the future. Where instructional discourse imparts concrete knowledge, regulative discourse is centred on shaping values and identities. Regulative assigns meaning and purpose to this knowledge, guiding individuals not only in what to do but also in how to understand and interact with the world.

3.1.3.3 *Recontextualisation.*

Recontextualisation is a broad concept Bernstein (2000) uses to describe the process of the movement of knowledge from its site of production (e.g., university) to a site of recontextualisation (e.g., school). School knowledge is, then, most often a recontextualisation of university disciplinary knowledge (McPhail et al., 2023). In this process of recontextualisation, there is always the play of ideologies that vie for dominance as certain ideas are selected, re-ordered and changed into a new discourse by curriculum designers and policymakers. Within this process, the curriculum designers and policymakers are influenced by various discourses associated with the subject being recontextualised, and what emerges is a curriculum document that reflects the ideologies prevailing in the ongoing curriculum discourse (e.g., student-centred, identity, and culturalism).

Recontextualisation as a process is crucial in shaping the new educational discourse and takes place within the realms of both official and pedagogic fields (Bernstein, 2000). The Official Recontextualisation Field (ORF), predominantly shaped by the state and its appointed representatives, contrasts with the Pedagogic Recontextualisation Field (PRF), which comprises educators in academic institutions, educational experts, and researchers (Bernstein, 2000). Within these fields, there can be contention among educationalists and researchers vying for influence over the recontextualisation process and the nature of the curriculum (Hordern, 2021). Further, the process of recontextualisation creates a space for disciplinary knowledge to be distorted by ideology (McPhail et al., 2023). The main concept

I have used in this research is Bernstein's (2000) official recontextualisation field. As Te Mātaiaho is curriculum policy, it is viewed as a product of the official recontextualisation field. Bernstein's (2000) concept of the official recontextualisation field was the best fit to analyse the current state of specialised subject English knowledge in New Zealand.

3.1.4 Qualitative methods

Qualitative research deals with human meanings and words by exploring perspectives through in-depth analysis of language, symbols, and context. Through textual analysis, this research method is often used to generate rich, descriptive insights into the social and cultural dimensions of the studied phenomena (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). A qualitative research method, in this case content analysis, was utilised as it is commonly acknowledged that qualitative approaches are the most effective method for investigating and comprehending the significance that individuals or groups attribute to a social issue (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Therefore, the approach allowed me to gain an understanding of curriculum design by exploring the influences that shaped subject English in the Te Mātaiaho curriculum document. First, I did this by examining policy and curriculum design materials. Subsequently, I contextualised this more specific information within a broader socio-political context using theory and concepts.

A qualitative content analysis approach is aimed at summarising raw information, in this case, policy statements, into categories or concepts using inference and understanding derived from disciplinary concepts (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2005). Qualitative research relies on inductive reasoning, where concepts and categories are derived from data through careful examination and continuous interrogation by the researcher (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2005). I began by giving the curriculum documents a preliminary appraisal by conducting a content analysis (Prior, 2020). The gathering and analysis of data within the wider content analysis framework follows a typical qualitative research design where early inductive analysis of data leads to refining the focus for subsequent data gathering to identify further concepts (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Following this initial analysis, I devised a translation device serving as a methodological tool to relate the empirical data to the concepts related to the knowledge types (see Figure 3). The translation device was used as a coding frame, which enabled the exploration of subject English curriculum discourse for indicators of the types of knowledge inexplicitly proposed in the content of the Te Mātaiaho document (Maton & Doran, 2017). To further reveal the discourse about knowledge, I conducted the directed content analysis

using the translation device. This direct content analysis was followed by examining specific sections of the curriculum document to identify underlying concepts and patterns.

Figure 2 *Translation device*

Discourse	Indicators	Empirical examples from the Te Mātaiaho curriculum
Knowledge Discourses	**Subject-specific knowledge propositional knowledge (knowledge-that)** The material exemplification of concepts which may include facts, contexts, aspects to know etc., specific to a subject	"Working with texts is at the core of English. Texts can be in a range of language modes (e.g., written language, oral language*, or the visual mode) and use a range of technologies (e.g., print and digital). Multimodal texts such as film and digital media combine language with other means of communication, such as images or a soundtrack. Texts are also generated using augmentative and alternative communication (e.g., gestures and picture symbols) and Braille." (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 3)
	Subject-specific procedural knowledge (know-how-to)	"Deliberately select from a range of strategies to compose texts with relatively complex language, structure, content, layout, or vocabulary and without intrusive errors." ((Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 15)
	Socio-cultural knowledge: concepts which may include ideology and regulative discourse	"Engaging with mātauranga Māori through the creation and interpretation of texts provides opportunities to strengthen knowledge and understanding of te ao Māori and Māori perspectives, and to play a part in giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi." ((Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 2)

3.2   Research Methods

3.2.1   *Document analysis*

Document analysis has numerous advantages over human participants, such as availability (e.g., access to documents through public domains) (Bowen, 2009). Because the object of study is The Refreshed New Zealand Curriculum: Te Mātaiaho, this study uses document analysis to collect and examine data. By being aware of the advantages and limitations, I have made informed decisions when employing document analysis as a research method.

By looking through documents published by the Ministry of Education, I narrowed down the main document for analysis to that which the Ministry of Education released in September 2023, Te Mātaiaho: the learning areas of Mātaiaho English. Te Mātaiaho: the learning areas of Mātaiaho English is deemed the most relevant document to my research aims. In particular, the relevance stems from the document being firmly situated in the discourse on knowledge in the refreshed subject English learning area because it determines

the 'knowledge that matters' (Ministry of Education, 2023b). By focusing on this document and drawing on the literature reviewed, I was able to evaluate the changing landscape of subject English in New Zealand and identify the visible knowledge in Te Mātaiaho. Therefore, upon the procedure of searching through documents relevant to the refreshing of The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC), my research question was then changed to: 'To what extent is specialised subject English knowledge explicitly incorporated into the English learning area in Te Mātaiaho: The Refreshed New Zealand Curriculum?'

The above question will be examined through the following sub-questions.

- o What type of knowledge discourse is visible in subject English as proposed in Te Mātaiaho: The Refreshed New Zealand Curriculum?
- o What implications does the extent of knowledge discourse visibility have for implementing subject English curriculum?

3.3 Content Analysis of Curriculum Policy

Content analysis is the process of putting data into different categories concerning the central research questions (Bowen, 2009, p. 27). Accordingly, this procedure was followed to analyse and interpret the Te Mātaiaho document. Directed content analysis is a method for empirically identifying and describing concepts within content (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). A directed content analysis approach allowed me to address the language and content of Te Mātaiaho simultaneously by interrogating the data; this revealed the context and purpose of the subject English curriculum.

Directed content analysis is an analytical approach which starts with a theory or relevant findings from the literature – such as concepts – as guidance for initial coding (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). By using a translation device, I was able to identify relevant and valid data from the curriculum document. Then, a directed content analysis revealed new concepts; this process is referred to as data mining by Prior (2020) as the terminology, definitions, and concepts are identified. Further, data mining through directed content analysis allowed this research to do what Shelly and Krippendorff (1984) refer to as going beyond mere descriptions, as I was able to make "inferences about 'why', 'for whom', and 'to what effect'" (p. 27). Ultimately, content analysis justified the selection of the Te Mātaiaho curriculum document as the best fit to analyse the concepts developed in the literature review and to

investigate the visible knowledge in the subject English 'learning area' in current New Zealand debates; this data collection process is outlined below.

3.4   Data Selection

3.4.1   Selecting documents for analysis

Critical considerations in policy document analysis must be considered before mapping out the methods selected for data analysis, and then the documents chosen for analysis are addressed and justified. Codd (1988) explains that it is important to remember several things when analysing policy documents:

i.   There is not one correct interpretation waiting to be discovered,

ii.   Policy documents have a historical and political context and as such, are the result of political forces and are inherently ideological, and

iii.   We cannot assume that a policy text is coherent.

As Ball (2015) acknowledges, policy documents will likely be constructed with conflicting dominant and non-dominant discourses 'of the day'.

Examples used in content analysis are typically specific texts chosen deliberately to provide insight into the research questions being explored (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). While this research could include a broader range of texts, including press releases, political speeches, and media reports, the limits of this research project mean that only portions of two curriculum documents will be analysed. The document for investigation is the Te Mātaiaho*:* The Learning Areas of Te Mātaiaho English (Ministry of Education, 2023a). I selected three areas from Te Mātaiaho: The Learning Areas of Te Mātaiaho English (Ministry of Education, 2023a) to analyse. First, I selected the '*Purpose Statement for English*'; then, the '*Overview of English*' as both areas are meant to outline the expectations of subject English. Then, finally, I selected the '*Phase 4 Years 9 and 10 progress outcomes by the end of Year 10*', which is a crucial transitional area from primary to secondary school; this was selected as students in New Zealand shift from primary students to high school students (transitioning from Year 8 to Year 9). However, looking into the efficacy of moving between the phases of learning proposed in Te Mātaiaho when transitioning between schools exceeds the limits of this review, although it creates a potential avenue for further research. What this thesis aims to highlight and discuss is the knowledge discourse that appears in the selected sections of the proposed curriculum and whether it is well-developed and sufficiently explicit in outlining what students should 'Understand' (knowledge-that), 'Know' (knowledge-that), and 'Do'

(know-how-to) to allow for a straightforward implementation (as evaluated in Chapters 4 and 5).

3.5   Data Analysis

I used directed content analysis to investigate the knowledge types (Bernstein, 2000) in Te Mātaiaho. This method aims to uncover the underlying meanings and ideologies represented in Te Mātaiaho. Schreier (2020) makes a case for researchers using inductively created or deductive-generated approaches to coding or a mix of both; I used a mix of both. Schreier (2020) emphasises the central importance of coding and validity in content analysis. I followed the following steps in my initial data analysis phase of the research to ensure validity, rigour, and trustworthiness.

The data was analysed using directed content analysis. Directed content analysis aims "to validate or extend conceptually a theoretical framework or theory" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1281). This approach mirrors how content analysis was utilised in this thesis, as the translation device was used to investigate and reveal the educational concepts evident in the curriculum. Fairclough (2010) states that within a single text, numerous discourses are likely articulated together through language and visuals, interwoven throughout the text and interacting with one another.

Steps of content analysis:
Create a preliminary version of the coding frame (in this research termed a translation device) for the analysis of content by:

   i. Generating initial codes through utilising concepts from the literature – this is referred to as 'directed content analysis' (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005),
   ii. Completing the main coding phase using directed content analysis and the translation device by:
      a.   Searching for concepts,
      b.   Reviewing the concepts and
      c.   Defining and naming further concepts.
   iii. Presenting the findings of the directed content analysis and main coding phase and
   iv. Investigating the concepts prevalent in the directed content analysis and presenting the discussion of concepts (see Chapter 5).

My concepts did not simply emerge; they were produced by my familiarisation with the content organised as codes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), drawing on deductive analysis from predetermined concepts from the literature. First, I carried out axial coding, grouping items into more abstract and related concepts. I then used the translation device to conduct a content analysis to connect the data and concepts for analysis and discussion.

3.6   Validity and Reliability

As this research project uses only document analysis, with no human participants, university ethics approval was not required. Nevertheless, critical engagement with any topic requires a consideration of ethics (Tesar, 2016). Tesar (2016) explains that ethics, particularly in the case of educational policy, is about critically examining the nature of knowledge, experiences and ideas, such as how we come to know something and "what values should be elevated, followed, lived by" (p. 593). In striving for trustworthiness in this qualitative research, the focus is not merely on reliability and validity as in quantitative research, but on demonstrating transparency in the methods used; therefore, the explanations provided in this chapter aim to ensure transparency about the methods used in this research.

In addition, the intended purpose of the documents used in the analysis should be made clear in order to ensure ethical analysis (Bowen, 2009). The intended purpose of the curriculum document is not that of research but rather to inform educational policy in New Zealand. As this is an analysis on subject English policy, I acknowledge that I am conscious of the opinions of those in the literature reviewed, both concerning the research and the results; therefore, I have strived for objectivity through a realist paradigm and considered alternative viewpoints to ensure a comprehensive and fair analysis.

In light of the above considerations, for this research project to be conducted with validity and reliability, I have allowed others to find validity in my analysis by:

    i.   Outlining what kind of lens the data is being interpreted through,

    ii.   Explicitly outlining my research process and

    iii.   Engaging in the process of data triangulation through theory and analysis to provide a measure of trustworthiness in my results.

Adequate citations, using APA referencing, and acknowledging sources to give credit to the original authors helped to respect the intellectual property rights of the creators of the

documents analysed. Although the specific identities of those who created the Te Mātaiaho document are unknown, I have accurately acknowledged that the Ministry of Education developed this document as part of refreshing curriculum policy in New Zealand. Also, the Te Mātaiaho document is in the public domain, and it is attainable without the permission of the Ministry of Education as it is policy (as discussed earlier). As Merriam (1988) states, locating documents in the public domain is limited only by one's imagination.

Well-informed research with the support of my supervisors and objectivity through a realist paradigm helped to establish credibility and maintain the integrity of the research process. Braun and Clarke (2006) explain the vitality of interrogating bias in the research process to ensure validity and reliability; I questioned and interrogated my bias through a realist paradigm to ensure the investigation was valid and reliable. Further, I transparently outlined my methodology and undertook rigorous consultation with my supervisors to ensure I accurately and fairly represented my findings.

3.7   Summary

This research highlights subject English's changing purpose and the complexity of the subject in New Zealand. Drawing evaluative conclusions is complex. It is crucial to address whose values are reflected or emphasised in the curriculum document, the analytical process, and how my values may influence my observations (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I have kept in mind that the social world is fluid, meaning there are a multitude of perspectives that inform discourse (Doyle & Loveridge, 2023). As the social world is fluid, a conclusion can be made that subject English is complex because of the multitude of discourses that intersect with the purpose of the subject.

4 Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of my directed content analysis aimed at revealing the types of knowledge discourse embedded within the Te Mātaiaho curriculum document, specifically in the subject English 'learning area' subsections '*Purpose Statement for English*', '*Overview of English*', and '*Phase 4 Years 9 and 10 progress outcomes by the end of Year 10*' (Ministry of Education, 2023a). The analysis highlights the explicit and implicit messages about what type of knowledge is valued in structuring the curriculum. Analysing the content brings to the surface the underlying principles and ideologies underpinning the narratives of the document, providing insights into the educational emphases inherent within the proposed curriculum framework.

4.2 Purpose Statement for English

The '*Purpose statement for English*' section is split into two parts. The first part includes the vision, values, and skills viewed as important in English, and the second part provides statements for teachers to consider when selecting texts for inclusion in the curriculum titled planning for teaching (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 3).

The purpose statement contains the three knowledge types detailed in the translation device: subject procedural knowledge, or 'know-how-to'; subject propositional knowledge, or 'knowledge-that'; and socio-cultural knowledge. Firstly, I provide some examples of procedural knowledge or 'know-how-to; then, subject propositional knowledge, or 'knowledge-that' (Rata, 2021); followed by socio-cultural knowledge. Finally, I include a thematic category not included in my original translation device that emerged from the data – dispositional imperatives (outlined below).

4.2.1 *Subject-specific procedural knowledge*

Procedural knowledge is applied knowledge, including the subject competencies, techniques, and skills that students use in the learning area (Rata, 2021). The purpose statement refers to students' competency in making, creating, interpreting, and connecting texts. For example,

the following quotes describe how students are expected to use procedural knowledge by applying various tools and 'making connections' through stories:

>*"...apply the tools of the English learning area and make links through stories, students are able to connect with experiences and issues of global significance."* (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 2)

The connection here appears to be to socio-cultural knowledge rather than to aspects of subject knowledge, as there is no mention of other types of English texts beyond the broad mention of "stories". Following this, the purpose statement suggests that students are to:

>*"Use their insights to advocate articulately and persuasively for equity and sustainability and to contribute to resolving collective global challenges"* (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 2).

This example highlights how students must represent and share their insights with procedural knowledge. However, the tools or means by which these skills should be developed, and how "insights" will be developed are unspecified. This statement also instructs students what to think – there is no indication that equity and sustainability might be explored as ideas with pros and cons – so the statement functions as a form of ideology.

Further examples of procedural knowledge are indicated by statements such as this, where students are expected to:

>*"Use their cultural, linguistic, and personal knowledge to interpret and create texts with varied levels of support (e.g., through listening, reading, or viewing in one language, and speaking, writing, or presenting in another)"* (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 3).

This statement outlines the expectation that students will 'know-how-to' "use their cultural, linguistic, and personal knowledge" to interpret and create texts. The first part of the statement emphasises the importance of knowing how to draw upon one's cultural background, language skills, and personal experiences when engaging with texts. However, it does not reference the specific 'knowledge-that' required for achieving the outcomes. The second part of the statement, "to interpret and create texts with varied levels of support", implies that students should 'know-how-to' interpret and create texts with different levels of assistance or guidance and in different modes.

Further mention of students 'knowing-how-to' is evident in the following progress outcome:

>*"Interpret and create texts to explore a common theme, topic, or idea"* (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 3).

This statement specifies a goal of a process, which is to explore and examine a shared theme, topic, or idea across different texts. This example of procedural knowledge highlights a critical skill in subject English education: the ability to 'know-how-to' analyse, interpret, and create texts that revolve around a central theme or idea. For students to 'know-how-to' interpret and create texts across the curriculum progression "phases", they must develop a strong understanding of text structures and conventions. By this, I mean that for students to be able to 'know-how-to' interpret and create texts, they require 'knowledge-that' (such as knowledge of the intricacies of language and structure, i.e. grammar and syntax) to build their proficiency to be able to interpret and create texts. However, this 'knowledge-that' is not explicitly outlined.

4.2.2   Subject-specific propositional knowledge

A key statement identified for its specific reference to language and literature, 'knowledge-that', is a proposition that:

> "*Learning about language and literature from New Zealand and around the world enables students to build literacy, walk in different worlds, access the thoughts and perspectives of others, and make linguistic and cultural connections.*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 2)

This statement emphasises literature, a focus not unexpected for subject English. However, the statement highlights that students are expected to develop 'knowledge-that' about diverse cultural contexts by simply engaging with a range of language and literature. Once again, we are left wondering what 'knowledge-that' about the forms, structures, and language are being referred to, and what 'knowledge-that' about the use of the literature itself will be required to develop these skills and understandings. By 'knowledge-that' in this case, I mean ideas, facts, and theories associated with subject English, sometimes known as propositional or substantive knowledge (McPhail et al., 2023). This example emphasises the need for the subject to provide students with the opportunity to develop empathy and to "*walk in different worlds*", "*access the thoughts of others*", and "*make linguistic and cultural connections*". Further, this statement infers that students 'knowing-how' to "walk in different worlds" requires 'knowledge-that' language is used and understood in a multitude of cultural settings. This process outlined above requires students to use 'knowledge-that' to demonstrate they 'know-how-to' adapt their use of language and communication styles to fit different cultural norms and expectations. In addition, the student's ability to "*access the thoughts of others*"

is contingent upon their 'knowledge-that'. This ability also requires procedural knowledge of comprehending language and 'knowing-how-to' interpret texts and language. Understanding and interpreting ideas and perspectives involves students 'knowing-how-to' infer meaning from context and having the knowledge to interpret the nuances of language use – conceptual, abstract thinking or 'knowledge-that'. There is no further explicit 'knowledge-that' beyond the mention of language and literature (also referred to as texts) in the '*Purpose statement for English*'.

4.2.3   Socio-cultural knowledge

Along with, and connected to, the 'knowledge-that' and 'know-how-to' outlined above, the purpose statement highlights the importance of socio-cultural knowledge. For example:

> "*Learning about language and literature from Aotearoa and around the world enables students to build…* **cultural connections**" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 2, emphasis added).

This statement involves acquiring socio-cultural knowledge as it encompasses understanding the social and cultural factors influencing human behaviour, beliefs, values, and practices rather than focusing solely on subject-specific knowledge. Students are expected to gain insights into different perspectives and ways of life by studying New Zealand and worldwide texts. Ultimately, it appears the Ministry of Education intends to encourage students to "walk in different worlds" by using literature and language to expand their understanding of the world around them. Furthermore, by accessing the thoughts and perspectives of others through literature, students are expected to make cultural connections which foster a deeper appreciation for diversity and enrich their perspectives. The literature appears to be a conduit for developing an espoused worldview rather than learning about literature per se. There is less explicit focus on the forms of language and the forms of literature itself; instead, there is a focus on life and the perspectives of others, allowing students to expand their perspectives.

A further statement also highlights the importance of understanding a diverse range of perspectives and cultures through coming into contact with a diverse range of literature, although there is some reference to the actual 'workings' of language here, i.e. more specific subject knowledge (see emphasis):

> *As they develop essential communication skills, students can better understand others and make themselves understood. As text critics, students come to understand* **how language and texts work***, giving them the power to interpret*

and challenge texts and to create their own powerful texts. As text creators, they take part in literacy communities and conversations, contributing to their own stories and their interpretations of others' stories. (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 2)

Effective communication skills are seen as a means of connecting with diverse perspectives within a social and cultural context rather than being particular subject-worthy ends in themselves. As evidenced by phrases such as "*become text creators and critics by contributing to their own stories*" and "*their interpretations of others*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 2), students are expected to develop an understanding of how language and texts work through interaction with others in a societal and cultural context. Then, through the process of 'knowing-how-to' interpret, challenge, and create texts, students are expected to develop "*essential communication skills*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 2) that empower them to advocate for themselves and others. All of these examples align with 'progressive' student-centred ideology while also deciding that exposure to culture through literature and language is a form of enrichment that develops a student's view of life—a particular worldview espoused by the document writers.

Further examples of socio-cultural knowledge in the purpose statement reference the world of te ao Māori or Māori perspectives. For example:

Engaging with mātauranga Māori through the creation and interpretation of texts provides opportunities to strengthen knowledge and understanding of te ao Māori and Māori perspectives, and to play a part in giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 2)

This statement demonstrates a holistic perspective incorporating societal and cultural values into the expected learning experiences. There is an emphasis on the importance of understanding and respecting indigenous perspectives, as well as the cultural and historical context of New Zealand. This is a type of *regulative discourse* (Bernstein, 2000) as it refers to the moral matters intended to develop order and national identity by strengthening te ao Māori and Māori perspectives in the curriculum. Regulative discourse is also evident and central in further statements from Te Mātaiaho, such as:

The learning area has been designed to support the vision of Mātaitipu and provides personal value, participatory value, pathways value, and planetary value. The tools and literacy practices that students develop in the learning area build on their existing ways of interpreting and expressing meaning. (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 2)

The central term of this statement, Mātaitipu, refers to the educational "*vision for young people*" and further mentions this vision "*as conceived by young people*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 2). In this statement, the curriculum centralises the role of the student and envisions students as meaning-makers who construct their knowledge and identities through texts, language, and cultural resources, fostering personal growth and a strong sense of self. The inclusion of 'Mātaitipu' as a concept highlights the importance of incorporating cultural values and perspectives into educational practices; this further strengthens the presence of mātauranga Māori in the curriculum. Integrating this concept and stating that subject English "*provides personal, participatory, pathways, and planetary value*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 2) infers that the subject is foundational to developing certain values and perspectives. However, the statements lack development beyond description and are read as a justification for including Mātaitipu rather than explicitly outlining what the values are and how the values are of importance. To support the values, it would be beneficial to include concrete examples or activities—such as specific strategies or approaches within the learning area that align with the specific values the curriculum hopes to develop through Mātaitipu. It is difficult to see how the inclusion of Mātaitipu will support students to build on their existing ways of interpreting and expressing meaning if the values are not fully outlined and justified here.

4.2.4 *Dispositional imperatives*

As well as the three types of knowledge associated with subject English mentioned above, dispositional imperatives are prevalent throughout the document, suggesting, along with socio-cultural knowledge, the inclusion of knowledge that goes beyond the scope of the subject. This is what Bernstein (2000) terms the regulative discourse of education, a discourse "concerned with what values are considered important; rules of social order and projections of certain identities" (McPhail, 2012, p. 25). For example, the curriculum features a moral and political imperative for students to acquire knowledge to "*give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 2). Such regulative ideals also affect the instructional discourse (Bernstein, 2000) as illustrated by the following progress outcome, which explicitly argues for the integration of Māori cultural knowledge into the subject English learning area and explicitly refers to Te Tiriti political and regulative concerns:

> *Engaging with mātauranga Māori through the creation and interpretation of texts provides opportunities to strengthen knowledge and understanding of te*

ao Māori and Māori perspectives, and to play a part in giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 2)

This regulative statement suggests that subject English is a tool that upholds Te Tiriti. Ultimately, the progress outcome encourages individuals to engage with Māori knowledge and perspectives by creating and interpreting texts. The statement is both a dispositional imperative and a statement of curriculum content intent, implying that engaging with mātauranga Māori is beneficial and necessary for strengthening knowledge and understanding of te ao Māori and Māori perspectives as a political goal. The use of the word "provides" suggests that engaging with mātauranga Māori is a means to an end, and the progress outcome implies that by engaging with mātauranga Māori, individuals will be able to "*play a part in giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 2). The progress outcome also implies moral and political obligations to engage with mātauranga Māori, as it suggests that by doing so, individuals can contribute to the fulfilment of the principles of the foundational Te Tiriti o Waitangi document.

4.2.5 *Summary*

This analysis of the *'Purpose statement for English'* above highlights the presence of subject propositional knowledge, subject procedural knowledge, and socio-cultural knowledge. Although not explicitly addressed in the translation device used for this analysis, dispositional imperatives were also identified, illustrating the presence of a strong regulative intent for the curriculum (Bernstein, 2000). The curriculum features a strong focus on socio-cultural knowledge to the detriment of the clear delineation of the propositional and procedural knowledge specific to subject English. There is a notable gap in the content of the '*Purpose statement for English'* as it lacks explicit subject-specific propositional knowledge (knowledge-that) beyond the mention of texts and language; I will return to this finding in the discussion chapter of this thesis (see Chapter 5).

4.3   Overview of English Section

The second section analysed was the '*Overview of English'* (Ministry of Education, 2023a, pp. 4-5). This section is split into two pages. The first page includes an outline of the 'big ideas' students should 'Understand' and features a visual representation of the knowledge of the strands being woven together. The second page provides an outline of the contexts students should 'Know', and the practices students should be able to 'Do'. The Overview of

English, which sets out to outline what students should 'Understand', 'Know' and 'Do' in subject English, also includes three of the knowledge types detailed in the translation device: propositional knowledge or 'knowledge-that', procedural knowledge or 'know-how-to', and socio-cultural knowledge. In the remaining sections, I provide examples that reveal subject-specific propositional knowledge (knowledge-that). Then, subject-specific procedural knowledge, or 'know-how-to'. Followed by socio-cultural knowledge, and then finally, dispositional imperatives.

4.3.1 Subject-specific propositional knowledge

Propositional knowledge is the 'knowledge-that' related to concepts, including facts, contexts, and aspects specific to a subject (McPhail et al., 2023). The '*Overview of English*' refers to students' developing knowledge of text and language structure as well as codes and conventions, which can be considered specific to subject English as they are aspects of texts. The progress outcome from the 'Know' strand features propositional subject English knowledge by identifying the importance of understanding the features and structures of language:

> ***Features and structures of language*** *is about the codes and conventions used to make meaning in texts and to structure texts, particularly literary texts. These codes and conventions encompass both the technical conventions that help texts make sense and the more specialised conventions of particular texts forms.* (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 5, emphasis in original)

The progress outcome contains propositional knowledge as it illustrates that students will learn 'knowledge-that' features and structures of language rely on codes and conventions to create meaning in texts. The concept of codes and conventions in language is referred to. However, specific examples or details about the 'knowledge-that' related to these "technical codes and conventions" are not explicitly indicated. Another progress outcome, this time from the 'Understand' strand, also features propositional knowledge about codes, conventions, and structures. The progress outcome:

> "*shared codes and conventions enable us to make sense of what is heard, read, and seen. They change over time and are used differently in different contexts*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 4).

This progress outcome infers a need for students to have 'knowledge-that' there are different types of conventions involved in structuring texts; however, these conventions are not

explicitly outlined. Further, the propositional statement infers that students are to possess the 'knowledge-that' people use shared 'codes and conventions' to understand each other, which can vary over time and "*in different contexts*". Rather than outlining specific examples of these tools for communication, the focus appears to be centred on the function of these "codes and conventions".

A further example of propositional knowledge from the 'Know' strand suggests that students are expected to know that:

> "*texts are shaped for particular purposes and with particular audiences in mind. Text **purposes and audiences consider** both why texts are shaped the way they are (the purposes) and who texts are shaped for (the audiences)*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 5, emphasis in original).

The progress outcome conceptualises a tool for analysing texts based on their intended purposes and audiences. However, it lacks specific examples demonstrating how texts are shaped for particular purposes and audiences, including concrete examples of texts and how their purposes and audiences are reflected in their content, structure, and style. This means teachers are to interpret a framework for analysis based on a broad mention of text purposes and audiences. There is also implied procedural knowledge here with implicit reference to approaches used in text analysis (e.g., analysing a text to deduct the purpose and who the audience is). A gap persists here that the need for more specificity means there is work to be done by teachers to surface this procedural knowledge.

4.3.2 *Subject-specific procedural knowledge*

In addition to codes and conventions, and purpose and audiences, the '*Overview for English*' section also refers to the procedures specific to subject English such as developing students' competency in "*making, creating, interpreting, and connecting texts*". The following progress outcome from the 'Do' strand reflects an emphasis on procedural knowledge specific to subject English, particularly in the areas of reading comprehension and text creation:

> ***Comprehending and creating texts** focuses on the **processes and strategies** required to make sense of texts and to create texts that make sense. It helps us to use our literacy and communication skills to interpret and create texts in written, visual, and oral modes.* (Ministry of Education, September 2023, p. 5, first emphasis is original; second emphasis is added)

This progress outcome from the 'Do' section alludes to the fact that processes and strategies are involved in understanding and producing texts in various forms (e.g., written, visual, and oral). However, it does not outline these processes or strategies. Part of the progress outcome, "*comprehending and creating texts focuses on the processes and strategies required to make sense of texts and to create texts that make sense*", emphasises the importance of a student understanding the processes involved in both reading and writing, although without specifically outlining what these processes are and what students should 'know-how-to' do concerning these aspects. The Ministry of Education acknowledges that comprehension involves more than just understanding the words on the page; it requires the application of specific strategies to make meaning from the text. Similarly, creating texts involves more than just putting words together, yet there is no explicit mention of how students can create a coherent and meaningful text; this requires the students to use subject-specific strategies (e.g., grammatical writing and competency in organising and structuring), which are not mentioned, to ensure that the text is coherent and meaningful to the intended audience. Further, the following progress outcome highlights the role of literacy and communication skills being essential in 'knowing-how-to' comprehend and create texts across different modes effectively:

> "*it [processes and strategies] helps us to use our literacy and communication skills to interpret and create texts in written, visual, and oral modes*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p.5).

Ultimately, this progress outcome refers to students 'knowing-how-to' comprehend and create texts that allow them to demonstrate they 'know-how-to' use specific processes and strategies. The strategies and processes students should 'know-how-to' use (e.g., exploring the connotations of words) are not mentioned. The process of comprehending and creating texts also relies on the knowledge that language functions semiotically.

Another example of procedural knowledge specific to subject English is evident in the following progress outcome from the 'Do' strand:

> "*All texts carry ideas and help us to form our ideas about the world. **Ideas within, across, and beyond texts** focuses on the knowledge needed **to identify, respond to, and create ideas across all forms of texts***" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 5, first emphasis is original; second emphasis is added).

Procedural knowledge is evident, particularly in analysing and interpreting texts, which also relies on students understanding that language functions semiotically. The following sentence, "*all texts carry ideas and help us to form our ideas about the world*", suggests that

students need 'knowledge-that' texts, whether written, visual, or oral, contain ideas that influence our thinking and perceptions of the world. Acknowledging the global significance of texts in conjunction with the phrase "*help us to*" implies that students need to 'know-how-to' analyse and interpret texts to contribute to shaping their own ideas and perspectives "*about the world*". The subsequent sentence, "*to identify, respond to, and create ideas across all forms of texts*", highlights the aim to support students to 'know-how-to' engage with texts. However, there is a gap in identifying the 'knowledge-that' – such as the functions and subjectivity of language and structure – which may leave teachers wondering how students will be able to do this. The former progress outcome further highlights procedural knowledge in subject English education by outlining that students need skills and strategies to engage with and interpret texts critically and effectively. However, a gap remains in that the specific skills and strategies are not explicitly mentioned, and we are left wondering what these are.

4.3.3   *Socio-cultural knowledge*

Procedural knowledge is often linked to socio-cultural knowledge throughout the curriculum document; for example, skills such as analysing and interpreting are linked to providing an understanding of socio-cultural aspects, such as how language is used to generate ideas, culture, and perspectives. In addition to 'knowing-how-to' analyse and interpret texts, the '*Overview for English*' section refers to students' understanding of the social and cultural factors influencing human behaviour, beliefs, values, and practices. The following progress outcome from the 'Understand' strand illustrates socio-cultural knowledge, specifically in the context of language use in New Zealand. The curriculum suggests that:

> "*how we use language in Aotearoa has been shaped by our histories and linguistic heritages, and the encounters between them*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p.4).

The curriculum writers acknowledge that the way language is used in this specific cultural context has been influenced by New Zealand's 'histories' and 'linguistic heritages'. In this context, 'histories' likely refers to the diverse historical narratives and events that have influenced New Zealand's linguistic landscape—such as colonisation and immigration. The inclusion of this progress outcome suggests that students should have knowledge of these influences. Further examples of socio-cultural knowledge in the purpose statement make specific reference to the world of te ao Māori or Māori perspectives. For example:

> *Our linguistic and cultural resources are part of our **whakapapa**; they help us to understand ourselves and others, and they enable others to understand us. As we understand more about ourselves through our encounters with literature and other texts, we also come to understand and appreciate more about other people and their perspectives.* (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 4, emphasis added)

This progress outcome from the 'Understand' strand of the '*Overview of English*' reflects socio-cultural knowledge in the context of language and culture and emphasises the claim that our linguistic and cultural backgrounds are integral to our identities, or "whakapapa". From a socio-cultural perspective, this progress outcome suggests that through "*encounters with literature and other texts*", students can gain insights into their own identity and the perspectives of others. Ultimately, the aspiration is to create students with a broader and more profound appreciation of different cultures and worldviews—a regulative rather than an instructional aim.

This notion is developed further in the strongly regulative statement from the 'Understand' strand, particularly regarding the significance of literature and language in understanding the identity and connections of people in New Zealand:

> *Through the literature of tangata whenua, Tangata Tiriti, and those who have come from around Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa, we understand where we have come from, who we are, and what it means to live in the Pacific nation of Aotearoa New Zealand. The literatures and languages of Aotearoa New Zealand have hononga (connections) beyond our shores and connect us to global literary and linguistic traditions.* (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 4)

The former quote suggests that knowledge discourse has been conflated in this creation of an 'Understand' progress outcome as the section it is categorised in infers it should be subject-specific propositional knowledge; however, it is mainly regulative in that students are to 'know-that' literature and languages of New Zealand are not isolated but are connected to broader global literary and linguistic traditions. This idea of connections and interrelatedness emphasises the ideology of culturalism and is reflected in the progress outcome above that refers to New Zealand's cultural identity within wider global contexts. Further, this progress outcome is slightly prescriptive in the socio-cultural knowledge proposed in subject English because it outlines a specific approach to selecting literature for study by emphasising the importance of including the literature of tangata whenua, Tangata Tiriti, and those from around Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa in the curriculum. Interestingly, this is the only specific

mention of the types of texts students are to encounter in subject English beyond the broad mention of written, visual, and oral texts.

4.3.4   Dispositional imperatives

In this section, I present findings that emphasise dispositional imperatives that are part of the regulative discourse that extends beyond the scope of English as a subject. As mentioned previously (see 4.3), Bernstein (2000) describes this discourse as "the moral discourse which creates order, relations and identity" (Bernstein, 2000, p. 32). A progress outcome from the 'Know' strand shows an understanding of how texts reflect the socio-cultural nature of New Zealand's history and treaty relationships. This outcome emphasises exploring:

> "*ideas within, across, and beyond texts [by placing] a particular focus on how texts help us to think about our place in Aotearoa New Zealand and our own role **in giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi***" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 5, emphasis added).

This progress outcome encourages a particular disposition, suggesting an attitude or approach towards texts and their role in shaping understanding. It implies that texts can prompt students to adhere to and understand of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Further, it requires that the texts students study play a significant role in shaping individual and collective perspectives on the purpose of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and emphasise both students' and teachers' responsibilities in upholding New Zealand's foundational document. The subsequent progress outcome from the 'Understand' strand implies an imperative to engage critically with texts, encouraging individuals to recognise and use the power of literature, language, and texts to advocate for themselves and others:

> *Throughout history, literature, language, and texts have been used to uplift and share, and to dominate and exclude. Recognising and using the power and influence of literature, language, and texts give us tools to advocate for ourselves and others. Exploring the effects of colonisation on our languages and literatures is an important part of understanding power relations in Aotearoa New Zealand.* (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 4)

By calling on students to recognise and use their knowledge of texts and language as 'tools to advocate for ourselves and others', there is an imperative for students to understand the power of language and literature. This understanding, in turn, can lead to a sense of responsibility to use these tools for positive change. Ultimately, this notion is presented as an

expectation to develop a disposition of advocacy, where students are encouraged to speak up for themselves and others who may be marginalised or disadvantaged. Again, these progress outcomes present a regulative ideal rather than knowledge specifically related to the subject English.

4.3.5   Summary

This analysis of the '*Overview of English*' highlights the presence of subject propositional knowledge and procedural knowledge alongside socio-cultural knowledge. Dispositional knowledge was also identified, noting the effect of these dispositional imperatives on the curriculum. The '*Overview of English*' appears to disproportionately focus on identifying socio-cultural and subject concepts typical for a 'progressive' model of subject English, such as identity and culture (as noted in the literature review of this thesis), without specifically outlining what exactly students should 'know' and 'know-how-to' do; I will return to this in the discussion chapter of this thesis (see Chapter 5).

4.4   Phase 4 Years 9 and 10 Progress Outcome by the end of Year 10

The last section I analysed in the Te Mātaiaho curriculum document was the '*Phase 4 years 9 and 10 progress outcome by the end of Year 10*' (Ministry of Education, 2023, pp. 14-15), which outlines what students should 'Understand', 'Know', and 'Do' by the end of Year 10. The '*Phase 4 years 9 and 10 progress outcome*' section is split into two pages. The first page includes an outline of the 'big ideas' students should 'Understand' by the end of Year 10, and the second page provides an outline of the contexts students should 'Know', and the practices students should be able to 'Do' by the end of Year 10.

The '*Phase 4 years 9 and 10 progress outcome by the end of Year 10*' in the curriculum includes references evidence of all three of the knowledge types detailed in the translation device: subject procedural knowledge, or 'know-how-to', subject propositional knowledge, or 'know-that', and socio-cultural knowledge. First, I analyse the subject-specific propositional knowledge (knowledge-that). Then, subject-specific procedural knowledge, or (know-how-to). Followed by socio-cultural knowledge, and then finally, dispositional imperatives.

4.4.1 Subject-specific procedural knowledge

As expected, subject-specific procedural knowledge (or know-how-to) is evident in the 'Do' section of the Understand–Know–Do framework in progress outcomes that identify what students are expected to 'know-how-to' do by the end of Year 10. For example, the following progress outcome implies that there is a proficiency required to compose a text:

> "*I can deliberately select from a range of strategies to compose texts with relatively complex language, structure, content, layout, or vocabulary and without intrusive errors*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 15).

The word "*compose*" implies a procedural action as students are expected to use their knowledge of language, content, layout and vocabulary to create a text; however, this is not explicitly described anywhere in the curriculum. Further, this progress outcome infers that students need propositional knowledge of structures, language, content, layout and vocabulary; however, the nature or content of this 'knowledge-that' is not specifically explained in the curriculum, meaning that teachers are left to interpret what specifically students need to know about these concepts in subject English. The progress outcomes in the 'Do' strand emphasise the need for students to 'know-how-to' make meaning and select from a range of strategies that broadly link to subject English. The following progress outcome mentions strategies for textual analysis:

> "*Deliberately select from a range of strategies (e.g., comparing, contrasting, summarising, linking) to make meaning from texts with relatively complex language, structure, content, layout, or vocabulary*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 15).

The textual strategies of comparing, contrasting, summarising, and linking, are not unfamiliar to subject English and refer to specific strategies for students to analyse a text. However, the vagueness of the word "relatively" in this progress outcome creates questions as to what texts are considered "relatively" complex as there are no explanations or examples of this throughout the learning phase, meaning teachers are left to interpret relativity themselves. Ultimately, there is a gap in providing a clear standard for what constitutes a complex text to ensure students meet the 'Do' strand criteria to move on to the next learning phase. This lack of specificity means teachers use their professional judgement to interpret whether or not a student is ready to move on to the next phase of learning.

Similar to the previous progress outcome, subject-specific procedural knowledge extends to the following progress outcome, where students can:

> *"Select from a range of creative processes to tell stories – big and complex or small and subtle – using written language, oral language, the visual mode, the gestural mode, or a combination of these"* (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 15).

This outcome refers to creative processes that students select to tell stories; it requires that students know a range of creative processes they can select from or are presented with a range of processes. In either scenario, the selections teachers should choose from during this learning phase must be identified in the curriculum. Further, the procedure of writing is mentioned in "*using written language*", which involves students 'knowing-how-to' create written stories. Within this example, students also require 'knowledge-that' of aspects of writing such as style, tone, structure, and grammar, which appear to be subsumed within the phrase "*using written language*". Providing specificity on these aspects and a more detailed outline of the skills and processes involved in storytelling would create a clearer understanding of the knowledge students should have.

4.4.2   Subject-specific propositional knowledge

A key progress outcome identified from the 'Know' strand for its specific reference to language and literature – aspects familiar to subject English – is propositional knowledge that implies students need to know that:

> *"Language works at both denotative and connotative levels"* (Ministry of Education, 2023, p. 14).

This proposition implies an understanding of language as an active tool that serves a variety of functions by stating that "*language works*". Here, the curriculum writers recognise that language is not static but dynamic, operating on multiple levels to convey meaning. "*Denotative*" refers to the explicit meaning of words or language (e.g., car, meaning a four-wheel vehicle used to transport people). In this progress outcome, the Ministry of Education implicitly recognises that language operates at a denotative level, where words convey their primary and objective meanings and implies that students need to know this. Further, "*connotative*" refers to the additional meanings or associations that words carry beyond their explicit definitions (e.g., a rose is associated with, and conventionally symbolises, love, which originated from the Greek mythological story of Aphrodite and Adonis). Ultimately, this progress outcome implicitly acknowledges that language also functions at the connotative level, where words implicitly evoke subjective cultural subtleties, emotions, or implications

and implies that students need to know and understand this. There appears to be a gap in creating a unified understanding about what this progress outcome means by denotative and connotative, leaving teachers to make a professional judgement. This gap could be rectified by specifying that words can be straightforward or have deeper associations to strengthen the propositional knowledge.

The lack of specificity about the knowledge students should know is a common feature in the subject English learning area. This is evident in the following progress outcome from the 'Know' strand:

> "*Text creators choose text structures to create meaning. These structures can be combined and recombined for particular effects*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 14).

This example suggests that the deliberate selection of text structures assumes a central role for students in constructing meaning from a text. Further, this progress outcome highlights the intentional decisions made by text creators to convey information with precision. Further, this progress outcome infers a malleability of language structures, suggesting that students need to know that creators can manipulate structures to achieve specific communicative goals. However, the type of structures (such as paragraphs, chronology, and syntactical choices) used to create meaning are not mentioned and rely on the interpretive skills of specialist subject teachers who are to detect what type of structures are being referred to and that students should know. In essence, the concept of 'knowledge-that' is also evident here within contexts such as structures and effects specific to subject English as students need to know what a structure is, and in fact, many types of structures such as sentence, poetic, essay, and paragraphs. However, these specific structures are not detailed in this phase of learning. Adding more specificity regarding how text creators create effect, such as chronology and the types of structures, would enhance the clarity about what students need to understand. This would support students in knowing that texts are purposefully structured, which would further enhance the student's ability to 'know-how-to' construct a text.

4.4.3   *Socio-cultural knowledge*

Embedded in or connected to the 'knowledge-that' outlined above, the Year 9 and 10 progress outcomes also highlight the importance of socio-cultural knowledge. The progress outcome mentioned below features socio-cultural knowledge as there is an explicit mention of

collaboration. The emphasis on collaboration and engaging in critique with empathy and resilience in this progress outcome from the 'Do' strand:

> "*Create stories in **collaboration** with others, engaging in critique with empathy and resilience (e.g., giving and receiving feedback in productive, informative ways)*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 15, emphasis added).

The progress outcome emphasises a socio-cultural context in collaborative storytelling processes as well as the skills and processes involved in collaborating. Further, this progress outcome infers that collaboration will support students in 'knowing-how-to' use the English language effectively, such as writing, reading, and communication. Collaboration is a skill that links to a 'progressive' ideology that, in this learning phase, involves working with others to develop narratives, whether for creative writing, storytelling, or other forms of collaborative storytelling. How people collaborate is variable and can be influenced by socio-cultural factors such as communication styles, cultural norms (e.g., leadership roles in the family), values and attitudes towards teamwork. For example, some cultures may prioritise individual achievement over group work. In contrast, others may emphasise the importance of a collective effort. Socio-cultural factors are evident in the procedure mentioned in the following phrase, "*engaging in critique with empathy and resilience*", which involves giving and receiving feedback in a way that is both constructive and empathetic. This requires students to have 'knowledge-that' of constructive and empathetic feedback, and is also subjective because of the various factors that may be revealed according to a student's or teacher's understanding of collaboration. Students are expected to want to collaborate and use this 'knowledge-that' to indicate an ability to 'know-how-to' provide helpful and supportive feedback. Here, it is implied that, through the process of collaboration and feedback, students will become more resilient and empathetic. However, there is a lack of mention of how "productive" or "informative" will be measured so students can progress. Teachers are then left to wonder what constitutes as feedback that is productive and informative enough to develop empathy and resilience. Ultimately, for this progress outcome to develop the ability to create stories, there needs to be more specificity regarding the types of feedback and what constitutes "*productive*" and "*informative*".

A further quote also highlights the importance of understanding a diverse range of perspectives and cultures through coming into contact with a diverse range of literature; however, there is some reference to the actual 'workings' of language here, i.e. more specific subject knowledge. For example, the progress outcome from the 'Know' strand

acknowledges that individuals' backgrounds, experiences, and cultural contexts shape their perspectives and, consequently, their writing:

> "*All text creators have biases, which may undermine or enhance their intended purposes. These biases may not be immediately apparent to them or their audience*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 14).

Socio-cultural factors, such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, and cultural background, can influence how writers perceive and interpret the world, leading to biases in their writing. Further, by the end of Year 10, students are expected to know that socio-cultural factors can impact communication effectiveness, as indicated in the mention of 'biases', which are rooted in one's cultural background and can hinder the writer's ability to convey their message effectively or enhance their writing. These biases are often implicit and may go unrecognised by both the writer and the audience. This progress outcome acknowledges the need for students to be aware of writers' biases and approach texts critically. For students to know this, they also need to know that language functions semiotically and how to analyse a text critically; this is not explicitly stated, and we are left wondering if this is the 'knowledge-that' the progress outcome refers to so that students can interpret the purpose of the text and the text creator.

Further examples of socio-cultural knowledge in the progress outcomes for students by the end of Year 10 make specific reference to the world of te ao Māori or Māori perspectives. Including Māori perspectives creates a regulative discourse with the intention of creating a bicultural curriculum. For example, the curriculum prioritises students' knowing New Zealand's cultural context and the importance of students valuing and preserving these narratives. This is highlighted in the following progress outcome from the 'Understand' strand, which refers to the stories of New Zealand as unique treasures which are handed down:

> "*The stories of Aotearoa New Zealand are unique taonga tuku iho*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 14).

In this sense, stories encompass narratives and the histories, traditions, and cultural practices of Māori and other communities in New Zealand. Further, the inclusion of the term "taonga tuku iho" (translating to "treasures handed down from ancestors") acknowledges that students should value and 'Understand' the importance of these stories as cultural treasures that have been passed down through generations. These stories are presented as an important part of New Zealand's cultural identity and heritage and hint at the types of texts students are to study and use in subject English. A type of regulative discourse is evident in this progress outcome as it refers to the moral discourse intended to view order and national identity by

strengthening te ao Māori and Māori perspectives in the curriculum, particularly through the "*stories of Aotearoa New Zealand*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 14).

4.4.4   Dispositional imperatives

Among the three types of knowledge associated with subject English mentioned above, dispositional imperatives are included, further building on the previous sections and suggesting the inclusion of knowledge that goes beyond the scope of the subject. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, this is what Bernstein (2000) terms the regulative discourse of education. By incorporating Māori cultural knowledge into the subject English learning area and explicitly referring to Te Tiriti, there are political and regulative concerns reflected in the '*Phase 4 years 9 and 10 progress outcome by the end of 10*'. For example, the progress outcome from the 'Know' strand:

> "*Aotearoa New Zealand has unique literary traditions shaped by tangata whenua, tangata Tiriti, and those who have come from around Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa. These traditions help me understand and* **contribute to the uniqueness of this place**" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 14, emphasis added).

Further, this progress outcome reflects an awareness of the cultural influences on literary traditions and the role of literature in understanding and contributing to the uniqueness of New Zealand; therefore, it urges students to use this understanding to contribute to the uniqueness of our "*place*". This progress outcome can be seen as a dispositional imperative because it encourages a particular attitude or disposition towards the literary traditions of New Zealand. Specifically, it encourages individuals to recognise and appreciate the uniqueness of these traditions and to understand their role in contributing to this uniqueness. Further, by interacting with the literary traditions of New Zealand, individuals can develop a deeper understanding of the cultural richness of the country. Ultimately, this progress outcome encourages individuals to adopt a disposition of appreciation and engagement with the literary traditions of New Zealand. This regulative statement suggests that subject English is a means to develop a student's ability to contribute to the uniqueness of New Zealand through texts, specifically texts relating to "*tangata whenua, tangata Tiriti, and those who have come from around Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 14). Again, deciding what these literary traditions are is left for teachers to determine.

4.4.5 Summary

This analysis of the *'Phase 4 years 9 and 10 progress outcome by the end of Year 10*' highlights the presence of all three knowledge types identified in the translation device: subject-specific propositional knowledge and subject-specific procedural knowledge alongside socio-cultural knowledge. Dispositional imperatives were also identified, noting the effect of these dispositional imperatives on the curriculum. The '*Phase 4 years 9 and 10 progress outcome by the end of Year 10*' focuses largely on socio-cultural and regulative knowledge to the detriment of identifying explicit subject-specific propositional knowledge and procedural knowledge beyond the broad mention of texts and language; I will return to this in the discussion chapter of this thesis (see Chapter 5).

5   Discussion

There are two ways to view policy (Ball, 2015). The first is as a text, focusing on understanding what the document says and means and how best to implement the policy. Another is to consider policy as discourse. Whether viewing policy documents as a text or as discourse, policy is not neutral but is formed by discourse (Ball, 2015). There is a continuous, interactive process of discourse being formed by, and also forming, social events and structures. For example, the election of new governments and multiculturalism may strongly influence what teachers (as well as other stakeholders) think and believe, which impacts the creation and implementation of policy documents such as the national curriculum. In order to fully understand this notion of evolving discourse, it is essential to understand what is in the Te Mātaiaho curriculum policy and why the form of discourse is represented in the Te Mātaiaho curriculum policy. Analysing the discourse in the content, particularly the discourse around knowledge, in educational policy documents allows us to interrogate what is deemed important. The directed content analysis paved the way for deeper analysis as concepts derived from the literature were confirmed in the data. In the following sections, I discuss each concept evident in the content of Te Mātaiaho. First, I discuss the concepts of knowledge differentiation, and within this, I refer to powerful knowledge. Then, I discuss the following concepts as recontextualisation principles: progressivism, social constructivism, and culturalism. These concepts were prevalent in the literature I reviewed and have proven to be lurking in the content of the curriculum, as highlighted in my findings. This thesis draws on and uses the concepts above as analytical tools to discuss the visible knowledge types in Te Mātaiaho.

5.1   Knowledge Differentiation

Knowledge differentiation is the concept that enables a distinction between social and academic (epistemic) knowledge (Siteine, 2018). While the nature of knowledge has long been debated in epistemology, Emile Durkheim (1926) introduced a distinction between the 'sacred' and the 'profane', defining the former as internalised beliefs and the latter as everyday, mundane matters (as cited in Siteine, 2018). Sociologists of education have used this framework to explain how knowledge is differentiated (Siteine, 2018). For instance,

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Bernstein (2000) categorised knowledge into horizontal and vertical discourses to differentiate between common sense, local knowledge and schooled official knowledge and to theorise about which knowledge is imparted to specific groups of children. Similarly, Young (2008a) proposed that knowledge can be viewed as either 'powerful knowledge' or 'knowledge of the powerful', allowing for a clearer understanding of the outcomes of these distinctions. As outlined in Chapter 3, powerful knowledge refers to knowledge that is considered valuable because of its distinction from everyday experience, its specialist nature, its systematic structure, and its generalisability (Wheelahan, 2007; Young, 2008a; 2008b). Social realist literature also examines the types of knowledge accessible to students in schools (see Maton, 2013; Rata, 2012; Wheelahan, 2012). The concept of knowledge differentiation is valuable for analysing the knowledge discourse in the Te Mātaiaho curriculum and for distinguishing between subject-specific and socio-cultural knowledge. As identified in the analysis of sections of Te Mātaiaho, the translation device revealed a lack of clarity in knowledge types and a conflation of subject-specific knowledge and regulative discourse.

For a curriculum to be robust, Bernstein (2000) suggests it must be well-grounded in powerful knowledge or disciplinary knowledge (such as subject-specific procedural and propositional knowledge). However, the Ministry of Education has developed a subject English curriculum in Te Mātaiaho which lacks clarity in outlining the fundamental concepts of subject-specific knowledge beyond broad progress outcomes. These progress outcomes will require significant interpretive skills derived from subject-knowledge on the part of teachers to reveal what concepts are required to realise the aims. For example, the '*Purpose statement for English*' opening statement implicitly refers to subject-specific concepts such as "***purposes*** *and* ***audiences****, and in a variety of* ***text forms***" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 2, emphasis added). This statement is broad and lacks specificity on what these concepts are and how they are explicit to subject English. The document then loosely incorporates these concepts in the '*Overview of English*' section in an attempt to link them to the subject. The assertion that "*much of the learning in English is iterative and recursive*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p.2) does not outline the concepts which are "*recursive*" and "*iterative*". This statement fails to identify the 'knowledge-that' that students would come to know; rather, it is an indication that learning in English should be iterative and recursive—a spiral curriculum which Bruner (1960) states is a design where basic concepts are introduced first and then develop with layers of complexity. Similarly, the statement "*learning literacy in the context of language and literature is a key component of English, complementing the disciplinary literacies students develop in other learning areas in order to* ***navigate***

knowledge" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p.2, emphasis added) attempts to highlight subject English as a foundational subject for broader knowledge acquisition across disciplines. Literacy is acknowledged and identified as a key super-ordinate concept learnt through the content of language and literature. The phrase "disciplinary literacies" is worth noting as this is a 'knowledge-that' or epistemic aspect (Rata, 2021; McPhail et al., 2023); however, the curriculum emphasises literacy and disciplinary literacies without diving into specific details, indicating literacy as an overarching concept. This statement implies subject English is a pivotal subject for students to be able to develop knowledge in other areas; however, there is a gap in specifying the knowledge students acquire in these domains or the process involved in navigating that knowledge. Rather, the statement is aspirational, drawing on notions of socio-cultural knowledge in the form of statements found in the directed content analysis of Te Mātaiaho (see Chapter 4). Further, "*navigate knowledge*" is ambiguous because it does not specify whether students acquire or are merely observers of knowledge. In fact, it could mean actively avoiding knowledge as students pick and choose what is valuable or not as they "navigate knowledge" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 2).

The concept of "critical analysis" in the 'Do' strand involves a close examination of "*texts in order to interpret them and challenge their construction*" (Ministry of Education, 2023, p. 5). The definition of 'texts' here is broad, and it is assumed this includes written, oral, or visual modes (Ministry of Education, 2023a). The absence of explicit guidance on the disciplinary concepts and skills required for effective critical analysis again raises concerns about the clarity and consistency in implementing this aspect of the curriculum, leaving teachers to grapple with interpretative challenges and the potential for varied implementations. The absence of examples of content, coupled with the OECD's advocacy for disciplinary knowledge (as delineated in Wood & Aitken, 2023), implies a conflict between the diverse 'progressive' and 'traditional' epistemologies inherent in the development of the Te Mātaiaho curriculum and what knowledge is visible. Further, in the progress outcome, "*deliberately select from a range of strategies to compose texts with relatively complex language, structure, content, layout, or vocabulary and **without intrusive errors**"* (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 15, emphasis added), the emphasis on "*without intrusive errors*" implies a mastery of grammar. However, what these "*intrusive errors*" are is not explicitly stated. This raises questions about the foundational skills required for students to be effective meaning-makers as it ignores the foundational skills required for this. Further, reading is essential for analysis, and the lack of specificity regarding the knowledge (both propositional and procedural) of this foundational skill forces teachers to grapple with the

intended meaning of the curriculum as they plan for a robust foundation for students while navigating the socio-cultural complexities presented in Te Mātaiaho. Adding explicit mention of what is considered a complex language, structure, content, layout, or vocabulary would clarify what students are expected to understand and support teachers in ascertaining whether or not students can progress.

The conflation of regulative discourse and practical 'know-how-to' elements suggests a potential lack of coherence in the curriculum design, as exemplified in the following progress outcome from the 'Understand' strand, "*broadening and deepening the intellectual and aesthetic appreciation of story is a worthwhile outcome in itself*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 4). The broad ideals of deepening intellectual and aesthetic appreciation are referred to. Yet, the means to achieve these outcomes remain elusive and are lost behind regulative discourse, such as "*enjoying the stories of others and crafting our own provide us with opportunities to experience different worlds*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 4). While encouraging the enjoyment of stories and the act of crafting narratives, this progress outcome, like many others, could face criticism for being overly aspirational and may indicate potential challenges in maintaining curriculum coherence and clarity on specific learning objectives. The focus on creating socially aware and empathetic students might overshadow specific learning objectives, revealing a more regulative stance without clear instructional guidelines (Bernstein, 2000).

The '*Purpose statement for English*', '*Overview of English*', *and '*Phase 4 years 9 and 10 progress outcome by the end of year 10*' are notably deficient in subject-specific propositional knowledge (knowledge-that), which is fundamental for comprehensive learning experiences and a coherent curriculum (see McPhail, 2020). Instead, the document features 'big ideas', which "are often more broad statements not sufficiently connected to a subject's epistemic structure to provide the necessary conceptual signalling for coherent curriculum design" (McPhail et al., 2023, p. 522). The absence and inconsistency of 'knowledge-that' and 'know-how-to' will likely impede students' ability to grasp the practical application and execution of the concepts or 'big ideas' proposed within subject English because they will not always be clear to their teachers, meaning the 'learning that matters' is open to interpretation.

5.2   Recontextualising Principles

Viewing the curriculum as an Official Recontextualisation Field (ORF) for subject English (Bernstein, 2000) helps explain the trajectory shift for the New Zealand curriculum creators who appear to use ideology to reshape subject English in the curriculum with a bicultural focus. This is evident as ideological concepts such as progressivism, social constructivism, and culturalism vie for influence over the recontextualisation process (from a university discipline to a school subject) and the nature of the curriculum (Hordern, 2021). A process of recontextualisation, referred to by McPhail et al. (2023), suggests that disciplinary knowledge has been distorted by ideology in Te Mātaiaho. As stated earlier, Bernstein's (2000) concept of the official recontextualisation field was the best fit to analyse the current state of specialised subject English knowledge in New Zealand. Accordingly, the concepts which lurk in the framework and design of the proposed subject English curriculum in Te Mātaiaho are discussed below.

5.2.1   Progressivism

The refreshed curriculum document reflects a 'progressive' and aspirational approach to the recontextualisation of the subject English learning area, encouraging students to engage with language and literature across various mediums and for various purposes. Socio-cultural dispositions and aspirations are found in the opening statement, including enjoyment:

> "*In the English learning area, students **study**, **use**, and **enjoy** language and literature, communicated orally, visually, and in writing, for a range of purposes and audiences, and in a variety of text forms*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 2, emphasis added).

Using the terms "*study*" and "*use*" gives more direction to what might be expected to be studied in subject English. The use of "*enjoy*" in relation to learning seems pedagogical and subjective as the aspirational tone assumes a consistent level of enjoyment. Mixing aspirational goals (such as students enjoying literature) with propositional, procedural, and socio-cultural knowledge creates confusion about the knowledge types 'that matter' in the curriculum. It appears that there has been a process of recontextualisation as 'progressive' pedagogies (e.g., student-centred, co-constructors, and meaning-makers) are conflated with the subject-specific knowledge types, such as propositional knowledge being conflated with enjoyment, in the subject English learning area. This is further seen in the 'Understand' progress outcome, "*Enjoying the stories of others*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 4),

which is supposed to represent propositional knowledge (knowledge-that), but instead of providing a clear progress outcome that outlines the 'knowledge-that' students are to have, it is regulative in that it aims to encourage students to enjoy literature. The progress outcomes, as evidenced by strong regulative discourse, often refer to developing a certain disposition rather than outlining the subject-specific content, meaning students lack access to the powerful knowledge which promotes higher-order thinking (see Chapter 2). In place of clear, powerful knowledge, teachers are to develop a student's sense of enjoyment for literature and language by empowering them to seek out their own texts for study. What is evident here is that the role of the teacher is to co-construct or encourage a sense of enjoyment. It is not explicit as to whether teachers are to encourage students to seek out their own texts or whether teachers are to use pedagogy as a tool to get students to enjoy literature; this is open to interpretation. If it is the former, it is to the detriment of students as this means the access to powerful knowledge, such as that in carefully selected literature relevant to the curriculum phase, is open to teachers' interpretation of the abovementioned progress outcome. Ultimately, the shift from outcomes to the Understand–Know–Do framework was an attempt to increase knowledge (Ministry of Education, 2023a). The shift to this framework is an attempt at knowledge differentiation, as evident in the progress outcomes with 'Do' being mostly procedural knowledge. However, the propositional knowledge in the 'Know' and 'Understand' progress outcomes is largely conflated with aspirational and regulative outcomes as opposed to subject-specific outcomes. The analysis of Chapter 4 indicates an increase in knowledge—but not subject-specific propositional knowledge, and a lack of clear procedural knowledge. Instead, Te Mātaiaho is a curriculum rich in a regulative, socio-cultural and dispositional type of knowledge. There is a lack of powerful knowledge, such as propositional knowledge, to empower students to be able to "transcend the limits of their own cultures" (Rata, 2015, p. 115).

The subject English curriculum in Te Mātaiaho is filled with student-centred propositions, aspirational statements and progress outcomes that link to a 'progressive' view of education that reflects the Ministry of Education's vision and the bicultural aspirations for New Zealand's curriculum. For example, "*learning about language and literature from New Zealand and around the world enables students to build literacy, walk in different worlds, access the thoughts and perspectives of others, and make linguistic and cultural connections*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 2). This is an indication of the type of literature to be studied and specifies it should be literature from both "*Aotearoa and around the world*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p.2). The mention of literature from New Zealand is more specific and

allows teachers to select from a range of literature which can be used to provide students with access to powerful knowledge. However, this example does appear to assume that teachers have the disciplinary knowledge related to the subject and what knowledge students should develop about literature. The opportunity for interpretation leaves the 'learning that matters' ambiguous. What is clear is that the 'learning that matters' appears to be learning that provides students with the socio-cultural tools to become advocates for justice, as seen in the Ministry of Education's expectation that subject English gives students the "tools to advocate for ourselves and others" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 4). Further, the progress outcome from the 'Do' strand in the '*Overview of English*' highlights a commitment to critical thinking and developing students who are advocates for others: "*When we consider and respectfully discuss different perspectives on texts with others, we develop new insights*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 5). However, behind this aspirational progress outcome is a lack of 'knowledge-that' and 'know-how-to' to explain exactly how such insights might be developed. Ultimately, the curriculum is student-centred in that in place of subject-specific progress outcomes; it features a significant amount of regulative statements such as, "*reading for pleasure involves choosing a variety of texts (including written texts) based on our own preferences and interests*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 5). The aim here appears to be to promote individual autonomy in text selection, further emphasising a learner-centric approach to subject English. However, we are left wondering how the criticality alluded to will be developed as there is no explicit mention of this. Teachers must make a professional judgement on this, meaning there is potential for different interpretations and inequitable access to this criticality across New Zealand.

The socio-cultural knowledge embedded in the curriculum for subject English is intricately woven into various aspirational and regulative statements across the Understand–Know–Do framework, each emphasising the development of empathetic and resilient students. For example, Māori phrases such as, "Te whai ahunga, te manaaki I ētahi atu me te mau tonu ki te manawaroa" (translating to "Having a purpose and being empathetic and resilient") are strategically placed at the top of each page introducing the different phases of learning within the subject of English learning area (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 15). The curriculum features five phases of learning that reflect the knowledge and skills students should have at each phase, starting from the first six months of school and progressing through the phases until they complete '*Phase 5*' at the end of Year 13. Each learning phase features a different aspiration in Te Reo, then translated to English, that introduces the learning progressions and links the learning area to aspirations embedded in 'progressive'

rhetoric with the aim to cultivate a particular sort of student. For example, one who has a strong sense of identity, and one who is an advocate, is empathetic, is resilient, and "*can shape the future*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 17). The inclusion of these phrases implies that the purpose of the subject is to cultivate empathy and resilience in students and provide further evidence of a student-centred approach which frames the subject within a 'progressive' paradigm and as a tool for personal development rather than as a tool for transforming academic knowledge (Wheelahan, 2012).

The curriculum further emphasises a student-centred approach in the 'Do' strand, illustrated by the directive to "*structure an interpretation that recognises my own positionality and the context in which the text was created and draws on evidence from the text and my knowledge of texts and the world*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 15). The open-ended nature of the term "*structure*" suggests a departure from a prescriptive approach and suggests there is not one correct structure allowing students to construct their own interpretative frameworks or "*structure*". Students appear to be expected to use their "*knowledge of texts and the world*" as a basis for interpretation, which could be limited depending on the extent of their exposure to "*texts and the world*"—particularly if students are encouraged to seek out texts, they know they enjoy rather than those that challenge them beyond their own realities.

5.2.2   Social constructivism

The lack of specificity found in the progress outcomes for the subject English learning area indicates the influence of what Schreiber and Valle (2013) describe as a 'progressive' *social constructivist* approach which emphasises the idea that learners are actively involved in constructing their own understanding and knowledge of the world. Further, as indicated in the findings, a co-constructive approach to the creation of many progress outcomes reveals social constructivism as a recontextualisating principle for subject English. In a co-constructive approach to curriculum, learning is an active process where individuals engage with ideas, make connections to their existing knowledge, and construct their understanding through practices such as inquiry and collaboration with the guidance of the teacher. Specialist readers are prompted to infer the intended concepts and their relevance, as the document does not explicitly identify the powerful knowledge referred to by Young (2008a; 2008b), such as explicit concepts and subject-specific knowledge. However, this flexibility can lead to varying interpretations of these concepts, potentially undermining the clarity of knowledge conveyed

within Te Mātaiaho. Therefore, educators may perceive the fundamentals of subject English learning quite differently. This lack of consistency in interpretation may contradict the objective of ensuring that learners engage in "learning that cannot be left to chance", as the Ministry of Education indicates with the refreshed curriculum (see Ministry of Education, 2023b, p. 5).

The curriculum envisions a social constructivist paradigm in the subject English learning area, emphasising students as active constructors of knowledge. In this case, students are deprived of access to powerful knowledge that can be provided by subject specialists such as teachers, as they are to construct knowledge themselves. Becoming a text critic is emphasised in the following statement, "*as text critics, students come to understand how language and texts work, giving them the power to interpret and challenge texts and to create their own powerful texts*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 2) yet to do this, the acquisition of powerful knowledge such as propositional knowledge and subject-specific understanding is necessary, unless becoming a text critic is informed only by personal opinion. This constructivist approach implies the teacher's role as a facilitator, guiding students toward personal growth. A potential issue here is that the concepts require specialist knowledge, meaning it would be difficult for students to come up with these concepts to be able to construct knowledge and, even further, the powerful knowledge, such as the semiotics of language, to develop higher-order thinking. The findings mentioned in the curriculum suggest that the purpose is to create meaning-makers by providing students with autonomy in content selection (see Chapter 4). However, this may be problematic or overly optimistic in that it is unlikely that students will seek out texts which will challenge them in the process of becoming meaning-makers. The lack of propositional knowledge and, in place of this, the 'progressive' student-centred ideals suggest the curriculum's vision is to develop broad and transferable skills through a student-centred curriculum, as opposed to developing powerful knowledge. The curriculum must provide clarity on what disciplinary knowledge will be required to develop these aspirational skills.

The curriculum also encourages students to connect with global issues. However, there is a need for more specificity on the tools to do this meaningfully; it currently leaves this open to interpretation and chance. My findings suggest the document lacks specificity regarding the "tools" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 2) needed for students to become articulate advocates for global issues, leaving it open for interpretation and suggesting a regulatory influence in shaping values and thoughts within the curriculum. These statements' regulatory nature and progress outcomes imply a prescriptive influence, telling teachers and students

what to think and value. Such content symbolically projects an imagined future shaped by the curriculum's aspirational goals, reflecting a strong regulative discourse (Bernstein, 2000).

5.2.3   Culturalism

Culturalism is the notion that a person's identity and potential are primarily shaped by their culture (Siteine, 2018). This ideology reflects the notion that culture holds a significant and revered position (Openshaw & Rata, 2006). The inclusion of mātauranga Māori helps create a strong bicultural regulative discourse and reveals culturalism as a recontextualising principle for subject English. Te Mātaiaho is largely regulative, with broad statements and progress outcomes, which link to the aspiration of undoing the wrongs of the past. However, this acknowledgement of socio-cultural knowledge, specifically mātauranga Māori, appears to be to the detriment of subject-specific propositional and procedural knowledge about the subject itself because it tends to 'push out' or replace subject-specific knowledge. Socio-cultural knowledge is important for the curriculum; however, as McPhail et al. (2023) suggest, there needs to be an equal focus on propositional and procedural knowledge to support the socio-cultural knowledge.

While the document emphasises the exploration of literature from New Zealand and globally as a means to build literacy and cultural connections, it tends to focus more on Māori knowledge, using the term 'mātauranga Māori' consistently without a parallel term for 'European' or 'Western' knowledge. For example:

> "*Engaging with mātauranga Māori through the creation and interpretation of texts provides opportunities to strengthen knowledge and understanding of te ao Māori and Māori perspectives, and to play a part in giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 2).

The socio-cultural knowledge in this example, with explicit mention of mātauranga Māori and Te Tiriti, infers a political purpose for literature and subject English, meaning they are gateways to cultural understanding with an emphasis on including Māori perspectives. However, there is a lack of powerful knowledge, such as explicit propositional and procedural knowledge, to support the development of the socio-cultural knowledge. Instead, this is "left to chance" as teachers are to use their specialist knowledge to interpret what skills the curriculum refers to in "*the creation and interpretation of texts*". These skills are not explicitly outlined, which could cause a disparity in what skills are taught depending on how a teacher interprets this statement. The following progress outcome from the 'Know' strand is

aspirational with political aims to enhance the visibility of mātauranga Māori in subject English:

> *It places a particular focus on how texts help us to think about our place in Aotearoa, New Zealand, and our own role in giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. It helps us to act as literary critics who make evidence-based evaluations and judgments about texts and their creators* (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 5).

This progress outcome features a particular focus on Te Tiriti o Waitangi, which suggests that local texts help students think about their role in New Zealand. However, the document needs more clarity on how students will act as literary critics and make evidence-based evaluations to think about their role in New Zealand; this leaves room for interpretation and potential gaps in learning.

Te reo phrases and symbols suggest that this is a bicultural document. This is familiar to the curriculum and was a feature of The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC). However, using te reo phrases in each learning area is new and more prominent than in the preceding curriculum. The prominence of te reo Māori carries implicit messages that mātauranga Māori is a vital part of creating a 'progressive' curriculum in New Zealand. The statements that form the section headings ('*Purpose statement for English*', '*Overview for English*' and '*Phase 4 years 9 and 10 progress outcome by the end of 10*') give a formal tone and suggest strong prescriptive and academic knowledge content. However, the statements, progress outcomes, and descriptions in the following sections suggest largely regulative content with aspirational statements that feature a disproportionate focus on mātauranga Māori to the detriment of subject English. 'Traditional' subject English knowledge is less explicit than that of mātauranga Māori; even though mātauranga Māori is vague, it is the most prominent discourse that infers a focus on creating a bicultural curriculum that seeks "*to foster the next generation of Te Tiriti partners by moving beyond the rhetorical notion of 'honouring' Te Tiriti to give effect to it and its principles*" (Ministry of Education, May 2023a, p. 9). The Ministry of Education seeks to make Te Mātaiaho transformational for those who have "*been left behind or situated on the margins*" by deriving content from the preambles and articles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and making a bicultural curriculum with Te Tiriti as the central pillar (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 5). The numerous whakataukī, which appear in te reo and are then translated to English, such as: "*Language is my identity; language is my uniqueness; language is life*", "*Having a purpose and being empathetic and resilient*", "*Seeing ourselves in the wider world and advocating with and for others*", and "Don't forget your roots"

illustrate the aspirational and regulative tone to the document (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 4). Even further, these aspirational statements are used to justify subject English's position in the curriculum; for example, "*creativity and imagination transport us to new worlds*" (Ministry of Education, 2023a, p. 4). These statements appear conversational and inspiring, much like an advertisement slogan suggesting the Ministry of Education is promoting or marketing Te Mātaiaho—more specifically, marketing a bicultural model of subject English.

6   Conclusion

6.1   Implications

The Ministry of Education (2023b) have created Te Mātaiaho, a broad curriculum which raises concerns about equitable implementation across New Zealand, further increasing the potential for educational disparities. The lack of visibility of robust subject-specific knowledge is notable in the process of recontextualisation of subject English. This lack of visibility means Te Mātaiaho fits into a strong regulative discourse rather than being grounded in the epistemic (academic) knowledge recognised in subject English, such as procedural or propositional knowledge (e.g., grammar and explicit codes and conventions like paragraphs).

The increase of socio-cultural knowledge is to the detriment of subject English as there needs to be more specificity on a variety of knowledge types rather than featuring the assumption that socio-cultural knowledge will develop subject-specific procedural knowledge and propositional knowledge. Ultimately, subject-specific knowledge in subject English is left to chance. Further, the curriculum lacks explicit guidance on the knowledge and skills students need to embody, which places the onus on teachers to navigate the ambiguity of the broad, aspirational statements and interpret the content for teaching. There is much work for teachers to do to make propositional and procedural knowledge visible in the curriculum. The curriculum attempts to inform its readers of the 'learning that matters', yet there is a lot of ambiguity as to what this is beyond socio-cultural knowledge; this could hinder teachers' understanding of what learning matters. If this is the case, ensuring that what is taught is consistent across New Zealand could be difficult.

A social realist approach emphasises the importance of students having access to all conceptual frameworks of subjects while also acknowledging that knowledge is socially constructed and subject to change (McPhail et al., 2023). Given this, a social realist perspective allows me to critique the curriculum and challenge the apparent assumption that all students possess the foundational knowledge base developed in everyday scenarios. This assumption is potentially harmful to students' access to academic or epistemic knowledge, as described by Young (2008a; 2008b). As McPhail et al. (2023) explain from a social realist perspective, "knowledge itself is the pivotal element in the role of a school and that which differentiates school education from other social institutions" (p. 522). McPhail et al. (2023)

refer to Muller and Hoadley (2019) to suggest that the "lack of clarity about *what* should be taught at school is part of the obstinate problem of underachievement in education systems" (p. 522). Further, they make a point that is salient to this thesis: The curriculum is a framework that should shed light on the knowledge students have the right to access (McPhail et al., 2023). This thesis questions whether the Te Mātaiaho curriculum can be used to adequately equip students with the foundational knowledge to engage in deep critical reflection and drive systemic change as envisioned by refreshing the national curriculum. The lack of strong specialised subject knowledge could mean students do not have access to the knowledge that allows them to think critically about society and culture (see Young & Muller, 2013).

In turn, these implications suggest further areas of research and questions. These questions include examining how teachers interpret curriculum documents, how curriculum is put into action in the classroom, and perhaps most importantly, what curriculum is received by students. This avenue of inquiries is crucial because to tackle the significant educational disparities in New Zealand, we must do more than make minor adjustments to classroom practices. Curriculum policy research offers a partial solution by investigating how institutional discourses that shape education contribute to these inequalities, as evidenced above through a social realist approach.

6.2   Limitations

Like all research projects, this study has limitations that should be acknowledged to enhance the credibility of its findings (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Firstly, due to the scope of the project, only part of the curriculum documents directly related to subject English were included in the analysis. However, these sections of the Te Mātaiaho document represent only a fraction of the influences on teaching and learning subject English. Additionally, the research focused solely on document analysis, providing no insights into how the curriculum is perceived and implemented by teachers, received by students, or understood by parents, whānau, or the general public. Here, it is important to note that interpretations and implementations often diverge from the original intent outlined, particularly in curriculum policy (Ball, 2015). Due to limitations in time and resources, I could not analyse the entire subject English curriculum, spanning Phases One to Five across Years 1-13. However, the abovementioned limitations highlight areas where future investigation is needed rather than undermining the research.

6.3 Summary

The issue is not the presence of socio-cultural or regulative knowledge in Te Mātaiaho, as there is a welcomed place for this in the curriculum if there is a balance of other knowledge types to empower students, such as propositional or procedural knowledge. However, the issue is that the dominance of socio-cultural knowledge supersedes the position of propositional and procedural knowledge to the detriment of subject English. By this, I mean subject English's rigorous recontextualisation process in Te Mātaiaho creates more confusion and further contestation over the purpose of subject English. Like The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC), Te Mātaiaho adds to the lack of congruence as to what the purpose of subject English is, and defining subject English continues to be a difficult task.

This thesis challenges teachers to think critically about the knowledge they provide students by highlighting the socio-concepts prevalent in the recontextualisation process of subject English in Te Mātaiaho. With the formulation of the refreshed curriculum, the Ministry of Education (2023) has tasked teachers with a complex interpretive process in teaching and learning to detect the content from the curriculum and empower students with powerful knowledge, such as specialist subject knowledge. This thesis indicates that the lack of specificity regarding the subject-specific knowledge in subject English leaves room for interpretation and adaptation, which is to the detriment of students having a well-rounded education. As outlined previously, this means teachers are left wondering what type of knowledge will empower students beyond socio-cultural knowledge.

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