A study exploring the factors that shape and continue to influence the personal epistemologies of student teachers of secondary English

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the formation of personal epistemologies and their impact on the development of professional subject knowledge in beginning teachers of English. The inquiry draws on a small sample of Secondary English student teachers studying for a Postgraduate Certificate of Education qualification (PGCE) at a university in the UK. The research explores the development of student teachers' 'personal epistemologies', or belief systems concerning the nature of knowledge. It emphasises the importance of the affective, as well as the cognitive dimensions of the development of subject knowledge and identity. The thesis shows how autobiographical memory feeds into personal epistemology and argues that as this remembering becomes overlaid with new contexts and pedagogical learning, and permeated by the dominant discourses which surround the subject, a sense of shift emerges, entailing disconnection and reconnection, continuity and disjuncture. These temporal shifts encompass beliefs, pedagogy, context and inter-subjectivity, which meld to provide a sense of dynamism and fluidity in personal epistemology. Whilst such shifting perspectives might generate tension and uncertainty, it is argued that there is also a sense of energy and praxis as new learning emerges. The research identifies the need for spaces which provide opportunities for reflexive and transformative questioning that puts the self at the heart of the inquiry.

It is argued that affect, memory, discourse and cognition are intertwined in complex ways in the development of student teachers' personal epistemologies, and that it is important for teacher educators and policy makers, as well as for student teachers themselves, to understand the complexity of these entanglements and their role in the development of subject knowledge for teaching.

The research employs a paradigmatic shift from interpretive, constructivist research methods to post-structural methodology in order to engage with the complexity and multiplicity of the voices emerging.

Hope is identified as a powerful concept running through student teachers' personal epistemologies. However, there is also evidence of what might be termed the 'limitations of hope' and the shutting down of hopeful voices through negative discourse. This research argues for student teachers' hopeful voices to be heard, listened to, and explored as part of the multiplicity of voices emerging in the process of becoming a teacher.

The outcomes of this research offer teacher educators conceptual resources with which to examine the process of professional knowledge development. Although the focus is on the personal epistemologies of beginning teachers of secondary English, the conceptual framework underpinning this study could be utilised to explore personal epistemology more widely.

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Figures

Glossary

A Level	Advanced Level Examination – usually taken in Key Stage 5
BERA	British Education Research Association
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
ELL	English Language Learner – United States of America
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education. The main school qualification, usually taken in Key Stage 4. Schools are ranked according to the grades pupils achieve. In the past this assessment has been made on the number of C and above grades but from 2017 this assessment is based on grades 4-5 and above.
GTP	Graduate Training Programme – an employment-based route to gain Qualified Teacher Status whilst working in schools. This has been replaced by the School Direct programme
GTTR	Graduate Teacher Training Registry - responsible for student applications from graduates (and those about to graduate) to providers of Initial Teacher Training in the United Kingdom
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
KS2	Key Stage 2: Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 – pupils usually aged 7-11
KS3	Key Stage 3: Years 7, 8 and 9 – pupils usually aged 11-14
KS4	Key Stage 4: Years 10 and 11 – pupils usually aged 14-16
KS5	Key Stage 5: Years 12 and 13 – pupils usually aged 16-18
LEA	Local Education Authority
Mentor	Designated support for student teacher within school or college subject department
NACCCE	National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education
NATE	National Association for the Teaching of English
NAWE	National Association of Writers in Education
NCTL	National College for Teaching and Leadership
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher

NWP	National Writing Project – United States of America
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Study
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate of Education – one year, graduate level award leading to Qualified Teacher Status.
Professional Mentor	Designated manager of mentors and student teachers in a school or college in partnership with a training provider
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
SEN	Special Educational Needs
School Direct	A one year school-led route to gain Qualified Teacher Status. It is run by a partnership between a lead school, other schools and an accredited teacher training provider.
SCITT	School-Centred Initial Teacher Training

Chapter 1   Introduction

This thesis explores the formation of personal epistemologies and their impact on the development of professional subject knowledge in a small cohort of beginning teachers of English following the Post-Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) programme at a university in the UK. It explores the development of student teachers' 'personal epistemologies', or belief systems concerning the nature of knowledge. While definitions vary, personal epistemologies may broadly be understood as 'the thoughts and beliefs of students concerning the nature of knowledge and the way they acquire it [including] the affective and cognitive dimensions of the subject' (Therriault and Harvey, 2013:444).

1.1 Personal history, affect and what matters in English

Foucault (1994:323) writes that curiosity 'evokes the care one takes of what exists and what might exist'. This image of being caught, hopefully, between what has been and what might be, offers a powerful insight into the uncertain process of becoming an English teacher. It speaks of the interest that motivates, and the remembered enjoyment from personal histories, which provide a hopeful momentum. Threaded through this process of becoming, is affect, which Hemmings (2005, cited in Gannon and Davies, 2007:89) argues, 'broadly refers to states of being rather than to their manifestation or interpretation as emotions'.

The process by which student teachers develop their professional identities, which, at secondary level is inextricably bound into subject, has been widely researched (Brindley, 2015; Britzman, 1991, 2007; Ellis, 2003, 2009; Gannon, 2012; Green, 2006; Goodwyn, 2002, 2004, 2011; Goodwyn and Findlay, 1999, 2003; Hanley and Brown, 2017; Marshall, 2000; Stevens, Cliff Hodges, Gibbons, Hunt and Turvey, 2006; Stronach, 2010; Stronach, Corbin, McNamara, Stark, and Warne, 2002). However, as an English teacher, PCGE Secondary English tutor and researcher, I was particularly interested in the personal epistemologies that student teachers brought with them onto the PGCE course: what they considered to have value in English, and why. I was also interested in exploring the part played by the affective dimension (Gannon and Davies, 2007:87) in shaping personal epistemologies.

Gannon (2012:436) notes that:

> University teacher educators might foreground the emotional, relational material as well as the intellectual labour of teaching practice, from the first day that students spend in their university-organised practicums to their move into classrooms on graduation, rather than buying into the pretensions of standards discourses that purport to map practice as a rational linear progression through levels of professionalism. This is not to frighten students away from teaching but to keep open other ways of talking about teacher subjectivities and professional practice.

I wished to explore 'other ways of talking about' becoming an English teacher which did not silence or suppress the affective impulses that had brought applicants to the PGCE. My experiences as a PGCE tutor suggested that these motivating factors drew on beliefs about subject which were clearly of importance to them. (N.B. Contextual information about the Postgraduate Certificate in Education can be found in Appendix R.)

My interest in personal epistemology was further motivated by my own experiences. I began my career as a secondary English teacher in 1980. However, in 2001, I began working as a Year 5 teacher in a primary school and I found the experience strangely unsettling. In secondary schools I had worked alongside colleagues where we had built a shared construction of English. However, the English I was teaching in my primary classroom, three years after the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1998), felt very different. Its emphasis on a skills-based approach to literacy and narrowly defined pedagogy were embedded within school policy and practice, and felt constraining. The disequilibrium I felt was compounded by an insistent voice in my head reminding me: *You're a secondary English teacher*. It became clear to me that I was finding it difficult to gain entrance to this particular community of practice. I had crossed the

boundaries of the primary and secondary phase and was dealing with unknowns on the one hand, and my personal history and subject beliefs, on the other.

This experience raised questions for me about how personal epistemologies are formed and how flexible they might be. I wondered how far student teachers' sense of subject identity might be shaped or constrained by constructions of subject at national level (Goodwyn and Findlay, 2003; Goodwyn, 2004). What happens when their personal epistemologies of subject are challenged, or what they believe to be important in subject is not seen as important by their school or department? I was also becoming increasingly aware of my own role in this research as a teacher educator. Britzman (2007:8) identifies a paradox at the heart of teacher education:

> That we grow up in school and that we return there as adults,
> that we bring to teacher education our own history of learning,
> only to meet the teacher educator's history of learning.

My thinking about this issue, meant that one of the threads of inquiry that courses through this study, and which gains momentum, is an analysis of my role in working within this paradox and hearing the multiplicity of voices that includes my own.

In secondary English education there has been a significant and unrelenting shift towards performativity (Ball, 2003) where the individual voice of teacher and pupil appear to be lost. Aoki (1996, cited in Neelands, 2004:14-15) describes this situation with sensitivity and humanity:

> What we see here is the conventional linear language of 'curriculum and instruction', of 'curriculum implementation', of 'curriculum assessment'. This is the world in which the measures that count are pre-set; therefore ordained to do the same – to dance the same, to paint the same, to sing the same, to act the same … where learning is reduced to 'acquiring' and where

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'evaluating' is reduced to measuring the acquired against some pre-set standardised norm. This metron, this measure and rhythm, is one that, in an overconcern for sameness, fails to heed the feel of the earth that touches the dancing feet differently for each student.

The simplicity of Aoki's words suggests what has been submerged in the tidal surge of educational initiatives, guidelines and statutory rulings. This same climate of performativity also constrains teacher educators. In view of this, perhaps it is timely that this study, borne of curiosity and configured through care and hope, sets out to explore the individuals and their beliefs at the heart of the learning endeavour, myself included.

1.2 Research aims

Britzman (2007:2) argues that the idea of development in teacher education remains 'conceptually underdeveloped'. My experiences as a teacher educator have highlighted the tensions in a system that charts linear development from inadequate to outstanding. This linear progression also encompasses subject knowledge development. From my reading and my experiences as a PGCE tutor, I recognised that there were intertwining threads of inquiry that I wished to follow. I wanted to discover what English meant to this generation of secondary student teachers. How were their personal epistemologies of subject constructed and how did this process continue? How did their understanding of English as a subject help to construct and shape their interpretation of the curriculum? In what ways might the officially constructed versions of English be at odds with their personal epistemologies of subject and what might be the implications of this for continued subject development? Built into this questioning were issues of development in subject knowledge and what this might look like. These questions, and the thinking that emerged, provided the key focus for this small scale qualitative study and enabled me to construct the following overarching research questions:

What are the factors that shape and construct the personal epistemologies of student teachers of secondary English? How do these factors contribute to their understanding of their subject and their subject beliefs? What are the implications for the development of their subject knowledge for teaching?

The empirical investigation on which the thesis is based involved a small number of student teachers on the PGCE course in Secondary English between 2011 and 2016. The study is divided into two parts. In Part One, student teachers' personal narratives, experiences, recollections, attitudes and values concerning English were collected via a range of written tasks and course writing and evaluation. The themes which emerged from this first phase, such as the importance of affect, resistance to new pedagogies, and the nature of the PGCE as a liminal space, fed into Part Two, which explored the personal epistemologies of three students via in-depth interviews. One of the most important insights to emerge from the study, as the research progressed, was the significance of contradiction, uncertainty and liminality in students' experiences and values during the PGCE course. This is turn led to a shift of theoretical emphasis, from a broadly interpretive position, to one that draws on concepts from post-structuralist theory. These latter theories provided resources for understanding contradiction and shifts, not merely as problems or impediments to the development of robust subject knowledge, but as potentially productive sites for rethinking and refashioning personal epistemologies in relation to practice and ongoing experience.

1.3 Thesis outline

Chapter Two begins by exploring the current context for this study and ongoing education reform in England. It explores English teachers' constructions of subject and considers the literature charting the development of thinking about personal epistemology including issues of affect. The place of English in the curriculum is critically examined from an international and historical perspective, considering issues of subject pedagogy and debates concerning standards and subject content. Definitions of subject knowledge are discussed and consideration is given to how

subject knowledge for teaching is developed. This chapter concludes by exploring the potential for developing subject knowledge through creative practice.

Chapter Three explores how the reading of Bourdieu, Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari, and Foucault empowered the researcher's shift in thinking from constructivist, interpretive research methods to encompass post-structural approaches explored through narrative inquiry. Through this shift, the conceptual features of the theoretical framework of this thesis: space, temporality, inter-subjectivity, meaning and text, dominant discourses and hope, assume an indeterminacy which enables an engagement with complexity. Derrida's use of *aporia* to recognise the difficulty or uncertainty in taking the next steps in the reading of a text is recognised as a productive and generative device in the analysis of the in-depth interviews in Part Two of the data sample in Chapter 8.

Chapter Four begins with a summary of the data collected. The type of data, how it was elicited and collected, details of the sample population size and the number of respondents, are provided in overview. Issues of validity and ethics, including informed consent, raised by Part One of the data sample, are examined. The decision to collect additional data in the form of one-to-one interviews which comprise Part Two of the data sample is discussed. The chapter concludes by exploring issues of validity, voice, representation and ethics raised by Part Two of the data sample.

Chapter Five analyses Part One of the data sample. It examines student teachers' personal narrative writing to consider the influences that have shaped their personal epistemologies. The analysis then draws on PGCE course writing and research questionnaires to explore the expectations of student teachers as they begin their PGCE course and how these expectations may be challenged or reaffirmed as the course progresses. The data raises questions about how student teachers continue to develop their subject knowledge once on the course. Part One of the data sample concludes by considering the researcher's role as a teacher

educator and examines approaches to opening up more indeterminate and productive spaces for student teachers to develop subject knowledge.

Chapter Six discusses the ideas emerging from Part One of the data analysis. It explores the idea of paradox inherent in the PGCE learning and assessment design. Student teachers' ideas about what is important in English are discussed alongside the notion of affect and the commodification of subject knowledge. The chapter concludes by considering the challenges facing subject knowledge development which connects with, and is meaningful within, student teachers' personal epistemologies.

Chapter Seven explores the researcher's learning journey and provides detailed theoretical consideration of the researcher's decision to gather further data in the form of one-to-one in-depth interviews. It explores the methodological shift from phenomenological interpretive approaches to research methods informed by post-structural theory.

Chapter Eight analyses Part Two of the data sample utilising narrative inquiry approaches and providing a detailed commentary and analysis of three in-depth interviews: Joseph, Alison and Tony.

Chapter Nine discusses the findings from Part Two of the data analysis utilising a conceptual framework described in Chapter 3. It explores the role of autobiographical memory in the development of personal epistemology and considers the shifts and dynamism of epistemology as memory becomes overlaid with pedagogy within different contexts. Dominant discourses surrounding English as a subject are examined with a focus on reading and reading families. The chapter concludes by considering the inherently ambiguous nature of personal epistemology, recognising the need for an ethical approach to exploring personal epistemologies which pays heed to multiplicity and inter-subjectivity.

Chapter 10 considers the theoretical contribution to learning and the contribution to theoretical understanding of this thesis.

Chapter 2   Literature Review

2. 1   The current context for teaching English in England

In UK educational policy over the past twenty years, change has become a fact of life for all teachers of the core subjects of English, Maths and Science. However, the current education reforms coupled with what can only be described as a crisis in confidence over the assessment of English, have engendered a degree of uncertainty that appears to be unprecedented. A number of factors have contributed to this, perhaps the most crucial being the ongoing political impact on the educational landscape. A Labour government with a focus on raising educational standards through national policy directives was replaced in 2010 by a Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition followed by a Conservative government in 2015, each with its own substantial change agenda. Since then the scale and breadth of change in all aspects of education has been remarkable. Further details of the education reforms since 2010 which have impacted upon those training to teach can be found in Appendix B.

This particular whirlwind of change is recent and ongoing, but English teaching has been at the centre of political micromanagement for much longer than this. Since 1998 and the introduction of the *National Literacy Strategy* (DfEE, 1998) into primary schools and *The Framework for Teaching English, Years 7,8 and 9* (DfES, 2001) English teachers have been swept along on a veritable deluge of curriculum information and instruction, mainly to do with pedagogy. The array of initiatives has been bewildering at times and researchers have identified the subsequent impact as the *de-skilling* of teachers (Fang, Fu, and Lamme, 2004; Westbrook, 2007). That approaches were too prescriptive was certainly recognised by the government as early as 2003 and the guidance document *Excellence and Enjoyment* (DfES, 2003a) provided exhortations to primary phase practitioners to implement more creative and contextually informed approaches to curriculum development. This document also recognised the importance of networking and collaboration in supporting teachers to develop their own pedagogic knowledge and understanding of curriculum development:

It is not enough for Government to set challenges. It must work actively – with local government and others – to support schools in making the vision a reality. The challenge is to do this in an empowering, rather than a directive, way. LEAs and consultants are an important part of the picture; and we know that resources from Government are critical to supporting primary schools (DfES, 2003a:71).

For English teachers in the current context, this support was suddenly withdrawn in 2011. The National Strategies were wound up, consultants dispersed and familiar online resources vanished. The Assessment for Learning Strategy (DCSF, 2008) had brought with it an approach to assessing pupils' progress in English, Maths and Science, based on the National Strategies curriculum guidance and many secondary English departments continued to use this approach for some time after it was withdrawn. Schools developed new approaches to assessment but this took on an individual, ad hoc appearance as they waited for the detail of new grading scales for GCSE. The aftermath of this sweeping change presented a strong impression of schools working in a vacuum as they adjusted to the lack of centralised directives regarding pedagogy and assessment, while the imperative for pupils to achieve continued to grow ever more relentless.

We might ask where subject support for English teachers, which had been deemed as integral to subject development in previous years, might now be found? However one might critique that support and its effects, the removal is significant. Added to this is the impact of the 'Rarely Cover' policy emerging from Workforce Re-modelling (DfES, 2003b). One of the, perhaps unintended, outcomes of 'Rarely Cover', was that teachers found it more difficult to leave school to attend Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses. CPD is now often delivered in-house and frequently through coaching programmes linked to school improvement. This raises implications for teachers and the continuing development of their subject knowledge, something I was keen to explore through this research.

A further development which might compound this issue is the government's desire to see more teachers trained by schools rather than universities (DfE, 2011a). In the past, this has been a popular, although not extensive, model of teacher training, but its expansion raises questions about the nature of wider subject knowledge development, if it is to be constrained within the context of the training school.

2.2   Education reform in England

In 2010 the coalition government announced a review of the national curriculum in England. The timescale for the review allowed for interested parties to engage in debate and, in 2012, I attended a Westminster Forum to discuss the proposed English curriculum. What I found interesting was the strong sense of dissonance between those presenting their views: the experts in their field, representing the breadth of the subject - and those charged with developing policy.   The presentations of those practising in the field of education were imbued with a strong sense of conviction about what mattered in the teaching of English and it was clear that the *affective dimension* of the subject was important to them. However, what emerged from the policy makers was noticeably lacking this sense of subject belief. Whilst reflecting on this sense of disconnection, I was struck by Foucault's idea of periods of history or 'epistemes', each of which had their particular world view which would not necessarily be understood by anyone outside that period.   Danaher, Schirato and Webb (2000:15) in exploring this concept, describe Foucault's reaction to a passage from a book by Borges, recounted in the preface to *The Order of Things:*

> The thing that Foucault reacted to in the Borges story was the
> idea that people in another time and place may have understood
> things altogether differently from us – and more than that; they
> made sense of the world in ways we couldn't possibly imagine.

If history provides a subjective perspective through which to view events (Foucault, 1984:90), this lack of 'meeting of minds' comes back to an understanding of what

matters in the subject, to whom, and why. The opening speaker at the forum was the Chair of an organisation called *Heart of English* (Heart of English, 2013). The name is significant, conjuring the vitality that pumps the life-blood into the subject. All the speakers were driven by a sense of what the subject meant to them. All were experienced practitioners who were drawing on their epistemological understanding of what was important and this was formed in 'another time and place' (Danaher, et al. 2000:15) to that of the policy makers.

Schools in England began teaching the latest national curriculum (DfE, 2017) in September 2014. The content of the new orders has predictably caused much debate. Issues identified include: prescriptive approaches to teaching grammar especially at Key Stage 2, the narrowing of the range of literature offered and what has been excluded, the lack of recognition of spoken language at the heart of the curriculum, and the lack of drama, media and moving image in the programmes of study. Furthermore, recent years have seen a crisis of confidence developing in external examination assessment procedures, which has not been alleviated by the introduction of revised GCSEs and a new assessment framework in English.

It could be argued that these are difficult times for new entrants to the profession as they navigate expectations borne of previous histories and the realities of new contexts. The current issues in assessment in English might be seen as an indication of this disjuncture. However, it is these points of dissonance where common interpretation is lacking, which provide the opportunity to trouble and unsettle expectations and assumptions.   Thus the job of a teacher educator is to help student teachers question their understanding of what matters in English and use the points of disconnection as a way into critical understanding that acknowledges complexity and conflict. In doing so, understanding of development shifts from a linear progression to a more fluid understanding of interaction between past and present in the re-working of an uncertain future.

2.3   What matters in English: student teachers' construction of subject and subject identity

Whilst the past thirty years saw an expansion in English-related subjects that might be studied at Key Stage 4 and 5 (Blake and Shortis, 2010), under the reform to GCSE and A level, this choice is beginning to narrow. Creative Writing has been removed from the A level offer, despite considerable campaigning (NAWE, 2017), along with the Culture and Communication A level (AQA, 2017). However, the range of English-related modules at degree level is wide, allowing students to pursue personal interests. Blake and Shortis (2010:31) note that there is no one English degree which provides perfect preparation for teaching English in secondary schools. They also note the preponderance of English Literature degrees amongst PGCE student teachers with the next most common degree being combined English Literature and Language. This finding was borne out by my own experiences as a PGCE Secondary English tutor. The question is: why are so many Literature students drawn to teaching English?   McGuinn (2005:206) identifies this as the 'romantic' tradition', enshrined in the Report of the Cox Committee (1989) as the 'personal growth' model of English:

> A 'personal growth' view focuses on the child: it emphasises the relationship between language and learning in the individual child, and the role of literature in developing children's imaginative and aesthetic lives (Cox, 1991:22, cited in McGuinn, 2005).

That many applicants to the English PGCE arrive with this view of English is borne out by personal statements and their comments at the interview, which focus on their love of reading and their understanding of English as a creative force which is transformational in some way (Goodwyn, 2002; Stevens, 2011:21). These beliefs will have been formed from their personal histories, cultural background and educational experience and they are bound up in their sense of personal identity. Burley (2004:141) identified the relationship between subject identity and personal identity and recognised re-workings of personal philosophy of subject also 'involve

shifts in personal perception of identity in relation to the discipline and subject'. New teachers of English are meeting challenges to their subject identity, as what they are expected to deliver now as secondary school English teachers, is not necessarily what they experienced themselves as pupils, or what they have enjoyed about the subject. The debate about English subject identity and Literacy has been well-documented by Goodwyn (2002; 2004) and Goodwyn and Findlay (1999; 2003). Indeed, Green (2006:111) notes that 'dichotomous paradigms of English (or rather Englishes) now exist in schools and colleges'.

If Literature has become no more than a vehicle for textual analysis and genre study (Ellis, 2003; Daly, 2004; McGuinn, 2005), then what of the student teachers who arrive armed with a love of literature and reading, and an understanding of English teaching embedded in the romantic tradition of the transformative powers of personal engagement with literature and the arts? Green (2006:111) refers to this need to adapt academic subject knowledge as a 'reverse transition', from university to school and recognises that this process of 'realignment' can be difficult. It is bound up with personal epistemologies of the subject. My experience as a PGCE tutor revealed that occasionally the reality of teaching school English fell so far short of the expectation, that students would abandon the dream and leave the course. This occurrence was identified in the survey carried out by Blake and Shortis (2010) with regard to Literature degree students and succinctly expressed by Ellis (2003:4) who asks: 'If school English becomes a place where your "love of literature" dare not speak its name, do you decide to do something else?'

Green (2006:113) recognises that the teacher of English remains a student of English. With the enormous breadth of subject knowledge to cover, how could this be otherwise? A sense of wanting to teach English to continue studying it is prevalent in personal statements on applications to the English PGCE but once again there is a tension to be addressed. The desire to continue studying English often translates into studying *literature* and in ways that enrich and enhance the personal construct of the subject (Goodwyn, 2002; Ellis, 2003). This might be a far cry from teaching non-fiction writing with a Year 8 class. This desire might also not

encompass studying grammar and linguistic terminology, or the study of poetry, all common areas of concern identified by PGCE tutors (Blake and Shortis, 2010). Even where a student teacher might find her/himself teaching a favourite text, author or genre, the pedagogical approach to meet the demands of an assessment-driven curriculum might suggest little in common with a personal understanding of what studying literature entails (Turvey, 2005). Stevens, Cliff Hodges, Gibbons, Hunt and Turvey, (2006:104) recognised that 'tensions are felt as the student teachers carry forward their personal histories and enter the particular cultural and historical locations of schooling where they encounter the many discourses of education'.

However, their research also identified the part that supportive departments could play in 'mediating' the impact of curriculum policy. They conclude on a more positive note, recognising that where student teachers identified themselves as learning from and with their pupils, there was still a palpable sense of excitement at the creative possibilities of English:

> To see yourself as a learner has profound implications for the ways English, as a school subject, attracts new teachers to the profession and retains them. It must remain 'open-ended', an intellectual space where risks are possible and where the outcomes are not pre-determined (Stevens et al., 2006:105).

This need to 'transform' subject knowledge into curricular and pedagogic knowledge (Daly, 2004; Burley, 2005; Turvey, 2005; Green, 2006; Stevens et al., 2006) requires not only an understanding of the nature and purpose of the subject English in the school curriculum but also an awareness of the context in which they are teaching and of the interface between the curriculum and pupils at the heart of it (Turvey, 2005; Green, 2006; Stevens et al., 2006). Green (2006:113) describes the process by which student teachers:

> … enter into a reconstructive dialogue with their degree level knowledge and in the light of this … come to an understanding of

how these linked but distinct knowledges can be made to co-exist and interrelate with one another within effective teacherly practice.

The idea of linking these 'knowledges' is raised by Daly (2004:193) who, instead of seeing a problem in student teachers' love of reading and literature (Goodwyn, 2002), identifies a 'continuum' where the student teacher's personal history and knowledge of what is important in English helps them to:

… resist the pressure to replace what they know to be the point of reading anything, with short cuts to `assessable' skills for pupils to perform as evidence that they are `learning' something.

Daly (2004), Green (2006), Stevens et al. (2006), all identify shifts in subject knowledge in which student teachers are actively engaged and which is 'generative' (Daly, 2004:196). It is the possibility of seeing English through fresh eyes with new perspectives that excites student teachers (Daly, 2004; Stevens et al., 2006) because their experiences open up new learning that builds on their existing subject knowledge.   How far such shifts are assimilated and embraced within personal epistemologies of English, remains a significant question. Stevens, et al.*'s* (2006) identification of the importance of a supportive English department might be a telling factor in how far such subject knowledge development becomes both generative and sustained.

What is emerging through the review of the literature, is a strong sense of the way in which English teachers might personally identify with their subject and a consideration of how their beliefs about English interact with their pedagogical learning during the training year. What is the personal knowledge that student teachers bring to their training and how is that knowledge shaped? Accordingly, the next section of this literature review will explore conceptual understandings of personal epistemology. A starting point is to consider the more general term of teacher belief.

2.4   Teachers' personal epistemologies

Kagan (1992:65-66) notes that:

> Teacher belief is a particularly provocative form of personal knowledge that is generally defined as pre or in-service teachers' implicit assumptions about students, learning, classrooms and the subject matter to be taught.

Kagan's use of the word 'provocative' is interesting. On the one hand it could suggest a viewpoint that is strongly held and the personal source from which it emanates endows it with qualities of challenge or confrontation simply because it has not been moulded to anodyne, smooth and untroublesome blandness. On the other hand, this personal knowledge might be provocative because it is fed by the dominant discourses that permeate perceptions about subject and learning so that they appear to become irrefutable truths.   In either sense, personal beliefs might be likened to the stimulation that feeds a purpose, or the fire within. Kagan (1992:66) goes on to refer to the scope of the research into teacher beliefs as a 'riotous array' because of the many and varied topics emergent in the research field. Fives and Buehl (2010:470) elaborate on this array of research to include teachers' beliefs into knowledge and knowing – their *epistemic* beliefs. They cite Richardson (1996, in Fives and Buehl, 2010:472) who defines teacher beliefs as 'psychologically held understandings, premises, and propositions about the world that are felt to be true'. Fives and Buehl (Ibid.) note that such beliefs may be articulated and examined, or implicit and rarely subject to challenge or question. The breadth of the research field into teacher beliefs is wide and encompassing and, as such, overlaps with research into teacher knowledge. It is the point where these fields intersect that I am particularly interested in exploring in this thesis: the development of personal epistemologies of subject.

Hofer and Pintrich (1997:88) define personal epistemological development as:

> How individuals come to know, the theories and beliefs they hold
> about knowing, and the manner in which such epistemological
> premises are part of and an influence on the cognitive processes
> of thinking and reasoning.

Hofer and Pintrich (1997) and Feucht and Bendixen (2010) provide useful overviews of the research into personal epistemologies, beginning with Perry's (1970) developmental sequence which identified the 'abstract structural aspects of knowing and valuing' (Perry, 1970, cited in Hofer and Pintrich, 1997:90). Perry's thinking drew on stages of personal epistemology beginning with 'Dualism', progressing to 'Multiplicity', then 'Relativism' and finally 'Commitment in Relativism'. Following a similarly developmental line of thought, King and Kitchener (1994, cited in Feucht and Bendixen, 2010:6) described personal epistemology as developing through three levels: 'pre-reflective thinking', 'quasi-reflective thinking' and finally, 'reflective thinking'. Khun, Cheyney and Weinstock (2000:311) also propose a developmental cognitive scale which begins with 'realist thinking'. This is followed by 'absolutist thinking' and, as objective knowledge is replaced by subjective, the scale moves to 'multiplist ways of knowing' and finally to an 'evaluatist' dimension where a balance between objective and subjective thought is achieved. They acknowledge, however, that while some findings revealed an orderly progression across the levels, transitions were not always smooth, demonstrating that linear development can be problematic and that ways of knowing can overlap and seemingly contradict (Ibid.:324). These frameworks focus on ideas of cognitive development from absolute, positivist ways of thinking where knowledge is either right or wrong, to understandings of multiplicity and uncertainty and co-constructivist approaches to understanding and learning, where individuals can make judgements within a relativist context.

With regard to how such personal epistemologies might translate to the classroom, Feucht and Bendixen (2010:7) note that:

Absolutist teachers may tend to perceive teaching as transferring knowledge from teachers as experts to students as naïve and passive learners, while evaluatist teachers may promote learning activities in which students collaboratively construct knowledge and are expected to justify their knowledge commitments.

This view also draws on the gendered work of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986 cited in Hofer and Pintrich, 1997:95-96) who identified a scale from 'received knowledge' to 'constructed knowledge' and Baxter Magolda's (1992 cited in Hofer and Pintrich, 1997:98) model which identified a scale from 'absolute knowers', 'transitional knowers', to 'independent knowers' and 'contextual knowers'. These ways of knowing each carry assumptions about learning and how it is acquired.

Whilst the studies mentioned so far have concentrated on developmental stages, Schommer-Aikins (2004) conceptualized personal epistemologies as a system of beliefs that could exist more or less independently and progress at different rates. This recognised the complexity of belief systems and the impact on the way students learned and how teachers approached instruction in the classroom. She also notes that such beliefs are subtle yet ubiquitous (Schommer-Aikins, 2004:27). The idea of the 'ubiquity' of such beliefs, I feel, is relevant to my study.

Hofer and Pintrich (1997:89) note that whilst Perry's (1970) work sparked significant and interrelated lines of research, there continues to be little agreement about personal epistemologies as a construct. In their overview of the research they attempt to identify the common elements in all the studies, into four dimensions:

The nature of knowledge:

- Certainty of knowledge
- Simplicity of knowledge

The nature of knowing:

- Source of knowledge
- Justification for knowing

This categorisation recognises the complex interrelationship between the individual and their beliefs about knowledge, and contextual issues about how knowledge is gained. These ideas are built upon in later studies which have considered personal epistemologies developing as a result of 'complex socio-cognitive learning' (Johnson, Woodside-Jiron and Day, 2001; Therriault and Harvey, 2013) and described by Newell, VanDerHeide and Wynhoff-Olsen (2014:97) as a 'constellation of beliefs'.   Muis, Bendixen and Haerle (2006) conclude that individuals begin to develop general epistemic beliefs in non-academic contexts which are initially separate from academic epistemic beliefs developed through education experiences. These academic epistemic beliefs gradually become domain-specific although the relation between the two may be complex. This is a further area that I wish to explore through my study: the way in which early influences shape personal epistemologies of subject.

However, it seems as I consider my personal writing (Appendix A) and my reading into this area, that the notion of progressive development in epistemic beliefs is indeed complex and problematic. My thinking as I began this thesis, was that early formative experiences of what might loosely be termed 'subject', remain with you as a shaping and guiding force. However, the more I consider this relationship, especially within Hofer and Pintrich's (1970) dimensions of knowledge and knowing, the more uncertain and shifting these influences appear to be. Goodwyn's (2002:77) exploration of secondary English student teachers' professed 'love' of reading notes that it is likely that their narrative accounts:

> … consciously disguise a much more ambivalent relationship with reading. It is also probable that some are retrospective realignments and so rather more unconsciously construct a love

of reading from what was in reality a less "passionate" relationship.

In much the same way, my reading has opened up a new perspective on my writing and thinking and I realise that the language we use to construct texts is slippery and impossible to grasp with certainty. The *truths* that texts appear to offer with clarity may, in fact, become opaque and complex when examined from a new perspective. Accordingly, I am beginning to realise that the notion of this unstable relationship with the past is, in itself, a generative force leading me to question the dominant discourses surrounding English and consider what I might previously have taken for granted.

Muis, Bendixen and Haerle (2006) explore some of these ideas as they discuss how schools' pedagogical epistemic knowledge might conflict with academic epistemic beliefs in higher education because these beliefs are supported by tacit assumptions about the nature of the subject, which might be contradictory. Therriault and Harvey (2013) continue this thinking, exploring the epistemological beliefs that pre-service teachers hold and the relationship of these beliefs to the knowledge they develop during their programme of teacher training in university and in schools. Their study found conflicting positions attributed to beliefs generated through subject-specific study in university and those generated through practical training in schools. They draw on Hofer (2004b) to note that personal epistemology:

> … refers to the thoughts and beliefs of students concerning the nature of knowledge and the way they acquire it. It includes the affective and cognitive dimensions of the subject (Therriault and Harvey, 2013:444).

Therriault and Harvey's (2013) conceptual unpicking of personal epistemologies considers ideas about relationship to knowledge drawing on both pedagogical perspectives relating to subject content knowledge, and sociological perspectives.

This emphasises the idea of 'complex socio-cognitive learning' (Johnson, Woodside-Jiron and Day, 2001) in the development of personal epistemology, and also explores the idea of an affective dimension to knowledge. Their conceptual framework explores context, status and role in the relationship to knowledge which encompasses the wider world, the self and the social (Therriault and Harvey, 2013).

Therriault and Harvey (2013:446) use the term 'epistemological posture' to refer to the way pre-service teachers position themselves with regard to their epistemic beliefs noting that:

> The very notion of 'posture' which refers to a particular attitude of
> the body, illustrates the dynamic, changing and even evolutionary
> nature of this concept.

The idea of fluidity and change with regard to articulated beliefs about knowledge, emerged through the findings of their study and they saw:

> … grounds for believing that students adopt a multiplicity of
> postures, sometimes conflicting, based on the situation, whether
> during courses in their university discipline or teaching practice
> (Therriault and Harvey, 2013:455).

This idea of multiplicity begins to connect with my reading into post-structural theory and the ambiguities inherent in any attempt to articulate personal epistemologies through textual representations.

This idea of shift and fluidity resonates with Fives and Buehl's (2010) study and would perhaps support Muis, Bendixen and Haerle's (2006) conclusions, that domain-specific beliefs are shaped by academic settings. They cite Jehng et al. (1993, cited in Muis, Bendixen and Haerle, 2006:36) who maintain that:

... the acquisition of epistemic beliefs occurs through a process of
enculturation; students learn to view knowledge from the same
perspective as those around them.

Therriault and Harvey (2013:455) noted that the pre-service teachers in their study
seemed to be aware of the contradictory epistemological postures they were
adopting.   They sum up these positions as fluid and subjective knowledge in their
training by discipline, and more simple and objective knowledge during teaching
practice.   They noted that the pre-service teachers were able to conform to the
dominant epistemological positions in the settings they encountered.   Johnston,
Woodside-Jiron and Day (2001) and Gleeson (2015) recognise that epistemological
values and beliefs generate associated discourse. However, Johnston, Woodside-
Jiron and Day (2001:3) make the point that:

We all live in multiple discursive environments. Individuals work
to maintain personal integrity but the frequent tensions and
disjunctures often lead us to talk out of both sides of our
epistemological mouths.

Thus the issue of domain-specific beliefs is complex and evidently becomes more
so as subject meets pedagogical content knowledge. Subject disciplines have long
been categorised into dichotomies, most commonly hard/soft (Muis, Bendixen and
Haerle, 2006; Gleeson, 2015). 'Hard' subject domains are characterised by clear
structures of content or methodology, whereas as 'soft' domains might focus on
the development of critical thinking skills, exploration of ambiguity and be
concerned with expression and individual interpretation.   Gleeson (2015:106)
however, considers such classification to be limiting and a better approach would
be to:

… arrange subjects along a continuum from sequential, describing
clearly defined subject matter, and cumulative understanding
built within certain disciplines; to negotiable, describing how

broader subject matter is considered contestable and open to interpretation by practitioners in other disciplines.

Such grouping echoes Bernstein's (1999) hierarchical and horizontal knowledge structures (Chen and Derewianka, 2009). Noting that English or the Language Arts would be placed within the negotiable section of the continuum, Gleeson (2015) identifies the shifts in understanding of the nature of knowledge and how it is acquired, and the associated pedagogy, that can be identified along this continuum. Her investigation into embedding the teaching of academic language through subject teaching to support English as an Additional Language learners, found that those teachers whose epistemologies emerged from non-sequential, negotiable subjects were more pre-disposed to use interpretive constructions of knowledge and discursive practice than those from sequential subjects. She notes that 'the participants' epistemology and pedagogy had developed through many years of apprenticeship into their dominant subject' (Gleeson, 2015:112).

This is particularly relevant to my study and something I had become interested in through my work as a PGCE tutor and the early autobiographical research data I had collected. As a teacher educator, my role was to support student teachers as they encountered possibly unfamiliar pedagogical approaches and the emerging demands on subject knowledge. I was interested in how beliefs about the nature of knowledge in English developed, and the potential impact of these personal epistemologies on the process of ongoing subject knowledge development. How might the dominant discourses surrounding the nature of knowledge in English become embedded as 'tacit knowing' and constrain new thinking?

Hofer and Pintrich (1997:123-4) consider how change in epistemological beliefs might be enacted. They note the need for a 'disequilibration mechanism' to enact change, citing the following conditions:

Individuals must be dissatisfied with existing beliefs, must find the alternatives intelligible and useful, and must see a way to connect new beliefs with earlier conception.

They raise questions about the malleability of personal epistemologies and the impact of change on the individual, for example, whether individuals superficially adapt their beliefs to meet a contextual need or whether such changes become long lasting (Ibid.:126). That such change might be difficult to identify is echoed by Kagan (1992:78) who notes that: 'a teacher's professional growth appears to be an inherently private affair, self-defined and self-directed'.

This point raises interesting questions for me to explore as I feel it connects to the affective dimension of such change. Hofer and Pintrich (1997:129) cite Schoenfeld (1985:155) who questions whether adaptation in the classroom in the face of conflicting beliefs and practice happens purely as a result of cognitive reasoning or whether:

… such behavior may have an affective component and that "it is in this sense that the issue of belief straddles the affective and cognitive domains".

Thus a further point to consider is whether change is sustained or superficial, part of a developmental trajectory or simply contextually-bound. Do student teachers simply adopt the formal epistemological discourse of their settings without changing deep-seated positions (Fives and Buehl, 2010)?

I am also interested in Feucht and Bendixen's (2010:7) point that teachers' epistemic development in particular:

… influences not only their choices of teaching strategies and use of educational materials, but also openness to educational reform and further professional development.

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This last point is echoed by a number of studies. Wilson and Myhill's (2012) study exploring the teaching of poetry, Gleeson's (2015) investigation into embedding the teaching of academic language to support English as an Additional Language learners, Newell, VanDerHeide and Wynhoff-Olsen's (2014) research into Language Arts' teachers argumentative epistemologies for writing, all recognised the importance of understanding teachers' personal epistemologies and how these beliefs might relate to new learning. Gleeson (2015:112) noted that the requirement in the New Zealand curriculum for all teachers to support English as an Additional Language learners in developing academic language, had significant implications for teachers' pedagogical content knowledge and yet 'any pedagogical language knowledge struggled to gain a foothold in participants' belief systems'. This finding resonates with Fives and Buehl's (2010:507) study which found that 'learners may be more or less willing to learn about specific topics based on the perceived utility value of that knowledge'.

There are numerous questions arising from the conceptual complexity of personal epistemologies which will have resonance for my study:

- To what extent might early influences shape personal epistemologies and continue to resonate to give value to knowledge?
- What are the conflicting epistemological positions between the study of English as a subject domain and the teaching of English and its associated pedagogical content knowledge? Are these conflicting positions identified and managed by student teachers? Is such conflict in fact, generative and energising?
- What are the dominant discourses around English which continue to shape and endow value to knowledge in English? Are student teachers aware of these discourses?
- How might post-structural theory with its focus on uncertainty and ambiguity, support my efforts to understand the complexities of student teachers' textual representations and recognise the limitations of what texts can tell us?

Kagan (1992:75) notes that 'personal beliefs function as the filter and foundation of new knowledge' that can either facilitate or impede new learning. A range of studies (Gleeson, 2015; Newell, VanDerHeide and Wynoff-Olsen, 2014; Therriault and Harvey, 2013; Wilson and Myhill, 2012; Fives and Buehl, 2010) all acknowledge the need to engage student teachers directly in explicit discussion about personal epistemology to provide a clearer understanding of the changing and evolving nature of knowledge, and how current understandings come to be accepted in dominant discourses around subject.

This finally raises a question about the length of time provided on teacher training courses that might allow for such in-depth reflection and enable closer critical understanding of the resultant epistemological uncertainty that might be the correlation to such scrutiny.

With regard to the length of time allocated to Initial Teacher Education (ITE), the diagram below illustrates the 'minimum level and total duration of ITE for work in lower secondary education' (Eurydice, 2015). The analysis has been compiled by drawing on the data of participating European countries/regions. The code allocated to each country can be found in Appendix C. [1]

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[1] The diagram shows two main routes into teaching at Master's (L7) or Bachelor's (L6). These are:
- The concurrent model where theoretical and practical professional training is gained at the same time as academic degree study
- The consecutive model where theoretical and practical professional training follows academic degree study in a separate phase.

Minimum level and total duration (in years)

Years
8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

BE fr BE de BE nl BG CZ DK DE EE IE EL ES FR HR IT CY LV LT LU HU MT

Years
8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

NL AT PL PT RO SI SK FI SE UK-ENG/WLS/NIR UK-SCT IS LI ME MK NO RS TR

| a | Main model | | Bachelor's level (concurrent route) | | Bachelor's level (consecutive route) |
| b | Other existing model | | Master's level (concurrent route) | | Master's level (consecutive route) |
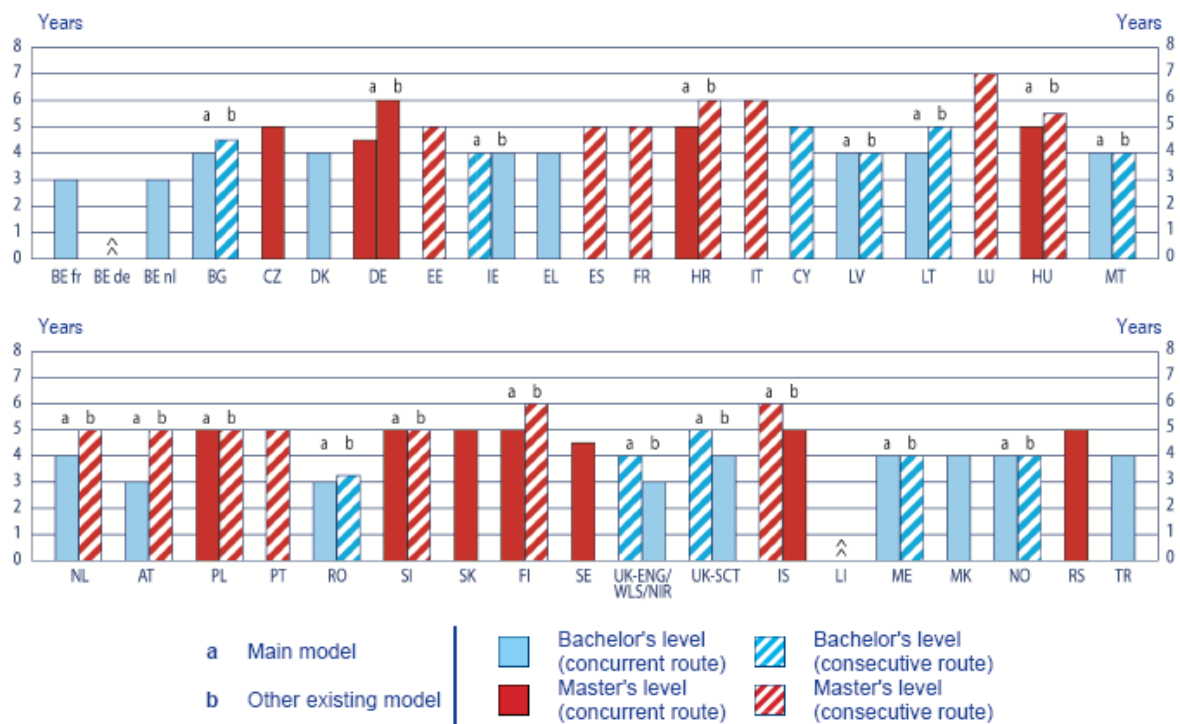
Figure 1: The minimum length of time allocated to Initial Teacher Education (Eurydice 2015)

From the diagram it can be seen that the UK (ENG/WLS/NIR) three-year concurrent model is only used by four other countries/regions and far more common is training which lasts between four and six years, although in Luxembourg the consecutive route lasts seven years. In fifteen countries, the minimum level of ITE programmes is a Bachelor's qualification whereas seventeen countries require a Master's degree (Eurydice, 2015).

Such lengthy training might provide opportunities to develop the reflective skills and pedagogic subject knowledge discussed in this section but this then draws in complex questions of how further study is funded and supported.

2.5   What do we mean by 'English'?

The simplicity of this question belies its complexity and the angles of perspective from which an answer may be sought. For a start, Knights (2015:7) notes that:

'English' has never been simply derived from bodies of knowledge generated by experts. Given that the word names simultaneously, a nation, a language and an educational subject, the number of people who feel they 'own' the subject is more or less infinite.

We can add to this Walsh's (2007:47-8) discussion of the 'geographic and economic reach of the British Empire' to realise that we cannot answer this question by simply listing topics on current school curriculum or university modules:

English has a presence as a global language which is related to British history and the history of imperialism over the last 300 years. This kind of geographical perspective and long view of the history and significance of the language in today's world is necessary if we are to have more than a parochial view of what constitutes the school curriculum subject of English.

In countries where English is spoken as the mother tongue: United Kingdom, America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, there is a subject on the curriculum with the title English, or variants of this. Goodwyn, Reid and Durrant (2014:1) note that in each of these countries the main subject association has English in the title, or Literacy. However, within these countries there might be more than one official language, as in New Zealand, where alongside English, Maori and New Zealand Sign Language are also designated official languages. The terms to describe language use whether official, indigenous or minority language, are contentious and grounded in political, economic and social prestige. Grenoble and Singerman (2014: online) make the point that the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, 'defines minority languages based on two criteria: a numerically smaller speaker population and a lack of official status'.

All the countries mentioned above are linguistically and culturally diverse and pay attention to this diversity in varying degrees. In New Zealand, for example, the New

Zealand Curriculum and the Te Marautanga o Aotearoa exist as parallel documents for schools who deliver the curriculum in either English or Maori. The statement of official policy notes:

> Together, the two documents will help schools give effect to the partnership that is at the core of our nation's founding document, Te Tiriti o Waitangi/the Treaty of Waitangi (TKI, 2017).

In Australia, whilst the indigenous Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are taught within the Languages section of the Australian Curriculum (2017), the language of instruction is Standard Australian English:

> Australia is a linguistically and culturally diverse country, with participation in many aspects of Australian life dependent on effective communication in Standard Australian English. In addition, proficiency in English is invaluable globally. The Australian Curriculum: English contributes to nation-building and to internationalisation.

These two examples demonstrate differing attitudes to mother tongue education. They raise questions about whose language is being privileged and for what purpose, and these questions play out through school curricula and the attitudes to language espoused there. Goodwyn, Reid and Durrant (2014:2) make the point that:

> Essentially there remains an immense tension between an imperialistic and nationalistic notion of English as a dominant language (i.e. all immigrants must learn to speak and 'love' English) and a far more inclusive notion which critiques this domineering position and asks students to do the same.

In America, which has no official language and no national curriculum, the issue of bilingual education has had a chequered history. Individual states make their own decisions on policy and in 1997, California, followed by Massachusetts and Arizona, enacted sweeping legislation to shut down bilingual education (Goldenberg and Wagner, 2015). California finally overturned this ruling in 2016 (Sanchez, 2016) paving the way for bilingual education and recognising the growing parental interest in bilingualism, across many states. Sanchez (2016: online) notes that California has 1.4 million English Language Learners (ELLs), approximately one fifth of the enrolled student population, but the push for bilingual education is also being driven by parents for whom English is the first language. As Goldenberg and Wagner (2015: online) note:

> Interest in bilingual programs crosses lines of language background, neighborhood, and income as parents across the United States realize the social and economic value of bilingualism.

The interesting question to ask here is what bilingualism means to the different groups identified above? It is one thing to desire bilingual education as a human right to enable economic and social participation in a society whose official language is not your mother tongue. It is something else to desire bilingual education because it might enhance a position already privileged by mother tongue access to the official language. These are different needs and raise questions about identity and school systems of teaching and learning and assessment. They also raise issues about the training and recruitment of bilingual teachers and the training and support of all teachers working in multilingual classrooms (UNESCO, 2013/14; Sanchez, 2016). There are also wider and more complex issues raised by Goldenberg and Wagner (2015) about the social and cultural status conferred on minority languages and reinforced by the state, through the choice of non-official foreign language study in the curriculum.

This point is supported by Benavot's (2008:31) study exploring the global perspective on the construction of official curricula. He notes that:

> 'Official' recognition of some languages and not others by the state, and the requirement that certain languages be included in public school criteria, clearly illustrates the impact of political considerations and cultural factors on language policies.

Benavot (2008: 32) goes on to note the global rise in 'non-official' foreign language learning, whilst also recognising that the designation of a country's official language has a significant impact on the construction of curricula and the ideology that supports it.   Bogue (1997:107) draws on the *power relations* inherent in Deleuze's view of language and notes:

> The object of language is not communication but the inculcation of 'mots d'ordre' – 'slogans', 'watchwords' but also literally, 'words of order', the dominant, orthodox ways of classifying, organizing and explaining the world … the various mots d'ordre of a culture being enforced through regular patterns of practice, 'collective assemblages of enunciation' or 'regimes of signs'.

The role of the dominant language in establishing national identity is identified by Benavot (2008:31). He notes that a country's 'official' language is given core status in the first eight grades of formal schooling and predominates all other language education. He makes the point that the lack of '(non-official) local or regional vernaculars in the language component of the school curriculum illustrates the limited political power of language minorities'.

This observation begins to explore the tension encapsulated in Deleuze's 'mots d'ordre', to provide another perspective through which to view the question posed at the start of this section. Benavot (2008:32) continues:

Language education obviously plays a critical role in the transmission of national cultures, and thus it is not surprising that instruction in 'official' – typically national – languages is emphasized in primary schools.

The tensions existing between the desire for a national identity established through common language usage, balanced against the importance of recognising linguistic and cultural identity, are further heightened by the economic prestige of a standardised English as an international language. The omnipresent role of the internet in global communications means that English, in its standardised forms, e.g. Australian English, American English, British English, and so on, has become the lingua franca of commerce and communication. While the rise of different 'standardised' forms of English appears to suggest a paradox, it represents the global cultural and economic changes of the last century. There are two points to be considered here, which I will look at from a European perspective. The first is that whilst there are 24 designated official languages in the 28 countries of the European Union, English as a foreign language is taught in 94.1% of these countries at secondary level (Eurostat, 2016). The prominence of English language teaching lies with the fact it is regarded as a *lingua franca.* However, this begs the question of whose English and whose culture is being taught (Decke-Cornhill, 2010)? Crystal (1999 cited in Decke-Cornhill, 2010:261) makes the point succinctly:

Teachers need to prepare their students for a world of staggering linguistic diversity. Somehow, they need to expose them to as many varieties of English as possible, especially those which they are most likely to encounter in their own locale. And above all teachers need to develop a truly flexible attitude towards principles of usage.

The current emphasis in England, on a narrowly conceived Standard English in the current national curriculum for English, to the exclusion of linguistic investigation that had been a feature of earlier documents, flies in the face of such

recommendations and fails to acknowledge the variants of English on the global stage.

A further point emerges when considering Europe. Looking to the future and bearing in mind that global language usage clearly does not stand still, the UK's decision in 2016, to leave the European Union may signal a shift in the automatic assumption that English remains a language of governance across European boundaries. A speech in French by the European Commission President, Jean-Claude Juncker, at an EU Conference in Italy, sparked much debate in the UK media as he commented that: 'Slowly but surely English is losing importance in Europe' (Rankin, 2017:online). It will be interesting to observe how the political, cultural and economic negotiations surrounding 'Brexit', play out in terms of language use and how far assumptions about the dominance of English on a global stage might be challenged.

The issues of contention emerging through the place of language in the curriculum, play out globally with regard to the authors and texts that might be deemed worthy of study in schools. Knights (2016:6) makes the point that:

> Educational subjects themselves are not inevitable, nor do they simply reflect an objective, uncontentious parcelling up of knowledge … Historically they emerge from, and are shaped and sustained within fields of social and political, as well as intellectual forces.

Literary study in national or state curricula, reflects a complex interplay of cultural and political ideology which draws on historical, social and geographical understandings of national identity. This complexity goes beyond the prescription of set texts. The question is not so much about which texts have been included, as which have been excluded and why: whose voices are heard and whose are not and how are these decisions made? A comparison of the Literature guidance in the curricula of New Zealand, Australia and England reveal significant differences in

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terms of detail and prescription but also in the notions of heritage and a sense of one's place in the world. The New Zealand Curriculum guidance for Literature states that:

> The study of New Zealand and world literature contributes to students' developing sense of identity, their awareness of New Zealand's bicultural heritage, and their understanding of the world (TKI, 2017).

The Australian Curriculum guidance for Literature states that:

> The range of literary texts for study from Foundation to Year 10 comprises classic and contemporary world literature. It emphasises Australian literature, including the oral narrative traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, as well as the contemporary literature of these two cultural groups. It also includes texts from and about Asia (AC, 2017).

The English national curriculum states that at Key Stage 3 pupils should be taught to:

Develop an appreciation and love of reading, and read increasingly challenging material independently through:

- reading a wide range of fiction and non-fiction, including in particular whole books, short stories, poems and plays with a wide coverage of genres, historical periods, forms and authors, including high-quality works from English literature, both pre-1914 and contemporary, including prose, poetry and drama; Shakespeare (2 plays) and seminal world literature

At key Stage 4 pupils should be taught to:

Read and appreciate the depth and power of the English literary heritage through:

- reading a wide range of high-quality, challenging, classic literature and extended literary non-fiction, such as essays, reviews and journalism. This writing should include whole texts. The range will include:

- at least one play by Shakespeare

- works from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries

- poetry since 1789, including representative Romantic poetry (DfE, 2017).

A comparison of this guidance raises two striking features. The first is a notion of heritage in the English curriculum that is inward-looking as opposed to the outward-looking, global interpretations of literature encapsulated in the New Zealand and Australian curricula. The second feature is that the heritage specified in the English curriculum appears fixed and mono-cultural. There is a sense of an envisioned identity being imposed rather than the idea of identity as fluid and organic, and growing out of and continuing to develop into shared cultural histories. McLean Davies (2014:241) makes the point that:

> While the national curriculum of England makes relatively few
> references to the world, or global concerns, the latest version of
> the Australian curriculum makes consistent connections between
> the study of literature (both national and international) and
> students' ability, in a Frieran sense, to 'read the world'.

It is also striking that both the New Zealand and Australian curricula explicitly encompass a wide-ranging view of textual literacy that includes film, visual image, digital texts and multi-modality. This is an ongoing global debate into where the study of the media might fit within a curriculum structure, and the importance attached to digital literacy (Goodwyn, Reid and Durrant, 2014:5-6). However, such debate is missing from the English national curriculum. Richmond (2015:17) notes:

A particular blind spot in the new orders, across the piece, is the almost total absence of any recognition that in the second decade of the 21st century the children and young people in our schools are surrounded by electronic and digital media.

A similar concern is echoed by Goodwyn, Reid and Durrant (2015:6) with regard to the lack of attention to Media and Digital Literacy in the Common Core State Standards in America. They note that:

Teachers and teacher-educators will need to find ways to teach beyond the standards if students are truly to be prepared for their futures.

Whilst curriculum specifications might envision the power of language and literature to determine a national sense of identity, there are other factors at play in determining what shapes the subject English. America and Canada, have no national curriculum and responsibility for education lies with state governments. Teale and Thompson (2014: online) note that with the introduction of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2010, America has moved closer to what might be described as a national curriculum and this has had an impact on the breadth of literature taught:

What has been more consistent for the past 15-20 years across the country is that the teaching of literature has been based on educational standards established by each state. These standards detail what students are expected to know and are able to do in each particular high school content area, at each grade level … As a result of the widespread adoption of the CCSS standards, we anticipate that research will show increasing conformity in the materials used in high school literature instruction in the US.

This contraction in the face of standardised models of what pupils should know and be able to do, is supported by Benavot (2008:8) in his global study into the organisation of school knowledge:

> Overall these studies underscore the growing global isomorphism of national curricular policies and structures … These findings illustrate the preponderance of the state as the site at which school curricula are constructed and sanctioned, but also the spreading influence of international organisations and transnational professionals in diffusing legitimate prescriptions of educational knowledge and rationalized curriculum models.

Perhaps a consequence of globalization is a growing sense of uniformity in terms of what constitutes knowledge and how that knowledge should be organised. As Teale and Thompson (2014) recognise, when standardised outcomes are added to this view of what constitutes worthwhile learning, then core subjects such as English might begin to narrow and conform to meet attainment targets.

Such attainment becomes more pressing when the outcomes are publicised on the world stage. A highly contested area of the English curriculum is the teaching of early reading (Goodwyn, Reid and Durrant, 2014). In this global era, attainment in reading is measured against international benchmarks such as the triennial tests run by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), co-ordinated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and also the five yearly Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). Such international tests have become a measure by which standards in schools may be judged. Concerns borne out of such international comparisons continue to shape reading interventions which in turn shape curricula. Whilst recognising the imperative to raise reading attainment, Alexander (2012:5) warns against wholesale borrowing from other education jurisdictions to do this:

Despite all we know about the pitfalls of cause/effect attribution in the educational and economic spheres, successive governments have found it hard to resist the naïve belief that raising test scores in literacy and numeracy will elevate a country's economic performance, and that copying successful nations' educational policies will both raise standards and pull us out of recession.

Alexander goes on to articulate the concern that, in the effort to ensure all pupils achieve, and gain competency, education policy makers might overlook the fact that curricula in different countries are embedded in the culture of that country. However, he does draw on an earlier comparative study (Alexander, 2001) to consider what might be learnt from the pedagogy of France, India, Russia and the United States. His conclusions focus on the centrality of dialogic, classroom talk to learning and he argues that:

… because spoken language is so central to both human learning and collective culture and identity, and precisely because the differences I had observed were so striking, classroom talk surely offers a rich potential for policy learning (Alexander 2012:15).

It is striking once again to note, that the latest iteration of the national curriculum in England is moving in a contrary direction to such research. Where Speaking and Listening had once taken an equal place alongside Reading and Writing, it is now embedded across the two programmes and a speaking and listening component no longer contributes to the English GCSE grade.

What does all this say about English teaching in England? The subject itself is hard to define and Knights (2015:7) notes that it has 'permeable boundaries'. He goes on to point out that:

There is a very low level of agreement about what counts as knowledge in the subject, or in what order its concepts and terms should be introduced to learners (or for that matter what those concepts and terms really are). This is of course what makes it such a rich and fascinating subject – and one endlessly open to influences not only from new creations in literature, media and film, but from the concepts and working habits of other subjects.

The lack of a consensus definition which identifies the parameters of 'English' means that individual understandings of the subject become very important. This is something I wish to explore through my research. What beliefs about English as a school subject do student teachers bring with them into the profession? As a subject with 'permeable boundaries', these beliefs are likely to be rich and varied. What happens to these personal epistemologies as student teachers encounter classroom practice?

English in England seems to be a subject full of contradictions and tensions. It is an open, fluid and dynamic subject that reflects the creativity of its component parts and the evolving nature of the language itself, yet the need to chart pupil progression requires standardised outcomes which can constrain and impose conformity. It is a subject with 'permeable boundaries' which borrows from everywhere, yet aspects of its national curriculum suggest an inward-looking and static vision of the subject, which deny its magpie tendencies. English as a subject is concerned with all aspects of the individual and how they might achieve their potential which can, paradoxically, seem at odds with the very systems put in place to enable that to happen.

The question: what do we mean by 'English', reveals shifting perspectives as the subject is considered within its global dimensions, which raise questions about the possibility, or desirability, of pinning content down. However, the Carter Review of Initial Teacher Training (DfE, 2015:23) has recommended that 'ITT should address core content knowledge in teaching subjects with appropriate rigour, including the

definition and scope of the subject'. The identification of such content knowledge would need to draw on an awareness of how understandings of the subject have been shaped over time and the tensions that exist between the different versions of English.

To consider how the subject has been shaped over time, I do not intend to explore the history of English teaching in detail; there have been extensive studies into this area, notably Doyle (1989), Poulson (1998) and Marshall (2000). Doyle (1989:6) like Marshall (2000), disputes the developmental view of school English and welcomes opportunities to examine 'the influence of ideological conflicts within the profession of English teaching, upon changes within the discipline' and, accordingly, I will look at some of the ideological debates that have shaped and are still shaping the teaching of English today.

2.6   The purpose of English

If we ask why English should have a place in the curriculum and what its purpose is, we will hear many competing voices. The revision of the national curriculum ignites such debates (Pope, 2002) and the fact there have been five versions of the national curriculum since its inception in 1989, indicates the changing thinking about what it means to study English (Fleming and Stevens, 2010). However, to understand the present we do have to look, albeit briefly, at the past.

English as a subject to be studied in its own right was only recognised towards the end of the 19th century. Poulson (1998:17) notes:

> Its emergence as a distinct subject reflects the interplay of
> differences of opinion about its primary purpose in the education
> system and differing ideas as to what should constitute its proper
> content and how it should be taught.

The expansion of the education system through the Education Act of 1870 coincided with an expansion of democratic rights to a broader electorate and

consequent imperative to educate the lower classes. The inclusion of English as a subject in the publicly funded elementary schools was to provide functional literacy emphasizing the knowledge that was useful for getting on in life. Upper and upper middle-class children were educated through public and endowed schools and the curriculum was based on classical languages and texts. Poulson, (1998:18) notes that both Latin and Greek were requirements for entry into Oxford and Cambridge and, despite calls for education reform to reflect the changing needs of society, public schools were resistant. Whilst the benefits of a classical education were disputed, there were concerns that a purely functional education would not provide the aesthetic and moral fibre that should be the underpinning of civilised society. The education reformer and inspector of schools, Matthew Arnold, promoted the study of English literature to provide a moral and aesthetic education for the masses.   This would enrich pupils and guard against the influences of popular culture by educating them about the value of 'high' literature. By 1882 English had become a compulsory subject in elementary schools and by the end of the 19th century was being recognised as a subject in its own right, although initially only regarded as suitable study for women. Thus, we see the emergence of two strands of English: functional literacy and grammar, and the enriching power of literature, along with the impact of class and gender on curricular provision and content.

Poulson (1998:24) argues that the place and purpose of English in the curriculum is inextricably bound up in the political, social and cultural concerns of the time. The Newbolt Committee in 1921 (Departmental Committee of the Board of Education, 1921) established English as a core subject in the curriculum but again we see the battle for the purpose and role of English emerging. Marshall (2000:22) identifies the following paragraph from the report to illustrate the way in which English is delineated through Matthew Arnold's understanding of the civilising power of English Literature. English:

> … in its fullest sense connotes not merely acquaintance with a
> certain number of terms, or the power of spelling these terms

correctly and arranging them without gross mistakes. It connotes the discovery of the world by the first and most direct way open to us, and the discovery of ourselves in our native environment … For the writing of English is essentially an art, and the effect of English literature, in education, is the effect of art upon the development of the human character (Departmental Committee of the Board of Education, 1921, cited in Marshall, 2000:22).

The tone of the Newbolt Report is predominantly patriotic set against the backdrop of a country emerging from a world war and recognising the impact of the Russian revolution (Protherough and Atkinson, 1994:7; Poulson, 1998:25; Marshall, 2000:23). A further purpose for English then was nationalistic, to instil a sense of nationhood through pride in a shared cultural literary background, providing a unifying core between classes:

Such a feeling for our own native language would be a bond of union between all classes and would beget the right kind of national pride. Even more certainly should pride and joy in the national literature serve as such a bond (Departmental Committee of the Board of Education, 1921, cited in Poulson 1998:25).

Marshall (2000) notes that while Arnold saw literature as a force that worked against industrialisation and mechanisation, the Newbolt Report emphasised the personal growth of the child nurtured through encounters with literature and the arts in its understanding that language should be taught for expressive purposes. However, as Poulson (1998:26) notes, a further aim of the report was to ensure standardised language use and the eradication of regional and dialect forms which were not considered the mark of an educated class.

The debates emerging are to do with the function and purpose of English in the curriculum. Whilst there are claims for developing the personal and aesthetic

aspects of the individual, there is much more to do with promoting a view of English that is 'civilising'. This would provide a standard and unifying model to aspire to, not just of language but also of values and taste, thus providing a code to live by and, significantly, by which to be judged. The Newbolt Report also signalled the separation of literary from linguistic strands in the English curriculum; a delineation that continues today in the separate external examination and degree subjects (Yandell, 2014).

Protherough and Atkinson (1994:8-9) identify three views of English emerging from the Newbolt Report: a view of English that held back the tide of industrialisation and the impact of popular culture; one that was creative and expressive and which encouraged active engagement and one that upheld the values of cultural tradition and values through the enshrinement of canonical texts.

These debates crystallised with the work of Frank Leavis in the 1920s and 1930s (Marshall 2000), and once again the context is important to consider. In the inter-war years there was a sense of nostalgia for a time and way of life that seemed to be passing. It was a time of change socially and culturally, with the development of the mass media and communication which made newspapers, magazines, cheap books and cinema readily available to all. To some this was perceived as a threat to traditional cultural values and Leavis' focus on the critical study of English Literature was to become very influential. It is from Leavis that the idea of canonical texts which are worthy of study, emerged (Marshall, 2000) and became enshrined in the English national curriculum which, as discussed in the previous section, continue to spark debate and contention today.

The current debate about literature, however, encompasses more than what has been omitted from, or marginalised in, the prescriptive lists of literary texts to be studied in the national curriculum in England. A further issue of contention raised by Goodwyn (2012b), is the opportunity for literary reading which draws upon the affective dimension of engagement with the text. 'Cultural awareness and expression', is one of the European Commission's *Key Competences for Lifelong*

Learning (European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, 2006:12), and provides a perspective which moves beyond preservation and reverence to the idea that the study of one's own culture provides 'the basis for an open attitude towards and respect for diversity of cultural expression'. In doing so it acknowledges that appreciation of cultural artefacts involves more than detached intellectual engagement, but also, 'the importance of the creative expression of ideas, experiences and emotions'. Goodwyn (2012b) argues that whilst the study of literature is firmly enshrined in the national curriculum, its status has been diminished by the focus on narrow, objectives-driven approaches which fail to engage the person in the reading.   Yandell and Brady (2016:54) take this argument further and note that the danger of a 'knowledge-led' curriculum, which presents itself as distinct from the experiences and knowledge that pupils bring with them to the classroom, is that it overlooks the understandings that emerge from the 'local' and 'particular'. They make the point that how students 'read and respond to the text is a product of culture and history – of different, and specific, cultures and histories'. They conclude that the work in classrooms is 'cognitive and emotional: intellect and affect are not neatly separable' (Ibid.:55).

This brief overview of the historical antecedents of English provides some understanding of the competing claims for the subject. Interwoven within all of this are implications for pedagogy.

2.7   Pedagogy

It is worth beginning with a definition of the term 'pedagogy' from Alexander (2004:11):

> Pedagogy is the act of teaching together with its attendant
> discourse. It is what one needs to know, and the skills one needs
> to command, in order to make and justify the many different
> kinds of decisions of which teaching is constituted.

The history of English as a subject, its content and purpose, inevitably carried with it a debate about how the subject was to be taught. The establishment of the English Association in 1907 did much to identify not just subject content but also pedagogy (Doyle, 1989; Poulson, 1998). The Association tried to unify the strands of the subject although strongly held beliefs about the purpose of English as a subject continued to cause tensions. Within the arena of pedagogy new thinking into child development was beginning to have an impact. By the 1890s, Rousseau's theories about the ways in which children were motivated and the need to recognise individuality were gathering support and there was criticism of methods of memorisation and rote learning. Poulson (1998: 23) notes that: 'Particularly important for English was the recognition of a connection between individual development and self-expression.'

The Progressive movement, then might be deemed to have begun in the 19th century and become more clearly delineated throughout the 20th century with the focus on personal growth, expression and creativity. Edmund Holmes writing at the turn of the century, focused on the importance of potential and creativity and questioned the constraining impact of formal examinations (Marshall, 2000:25). The significant work of Dewey focused on the way in which children learned as being as important as what they learned. Dewey (1966, cited in Marshall, 2000) described the purpose of a 'traditional' education as preparing young people to be docile, receptive and obedient.

It is easy to see in these arguments a neat division or polarisation between 'traditionalists versus progressives' (Pope, 2002) but this is too simplistic and does not take into account the way ideas and philosophies of education develop and the context in which they develop.

Alexander (2004:8) argues that pedagogy cannot be a purely ideological activity. He goes on to note:

Ideology may define the ends in teaching and hint at aspects of its conduct, but it cannot specify the precise means. Professional knowledge grounded in different kinds of evidence, together with principles which have been distilled from collective understanding and experience are also called for.

Alexander (2004:10) identifies the 'oppositional pedagogical discourse' which has emerged over the past fifty years underpinning ideological positioning, and contrasts this view with understandings of pedagogy in continental Europe which bring together under one concept:

… the act of teaching and the body of knowledge, argument and evidence in which it is embedded and by which particular classroom practices are justified.

Alexander (2004) argues that discussion about pedagogy takes a subsidiary role in the UK because, unlike many European countries where the curriculum has been long-centralised, the curriculum remains open to contestation and debate. As already discussed in this literature review, this remains a significant feature of the subject English. Professor Brian Cox, who was instrumental in writing the first national curriculum, noted that the ill-defined boundaries of the subject posed problems (DES 1989:2.2) whilst Protherough and Atkinson (1994:14) state: 'There is clearly no consensus here about what is to count as English.'

That English has long been a contested subject is evident in the schools of thought that have helped to shape its history. This is an area well researched by Fleming and Stevens (2010) and also Marshall (2000), who notes that:

Ball, Kenny and Gardiner (1990) add caution to the idea that schools of thought affect classroom practice on anything more than a limited scale (Marshall, 2000:23-24).

This idea had been explored by Professor Brian Cox in his discussions with English teachers before writing the report, *English for Ages 5 – 16 (*DES, 1989)*.* Cox (1991:21) identified five views about the purpose of English in the curriculum: personal growth, cross-curricular, adult needs, cultural heritage and cultural analysis, but did not see these views as being mutually exclusive or even 'sharply distinguishable', rather he felt that such views recognised the breadth of the curriculum. Goodwyn and Findlay's (1999) research into English teachers' beliefs about English found a strong consensus in the importance of the personal growth approach along with a growing recognition of the place of cultural analysis.

The question to ask is how far these occasionally polarised, and sometimes complementary, schools of thought, might have pedagogical implications in the classroom. To explore this further we need to return to teachers' personal epistemologies of subject. Political and educational commentators who position themselves firmly at end points of a spectrum do so to provoke debate. Thus, Marenbon's comment (1994, cited in Brindley, 1994:24) that 'in English, as surely as in mathematics or chemistry, there is right and wrong', is likely to generate an oppositional response rather than explore the nuances of the subject from either perspective. However, it does present an epistemological viewpoint and one which is worth debating for its understanding of the nature of knowledge in English. Wilson and Myhill (2012:556) cite Maggioni and Parkinson (2008) who note that:

> … the way in which teachers conceptualize the nature and justification of their subject-matter knowledge and their ideas about students' learning influence the features of classroom discourse.

Alexander (2012:16) describes classroom talk as the heart of pedagogy and that genuinely dialogic talk should be: 'collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative and purposeful'. He cites Nystrand, Gamoran, Kachur and Prendergast (1997) who state that:

> What ultimately counts is the extent to which teaching requires students to think, not just to report or repeat someone else's thinking (Nystrand et al., 1997, cited in Alexander, 2012:17).

Thus the way knowledge is conceptualized might lead to a dualist, right or wrong approach to transmitting knowledge, or to an approach that recognises pupils as co-constructors of knowledge and utilizes dialogic practice. A further complication might lie in the challenges presented by high stakes assessment which lead teachers to adopt conflicting epistemological positions which play out in associated pedagogical practices. Another question to ask is how deep-seated and malleable, personal epistemological beliefs might be when enacted in the classroom? Wilson and Myhill (2012:557) cite Nystrand et al.*'s* (1997) study which 'revealed a discrepancy between Language Arts teachers' espoused beliefs in expressive, dialogic practice and the more monologic discourses that many of them appropriated'.

Thus, the way that philosophies underpinning the subject English are embraced and enacted by individuals in the classroom, and the wider social and political contexts of education will shape pedagogical approaches. What would seem to be important then for student teachers is to have the space to explore the factors that shape pedagogy and to examine and debate the polarised responses that the subject English generates.

2.8 A contested subject

It is clear from the discussion thus far that English as a school subject has had a contested history and that this history continues to influence the present. In current calls for English curriculum reform we can see the continuing questions about the function and purpose of English and debates about the content to be taught. Robinson (2000:90) identifies two pairs of current tensions within the subject:

- Between literacy and literature
- Between reception and production

Robinson (2000:91) describes English teaching as a 'highly political charged site of contested truths'. She argues that literacy teaching, particularly in the primary school has developed quite separately from the teaching of literature and that reading, in class or for pleasure has been segregated from the process of producing written texts. She also notes that as pupils move through the secondary school their own creative writing becomes significantly less important as their critical writing in response to other texts increasingly dominates (Robinson, 2000:94). Goodwyn (2012a: 45) notes:

> The overarching context for teachers' work in England for almost 25 years has been increasing standardisation of content, pedagogical approaches and teacher performance. It is very well documented that all political parties have been seeking much closer control of curriculum, all teachers and the assessment regime.

Whilst the debate on declining standards has a long history, the teaching of English with a focus on literacy has become more centralised and prescriptive since the introduction of the first national curriculum in 1989 (Goodwyn, 2004). Policy documentation identifies effective literacy teaching as key to raising standards across all subjects (DfES, 2001). In this way, as Robinson (2000) notes, the teaching of English is now highly politicised.

Chen and Derewianka (2009) explore how such politicization occurs using Bernstein's (1990; 1996; 2000) framework: 'The Pedagogic Device'.

THE PEDAGOGIC DEVICE

Field of knowledge production
(distributive rules: access/power/control)

Site: research papers, conferences, labs.

Recontextualisation field

Official Recontextualising Field

Site: Departments of Education, curriculum authorities.

(recontextualizing rules: selective delocation & relocation)

Pedagogic Recontextualising Field

Site: teacher education institutions, education research & journals, media, textbooks.

Reproduction field
(evaluative rules)

Site: classrooms, exams.

Figure 2. Bernstein's 'pedagogic device' (Chen and Derewianka, 2009:224)

This device provides a framework for conceptualizing the relationships between the key sites of educational activity. Chen and Derewianka (2009:224) cite Bernstein (1990; 1996; 2000) who describes the device as:

> … a system of rules that regulates the processes by which specialised knowledge is transformed (or 'pedagogised') to constitute pedagogic discourse (in the forms of curricula, selected texts and teacher talk).

Bernstein stresses the dynamism of the device that occurs through conflict within and across fields. The power struggles create instability through 'challenge,

contestation, negotiation and struggle between different groups who seek to appropriate the pedagogic device' (Chen and Derewianka, 2009:225).

Chen and Derewianka (2009) use the pedagogic device to provide a detailed analysis of how power struggles have been played out in the educational field of literacy, with particular focus on large scale education reform in the USA, UK and Australia. Of particular interest in this literature review, is their analysis of the field of knowledge production in literacy. As discussed in Section 2.4, subject domains' internal structures of knowledge and knowledge acquisition may be characterized in different ways. Bernstein (1999) identifies hierarchical knowledge structures typified by science subjects and horizontal knowledge structures typified by the social sciences and humanities. Chen and Derewianka (2009:227) list the subject disciplines which contribute to knowledge formation in literacy (Figure 3). They note that Psychology has a more hierarchical knowledge structure, whilst Linguistics combines structures. Different fields of knowledge within sociology might cross-over (denoted by the dotted lines) whereas knowledge fields within English Literature and Media Studies tend to have closed boundaries. Chen and Derewianka (2009:227) note that:

> Given such diversity of orientations, it is little wonder that language education is a field where power skirmishes are endemic.
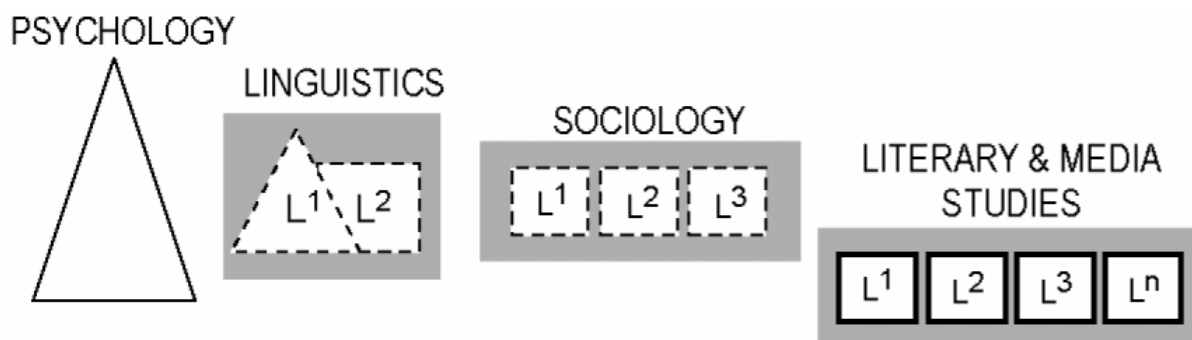
Figure 3. 'Disciplines contributing to language and literacy studies (represented as

hierarchical or horizontal knowledge structures)' (Chen and Derewianka, 2009:227).

Such analysis suggests epistemological reasons for why Literacy or Language Education as a subject domain might be susceptible to challenge and debate. Literacy as a subject is described by UNESCO (2006:147) as 'complex and dynamic' and they note the evolving definitions and demands which make it difficult to achieve international consensus on policy approaches to literacy. They note that:

> The international policy community, led by UNESCO, has moved
> from interpretations of literacy and illiteracy as autonomous skills
> to an emphasis on literacy as functional, incorporating Freirean
> principles, and, more recently, embracing the notions of multiple
> literacies, literacy as a continuum, and literate environments and
> societies (Ibid.:155).

In the breadth of this definition, we can hear the competing voices which emerge to exert ideological or political pressure on the domain. In the nature of competition, these voices are often polarised to assert dominance. However, to consider why Literacy is so highly politicized it is important to consider the ongoing standards debate and the rise of global assessment models, as discussed in Section 2.5, alongside what it means to be literate.

2.9 The standards debate

Chen and Derewianka (2009:230) note that the 1960s and 70s saw a great deal of teacher autonomy with decentralised control. Teachers responded to the individual needs of pupils and there was a focus on child-centred approaches. Schools, however, were not working in isolation but informed by bodies which focused on inspection, assessment, curriculum and subject support at local and national level (Alexander, 2004; Levin, 2009). In terms of the wider, national picture, this support did not demand uniformity and the only sense of commonality was provided by external examination syllabi. This could be described as a

liberating time to be a teacher (Chen and Derewianka, 2009:230). However, whilst Brooks (1998, cited in Beard, 2000:423) notes that standards in literacy amongst primary school children had remained stable from the post-war period, there was evidence of a 'long tail of under-achievement' in England (Brooks, Pugh and Schagen, 1996, cited in Beard, 2000:423). It was this underachievement that had become marked in international comparisons of reading scores. Thus there was a strong sense of inequity in that some children were not achieving their potential in literacy and a growing movement of thought that suggested it was the teaching methods in schools that were holding them back (Beard, 2000; Chen and Derewianka, 2009).

Westbrook, Bryan, Cooper, Hawking and O'Malley (2011) note that before the large scale literacy reform that occurred in England, secondary school provision for pupils who encountered challenges with reading and writing showed a great deal of disparity. Research into reading emerging from the USA and Australia (Beard, 2000) and, significantly, policy- driven interventionist approaches in the USA (Chen and Derewianka, 2009), provided an impetus for the implementation of the National Literacy Project in 1997 (Sainsbury, Schagen, Whetton, Hagues and Minnis, 1998) to be followed soon after by the National Literacy Strategy in 1998. For a detailed exploration of the implementation and impact of the national strategies see Levin, 2009; Moss, 2009; Westbrook et al., 2011. The rise of international comparisons in literacy in the form of PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) meant that literacy came to be seen as a 'valued economic commodity … linked to employment and workplace productivity' (Chen and Derewianka, 2009:231). Education and particularly standards in literacy and numeracy became a top political priority with policy designed to address perceived deficits in global literacy rankings. The consequent impact on the subject English has been explored in Section 2.5.

In all of this we can see the standards debate in literacy playing out against issues of equity for all pupils, the global imperative to achieve a productive economic workforce, and political fears for the consequences of poor performance in global

league tables. Highly interventionist and centralised attempts to monitor and regulate what happens in English classrooms have been implemented to ensure the efficacy of an input-output model that can be measured and quantified. In this analysis we begin to see the tensions inherent in English: between the desire for individual, child-centred approaches which focus on the personal and transformative elements of the subject and the need to ensure that all children are literate and able to play a productive part in society. These aims are not mutually exclusive; as Cox (DES, 1989) noted, they are part of what it means to teach English. The tensions perhaps emerge through the means to achieve and measure these aims, which can seem to place them in conflict.

We can add to these tensions the epistemological positions about the nature of knowledge in English. Thus, the standards debate continues to stem from strongly held and, at times, entrenched, views about the function and purpose of English in the curriculum and what it means to be literate. Accordingly, we see debates between the 'canon' of literature and popular culture and media, between whole language and phonics, between free expression in writing and genre study, between investigative and embedded approaches to grammar and decontextualized learning of grammatical structures. These are epistemological questions which reflect the nature of knowledge and how it is acquired in English. For example, the debates about the teaching of grammar illustrate views that have become increasingly polarised between those who call for the systematic and prescriptive teaching of grammar and those who advocate a more embedded, language-centred approach. Beliefs in a static and *correct* form of English which can be assessed, like science, as right or wrong (Marenbon, 1994, cited in Brindley, 1994), can be recognised in the introduction of a controversial grammar test introduced in the summer of 2013 for all 11 year olds (Marszal, 2012), with very little preparation for schools or pupils. This particular debate is frequently played out in the media but Myhill (2011:75) notes that 'within the profession of English teaching there is no consensus on the role of grammar in the curriculum'. Myhill (2011:75) summarises the professional debate as dividing:

… those who see no place for grammar, because of no demonstrable impact on students' learning, from those who believe that knowledge about language in its own right has a role in a language curriculum.

This divide, however, is more nuanced and complex than it might seem, drawing in issues of teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge and their epistemological beliefs (Myhill, 2011; Myhill, Jones and Watson, 2013). In this way, the standards debate is enacted in the everyday lives of schools and their teachers against a backdrop of published league tables, improvement targets and teacher performance judged through management tools and linked to pupil outcomes and pay structures.

In English, as in other subjects, we see a battle for the ideology of the subject but these battle lines are increasingly being constructed by the government, along the lines of theory versus practice and school versus academia. Thus we have a recent Secretary of State for Education in 2013 branding the 100 academic signatories of a letter questioning educational reform, as 'enemies of promise' and academic researchers in the educational field as 'The Blob' (Gove, 2013). There is governmental effort to move teacher training out of higher education and into teaching schools, with a previous Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove stating:

Teaching schools are leading the teaching profession. They are at the forefront of driving and delivering change. The best people to teach teachers are teachers. School-led systems put schools, school leaders and teachers firmly in the driving seat (Gove, cited in Elmes, 2013: online).

For English teachers, what does this change look like, that schools will be at the forefront of delivering? The current national curriculum (DfE, 2017) has a strong focus on literacy, Standard English and the reading of canonical texts – or what

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might be termed literary cultural heritage, an aspect of the current curriculum that has been fraught with contention. Simon Gibbons, Chair of The National Association for Teachers of English (NATE) commenting on the draft orders, noted his concerns:

> Most importantly is the woeful undervaluing of oracy in the curriculum - good speaking and listening work should be at the heart of English given the links between language development and the development of thought and all forms of literacy. Aside from this it seems the English curriculum will essentially be devoid of important areas like drama, media, multimodal texts and creativity (Gibbons, 2013: no pagination).

The question that must be raised is whether this indeed is a curriculum for the 21st century that encapsulates evolving understandings of what it means to be literate in a global society and which draws in the many strands of literacy identified by UNESCO (2006).

For English teachers who will be charged with delivering this new curriculum and supporting the training of new teachers, there are also questions concerning the willingness to innovate and develop after many years of curriculum control and numerous revisions to statutory requirements. Goodwyn's (2012a:46) view is that the past 25 years have brought about 'passive conformity' within the profession with only issues such as assessment now having the power to provoke reactions.

This has relevance for teacher educators supporting student teachers to manage the contradictions and tensions inherent in the subject. How far are student teachers aware of contention and debate? Are the changes affecting English departments destabilising for student teachers because of the uncertainty engendered? How far might the 'passive conformity' that Goodwyn (2012a) identifies, possibly translate into negativity and what might be the effect of this on student teachers?

2.10   Competing and complementing discourses: developing subject knowledge for teaching

My personal narrative writing (Appendix A) presents a view of my subject knowledge development from early formative experiences, through teacher training and into my first year of teaching. However, I am aware that this writing offers just a fraction of the many stories I could have told and that the narrative I have presented may serve multiple purposes.   These include my pleasure in recalling specific memories woven into a coherent narrative with its own timeline, and the telling of a story which illustrates my understanding of subject development. It is also a way of letting the past speak to the present to energise my thinking by making connections which generate new ideas.   However, my reading is beginning to challenge the notion that these connections are simple and straightforward. I am increasingly aware that interpretive methods of analysis may actually limit and constrain by attempting to fix meaning rather than explore ambiguity. Richardson (2008:477) explores the 'blurred genres' of ethnographic research, combining creative and analytic approaches which 'invite people in and open spaces for thinking' allowing them to explore the uncertainties of the social world.   The texts that I and the research participants have created are both complex and ambiguous. I am aware that they can also be analysed in ways that reveal what Richardson and St.Pierre (2005:961) describe as the 'competing discourses', so that language itself becomes 'a site of exploration and struggle'. This thinking is further explored in Chapter 3.

As I consider my writing in Appendix A, I realise that I offer a strong sense of my subject knowledge development as part of a 'community of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991) that was socially as well as professionally motivated. My writing also reveals the levels of support I received as a beginning teacher and the variety of support networks that were available to me.   Whilst some of these networks were formalised, there is also a sense of the individual route that my learning took. Smith (2001:74) explores the possibility that the development of subject knowledge is:

… highly dependent on the social relationships found in the field of ITE and the dispositions of student teachers and their mentors to use such relations to access subject knowledge.

Burn, Childs and McNicholl (2007) draw on Hodkinson and Hodkinson's (2005) concept of an 'expansive learning environment' in identifying factors within a department that combine to promote the effective development of subject-specific pedagogical knowledge. This point then raises the question of how subject knowledge development is articulated by student teachers, their subject mentors and university tutors and whether this is something that can be planned for or whether in fact, this learning is 'unplanned and serendipitous [without] preset objectives or easily identifiable outcomes' (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2005:122).

To a certain extent the content of the subject, English, in state schools in England, has been prescribed since 1988 through the national curriculum. Furthermore, the micro-management of pedagogical approaches through government initiatives, reinforced through inspections, has been a feature of secondary English departments since 2001. Alongside this has been a government emphasis on teachers' subject knowledge which has focused on content knowledge as a fixed commodity, 'having physical presence and volume' (Ellis, 2007:450). Thus it could be argued that English teachers' subject knowledge has been defined through the texts and authors and grammatical terminology listed in the national curriculum (Gordon, 2012). Certainly, the Carter Review of Initial Teacher Training (DfE, 2015:26) stresses that subject knowledge development should be 'sharply focused' on the content knowledge of the national curriculum and exam syllabi, and recommends that it 'should be addressed systematically, through a process of auditing and tracking with specific on-going input to address subject knowledge gaps'. The discourse surrounding this approach is one that suggests that knowledge is conceived as 'some third thing – to be grasped, held, stored, manipulated and wielded' (Davis and Sumara, 1997 cited in Ellis, 2009:10). In this discourse, knowledge is fixed and separate from the individual and the context in which learning takes place. As it remains stable and the same for everyone, it can

be *audited,* and because the precise type and amount of knowledge have been prescribed, gaps can be identified to be *remedied.*

 Poulson (2001) has identified this approach as a deficit model of teacher subject knowledge development, a point supported by Evans, Hawksley, Holland and Caillau (2008).   This sense of deficit comes from what Ellis (2007:450) terms 'Objectivism – or what we might call the knowledge-as-thing problem'. It offers the idea that teacher subject knowledge can be compartmentalized, quantifiable and therefore assessable. As Edwards, Gilroy and Hartley (2002 cited in Ellis, 2009:9) note:

> The very question 'What is teacher knowledge?' presupposes an answer that will provide some sort of objective list of knowledge … Such a knowledge-base would be objective in that it was unchanging, a source of certainty, providing a firm foundation for clear-cut unconditional statement about teacher knowledge and the justification for a single and unchanging national curriculum for teacher education.

This view of teachers' subject knowledge development is contested strongly by Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2005) but is evidenced, for example, in Teaching Standards in the countries of the UK (DfE, 2011d; GTC Scotland, 2015; DfES Wales, 2011), Australia (AITSL, 2011) and New Zealand (EC New Zealand, 2017). Not all countries have adopted national teaching standards but where they have, the standards become a method of assessment by which knowledge for teaching is judged.

The largely vague wording of such standards masks the underlying difficulty of defining knowledge in this way. For example, in demonstrating good subject and curriculum knowledge, what is meant by 'good' and secure? How much knowledge is enough knowledge (Gordon, 2012:378)?   The use of imperatives in such documentation: know, acquire, learn, demonstrate, and so on, reinforces the

dominant discourse around teacher subject knowledge, in particular that knowledge is available and out there to acquire; once it is gained, it is located within the individual and can be clearly seen. Britzman (1991:227-230) makes the point that, in this discourse, the teacher is seen as the expert and all learning depends on the teacher having 'enough' essential knowledge to teach successfully.

The assumption that an outstanding graduate will make an outstanding teacher provides a further view of knowledge as acquisition (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2005). This assumption is strengthened by the fact that bursaries across all the routes into Initial Teacher Training are currently allocated to beginning teachers on the basis of their degree classification (NCTL, 2017). However, the correlation between what a teacher knows and the way they apply that knowledge in the classroom is not straightforward (Grossman, Wilson and Shulman, 1989; Britzman, 1991; Poulson, 2001; Banks, Leach and Moon, 2005; Green, 2006; Stevens et al., 2006; Ellis, 2007; Gordon, 2012). Nor does an initial subject degree provide the breadth of subject knowledge for teaching (Blake and Shortis, 2012; Carter, 2015).

There have been many attempts to delineate and define the complexity of teachers' subject knowledge and to identify the component parts to understand the way they interact to create subject-specific pedagogical knowledge for teaching (Burn, Childs, McNicholl, 2007). Gordon (2012) provides a good overview of the literature in the field. Many of the studies use Shulman's (1987) work on the seven categories of knowledge as their starting point: content; general pedagogical knowledge; curriculum; pedagogical content; learners and their characteristics; educational contexts; educational ends, purposes and values. Green (2006:118) goes on to cite a model by Grossman et al. (1989) which is more complex and analytical in its reflexive positioning of the teacher in relation to different aspects of subject knowledge, encompassing: content knowledge; substantive knowledge(s); syntactic knowledge; beliefs about subject matter.

Gordon (2012:378) notes that all the studies suggest that 'understanding the complexities of teaching extends beyond observation of expert practice' and there

needs to be a synthesis of what is being observed and how this fits into the student teacher's knowledge base and their knowledge of context. This counters ideas of teaching as *craft,* which is learnt through apprenticeship.

Grossman et al. (1989) point to studies which have identified how teachers 'interweave their prior knowledge of subjects with immediate knowledge of classroom realities to provide "action-relevant" knowledge' (Grossman et al., 1989:26, citing Calderhead and Miller, 1985) so that their initial subject knowledge per se is enriched by knowledge of student, curriculum and teaching context. This idea that teachers' subject knowledge needs to be transformed into pedagogical subject knowledge is picked up by Stevens et al. (2006) and by Green (2006:113) who refers to the 'fundamental issue that scholarship and pedagogy must interact', recognising that 'any academic discipline functions around an essentially dichotomous, dialogic structure'. He cites Dewey's (1903) words:

> Every study or subject thus has two aspects: one for the scientist as a scientist; the other for the teacher as a teacher. These two aspects are in no sense opposed or conflicting. But neither are they immediately identical (Dewey, 1903 cited in Green, 2006:114).

Green, (Ibid.) goes on to comment:

> The teacher and the learner are frequently in obverse relationships with the subject they share: their knowledges and experiences of the subject are connected but functionally differentiated. It is through effective pedagogic practice that the two knowledges come together to enable new learning for both teacher and student.

Banks, Leach and Moon (2005) and Ellis (2007) both produce models of subject knowledge development which explore a process of learning that is dynamic and

situated. Banks, Leach and Moon (2005:336) discuss the differences between subject knowledge, school knowledge and pedagogy and see the interaction between the three as a dynamic interplay:

> A teacher's subject knowledge is transformed by his or her own pedagogy in practice and by the resources which form part of his or her school knowledge. It is the active interaction of subject knowledge, school knowledge and pedagogical understanding and experience that brings teacher professional knowledge into being.

Providing the lynchpin for this interplay and informing the process are the 'personal subject constructs' (Ibid.) of the teacher. They are critical of Shulman's work and contest the notion that professional knowledge is 'a static body of knowledge, lodged in the teacher's mind' (Banks, Leach and Moon, 2005:333), creating a teacher-centred pedagogy which focuses on skills and knowledge the teacher has, rather than on the process of learning. However, their focus on the three elements of knowledge which combine to create professional knowledge, still distinguishes between the types of knowledge, suggesting that they can be defined and categorised. They draw on the work of Verret (1975) and Chevellard (1991) to provide an exploration of the differences between 'school English' and the subject as a discipline, which they define as 'subject knowledge'. Their model of English teachers' professional knowledge would certainly suggest clear distinctions between English studied as an academic discipline and English as a school subject.

Leach (2000) is also struck by the fact that student teachers rarely connect their study of English as an academic subject with their practice as English teachers. So, for example, although most will have encountered literary theory to a greater or lesser extent in their degree, they do not necessarily draw on this knowledge in developing their own understanding of English as a school subject. Instead, they revert initially to a view of English inculcated through their own experience of being taught GCSE or A level. Leach's (2000) conclusions are that this narrow and rather

traditional view of English, which is often literature-based, is not challenged as student teachers progress through their placements, as English departments have little time or inclination to re-examine or re-position their own thinking in the face of constant pressure to perform for league tables and Ofsted inspections. Thus a narrow and potentially reductive view of English might be perpetuated unintentionally by the practitioners themselves.

This potential lack of challenge raises a number of interesting issues. Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2005) recognise the centrality of the mentor–student teacher dialogue in developing subject knowledge and McNamara (1995:59) identifies that the most important factor 'is the quality and suitability of the advice and support that students receive and their capacity to reflect on it and incorporate it in their own teaching'. Smith (2001:74) concurs with this point and goes on to add that, 'knowledge *about* subject knowledge acquisition may be distinct from or complementary to, subject knowledge for teaching itself'. Maynard and Furlong (1995) found that teachers did not necessarily make connections between their classroom teaching and planning, and key ideas within their subject. Evans et al. (2008:17) noted that many of the Subject Mentors questioned in their sample found it difficult to articulate the ways in which supervising a student teacher had developed their own subject and pedagogic knowledge or to articulate the ways in which they had drawn on Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to develop this aspect of their practice. However, Turner-Bissett (2001) whilst recognising contextual factors that might prevent this happening, assumes that 'expert' teachers should be explicit in their thinking and planning. Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2005:115) explored this aspect of teachers' learning, recognising that individual learning is a by-product of everyday interaction in the classroom, where teachers are 'constantly adjusting and modifying their practice, in response to actions, reactions, interactions and activities in the classroom, and in anticipation of approaching situations'. They cite Beckett and Hager (2002) who refer to this type of learning as 'embodied judgement making', moving beyond reflection to draw on the immediacy and emotion of the situation as well as reasoned response. In Hodkinson and Hodkinson's (2005) study, teachers found it difficult to describe

this learning, supporting Smith's (2001) findings and suggesting that Turner-Bisset's (2001) view leans more to a view of knowledge that is quantifiable and commodified.

In the light of this, how easy might it be for subject mentors working with student teachers to be explicit in their thinking and planning when they are discussing subject knowledge? Gordon (2012:387) found evidence that mentors were able to share their planning process with student teachers to provide insight into the 'dynamic nature of subject knowledge'. However, Lock, Soares and Foster (2009), working with a group of Science student teachers and their mentors, identified that written lesson feedback often concentrated on classroom management issues and provided little indication of ways of developing subject specific pedagogy.   This persisted even when mentors had been asked to write specifically about subject development.

In 2007, Ofsted published a report into Employment-Based Routes into Teaching (Graduate Training Programme) 2003-06. In its key findings, it noted that:

> … school-based trainers frequently have insufficient time to fulfil
> the demanding subject training responsibilities they are expected
> to shoulder. Trainees often take steps to remedy the gaps in their
> training and this contributes positively to the standards they
> achieve (Ofsted, 2007:4).

The point about lack of time is echoed by Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2005:125) and they raise a further point, supported by Smith (2001) about the impact of individual dispositions and past experiences on teacher subject knowledge development, which might mean that individual student teachers might not necessarily remedy *gaps.*

However, a central plank of the government reforms to Teacher Training in England (DfE, 2011a) is the premise that teachers are better trained in schools rather than

universities and the intention that a greater number of student teachers will be training for longer periods in schools following more school-based routes. The issue here is how far mentors in schools feel supported and prepared to develop their student teachers' subject knowledge?

The Carter Review of Initial Teacher Training (DfE, 2015) makes no recommendation about which is the most effective route into teaching but does put the development of subject knowledge and more effective mentoring, at the heart of its findings. There is recognition that 'the resource allocated to mentoring should reflect the importance of the role' (DfE, 2015:59). Clearly, much depends on the opportunities presented by the school learning environments (Smith, 2001; Burn, Childs and McNicholl, 2005; Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2005; Stevens et al., 2006).

Ellis (2007) makes the point that the emphasis on subject knowledge as a given (and usually gained through a university degree), which needs to be transformed in practice into subject knowledge for teaching, has provided weight to arguments by those who seek to remove teacher training from universities and locate it solely in schools. He also argues that the emphasis on pedagogical knowledge for teaching has drawn attention away from the more complex issues of how teachers develop their subject knowledge.

Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2005) have explored this process through their work on expansive and restrictive learning environments. Their study showed that how teachers learn can be varied and complex and at times, as Burn et al. (2007) also discovered, unpredictable. They recognised the importance of the individual and how professional identity is forged within the collaborative culture of the school and department. Their findings are interesting in that whilst they identify the importance of collaborative, communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) they place equal importance on the learning practices of the individual, recognising that each individual will respond differently to the same opportunities and

circumstances. They note that this is 'antithetical to dominant views of learning as acquisition within the audit culture' (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2005:123).

Such thinking is also explored by Davis and Sumara (2000:824) who present a 'nested' approach to knowledge development drawing on the concepts of fractal geometry. They note that learning is complex, tends not to happen in straight lines and so is difficult to represent within graphs and grids. They argue that the images, metaphors and visual referents that guide curriculum planning, belong to the geometry of Euclid whose formal, logical arguments are entrenched in academic thinking and how we represent learning:

> So dominant is this geometry that the unruly and organic are often surprising and even unwelcome. What tend to be preferable are narratives of control, predictability and efficiency such as is demanded by Plato's logic and embodied in Euclid's images.

Their ideas explore not just the recursive nature of learning but its inter-relatedness and rejection of boundaries. They note that the thinking that underpins fractal geometry is 'not a renewed effort to colonize the disorderly, but an appreciation of the universe as complex, ever-unfolding, self-transcending, and relational' (Davis and Sumara, 2000:827).

The Biosphere, or the Planetary Body
(Ecological Theories)

The Species
(Biology and Evolutionary Theory)

Society, or the Body Politic
(Cultural Studies and Critical Discourses)

Collectivities: Social Bodies,
Bodies of Knowledge, and so on
(Social Constructionism)

The Person, or Body
Biologic (Constructivism)

Bodily Subsystems:
Organs and Cells
(Recent studies in
Immunology, Neurology,
and related domains)

Figure 4: 'A visual interpretation of the nestedness of bodies (and the discourses that address these bodies). The image is intended to highlight the self-similarity of the complex evolutionary dynamics at play across the levels and the scale independence of the forms that emerge at each level' (Davis and Sumara, 2000:838).

Ellis (2007; 2009) draws on the ideas of Davis and Sumara (2000), Lave and Wenger (1991) and Hodkinson and Hodkinson's (2005) work on expansive learning, to reconceptualise the process of student teachers' subject knowledge development and propose a model that is fluid, dynamic and contextually situated. In this model the three dimensions: 'culture, practice and agents are mutually constitutive and interdependent and knowledge is seen as potentially emergent in the relationships between them'. Thus, subject knowledge is created and shaped collectively and individually according to setting so that knowledge is not fixed but *part of a* 'dynamic process of change arising out of competing claims and contestation originating fundamentally out of practices in multiple settings' (Ellis, 2007:457).

Drawing on Lave and Wenger's (1991) ideas of legitimate peripheral participation, the beginning teacher draws on communal knowledge but also shapes that knowledge through a process of 'creative displacement of usual practices and the

development of new knowledge' (Ellis, 2007:458). In this way a sense of professional identity is formulated that is in itself not stable or fixed but subject to contextual influences, constraints, pressures and possibilities. The very dynamism of this model accommodates learning that is planned as well as that which is serendipitous and unintentional. In this way learning is ongoing rather than an end product that is quantifiable, to be ticked off a list.

As a model of learning this sounds realistic, especially if taken with Hodkinson's and Hodkinson's (2005) conclusions that, even when there is a collaborative departmental focus on learning, any results are bound to be variable because different teachers respond in different ways. However, there are concerns. Effective learning takes time, space to reflect and a willingness to support new teachers to develop their 'epistemological stance' (Ellis, 2007:456). This means going beyond the immediate topic in hand to enable 'acknowledgement of the inter-relatedness of principles, values and knowledge of text' (Gordon, 2012:387). It relies on mentors' willingness and ability to acknowledge and articulate their developing subject knowledge and explore what is important in a highly contested subject; what Ellis (2007:459) describes as responsibility for 'continually examining the boundaries of 'what counts' as subject knowledge'. However, in the current climate it would seem that many English departments are embattled and under pressure. They are responding to changes in syllabi and ways of teaching, and performance-related pay structures. All of this is happening at a point when the government is attempting to move teacher education from universities and into schools.

It is possible that the combined impact of this *perfect storm* will be fewer opportunities for student teachers to build networks that are outward looking and collaborative, resulting in a professionally fragmented workforce whose development of wider subject knowledge is regarded as the responsibility of the individual (DfE, 2015:49), and which is quantified – and validated - by the number of A-C GCSEs they produce each year. Goodwyn (2012a:51) identifies a worrying disengagement with subject development and advocacy, particularly in beginning

teachers, as evidenced by the declining membership of the English Subject Association, NATE. Whilst this might point to change overload or innovation fatigue, the answer might also lie in the social media and digital communication explosion in recent years. There are currently many online teacher networks with committed and well-informed bloggers and Twitter users, some with followers numbered in the hundreds of thousands. Online teacher communities and forums such as the Guardian Teacher Network or the TES Community, continue to grow, and out of these emerge face to face communities such as Teachmeets in towns and cities across the UK, or Pedagoo in Glasgow, Scotland (Kelly, 2013). So perhaps you really can't keep a good idea down and the future for English advocacy and teacher learning is not as bleak as Goodwyn (2012a) fears.

In the final section of this literature review, I turn my attention to the ways teachers construct new learning in English through active participation in the subject. Such learning owes more to the 'nested' forms of knowing explored by Davis and Sumara (2000:824) where learning is felt as an ecological force that encompasses the inner and outer worlds of the learner. As such, I am reminded of Robert McFarlane (2007:315) in his writings on the natural world, musing on what it is that maps don't tell us:

> The road atlas now seemed even more distorting an account of
> the islands than when I had begun the journeys. So many aspects
> of the country go unrepresented by it. It does not observe the
> pale lines of old drove-ways that seam the soft-stone counties of
> England, or the tawny outlines of the south-western moors. It
> fails to record the ceaseless movement of mud within the
> estuaries of the Wash, and it is inattentive to texture, smell and
> sound: to the way oak pollen and fireweed seeds drift in wind, to
> the different shadows cast by mountains, to the angles of repose
> of boulders at the base of Pennine crags.

2.11 'Innerstanding':[2] subject knowledge development through creative practice

A colleague recently attended a research conference. Her comment at the end was that it was like 'being tumbled in a washing machine' (Bermingham, personal communication, cited with permission). I particularly liked this analogy suggesting as it did the discomfort and challenge, confusion and sheer invigoration of tackling something new and difficult, and emerging at the end with a fresh outlook. This is not a model of knowledge acquisition but a way of constructing new knowledge through participation which places the teacher as learner at the heart of their development.

Hodkinson and Hodkinson, referring to the deficit model of learning as acquisition, identify that:

> The sense of learning as personal growth, and self-actualisation, is lost. Learning can no longer be seen as 'lighting fires' (Stenhouse 1975 in Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2005:112).

Stenhouse's (1975) description of 'lighting fires' provides the most vivid and apt metaphor for my experience of subject knowledge development as illustrated in my personal narrative writing in Appendix A. What I wish to explore in this section are the ways in which English subject knowledge is developed through constructivist and participatory processes (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2005:111) to provide a model of subject learning that is productive and generative and to consider the implications of this for teacher education.

Fitzgerald, Smith and Monk (2012) argue that the introduction of national school league tables in the 1990s has impacted negatively on English teachers' willingness to take creative risks in their teaching and Grainger (2005) supports this view. In the secondary phase, the emphasis on achieving targets in GCSE means that there

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[2] Grainger (2005:85) citing Heathcote and Bolton (1995)

is an all-pervading anxiety about English (and Maths and Science) results. The outcome of this might be safe *teaching to the test* which tends to support the model of knowledge as acquisition. Whilst the undoubted aim is for all pupils to realise their potential, many English teachers consider that the personal growth (DES, 1989) of the individual forms an important part of this potential (Goodwyn and Findlay, 1999; Goodwyn, 2002; 2012a). I would also argue that this model of personal growth is important for English teachers' subject knowledge development.

At an English Subject Conference at my university, which took Creative Writing as its theme, I asked the question:

> If we want our pupils to write for pleasure, what do we, as teachers, need to know about writing? Not just how to teach it, but how to do it ourselves; experiencing the difficulties and frustrations as well as the triumphs and the pleasure, as we create something – for ourselves (Page 2013- Conference Notes).

In this introduction to the conference I was proposing a view of English as an expressive and creative art. In propounding this view, I was drawing on a growing body of research into the English teacher as a creative practitioner. Smith and Wrigley (2012:71) refer to John Dixon who wrote in 1967:

> Teachers of English at all levels should have more opportunities to enjoy and refresh themselves in their subject, using language in operation for all its central purposes … Teachers without this experience – who would never think of writing a poem, flinch at the idea of 'acting', and rarely enter into discussion of the profounder human issues in everyday experience – are themselves deprived and are likely in turn to limit the experience of their pupils.

Although a UK National Writing Project for teachers was implemented in the mid-1980s as a short term initiative, an American National Writing Project (NWP) began in 1974. This is still running and the longevity of this initiative is enabling some powerful conclusions to be drawn about its effectiveness. The underpinning principle of the NWP USA is that to teach writing effectively, you must be a writer yourself, a point picked up and explored by later researchers (Rosen, 1991; Grainger, 2005; Spiro, 2007; Andrews, 2008; Smith and Wrigley, 2012). In an interview with Richard Andrews (2008:37), the Director of the USA National Writing Project, Richard Sterling, commented on the impact on teachers who have been part of the project:

> The added benefit … is that when teachers start writing extensively, they discover things about themselves as learners that are almost an epiphany … they talk about practice, they study research, but the writing is at the centre, and they are writing all the time. I can only say to you that that is one of the most powerful things they take from it; it engages them intellectually in their profession again.

This sense of re-engaging professionally with the subject through personal writing, also comes through strongly in the work that Smith and Wrigley (2012:78) have undertaken with teachers' writing groups:

> There is an energy that comes from writing with the community and from writing itself a heightened sense of awareness: of self, of self as a writer, of pupils, of writing and of language, and of the living of it.

Grainger's two year research project which explored the teacher's role in developing creative writing in primary schools, also involved the teachers in the study in writing together as a group and with their pupils. Grainger (2005:76) makes the point that:

All teachers are professionally concerned as managers of learning
but they also need to be individually and aesthetically involved as
fellow artists and writers in the classroom.

She references Freire (1985:79) who states that, 'teaching kids to read and write should be an artistic event'. The use of the word artist/artistic here is interesting. It conveys a very different view of teaching from the teacher who transmits or mediates knowledge or who instructs, and who is also removed and distanced from the act of creation, which is done by someone else. Instead an artist is someone who is skilful and creative and who practises and demonstrates their art and is involved in the process and product: 'a creative practitioner' (Smith and Wrigley, 2012:73). Smith and Wrigley (Ibid.) refer to their role as workshop leaders facilitating teacher writing groups, as 'animateurs', drawing on a definition by Lucas (2003):

A practising artist in any art form, who uses her/his skills, talents
and personality to enable others to compose, design, devise,
create, perform or engage with works of art.

All the studies agree that 'being congruent with our own creative processes and reflecting on these can help us as teachers' (Spiro, 2007:92) and I feel that there are significant implications for teachers' subject knowledge development. The researchers found resistance, doubts and uncertainty when teachers were asked to engage in personal writing (Grainger, 2005; Spiro, 2007; Smith and Wrigley, 2012). Perhaps it is to do with the vulnerability experienced when asked to share something as personal as writing. Grainger (2005:78) found that the:

… initial focus on the product and their concern with others'
value judgements inhibited their preparedness to write, despite
the fact that as teachers they write for a variety of purposes every
day.

Dymoke (2011:149) noted that beginning teachers need to be supported in taking risks and experimenting with creative writing pedagogies to 'enable them to develop their creative selves'.

These barriers suggest that while teachers may be engaging in personal writing in private, it is seen as separate to their professional lives and not something to be shared (Grainger, 2005). This raises issues about what we ask pupils to do in the classroom and the affective dimension of writing that is often left unconsidered. All the research studies showed that once teachers had been involved in personal writing groups the understanding of writing process and the affective dimension increased, enabling them to approach the topic differently in the classroom:

> Many moved from being mere instructors in the classroom to informed facilitators and fellow writers and as they did so their understanding of the art of writing developed. The reflexive and emergent nature of writing was experienced first-hand and they perceived their sensitivity to the children's journeys as writers, also increased (Grainger, 2005:86).

In Grainger's (2005:85) study, teachers also experienced writing through drama, which proved to be a very powerful stimulus:

> In drama, the teachers were operating as artists, generating and considering ideas through participating in imagined worlds. Their involvement in these experiences enabled their thoughts to surge forwards and often produced passion in their prose and evoked connections and reflections … The act of composition, like any generative process involves preparedness to take risks and to order and shape one's thinking; drama provided opportunities for both.

The view that these studies take is that the learning experiences we provide for our pupils should also be experienced by our teachers as part of their professional development. There are clear implications here for how we view subject knowledge development for English teachers, and indeed, what we understand subject knowledge to be. Cremin, Bearne, Mottram and Goodwin (2008) looked at the reading habits of primary school teachers in the light of evidence that suggests children in England read less independently and are less likely to read for pleasure (Twist, Sainsbury, Woodthorpe and Whetton, 2003; PIRLS, 2006, cited in Cremin et al., 2008). Their findings suggested that whilst the teachers in the survey were active and interested readers of texts chosen for themselves, they had little wider subject knowledge of a range of children's authors beyond a relatively small, well-known canon, often inspired by their childhood and school experiences.

This point raised concerns that these teachers were not well-placed to stimulate and encourage wider reading amongst their pupils and develop their reader identities. One of the key findings of the Phase 11 of the Teachers as Readers study, (Cremin, Mottram, Collins, Powell and Safford, 2009) was the importance of teachers becoming 'reading teachers', and being able to engage with what they describe as 'inside text talk' (Cremin et al. 2009:24) and, in doing so, build positive reading identities for all their pupils.   It is this idea of *insider knowledge* that I find interesting because this is the knowledge of shared experience. Grainger (2005:85) references Heathcote and Bolton (1995) when talking about the powerful writing that emerged when teachers engaged with drama, evidencing that 'such deep insider involvement; 'innerstanding' as Heathcote and Bolton (1995) describe it, can enrich writing for all learners'.

These studies raise a number of issues about subject knowledge and how it is developed. The studies I have looked at all point to the personal growth of the individual teacher through engagement with their subject as a creative practitioner. The studies have aimed to identify the impact in the classroom but before that can happen there is the transformative element of the impact on the teacher her/himself. What I find interesting about this is that it connects with the way that

many student teachers describe their experiences of English and the reasons that they wanted to become English teachers in the first place – in that they found English to be inspirational and transformative in some way. Taking this into account, perhaps it is not surprising then, that one of the findings from the USA National Writing Project (Andrews, 2008:37) was that it re-energized teachers professionally.

A further key point emerging is that these studies point to subject knowledge development that is collaborative and participatory. This raises issues about the learning environment and educational climate that will resource, either formally or informally, such learning which can only point to gains in pupil attainment as a possible indirect result. Andrews (2008) provided a detailed and compelling case for a National Teacher Writing Project for the UK, which was taken up by Jennifer Smith and Simon Wrigley in 2009, with support from the National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE), as a *grassroots* education project run on similar lines to the USA version.

How much time and space do teachers of English have to explore their subject knowledge creatively and productively, in their departments? Britzman (1991:228) describes the pressure that the student teachers in her study were under 'to know and the corresponding guilt of not knowing'. She argues that:

> … in taking up normative discourses of classroom performance, they were prevented from attending to the deeper epistemological issues – about the construction of knowledge and the values and interests that inhere in knowledge.

As Britzman (1991) notes, these issues have implications for teacher training providers. Back in the late nineties, the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE, 1999:10) recognised the role that teacher training providers had to play in developing creative practitioners and that, just as in schools, this role was restricted by a prescriptive training curriculum:

Training providers are increasingly required to teach to the test, with little room for dialogue and creative work with their students. Ignoring student teachers' creative potential will make them less able to promote their pupils' creative and cultural development.

Grainger (2005) concludes that Initial Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development should provide time for teachers to write creatively and consider the processes involved. However, the current climate in education and recent changes to the way ITE and teachers' CPD are managed, might suggest that the concerns voiced by NACCCE in 1999 are not only still relevant today but possibly exacerbated.

2.12   Looking forward

This review of the literature has raised issues that are pertinent to my investigation into the development of personal epistemologies in English. The subject is a site of contradiction, tension and competing forces in which student teachers will almost certainly feel the pull of dissonance as they begin teaching. How far do student teachers recognise and understand the competing discourses of the subject? How do personal beliefs impact on the development of continuing subject knowledge? My reading and my personal writing are already leading me to an understanding of personal epistemology that is fluid and unstable. I have to consider now which research methods will capture both the lived experiences of student teachers as they navigate the training year, and the sense of dynamism and uncertainty inherent in these experiences? This literature review has explored both the nature of the subject and the process of becoming an English teacher. However, this 'becoming' is complex and I am aware that my efforts to pin down and identify simple answers to the questions emerging from the research texts I am working with, may run the risk of losing sight of this complexity. Accordingly, I am aware of the need to adopt research methods which will enable me to navigate a shift from familiar phenomenological and interpretive methods to embrace more post-structural approaches which allow me to explore complexity and uncertainty. Such

approaches which begin to explore the limitations of text, and the uncertainty this engenders, will be a valuable addition to my understanding as a researcher in the field of English teaching.

Chapter 3 Developing a Theoretical Perspective

This chapter explores the shifts and developments in the theoretical thinking that underpins this thesis. It charts my journey to find a theoretical framework through which I could develop my understanding of how personal epistemologies of English are formed and how they impact on subject knowledge development in the PGCE year. In the course of this process, I have explored the thinking of Bourdieu, Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari, and Foucault. The theorists I have drawn upon indicate the productive tensions that are a feature of this thesis as I have worked with the data and identified the challenges it has presented. These tensions are encapsulated in the shifts in my thinking between structuralist/constructivist and post-structural theory and the impact of this thinking on the research methods I have employed. My theoretical journey has taken a similar path to that described by Deborah Britzman (1991:xiii) who notes that post-structural thinking has:

> … pushed me to re-evaluate and re-fashion some very comfortable ideas about identity, agency, voice, and the ethnographic narrative. I have taken the risk of bringing together what may initially seem like disparate investments: the ethnographic voice that promises to narrate experience as it unfolds, and the post-structuralist voices that disturb any promise of a unitary narrative about experience.

Similarly I am aware of the push and pull of theory in my study as I have found myself caught between familiar ethnographic, interpretive research methods and the unsettling questions posed by post-structural theory.   The generative effect of this dissonance has pushed me to re-consider assumptions and methodology and to look anew at the dominant discourses which continue to shape and influence personal epistemologies of English, my own included.

3.1   Beginning with Bourdieu

As I gathered and analysed the data in Part One of the Data Sample I adopted an interpretive, phenomenological approach and, in my early analysis, I drew on

Bourdieu's (1992) concept of 'habitus' and 'field' to explore the phenomena of student teachers' personal epistemologies and their experiences of the PGCE. Bourdieu's theoretical concepts suggested a way into exploring how subject beliefs might be shaped and re-shaped and the dynamic tensions between subject and personal epistemologies that student teachers engage with as they begin their 'reverse transition' (Green, 2006) from university to school.

I was interested in Bourdieu's (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:17-18) idea of 'field' as a 'social space', consisting of an 'ensemble of relatively autonomous spheres of 'play' that presents itself as a structure of probabilities – of rewards, gains, profits or sanctions – but always implies a measure of indeterminacy'.

This idea of the PGCE as a 'field' raised questions about inter-subjectivity as student teachers' personal epistemologies interacted with 'autonomous spheres of play'. The uncertainty and indeterminacy of this concept became a recurring theme within the theoretical framework of my research and one which came to disturb and problematize my original theoretical understandings.

My thinking about how personal epistemologies are constructed and their ongoing influence on subject learning, also resonated with Bourdieu's (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:18) concept of habitus:

> The strategy-generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations ... a system of lasting and transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions.

Bourdieu (1992) describes the dynamic interplay between the internal belief systems and past histories of the habitus which constantly interact with the external constraints or enablers of the field, so that one cannot exist without the other. Bourdieu (1972, cited in Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:134) notes that:

The habitus acquired in the family is at the basis of the structuring
of school experiences … the habitus transformed by the action of
the school, itself diversified, is in turn at the basis of all
subsequent experiences … and so on, from re-structuring to
restructuring.

This interplay of habitus and field and the notion of 're-structuring' was a key point
of inquiry for me. I initially wondered whether student teachers' personal
epistemologies might be subjugated or constrained by the working practices of
schools and the curriculum they find themselves operating within. However, my
reading of Bourdieu (1992) suggested that this might be too simplistic. Bourdieu
(1992) proposes that the idea of domination and submission cannot be easily
delineated and that submission is often not a conscious concession to force.
Instead it could be described as 'collusion', residing in 'the unconscious fit between
their habitus and the field they operate within. It is lodged deep within the
socialized body' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:24).

My theoretical reading in the early stages of this thesis served to problematize my
thinking and challenge simplistic assumptions I might be tempted to make. In
recognising the theoretical complexity of the topic, I then needed to consider the
research methods which would enable me to explore the range of data I was
collecting and which would also allow me to consider my role as a PGCE tutor.

3.2   Phenomenology

The initial personal narrative writing I collected explored prior experiences of
English which dealt with feelings and emotions and invited respondents to consider
their relationship with English in the past as children, and within their current
contexts as student English teachers. Personal subject beliefs were explored as
well as perceptions of others: the pupils they taught and the departments in which
they worked. In utilising an interpretive, phenomenological approach, I was hoping
to gain insights into 'lived experience, the richness and texture of experience which

is understood through rich engagement with another's 'lifeworld'' (Lawthom and Tindall, 2011:4).

Theoretically I was aligning myself with constructivist thinking and Denscombe's (2007:78) definition of phenomenology seemed particularly apt:

> Phenomenology is particularly interested in how social life is constructed by those who participate in it … it regards people as creative interpreters of events who, through their actions and interpretations, literally make sense of their worlds.

My focus on the PGCE provided me with a sense of a spatially bounded 'field' and the personal narrative writing assumed the temporality of a journey to becoming an English teacher. I was drawn, therefore, to the common features of 'lifeworlds' which Lawthom and Tindall (2011:9 drawing on Ashworth, 2003) suggest lie at the heart of phenomenology: 'embodiment, spatiality, intersubjectivity, temporality'. However, it is interesting to note that these features which had initially for me identified key concepts in the process of becoming an English teacher, gradually came to problematize the research approach and the ontological perspective I had adopted.

The initial data I had collected also began to unsettle my understanding of the research method I had chosen. The personal narrative writing I had collected from my student teachers dealt with memories and perceptions, inviting the reader into rich, lived experiences. Denscombe (2007:77) notes that a phenomenological approach:

> … concentrates its efforts on the kind of human experiences that are pure, basic and raw in the sense that they have not (yet) been subjected to the processes of analysing and theorizing them.

However, this did not seem to describe these narratives.   This writing was thoughtful and reflective and it could be argued that the participants had already undertaken some analysis as they explored their relationship with English from the perspective of beginning English teachers.

I was aware, nonetheless, that phenomenology is a wide and evolving research method and that I needed to locate myself in analytic, interpretive approaches to phenomenology.   Titchen (2005:125) identifies the interpretive approach as 'Indirect' or 'Existential Phenomenology'.   She goes on to explain that in this approach:

> Researchers adopt an involved, connected observer stance and immerse themselves, literally, in the concrete, everyday world they are studying.

My role as a personal tutor on the English PGCE did mean that I was working alongside my student teachers in the field and I was the 'connected, involved observer' (Titchen, 2005:126). This role also meant that my data collection became more holistic as I drew on the everyday materials of the PGCE programme, including course writing and evaluations.   However, at times I also moved into a more empirical researcher role by using open questionnaires when I wished to follow up lines of inquiry emerging from the data. This desire to follow up lines of inquiry suggested a need to find answers and pin down meaning. I felt that the data I had collected did indeed suggest 'the richness and texture of experience' (Lawthom and Tindall, 2011:4) but I began to wonder if the phenomenological methods of interpretation were closing down this richness and texture instead of opening it up.   I had already realised that the formation and continuing development of personal epistemologies was a complex topic but it seemed that my ethnographic, interpretive approach was seeking to clarify and streamline the messiness rather than acknowledge it and explore it.

Furthermore, my reading into the post-structural/post-modern writing of Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari, and Foucault was taking me in new directions where issues of 'embodiment, spatiality, intersubjectivity, temporality' were beginning to be cast in a new light of indeterminacy. This new way of thinking sat uneasily with the interpretive approaches I had used and this tension between constructivist and post-structural thinking is a generative undercurrent which runs through the analysis of Part One of the Data Sample.

3.3   Indeterminate Spaces

Whilst my research methods were rooted in constructivist, interpretive approaches, my reading was opening up new ways of thinking suggesting a rather different landscape to the one I had first envisaged. Continuing in this metaphorical frame, Kaplan (1996:144) comments that:

> … increasingly, as part of an effort to avoid the abstract aestheticization of theoretical practices, the terms of cultural criticism have drawn from spatial as well as temporal concepts. Maps and borders are provocative metaphors, signalling a heightened awareness of the political and economic structures that demarcate zones of inclusion and exclusion as well as the interstitial spaces of indeterminacy.

I was interested in the idea of boundaries and limits to subject and the role played by personal epistemologies in forming such boundaries. I began to consider the spaces created by boundaries: within and without. How were these spaces formed? Were they imposed externally or created internally or a mixture of both? Were they visible or invisible spaces, designated or indeterminate? I began to consider how this idea of *space* and, in particular, *indeterminacy* might provide a lens through which to explore the PGCE training year and student teachers' experiences of that year regarding their developing personal epistemologies of subject.

However, when I looked back at what I had written about my early ideas regarding subject boundaries and the spaces emerging, it was interesting to see that I had begun to characterise these spaces in terms of polarities: *visible or invisible; designated or indeterminate.* Johnson (1981:viii) in her introduction to *Dissemination* by Jacques Derrida, explores Derrida's critique of Western philosophy which:

> … has always been structured in terms of dichotomies or polarities: good vs. evil, being vs. nothingness, presence vs. absence, truth vs. error, identity vs. difference … These polar opposites do not, however, stand as independent and equal entities. The second term in each pair is considered the negative, corrupt, undesirable version of the first, a fall away from it. Hence, absence is the lack of presence, evil is the fall from good, error is a distortion of truth, etc. In other words, the two terms are not simply opposed in their meanings, but are arranged in a hierarchical order which gives the first term priority, in both the temporal and the qualitative sense of the word.

It seems that it is the tension between polarities that has the potential to be productive and generative because if something has been favoured and given prominence then something else must have been suppressed and overlooked, so 'we should try to glimpse the 'trace' of what has been silenced or 'othered'' (MacLure, 2005:286). MacLure (Ibid.) notes that, for Derrida, this is 'an ethical stance of responsibility to the 'other': that is to whatever remains silent, unthought or 'untruthed' so that presence can come into being'. If I applied this ethical stance to an examination of the development of student teachers' personal epistemologies then it would seem that it is the 'invisible' or hidden discourses which influence and shape thinking which need to be explored through this productive tension. What had been privileged in the experiences of these student teachers and what had been silenced? How far did the PGCE confound or confirm expectations of what it means to be an English teacher?

Derrida described this way of looking at text as 'différance' (Derrida, 1982). This thinking invited me to consider ideas of *presence* and *absence,* where meaning is constantly shifting, changing and deferred. MacLure (2005:285-286) comments that 'différance' is sometimes referred to as 'spacing' and is:

> The irreducible gap that allows meaning, reality, identity, to come to definition in contrast to their opposites (words, representation, otherness). But the spacing is always uncanny – a matter of opening a space between things that cannot, yet must have, existed prior to the movement of opening.

I was struck by this philosophical construct of competing discourses, either acknowledged or unacknowledged, and the potential for confusion or *indeterminacy* that these discourses may create. This seems particularly relevant to the current state of education and, in particular, the much-contested subject of English. Reeves (2007:60) explores this idea with regard to the creation of Chartered Teacher Status in Scotland and conflicting paradigms of professionalism:

> One way of representing what is occurring is to envisage Chartered Teacher status as entering a space between competing discourses of teacher professionalism … where sites that entail sensemaking, such as enacting what it is to be a Chartered Teacher, may surface the tensions and fractures that this contestation creates.

The difficulty for beginning teachers who are trying to navigate their way through such competing discourses of professional identity and practice is that in the confusion, the 'visible' and prominent outcome may seem like all that matters. However, Mahony, Hextall, Gewirtz and Cribb (2006:4) comment on Reeves' (2005) recognition of the *agency* that such tensions might create:

The tensions between these competing discourses, Reeves argued, create a potential 'space of indeterminacy' which teachers can try to use to forge a revitalised, extended form of teacher professionalism.

It is interesting that Reeves, too, sees this as a 'productive tension' and one that enables agency and movement or development.

3.4 Discovering Deleuze and Guattari

My early findings from the data collected in Part One of the Data Sample (5.2: Personal Narrative Writing and 5.3.1: English PGCE Pre-Course Task) suggested that the student teachers in my research had regarded their relationship with the subject, English, as transformative and generative: something that was not pinned down easily but was dynamic and fluid and with which they could interact productively. In analysing the later data that emerged, I was struck by how this view of English as a subject changed as they progressed through the PGCE and assimilated the demands of the curriculum. I also became interested in the duality of English they were describing: the 'school English' and their own personal and 'private English'. I wondered whether one had been 'silenced' in the ascendency of the other (Derrida, 1981b), or whether one supplemented and enriched the other. To explore this further and look at it in a slightly different way, I was drawn to the writings of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and their view of 'state space' and 'nomad thought'. Massumi (1987:xiii) in the foreword to *A Thousand Plateaus,* provides a clear explanation which became my starting point:

> The space of nomad thought is qualitatively different from state space. Air against earth. State space is 'striated' or gridded. Movement in it is confined as by gravity to a horizontal plane, and limited by the order of that plane to preset paths between fixed and identifiable points. Nomad space is 'smooth' and open-ended. One can rise up at any point and move to any other. Its mode of distribution is the 'nomos': arraying oneself in an open

space (hold the street), as opposed to the 'logos' of entrenching
oneself in a closed space (hold the fort).

I was struck forcefully by the apposite description of 'state' space with its predetermined routes and pathways which left one 'entrenched' in a 'closed space'. It seemed to me to encapsulate the way the English curriculum and government directives and guidelines might have closed down the kind of creative and fluid dynamism of the subject English which the student teachers had recognised in their personal narrative writing. Conversely, the smooth and fluid spaces of 'nomad thought' spoke to me of the unbounded possibilities of English and the holistic and opportunistic nature of subject knowledge development which can follow unexpected pathways. In my teaching I had described English teachers as magpies, gathering any shiny new idea or resource, not because of immediate need but because of the attraction of the thing itself and what it suggested. This is the 'nomad space' that I felt English teachers inhabited. Massumi (1987:xi) considers the attributes of 'state philosophy':

> The subject, its concepts, and also the objects in the world to
> which the concepts are applied, have a shared internal essence:
> the self-resemblance at the basis of identity.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe this as an 'arborescent model' of thought. The tree above ground providing an established and visible order of things whilst the roots exist to serve one purpose – to feed and maintain the visible order. In their philosophy, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) move away from the idea of thought being analogous to a root because even if roots are seen to divide and spread, this remains a 'biunivocal' relationship; it does not represent multiplicity. Instead, they propose the rhizome because 'any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:7):

A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:25).

I became interested in the concept of the rhizome because I saw in it a way to explore the development of student teachers' subject knowledge. Deleuze and Guattari (1987:25) describe the tree - the aborescent model of thought - as the verb 'to be', whereas the rhizome is the conjunction: 'and … and … and …' . I found myself wondering whether, during the PGCE, subject knowledge became regarded as a fixed entity, a commodity that you either had or didn't have, and if this was the case, how did this view fit into student teachers' personal epistemologies? I also liked the concept of the rhizome as a map (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:12) meandering with all its affordances: 'detachable, connectible, reversible, modifiable …' [having] '… multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:21). The emphasis here is on affordances and production and this connects with what student teachers had explored in their writing about their early enjoyment of English.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987:12-13) also identify the difference between a map and a tracing, stating that 'a map has to do with performance whereas the tracing always involves an alleged 'competence''. In this way tracings are overlaid on the map, not the opposite. In thinking about this I began to consider further how subject knowledge development was like the rhizome in that it is productive and constructed and, in this understanding, the subject content becomes the tracings. To put it another way, if one begins one's subject knowledge journey from a list of things one needs to know – a set of competences, there will always be boundaries and limits. My early findings from the data I had gathered had suggested evidence of this limiting approach where subject knowledge was seen as a quantifiable commodity.

My analysis of the data began to explore how far student teachers recognised their involvement in the process of subject knowledge development and also whether

there were spaces in a very intense and pressured programme of learning and training to engage in wider subject knowledge enrichment and a metanarrative of their learning. Massumi (in Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: xii) makes the point that:

> Nomad thought does not immure itself in the edifice of an ordered interiority; it moves freely in an element of exteriority. It does not repose on identity; it rides difference.

This reading raised further questions which I explored through the data. If student teachers arrived on the PGCE with quite a clear understanding of their personal epistemology of English, how were they supported in recognising and managing conflicting epistemologies? If subject knowledge was seen as a quantifiable commodity, how were student teachers re-engaged with learning as unbounded? Moreover, in the face of such indeterminacy, what is the role of the PGCE? Is it perhaps complicit in silencing the other (MacLure, 2005)?

My reading of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) had prompted me to look anew at the opportunities provided in the PGCE for subject knowledge development and how far such such opportunities could be described as 'rhizomatic'. However, this reading also began to unsettle my thinking as I began to question how far my theoretical framework for analysis was built upon my certainties about what was important in English.

My reading of Derrida also led me to question my assumptions about my role as researcher in my early reading of the data. Derrida (1976:158) said: 'There is no outside the text [il n'y a pas de hors-texte]' suggesting that you can never position yourself outside a text to analyse it objectively or dispassionately because in the act of *reading* the text, you become part of it. This point had gained greater resonance with me as my personal and subjective response to the themes of my research took on increasing significance through my autobiographical writing. Through this I came to realise that my experiences were part of this research and that seeing myself as *inside* the text allowed me to question things I might otherwise have

overlooked. However, whilst opening up ideas and arguments to pursue, I also became aware that I was in danger of assuming the very position that Derrida had critiqued in that I was viewing beginning teachers' experiences on the PGCE in a dichotomous and hierarchical structure and making choices about which elements to approve and disapprove. These questions began to trouble the interpretive, phenomenological research methods I had used, as I began to explore issues of inter-subjectivity and reflexivity with regard to my own role in the research. My assumptions about the temporal, linear nature of the training year and how far a *learning journey* could be mapped or charted were also being troubled by my reading. Accordingly, I was left with questions which suggested that the theoretical framework I had constructed might generate valuable questions but perhaps might not allow me to grapple with uncertainty and indeterminacy. My reading of Foucault (1971; 1980, cited in Garland, 2014) provided further 'creative rekindling' (Pearce, 2017: personal communication) to suggest that there might be a new way of looking at the data.

3.5   Dominant discourses: letting go of certainty

I had embarked upon this thesis because I was curious. I wanted to know more about how we *become* English teachers and how our relationship with the subject continues to be wrought and fashioned. Through my theoretical reading I came to understand that my curiosity also represented care and hope and that I was intimately involved in the topic I was exploring. Miyazaki (2004:26) suggests that hope can be seen as a method of self-knowledge that tells us about who we are. He argues that hope allows someone 'to experience the limits of self-knowing without abandoning the possibility of self-knowing altogether'. Conceptually, the idea of hope and care was integral to my exploration of personal epistemologies and I realised that my theoretical framework needed to be both generative and open to challenge if it were to be capable of producing new thinking in this complex field of study.

Foucault (1994:325) notes that curiosity evokes:

> … a sharpened sense of reality, but one that is never immobilized
> before it; a readiness to find what surrounds us strange and odd;
> a certain determination to throw off familiar ways of thought and
> to look at the same things in a different way; a passion for seizing
> what is happening now and what is disappearing; a lack of respect
> for the traditional hierarchies of what is important and
> fundamental.

It seemed to me that the interpretive, theoretical framework with which I had begun the analysis in Part One of the Data Sample, could be seen as *immobilizing*. The shift in my thinking from constructivist to post-structuralist theory, pushed against and troubled the interpretive, phenomenological research methods I had employed. Accordingly, the data that I collected in the form of in-depth interviews, in Part Two of the Data Sample, allowed me to connect with what Derrida terms 'aporia'. The Greek word 'aporia' indicates 'impassable crossings' (Baker, 2005:48). These are intractable or paradoxical problems for which there are seemingly no solutions. Baker (2005:48) notes that:

> Derrida deployed aporia as a descriptor ''without really knowing
> where I was going, except I knew that what was going to be at
> stake in this word was the 'not knowing where to go''' (Derrida,
> 1993 cited in Baker, 2005:48).

For Derrida (1993:20) 'the nonpassage resembles an impermeability; it would stem from the opaque existence of an uncrossable border'. Or there might be no border and 'no opposition between two sides; the limit is too porous, permeable and indeterminate'. Derrida viewed aporia as a productive rather than a negative state. It is the impasse 'in the very place where *it would no longer be possible to constitute a problem'* (Derrida, 1993:12 italicization in original) that is important, generating 'openness to an other and a view of paralysis as the condition of responsibility' (Baker, 2005:48-9). This idea of 'paralysis' in the face of the seemingly difficult or impossible, then assumes an ethical responsibility, not to

accept the difficulty and retreat to well-worn routes, but to take the next step into uncertainty. This step carries with it a concern, or a duty for the researcher to listen to the multiplicity of voices and recognise indeterminacy.

In the use of 'aporia', I saw the opportunity to explicitly recognise the shift in my thinking; the point at which a limit seems to have been reached and which, however difficult it might be, prompts a further look from a new and unexpected perspective. I had already been considering Foucault's work on 'epistemes' and Foucault, (in discussion with Simon, 1971, cited in Garland, 2014:369), explains his thinking:

> What I am trying to do is grasp the implicit systems which determine our most familiar behaviour without our knowing it. I am trying to find their origin, to show their formation, the constraint they impose on us; I am therefore trying to place myself at a distance from them and to show how one could escape.

This thinking was relevant to my work on personal epistemologies and I began to wonder whether in my acknowledgement of my own interest and connection to the topic, I had omitted to challenge myself, and question my understanding of the dominant discourses that surrounded English teaching. Foucault's work on genealogical analysis explores how 'contemporary practices and institutions emerged out of specific struggles, conflicts, alliances and exercises of power, many of which are nowadays forgotten' (Garland, 2014:372). What Foucault aims to do is to trouble and unsettle these discourses and practices by tracing questions back into the past and then forward with the intention of disruption, through a process of 'descent and emergence' (Foucault, 1980 in Garland, 2014:372):

> The idea is not to connect the present day phenomenon to its origins, as if one were showing a building resting on its foundations, a building solidly rooted in the past and confidently

projected into the future. The idea, instead, is to trace the erratic

and discontinuous process whereby the past became the present:

an often aleatory path of descent and emergence that suggests

the contingency of the present and the openness of the future.

It seemed to me that if I were to work through the implications of this thinking in my research then I would need an approach which would allow a sense of discontinuity and contingency to emerge, to unsettle and challenge what might have been taken for granted. Alongside this was the need to recognise more acutely and critically, my own role in the research design and analysis. Accordingly, I utilised narrative inquiry approaches in the research design and analysis of the data collection of Part Two of the Data Sample. This research method and analysis is further explored in Chapters 4 and 7.

3.6   Considering the unconsidered

This chapter has charted the process through which I have put theory to work to explore the research questions posed at the start of this thesis. This has been an iterative process and so in no sense could it be described as linear progression. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011:6) identify the pivotal place of methodology in research:

Methodology is the bridge that brings our philosophical standpoint (on ontology and epistemology) and method (perspective and tool) together. It is important to remember that the researcher travels this bridge throughout the research process.

They also regard methodology as a guide which is malleable and subject to change and this is something that I have experienced. Research is a process and it is about learning so it can never remain static. There are sudden understandings and illuminations which can just as easily be eclipsed by another reading which suggests a further analysis and a new viewpoint. There have been many such shifts in the

course of this research where my reading has led me to question my assumptions and beliefs or look again at data with new eyes. Ultimately my reading has been the means by which I have begun to glimpse something deeper and more difficult to understand and it has given me the confidence to acknowledge its obscurity; its *edge* of knowingness and not to feel compelled to find a simple answer.

The conceptual framework for this study into personal epistemologies of secondary English student teachers, has drawn on questions of:

- Space and temporality

- Inter-subjectivity

- Meaning and text

- Dominant discourses

- Hope

The shifts and developments in the research design of this framework have encompassed constructivist, interpretive phenomenology and post-structural, narrative inquiry approaches which reflect my ongoing curiosity and desire to question my research topic. Above all, the theoretical reading I have undertaken has had a significant effect on my thinking about the research process and my part in this. It has troubled and challenged me and taken me to places I hadn't previously envisioned. In this sense it has been liberating and creative; a process that is summed up lyrically by Foucault (in Rabinow (Ed.), 1994) in *The Masked Philosopher:*

> I can't help but dream about a kind of criticism that would try not
> to judge but to bring an oeuvre, a book, a sentence, an idea to
> life; it would light fires, watch the grass grow, listen to the wind,
> and catch the sea foam in the breeze and scatter it. It would
> multiply not judgments but signs of existence; it would summon
> them, drag them from their sleep. Perhaps it would invent them
> sometimes - all the better. All the better. Criticism that hands
> down sentences sends me to sleep; I'd like a criticism of

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scintillating leaps of the imagination. It would not be sovereign or dressed in red. It would bear the lightning of possible storms.

Chapter 4   Research Methods

4.1   Introduction

The data for this thesis were collected between 2011- 2016 and fall into two parts. The initial data I collected for Part One of the analysis were collected between 2011 and 2014 and reflected my role as a PGCE Secondary English tutor. This role allowed me to explore the lived experiences of student English teachers, and the variety of samples collected during this time reflected my desire to explore and investigate these experiences. All of the samples gathered for Part One were written in a range of contexts within the year-long programme of the PGCE.

The data sampling in Part One, which encompassed opportunistic or 'found' data as well as researcher-directed data, helped me to refine my thinking and generate further questions. In this sense, the data gathered in Part One can be seen as a 'live' project, constantly unfolding and raising questions for my practice as a PGCE tutor and a researcher. The developing ideas that emerged brought into focus my thinking about the nature of personal epistemologies of English, the factors that contribute to their construction and their role within the training year.

Thus the data collected in Part One informed the data I went on to collect in Part Two in 2016, which focused on critically exploring the developing personal epistemologies of secondary English PGCE student teachers. The data in Part Two were gathered through in-depth interviews allowing me to engage directly with the research participants and analyse emerging thinking to a greater critical depth.

4.2   The Collection of Data

As the data gathered for Part One are not linear in nature nor chronologically dependent, I have tried to indicate how the ideas from one set of data prompted the collection of further data.

4.2.1 Part One: Research Sample

Data Set 1: 2011

Research question focus:

Having completed my personal narrative writing which explored my 'story of English' (see Appendix A), I became interested in the internal constructions of subject knowledge and subject identity and I was keen to explore what PGCE English student teachers thought was important in English. I was intrigued by the connections I was making between my personal life history and the kind of teacher of English I had become. Boud and Miller (1996, cited in Hunt, 1998:1) make the point that:

> Autobiographical research and writing, in enabling researchers to
> link the personal and the structural, individual life-histories and
> collective social movements, and public and private worlds, can
> be seen as central to the social scientific enterprise.

Thus it seemed that by asking my PGCE English student teachers to write about the learning journeys and personal influences that led them to teach English, the link between these private and public worlds might shed light on how personal epistemologies are formed.

Data Set 1

Personal narrative writing May 2011	
Type of data	Free narrative writing with prompt questions. A copy of the prompt questions can be found in Appendix D.
How elicited	The research focus was first discussed in whole Secondary PGCE English/English with SEN cohort session in the university. An email outlining research focus and requesting written responses to prompt questions was sent out to whole cohort of secondary English/English with SEN PGCE student teachers in May 2011.

How collected	If student teachers wished to participate they could choose to: - email their response directly to me - give their response to their personal tutor to pass on to me - place hard copy in an enveloped pinned to my office door in the staff administration building. This envelope was checked daily.
Population size *n*=	40 secondary English/English with SEN PGCE student teachers
Size of sample	7 secondary English/English with SEN PGCE student teachers: - 5 females and 2 males - Self-selecting

Follow-up:

An email requesting permission to include an anonymised complete copy of their personal writing in my thesis was sent out to sample participants in March 2017. A copy of the email can be found in Appendix E. Six of the original sample responded and their writing can be found in Appendix F.

Data Set 2: 2012-13

Research question focus:

The ideas emerging from the Personal Narrative Writing collected the year before, prompted me to explore student teachers' chronological experience of 'becoming' an English teacher during the course of the PGCE year, through the 'bookends' of PGCE-required writing at the start and end of the course, and a research questionnaire at the mid-point. The personal narratives of the previous year had been written by student teachers towards the end of their experience on the PGCE. I was interested in exploring some of the tensions that had surfaced in this writing

by tracking a number of student teachers as they progressed through the PGCE year. Thus I was interested in shifts and differences in expectations, personal epistemologies and attitudes towards subject development.

Data Set 2a

English/English with SEN PGCE Pre-Course Task September 2012: What do you believe are the characteristics of effective teaching and learning?	
Type of data	The English/English with SEN PGCE Pre-Course Task is a course requirement which all students, regardless of subject, complete before they begin the course. Feedback is provided by tutors but the writing is not assessed. The Pre-Course Task brief can be found in Appendix G (reprinted with permission from the Secondary PGCE Programme).
How elicited	Request for permission to draw on students' Pre-Course Task in my research was made during a subject university session with my tutor group in March 2013. I requested that student teachers should email this writing to me if they wished to take part in the research.
How collected	If student teachers wished to participate, they could send me their writing via email or leave a copy for me in an envelope pinned to my door in the staff administration building. This envelope was checked daily.
Population size *n*=	18 Secondary English/English with SEN PGCE student teachers - 14 females and 4 males
Size of sample	7 secondary English and English with SEN PGCE student teachers: - 5 females and 2 males - Self-selecting

Data Set 2b

Mid-point Questionnaire March 2013	
Type of data	Open questionnaire with 4 questions
How elicited	The research focus was discussed in a PGCE subject session in the university with my tutor group. I distributed a copy of the questionnaire to the whole group. The copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix H.
How collected	If the student teachers wished to participate, the questionnaire could be filled in during the afternoon in allocated time which did not impinge on other activities or free time and could be returned to me at the end of the day. A copy was also posted on the English PGCE subject area of the university intranet (Moodle), so that it could be downloaded and emailed to me at a later date.
Population size *n*=	17 secondary PGCE English/English with SEN student teachers - 14 females and 3 males
Size of sample	13 secondary PGCE English/English with SEN student teachers - 10 females - 3 males - Self-selecting
Note: This was an early attempt to gather data and, at the end of the questionnaire, I inserted a request to use three other pieces of data: the personal statement on the GTTR PGCE application form, the PGCE Pre-course Task and the PGCE Subject Development Task. A box was provided to tick if participants were **not** happy with this data being used. However, my ongoing reading into ethical considerations when collecting data meant that I did not make use of this approach: - I did not collect or draw on personal statements on the PGCE GTTR	

application form for this thesis

- I requested copies of the PGCE Pre-course Task and the PGCE Subject Development task, via email as described above and below, ensuring ethical considerations outlined in Section 4.2.3 were followed.

Data Set 2c

PGCE English/English with SEN Subject Development Task June 2013: The kind of English Teacher I am Becoming	
Type of data	The Subject Development Task is a piece of course writing required by the PGCE. It forms the basis of discussion at the final course student teacher review meeting. A copy of the brief for this task can be found in Appendix I (re-printed with permission from the Secondary PGCE Programme)
How elicited	My research focus was discussed at a subject session in university with my tutor group. I sent an email to my group of Secondary English/English with SEN PGCE student teachers asking for permission to draw on their Subject Development Task in my research.
How collected	If student teachers wished to participate, they could send me their writing via email or leave a copy for me in an envelope pinned to my door in the staff administration building. This envelope was checked daily.
Population size *n*=	17 secondary PGCE English/English with SEN student teachers - 14 females and 3 males
Size of sample	12 secondary PGCE English/English with SEN student teachers - 9 females and 3 males - Self-selecting

	Sample analysed in depth: 4 PGCE English/English with SEN student teachers - 3 females and 1 male - Selected by researcher

Note: Although all the writing submitted to me following on from my email request, was analysed initially (see Appendix J for initial analysis of all respondents' writing), I chose to focus on 4 student teachers whose responses had featured in my analysis of either the Pre-Course Task or the Mid-Point Questionnaire and to look at these responses in some depth. My aim in doing this was to connect narrative threads across points of the PGCE year to explore shifts and developments in thinking about subject. The 4 respondents chosen were not intended to be representative of the sample as a whole. My criteria for choosing the four respondents lay in the issues their final course writing raised with regard to personal epistemologies and the development of subject knowledge for teaching.

Data Set 3: 2011

Research question focus: Questions about the Reading Trail, which was part of the English course, had been trialled as part of an earlier subject evaluation (not part of the data sample for this thesis). The results from this trial prompted me to widen the scope of my inquiry to look more broadly at the affective dimension of reading and how this fed into personal epistemologies of subject.

Data Set 3

Approaches to reading texts September 2011	
Type of data	Questionnaire with 4 sections, each section with directed responses. The final section included an evaluation of the Reading Trail initiative I had been developing in university sessions. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix K.

How elicited	I discussed my research during a subject session at the university and distributed the questionnaire. It was optional for the student teachers to add their names
How collected	The questionnaire could be completed during the course of the day in allocated time which did not impinge on other activities or free time. A copy was also posted on the English PGCE subject area of the university intranet (Moodle), so that it could be downloaded and emailed to me at a later date. All the respondents chose to fill in the questionnaire on the day.
Population size *n=*	20 secondary English/English with SEN PGCE student teachers
Size of sample	9 secondary English/English with SEN PGCE student teachers - Self-selecting
Note: For the purposes of this research, only two sections of the questionnaire were analysed: Reading for Pleasure and The Reading Trail	

Data Set 4: 2013

Research question focus: The focus on the importance of reading in personal epistemologies of subject had emerged strongly from my reading and from data I had already collected. I was interested to explore student teachers' attitudes to personal writing and how this featured in their understanding of subject and their teaching role.

Data Set 4

Teachers as writers: March 2013	
Type of data	Questionnaire with open questions. The questionnaire was written and trialled by a colleague as a starting point for an English PGCE research project on teachers as

	writers. This is 'opportunistic' data which I have drawn on for my research with permission from the participants.
How elicited	The research initiative was discussed at a whole cohort session during a one day university PGCE English Subject Conference which was attended by student teachers and their school subject mentors. I discussed my research with my tutor group later in the day and asked permission to draw on participants' responses.
How collected	Student teachers had the opportunity to discuss the ideas in the questionnaire as a tutor group and complete it during the course of the afternoon in allocated time which did not impinge on other activities or free time. Student teachers had the opportunity to take the questionnaire away with them and return it at a later date if they wished. An electronic copy was also provided if student teachers wished to complete the questionnaire electronically and email it to me.
Population size *n*=	11 secondary English PGCE Core student teachers - 9 females and 2 males
Size of sample	10 secondary English PGCE Core student teachers - 8 females and 2 males - Self-selecting
Note: Due to structural variations in course design for the PGCE Core and the PGCE School Direct routes, the School Direct student teachers were not in university for this English Subject Conference	

Data Set 5: 2014

Research question focus: The questions on the evaluation of the Subject Enrichment Day at Manchester Art Gallery have been refined over a number of years to focus more closely on key issues emerging which provide insights into how

student teachers perceive the experience of working in out of school contexts and the sorts of challenges it presents to them. I wished to draw on these evaluations to consider perceptions of risk and innovation in teaching English and ideas about learning spaces.

Data Set 5

Art Gallery Subject Development Day Evaluation: May 2014	
Type of data	Evaluation of a Subject Enrichment Day at Manchester Art Gallery. A copy of the evaluation can be found in Appendix L.
How elicited	At the end of the Subject Enrichment Day the student teachers were asked if they would complete an evaluation anonymously.
How collected	Time was allocated at the end of the day to complete an evaluation if the student teachers wished.
Population size *n*=	56 secondary English and English with SEN PGCE Core and School Direct student teachers
Size of sample	52 secondary English and English with SEN PGCE Core and School Direct student teachers - Self-selecting
Note: for the purposes of this research only two questions were analysed: - What do you consider to be the benefits of learning in out of school contexts? - What might support or prevent you from using galleries and museums to develop skills in English?	

4.2.2 Part One Data: Issues of Validity

Denzin and Lincoln (2008:7) note that qualitative research has always drawn on multiple methods of collecting data in an 'attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question'. Such varied approaches are usually

referred to as triangulation and Denscombe (2007:137) argues that this enhances the validity and reliability of the findings. However, Denzin and Lincoln (2008:7) drawing on Flick (2002) make the point that triangulation is not a tool or strategy of validation but an alternative to validation because validity deals with objective reality, something that qualitative data can never achieve. Thus:

> The combination of multiple methodological practices, empirical materials, perspectives and observers in a single study is best understood then, as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness and depth to any inquiry.

Richardson (2008:478) disputes the usefulness of triangulation as an image, preferring instead the metaphor of the crystal. She argues that qualitative ethnography embraces a multiplicity of approaches and crosses boundaries and disciplines. As such it draws on many different perspectives and, as she says, there are 'more than 'three sides' by which to approach the world'. The multiplicity of viewpoints also challenges the notion of a 'fixed point' or 'object' that can be triangulated. Richardson (2008:479) concludes:

> Crystallization, without losing structure, deconstructs the traditional idea of 'validity'; we feel how there is no single truth, and we see how texts validate themselves. Crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex and thoroughly partial understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. Ingeniously, we know there is always more to know.

Questions of validity, regardless of the metaphor used, are bound up with this 'partial knowing'. I know that in my narrative (Appendix A), I have privileged certain events and omitted others. All the events happened but as director of my own montage, I had control over my editorial choices. Similarly, my respondents will have chosen what to write about and what to omit. Their knowledge of my

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relational position to them as their PGCE tutor will have had an impact on these choices, on how they represent themselves and the situations they write about. Added to this is the issue that while they may be writing about events in their lives that could be classed as fixed and stable, their perceptions of these events may change, reflecting Deleuze's notion of *becoming.* Deleuze and Parnet (2002:viii, cited in Coleman and Ringrose, 2014:9) argue that all things are made up of many relations:

> – a multiplicity – and that what counts are not the terms or the elements, but what there is "between", the between, a set of relations that are not separable from each other.

Coleman and Ringrose (2014:9) go on to explain that Deleuze and Parnet 'describe these relations, these 'lines' between things, as becomings, that is, as always in process, changing moving':

> A line of becoming has neither beginning nor end, departure nor arrival, origin nor destination … A line of becoming has only a middle (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, cited in Coleman and Ringrose, 2014:9).

In Part One of the data collection, I wanted to work with these ideas of 'multiplicity' and 'becoming' to explore how personal epistemologies of subject are constructed and the factors that impact on the way student teachers identify their subject. By gathering data from many sources I wanted to move beyond the idea of 'triangulation' which charts a route between fixed ideas, into something more akin to Richardson's (2008) idea of 'crystallization', which reflects different perspectives refracted through different contexts. However, I realised that I needed to further develop the research methods which would enable me to explore these ideas. As I approached edges and looked over to the 'spaces in between', I found myself pushing against the limits of my understanding. I began to recognise that the phenomenological and interpretive approaches I had embraced

might in fact prevent me from stepping over these edges into liminal spaces. My reading was leading me further into thinking about post-structuralism and, as I collected the data, I recognised that it raised questions about language, power, representation and temporality. These were questions about movement and instability, and the realisation that the research methods I had employed might not challenge and extend my thinking to move beyond the edges and outcomes I initially perceived, is part of my research learning journey in Part One of this thesis. Thus, Part One of the data sample provides a sense of this journey happening over time. It does not present a linear progression from phenomenological and interpretive beginnings to post-structural understandings; instead the journey is best understood as learning itself. In this sense, there are steps forward and slips back, troubling questions and uncertainty, assumptions challenged, unlearning, re-visiting, doubts and the opening up of new possibilities.

These tensions emerging through Part One of the data sample have added depth and complexity to the research process which complement the uncertain and shifting nature of the topic I have chosen to investigate: personal epistemologies of subject. Further discussion of these issues can be found in Section 4.2.4, 4.2.5 and Chapter 7.

4.2.3 Part One Data: Ethical considerations

This study was designed and conducted in accordance with BERA Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2011) and the Academic Ethical Framework (2011) of my HE Institution.

I was very aware of the ethical considerations raised by conducting research which involved my own student teachers. All the student teachers in the samples were informed that taking part in my research project was entirely voluntary and that their decision to take part, or decline to do so, would in no way affect their continuing work on the PGCE or the assessment of that work. I stressed that the research was being undertaken as part of my personal doctoral studies and played

no part in the current English/English with SEN PGCE course of study or assessment framework.

In accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998), I stored hard copies of data securely, in labelled folders in my home where I conducted all the data analysis, thus minimising the risks of transporting hard copies of data. Electronic copies of data were stored on my work computer and home laptop, both of which are password protected. These data were backed up on a separate USB stick used only for research purposes. I made sure that this USB stick was kept separate to the ones I used for work. Once this thesis has been completed I will delete all electronic data from my work computer and home laptop. I will keep hard copies of data and my USB stick, securely at home for further academic study and will destroy these data once all relevant research has been conducted.

I am aware that my position as a tutor on the PGCE represents an unequal weighting of power and that some students might have felt uncomfortable about declining to take part in my research in a face to face situation. I tried to mitigate this circumstance in the following ways:

- My research focus was first discussed in group university sessions. I outlined my request for data, why I was requesting this particular data and how it would be used. Confidentiality and anonymity was stressed, as was the right to refuse to participate and the right to withdraw without explanation
- The actual request for data was then sent out via email to the whole group. The email provided information about the research focus, why the data was being requested and how it would be used.
- One follow-up email was then sent out as a reminder
- Student teachers could elect to bring hard copy data into the university if they chose. An envelope was pinned to my office door in the staff administration building for a specified period and checked daily so that responses did not have to be handed to me in person and to ensure greater convenience.

The three questionnaires which also comprise part of the Part One data set also raised issues of unequal power relations where student teachers may have felt unhappy about refusing a request from their course tutor. I tried to mitigate this circumstance in the following ways:

- As before, the research focus was first discussed in group university sessions. I outlined my request for the data, why I was requesting it and how it would be used. Confidentiality and anonymity was stressed, as was the right to refuse and the right to withdraw without explanation

- Hard copies of the questionnaire were given out. Time was allocated during the course of a day or afternoon so that if the student teachers chose to complete the questionnaire this would not impinge on their free time or other activities.

- Student teachers could take the questionnaire away and bring it back to the university at a later date that was convenient to them

- An electronic copy was posted on the English PGCE subject site of the university intranet (Moodle) so that the questionnaire could be downloaded and completed electronically and then emailed to me

Informed Consent

In conducting this data collection, I followed my university Research Ethics Guidance (2011). I was aware that by working with my students during Part One of the data collection, I was working with a group of adults who were vulnerable. These were student teachers in my care and my status and involvement in assessment procedures meant that there were unequal power relations. I was therefore aware that despite my efforts to mitigate this inequality, some student teachers might have felt that they could not refuse permission for data. By requesting data via email, I felt that the student teachers would feel more able to simply ignore this request if they did not wish to participate.

In gathering the data for Part One and particularly the questionnaires, I followed my university ethical guidelines:

> Where participants are asked to complete and return a questionnaire, the questionnaire should be accompanied by a covering letter but no consent form is needed: consent is implied by returning the questionnaire. The covering letter, however, should include information similar to that in a Participant Information Sheet (MMU, 2017).

The only occasion when I did not seek consent was when using anonymous evaluative data that was already in the public domain. This was the case with the anonymous evaluation of the Subject Enrichment Day, which I draw on in Section 5.4.3 of Chapter 5. The student teachers were informed about the purpose of the evaluation and how it would support ongoing work to revise and develop subject practice on the PGCE. Thus, this evaluation is analysed as course data and the conclusions drawn feed directly into my work as a PGCE tutor as well as into my research.

Tilley (1998:317), in her work as a teacher-researcher with women in prison schools, explores the possibility of conducting 'respectful research'. She recognises the way in which her role as 'someone familiar' (Ibid.:319) enables her research to happen based on the relationships she develops. However, she is also aware, within that role, of the continuing potential for exploitation and subtle forms of coercion. I too, whilst working with Part One of the data sample, was 'someone familiar', working largely with my students. I was aware of their vulnerabilities and the power inequalities inherent in these positions. I ensured implied consent, as outlined above, and I was also mindful of Tilley's (1998:325) envisioning of reciprocity:

> When I think of respectful research, I envision reciprocal relationships from which both researchers and participants benefit. The women in the prison school became better educated about their rights as participants as I became more informed about their schooling experiences.

In considering the potential for reciprocity, I strove to ensure that my students were frequently informed about my research, what I was doing and why I was engaged in this work. In this way, I hoped that they would come to see research as being part of the teacher's role; a constant striving for informed innovation and development that they would carry forward into their own classrooms. In my wider work in Higher Education Continuing Professional Development, I am very much aware, as Czerniawski (2015:30) points out, that:

> Many teachers in England, once qualified, find it hard to justify
> and prioritise the role that educational research can (and should)
> play in their own professional development.

However, I am strongly in agreement with Myhill (2015:22) who recognises that:

> The integration of research into professional learning provision is
> fundamental to preparing students for the teaching profession in
> a manner which acknowledges the complexity of teaching.

 She goes on to note that:

> Whilst it is possible to ensure broad *access* to research to
> professionals, it is the contact with those who *create* research
> which is critical.

I hoped that by embedding my research into my everyday practice as a teacher educator, the benefits of this would be reciprocal in that research would be seen as a cornerstone of classroom work that feeds back into the classroom, to enhance learning opportunities.

I also recognise, like Tilley (1998:322), how my wider knowledge of my respondents might have contributed either consciously or unconsciously to my reading of the data gathered. This is something I have been aware of and have sought to minimise by my re-reading and re-visiting of the data to ensure that my findings are securely foregrounded in the data I have collected. Whilst this diligence is important, I must also recognise the potential impact of this wider knowledge on the analysis I have undertaken.

The issues of validity and ethics discussed above, gathered momentum throughout Part One of the Data Sample, to trouble and unsettle my thinking about voice and representation. This led to the realisation that, to address these issues critically and in a way that would deepen my thinking, I needed to approach both the collection of the data and the analysis in a new way.

4.2.4 The decision to collect additional data

During 2015-16, I had the opportunity to review the data I had collected for Part One of the Data Sample. This review raised questions about different ways of engaging with data to explore the complexity of ideas emerging about how personal epistemologies of subject are constructed. In the light of this, I decided to gather additional data in the form of in-depth interviews. I felt that this additional data would allow me to address issues of multiplicity and uncertainty and listen critically to the complex and dynamic interplay of the voices emerging. In doing so, I would further explore issues of validity, ethics, voice and representation.

4.2.5 Part Two: Research Sample:

Data Set 6: 2016

Research question focus

The opportunity to conduct in-depth interviews enabled me to engage with the research questions in new ways and provided a sense of immediacy alongside a more critical interrogation of the researcher's role.

The thesis aimed to explore the factors that had shaped the personal epistemologies of student teachers of secondary English and to consider how these factors might contribute to their understanding of their subject and impact on subject development as they began teaching. Thus, I was interested in the stories they had to tell as beginning teachers, right at the start of their careers. To this end, my questions were recursive, involving a sense of looking back over their experiences of English and also a sense of looking into the future and connecting these experiences.

Data Set 6

In-depth Interviews: February to March 2016	
Type of data	1:1 in-depth interviews lasting up to an hour
How elicited	A participant Information Sheet was handed out to whole cohort of Secondary English Core and School Direct PGCE group. Gatekeeper access was provided by the English PGCE Subject Co-ordinator. A copy of Participant Information Sheet can be found in Appendix M.
How collected	Mutually convenient times and locations were agreed via email. Where interviews took place in schools, School Professional Mentors were contacted to provide gatekeeper access. Consent forms were signed before interviews took place. These signed forms are available to External Examiners on request. A blank copy of the Consent Form can be found in Appendix N. All interviews were audio-taped and then transcribed. The transcriptions can be found in Appendix O.
Population size *n*=	49 secondary English Core and School Direct PGCE student teachers
Size of sample	5 secondary English Core and School Direct PGCE student

	teachers
	- 3 females and 2 males
	- Self-selecting

4.2.6 Part Two Data: Ethical considerations

In conducting these interviews, I followed my university Research Ethics Guidance 2016 (MMU, 2017).   At the start of each in-depth interview, I provided the interviewee with a copy of the Participant Information Sheet previously sent out (see Appendix M), and outlined the nature of my research. I checked if there were any questions that had not been answered and each interviewee signed a Consent Form to agree to the audio-taping of the interview.

The interviews were recorded on my work iPad which is password protected, using an App called Voice Recorder. This iPad is kept at home. The recordings will be deleted once the thesis has been completed.

4.2.7   Part Two Data: Transcription

I transcribed each interview myself, recognising the importance of listening for nuance and shades of meaning through pause and expression. The process of transcription also allowed me to consider issues of ethics as I listened to questions and answers, and conversations unfolding (Etherington, 2004). In the transcription, I retained the fillers, 'er' and 'erm', although I omitted to use these fillers when quoting, unless their inclusion was integral to the point being made. Pauses and ellipsis were shown by three dots … and long pauses by [pause]. As the data was being analysed thematically and dialogically (Riessman, 2008) I did not make use of any further structural transcription devices.

Etherington (2004:79) raises the question of returning transcripts to interviewees to enable checking for accuracy and recognises that there are differences of opinion amongst researchers based on ontological beliefs.   Schostak (2006:71) asks:

When an interviewee speaks – who owns what is said? Who owns

the truth? Who holds the power to ascribe meanings?

He goes on to reflect that if ownership belongs with the speaker then should transcripts be returned to them for accreditation? But if they then correct it, what is the relationship between this and censorship?   He asks: 'Can there be an innocent 'correction'?'   Such questions led me to think more deeply about these issues. A narrative emerges from a moment in time and, as Chase (2008:65) notes, they are:

… socially situated interactive performances – as produced in this

particular setting, for this particular audience, for these particular

purposes … a joint production of narrator and listener.

In the light of this thinking, I decided that what I had captured in my recordings was a moment and to return it for possible correction would be simply to overlay it with another moment in time, out of kilter with the original.   Therefore, I made the decision not to return the transcripts to the participants for checking as I was not trying to elicit truth in a truth/falsehood sense but instead I was using the transcripts to explore the stories that were being offered, including my own.

4.2.8   Part Two Data: Validity, representation, voice and ethics

In my analysis I aimed to address key criteria to ensure validity, as outlined by Etherington (2004:82). She notes that validity:

… rests on questions about: whether researcher reflexivity has

provided enough information about the social, cultural, historical,

racial, sexual context in which all stories are located; if multiple

voices give broad enough perspectives to take in different views;

if the style of representation offers enough openings to creative

expression;   and   finally,   if   the   work   contributes   to   our

understanding and new learning about the subject of inquiry.

The first question I had to address was one of editorial choice. Although I had interviewed five participants, I was aware that I might not wish to analyse all the interviews in the same depth. In the event, I analysed three interviews in depth and they form the basis of the analysis in Chapter 8. In selecting the interviews I wished to analyse, I focused on the personal epistemologies that seemed to emerge from each conversation and considered which ones connected with or challenged my thinking most powerfully. I looked for ideas that might be present in one interview and absent in another or thinking that connected or disconnected across the interviews. These, of course, were initial impressions, as deeper and unlooked for ideas emerged through the analytical process. All five transcripts can be found in Appendix O.

The analytical process I embarked upon was also very different to the interpretive, thematic approach I had used to explore earlier data collected for this thesis. Chase (2005:73) notes that 'rather than locating distinct themes across interviews, narrative researchers listen first to the voices within each narrative'. In this way, researchers can explore continuities and discontinuities and the complexity and multiplicity of narratives (Clandinin and Connolly, 2000; Etherington, 2004; Chase, 2008; Riessman, 2008), what Etherington (2004:81) calls 'the messiness, depth and texture of lived experience'. Researchers also look for how stories connect within a narrative, exploring the way a narrator navigates the different strands of their stories: their *'narrative strategy'* (Chase, 2008:73).

This process raises questions about voice and whose voice is heard in the analysis. Chase (2008:74-77) develops a typology of the researcher's voice to explore how researchers deal with issues of voice, interpretive authority and representation:

- The Researcher's Authoritative Voice
- The Researcher's Supportive Voice
- The Researcher's Interactive Voice

In practice, she notes, most researchers move across all three. In the analyses in Chapter 8, I have begun with an interpretive stance that could be termed the

'authoritative voice' but within each analysis I have shifted this stance to the 'interactive voice', to reflect the shift in my ontological understanding which draws on post-structural theory. This approach enables me to explore inter-subjectivities and my voice as part of the multiplicity that comprises a narrative. Thus I am no longer the *'invisible, omniscient author'* (Chase 2008:77) but instead I ground my analysis in my own personal and professional contexts. This is also an ethical stance which foregrounds transparency and seeks to hear participants' voices in all their complexities and recognise how my interpretation of their narrations has been shaped. This interweaving of the interpretive and interactive researcher's voice aimed to represent the student teachers' voices in the narratives in such a way as to hear the richness and complexity of their stories but also to place these stories within a social and cultural context:

> When the researcher's interpretive strategies reveal the stranglehold of oppressive metanarratives, they help to open up possibilities for social change. In this sense, audiences need to hear not only the narrator's story, but also the researcher's explication of how the narrator's story is constrained by, and strains against, the mediating aspects of culture (and of institutions, organisations and sometimes the social sciences themselves) (Chase, 2008:80).

This was central to what I hoped to achieve through this study. I wanted to hear the voices of student English teachers talking about what is important to them about the subject they teach and to explore how their personal epistemologies of subject were shaped and how they continue to develop. I also wanted to pay heed to the expressions of hope at the heart of their accounts.

To achieve this aim, I needed to move further than the individual narratives, which may be described as the strong warp threads of each story, to the patterning weft of ideas that run across the stories. Etherington (2004:76 drawing on Marshall and Rossman, 1999) comments that:

Narrative methods highlight the value of a person's individual story while also providing pieces in a mosaic that depict a certain era or group.

The ideas that run across these stories to create an emergent picture of the factors that contribute to secondary English PGCE student teachers' personal epistemologies of English are discussed in detail in Chapters 8 and 9.

Chapter 5:   Analysis of Part One of the Data Sample

The following chapter analyses the data gathered in Part One of the data sample to explore the questions posed at the start of this thesis:

What are the factors that shape and construct the personal epistemologies of student teachers of secondary English? How do these factors contribute to their understanding of their subject and their subject beliefs? What are the implications for the development of their subject knowledge for teaching?

The data I have collected from my student teachers in Part One, spans a four year period from 2010-2014. This data presents journeys ongoing, where meaning is 'perpetually deferred' (Darabi and Sepehrmanesh, 2012:121), not destinations. It provides opportunities for the student teachers involved in this research to reflect and consider their development as teachers of English.

5.1   Method of analysis

Silverman (2011:276) makes the point that whilst qualitative methods of data analysis may vary according to the frameworks and steps and stages implicated in the method chosen, all methods aim to move from the particular to the abstract. The starting point has to be a close familiarity with the data through reading and re-reading which enables key conceptual meanings to emerge.

The focus shifts from:

- What is said by participants, what you've observed them doing or what you read in a text (the level of description and summary); to
- Exploring and explaining what is 'underlying' or 'broader' or to 'distil' essence, meaning, norms, orders, patterns, rules, structures, et cetera (the level of concepts and themes).

I adopted a broadly thematic analysis approach to the data. At the initial reading stage I made notes about interesting features and ideas. These ideas developed into broad themes which I coded using either numbers or abbreviated labels on the

data itself. MacLure (2014:165) notes that the purpose of coding is to look for pattern or recurrence and I collated these codes into broad themes using labels. With the open questionnaires I also used tally charts of labels to find recurring ideas. These themes were then grouped into wider and more abstract concepts which, underpinned by my theoretical reading, formed the conceptual framework for the study. However, I also wished to keep sight of the personal stories emerging from the data and so my interpretive analysis interwove the student teachers' stories into the emerging themes. This was especially the case in Section 5.2 where I was analysing the personal narrative writing and also Section 5.3.3 where I focused on the development of 4 student teachers, and drew on data emerging from points across the PGCE year. My aim in doing this was to hear individual voices and to keep a focus on the personal and affective dimension within the formation of personal epistemologies.

5.2   Personal narrative writing 2011: 7 PGCE English student teachers

In my own writing (Appendix A) I have begun to explore the idea that the process of developing subject knowledge for teaching begins in the construction of personal epistemologies of subject which have rich and lasting inner meaning and which build an awareness of the intrinsic value of the subject. To explore this further, I examined the personal narrative writing of a group of student teachers studying on the English PGCE course.

The sample of seven was taken from a cohort of forty English PGCE student teachers in 2011, towards the end of the PGCE course. For further information about the sample please see 4.2.1 Part One: Research Sample Data Set 1, p.111-112. For a breakdown of first degree titles by gender, please see Appendix Q.

The request I sent out included several prompts which I have used as headings in the analysis of the responses. These question prompts can be found in Appendix D. Some respondents followed the prompts very closely providing, in effect, answers to questions. Others chose to use the prompts more loosely to frame their writing. This was particularly true of Kathy and Chloe, who wrote at length. The

respondents' personal narrative writing can be found in Appendix F. N.B. All names have been changed to ensure anonymity.

Prompt 1: What did you enjoy about English when you were younger?

MacLure (1993: 378) suggests that:

> … instead of reading 'through' an account for the self that lies beneath, behind or elsewhere, we might attend to the way identity is constructed and claimed in and through the discourse itself.

Drawing on MacLure's thinking, I looked closely at the language the seven respondents used to describe what they enjoyed about English when they were younger, and was struck by their use of what might be called *teacherly* discourse. They commented on exploring texts and enjoying speaking and listening and being fascinated by the *author's craft*. Kathy talks about her language acquisition being delayed due to moving between countries at a critical age. In these comments there is a sense of teacher identity being overlaid on their memories; the past in a dynamic interplay with the present. The opening prompt is complex. It assumes not just a particular response, that of enjoyment, but also a relationship with English as it might be constructed by a young child, overlaid with what English meant as a school subject to them when younger and what it means to them now. Add to this the fact that the audience for this writing is their English tutor. I will also have demonstrated a particular understanding of English through my teaching and discussions and the tutor-student relationship might impose certain constraints on what and how they write. The question is not as simple as it sounds.

The responses given are subjective and in some cases very personal. They have selected certain memories to illustrate what was enjoyable about 'English' but as they write they also begin to place a value on these experiences and, as they do so, a more objective voice emerges. Thus Duncan talks about 'being fascinated by the seemingly limitless possibilities of fiction' and Chloe talks about the 'endless

possibilities and the richness of a book'.   They are writing about a love of English and drawing on childhood memories but they are doing so from the perspective of a beginning English teacher.

Burley (2005:141), in exploring the relationship between subject identity and personal identity, recognised that re-workings of personal philosophy of subject also 'involve shifts in personal perception of identity in relation to the discipline and subject'. We see these shifts taking place in this autobiographical writing; the professional identity adding a new layer of perspective through which the subject is viewed. These early memories are shaping thinking and being shaped in turn by current thinking and future endeavour.

What these responses reveal is an understanding of English that was largely, but not exclusively, to do with personal reading and writing.   However, these young people were not passive consumers of texts, they were 'devoted' to reading. They 'consumed books with voracious hunger'; they were 'avid' readers who 'soaked up' texts.   Two spoke very movingly about the way fiction offered escapism and companionship.   Through their writing it became clear that for many of the respondents, *English* provided them with a creative outlet that was a productive or generative force. All of them spoke about their fascination for language and four of them identified the importance of their own writing; one respondent saying that she felt guilty that she no longer wrote. There was a sense running through these memories that English provided them with a creative agency so that they were not just consumers of texts but *producers* of texts in many varied forms.

Prompt 2: What part did family friends, school play in shaping your enjoyment and knowledge of English?

Once again, this question pre-supposes an enjoyment of English but the responses do begin to explore not just the influences at play on them, but also the way in which they responded to these factors and how they shaped and re-positioned themselves in relation to them. All the respondents explore the fields of family and school and, to a lesser extent, friends.

The importance of family is identified by all the respondents. Beth, Chloe and Duncan, all identified coming from families who read a lot as being instrumental in shaping their enjoyment of English. However, in their recollections it is not just the reading that is important, it is the fact that there were lots of books around the house. Beth's father 'constantly' bought books, and she identifies this as a factor in making her want to read. Chloe's Mum bought her a new book each month to add to her 'collection'. Duncan's family 'owned and cherished an extensive library of diverse and fascinating books'. The use of the words 'owned' and 'cherished', I feel are significant here. There is a sense of a dynamic force at play. These were not just books lying around the house, these were a collection of books, assembled purposefully and with meaning. The sense of the affective dimension of the ownership comes through powerfully in the word 'cherished' but the fact that these books are described as 'diverse' and 'fascinating' moves beyond mere ownership into valuing what has been gained by the reading of these books. There is a strong sense in Duncan's recollection of the 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:99) gained from his family of readers: 'where it wasn't uncommon for us to be reading our books around the breakfast table and I remember having some lively debates about the books we had all read'.

For Alison, family and books were also important but, unlike Duncan, Alison recognises early tensions between her family of readers and her abilities and aspirations. Alison's recollection reveals the worry of a child growing up in a reading rich environment, who finds reading difficult. Alison's mother was a librarian and during the school holidays Alison and her sisters had to go to work with her. The brevity of her words: 'We had to read or we would have nothing to do', appears to carry a forceful remembrance. This is further compounded as Alison remembers: 'I struggled with my reading at primary school and was put on special books.' The language is interesting as Alison is using a phrase that she might have remembered from her childhood. She has not distanced this recollection through *teacherly* discourse and so it seems more immediate and keenly felt.

With the help of her mother and sisters, Alison did learn to read fluently and came top of the class in Year 5. As a postscript, Alison notes that she now spends much time reading with her young niece and records her pride at the child's progress and her fluent speech. There is a sense here of the importance of being a part of, and conforming to, expectations of achievement and reading being a significant part of this.

There is a feeling emerging from Alison's and also Chloe's accounts that enjoyment of English should also equate to achievement in school English. Thus Chloe talks very movingly about the solace she found in writing poems and stories as a child but then goes on to say how English has also caused her much 'dejection and angst' as her handwriting and spelling has never been as strong as her reading. Perhaps we are seeing here the professional identity of a beginning English teacher interacting with, and re-shaping early memories. Alternatively, Chloe might be recognising the dualistic nature of a subject which thrives on creativity but which is also constrained by achievement targets.

Whilst discussing family influences, both Chloe and Kathy begin to explore something that might be described as the *redemptive* quality of English. Chloe describes her father who left school at fifteen with no qualifications, returning to education and discovering the work of Tolkein. He subsequently introduced his daughter to *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* and for Chloe, her father has remained an inspirational figure: 'reminding me in times of uncertainty of the concept of deferred gratification'. For Kathy, it is her sister, suffering from a degenerative neurological illness who, with the support of her teacher, finally learned to read and write. Kathy recognises the impact this had on her sister's life as well as her own. She was able to introduce her sister to *Anne of Green Gables* and the 'pleasures of fiction'. Like Chloe, Kathy recognises the fact that reading can find a creative outlet in writing, and this becomes a way of dealing with personal issues, something that Chloe describes as 'a solace'.

The *dualistic nature* of English begins to emerge more forcefully as the respondents discuss the influence of school on their enjoyment of English and it is interesting that for some of them, their love of English continues *despite* their school experience rather than because of it. To look more closely at what is happening here, it is worth separating the responses into school English i.e. the curriculum, and the influence of teachers.

Sarah enjoyed class readers whilst on the other hand, Duncan felt that he was being forced into reading things he didn't choose and saw reading in his own time 'as a refuge from the banality of the GCSE syllabus'. This point is echoed by Kathy, whose early education was in Africa and who comments that her 'experience of English as a taught subject was less enthralling than my private hobbies'. Kathy and Chloe record similar experiences in that they were both passionate readers who derived a great deal of pleasure from private writing. For Chloe this was in the form of poems and stories and for Kathy, it was keeping a journal. Yet both found their handwriting and spelling identified as a problem by their school teachers and both have chosen to record this as one of their early memories about English. Kathy notes that she did not connect her personal passions with the ability to excel in school English. In the dichotomy presented here of *school English* and *personal English*, there is a sense of the two being regarded as separate entities, but although two of the respondents record their difficulties with English, there is not an impression of their personal enjoyment of English being silenced or regarded by themselves as unimportant.

In fact, both Kathy and Richard found that their enjoyment of English on their own terms provided them with a refuge at school. For Kathy, experiencing school moves between continents, reading in the library: 'offered … a world of escapism and companionship during those years of regular solitude'. Richard, forced to take a daily forty minute train journey without friends of his own age, sat with the older boys and talked about books: 'It helped me realise that books and ideas were cool and fun.' There is a sense of agency emerging here as English in its private and

personal form provides solace and identity for Kathy and Richard who find themselves:

> … caught in the tensions between past histories that have settled in them and the present discourses and images that attract them or somehow impinge upon them. In this continuous self-fashioning, identities are hard-won standpoints that, however dependent on social support and however vulnerable to change, make at least a modicum of self-direction possible. They are possibilities for mediating agency (Holland, Lachiotte Jnr., Skinner and Cain, 1998:4).

For Kathy and Richard, their experiences could be described as a productive space.

All the respondents write about the influence of their English teachers, and in Kathy's case this is a negative response. However, for the others, an interesting thread begins to emerge about the way they identify the subject with the person, and the image of subject and identity that this then creates. For Alison, an inspirational teacher had made the subject come alive for her and she notes: 'I want to be that teacher!' However, it is Duncan's description of his A Level English teacher that powerfully crystallises a sense of subject, image and identity which underpins his understanding of what it is to be an English teacher:

> Imagine, if you will, a man who looked like he'd just stepped out of a New York Jazz bar with Allen Ginsberg and Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Now imagine that man in a classroom covered in old Bob Dylan LP covers, Rolling Stone magazine articles, yellowed, faded, newspaper cuttings of book reviews and playbills from plays you wished you'd been alive to see. It was just such a perfect, free environment, and I just felt inspired from the minute I sat down in that room. Add to that the man's passion and you just have the perfect storm in which to study and love English.

In this description the teacher himself and the learning environment embody the text and all its cultural precedents. He looks like a Beat poet: the rebel voice of a generation, anti-establishment and yet aesthetic, well-read yet confrontational. The reference to 'Rolling Stone' embodies the heady mix of music, politics and literature: the world that was opening up to Duncan through his study of English.

Prompt 3: What prompted you to study the subject at A Level / degree level?

All the respondents recognise their abilities in the subject alongside their enjoyment of it. However, there are other factors at play. Sarah had chosen to study English as it was a 'staple' subject 'which developed useful communication skills'. Duncan recognised his ability to achieve highly:

> I was always going to take English for A Level – on purely
> mercenary level, it was the subject I was best at, and regardless of
> whether I liked a book or not, I was able to articulate responses to
> texts fluently and with purpose.

Duncan's use of the word 'mercenary' and Sarah's use of the word 'staple' reminds us of the focus on attainment which has been overlaid on these memories of English and there is a sense of personal enjoyment being relegated. Until now, the respondents have placed much emphasis on those things that cannot be measured and their identification with English in its affective dimension but what is important at this point, is achieving highly in *school English.*

As each of the respondents moves into making choices about degree study, we begin to see the breadth of subject that might come under the umbrella of English.

Alison chose to study English and History and enjoyed discovering 'why the literature at the time was as it was, for example, Darwin's discoveries prompted the dark Victorian poetry which questioned religion'. Chloe, who also studied Film at A level and was interested in Sociology, opted to study English Literature with Cultural Studies, choosing 'modules that placed texts within historical periods and

varying schools of thoughts, including Marxism, Feminism, Post-modernism and Psycho-analysis'. Richard initially aimed to become a chartered surveyor but this only lasted six weeks:

> I realised that I wanted to write poetry and comedy revues and drink sherry in the afternoon. I switched to English and was able to do all of these things, and it was seen as 'good'.

There is a sense that their study is feeding a passion or an interest which is part of a developing sense of personal epistemology and identity. What also emerges is the individuality of these responses which provide very different definitions of what 'English' might be.

Prompt 4: Why did you choose to teach this subject?

It is one thing to study a subject but the decision to teach draws many other factors into play. For some, it was the opportunity to continue studying a subject which was personally enriching. Richard sums this up well:

> The chance to 'professionalise' my excitement about my own subject; to be the enthusiastic amateur who actually gets paid, had a real appeal for me.

Richard did not go straight into a PGCE after his degree. He initially thought that those who did, 'lacked imagination'. Later, having engaged in a successful career outside teaching, he realised that those people who had entered teaching had stuck at it and enjoyed it. He also comments: 'In addition, the teaching profession had never been out of the headlines – it looked like an exciting profession to be part of.' It seems that the sense of controversy also conveyed appeal. Beth, too, wanted to take on a 'core' subject perhaps acknowledging its importance in the curriculum.

A further motivation for teaching English emerged as the desire to pass on the love or passion for the subject, and to be the inspirational teacher who is able to inspire future generations of pupils to love English. However, Alison notes that: 'A solid understanding of English is the foundation for our society and how we are integrated into it.' This sense of the broad sweep of English in the curriculum and its pivotal role, is developed further by Chloe and Kathy. Both draw on personal experience to explore a powerful understanding of English that is based on inclusion and social justice. For Chloe:

> I chose to teach English because for me, language is power. Many young people feel they do not have a voice, that they cannot be heard in society. This they feel, renders them powerless, frustrates them and results in them attempting to gain power in deviant ways. The feeling of being unable to articulate yourself renders you silent, even if others give you the space to express yourself, if you do not feel you are equal you cannot, and perhaps will not, risk the humiliation of failing to 'perform' on a given stage.

Kathy, too, recognises the redemptive qualities of English:

> I have a strong belief that nobody should be 'written off' because of their learning or communication difficulties. Furthermore, my understanding of English is centrally focused around 'empowerment for the individual' where they are able to express themselves and to be enriched as a result.

For Kathy, Alison and Chloe, their passion for books and writing has helped them to transcend the difficulties that they have experienced both personally and in their lives and, in the journeys they have described, we can see different motivations in the desire to teach, that are perhaps more outward-looking and socially aware.

Prompt 5: What would be your personal definition of this subject?

This is a difficult question and one that requires many layers of interpretation. As Locke (2015:16) notes:

> How one theorizes about the subject and how it might be taught depends on how one conceptualizes such entities as: writer (more generally the maker of the text) / reader (viewer, listener) / text (including oral texts) / meaning-making mind / meaning / language (and other sign systems) / technological mediation / social context.

This sense of *multiplicity* comes through the respondents' attempts at definitions, along with a strong sense of individual engagement and an awareness of the changing space that English inhabits. Thus Richard comments:

> I think it is about being able to look at the world through a series of different lenses and then being able to describe what you can see or think you can see. This personal journey is made possible by being able to play with and master different ideas and frameworks illustrated through texts, from drama to poetry to pictures to adverts to blogs and everything else in between.

This sense of English adapting to a changing world, is echoed by Duncan:

> I … think it's one of the few subjects that is growing all the time – every day there are new words being developed, and new ways of presenting information, and there's something so encouraging about the myriad of ways people can engage with the subject – it really is such a bespoke learning experience.

There is in these definitions, a sense of excitement at the very openness of such a subject and its seemingly limitless possibilities.

A key point reiterated by the respondents is that of communication and the subject English providing a space for pupils' voices. Thus Kathy says:

> I have a very broad understanding of 'English' – essentially it is about communication: both giving students a voice and learning to listen to the voices of others.

For Sarah and Alison, the definition of English focuses more on content and skills base. For Alison, English is: 'the teaching and learning of the linguistic and grammatical terms that shape our language and through this, the discovery and understanding of how our culture has also been shaped through text'. Whilst Sarah defines English as: 'a mixture of key skills as well as an investigation into the power of language and how it can be used as a tool, alongside an exploration of inspirational cultural and heritage texts'.

The same sense of openness does not emerge from these last definitions suggesting a less indeterminate understanding of subject. For Kathy, however, content is: 'subservient to the goal of creating spaces for dialogue, creativity and thought in a manner that will inspire and engage the students'.

These are individual understandings of subject drawing on personal beliefs which are foregrounded in the experiences of English already described. In these definitions, I feel we can also see layers of thinking developing which push, sometimes uneasily, against different boundaries, contexts, beliefs and purposes. Here is early formative thinking about subject being formalised into school and then degree study and then overlaid with understandings of what teachers do, and beliefs about inclusion and social justice. All of this is in the process of being re-framed into defined school curricular content. I think that Chloe's definition encompasses the richness and complexity of this mix:

> At a basic level, English requires functional skills of comprehension and the ability to write in a grammatically correct

form. However, more than this, English is about analytical skills and about looking to understand the reasons and tensions of the construction of texts. English asks pupils to put themselves in both the position of the reader and the writer in order to experience texts as an active meaning maker but also as the consumer of texts … English is an individual space but it should also be the space of collaboration.

Prompt 6: How do you think a pupil that you teach might define 'English'?

There was less confidence in exploring the subject English from the pupils' perspective and for all their strongly held convictions, some of the respondents acknowledged that some of their pupils might hate English or not see the point of it. Beth notes that they might define it as a lesson where they get lots of 'sheets' suggesting a need for the certainty of information, but conversely she also hopes they see it as a space to 'express their opinions and be creative'. Chloe recognises that pupils might define it in terms of archaic texts with little relevance but hopes she can show them connections to their lives. The majority felt that their pupils would identify the subject with reading and writing skills but there was a hope that their pupils' definitions might move beyond this into the transformative and enriching qualities that they recognised. Thus Duncan comments that they might cite it as 'the only subject where they can be themselves, where they can have ideas without the fear of being incorrect'. Alison hopes that 'years down the line my students say that English opens up new worlds for them'. Kathy sounds a bleaker note:

> I think that many students are discouraged from sharing their
> ideas and developing their potential due to a perception of
> 'failure' in their school experience.

These comments are interesting in the layering of perceptions they reveal. The affective dimensions of English, which have been so important to them, are being

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tempered by the realities of teaching the subject but also for most, there is a strong sense of hopefulness about their roles and what they might achieve.

Prompt 7: What is important in English to your school/department?

The discussion that emerges in response to this prompt reveals an understanding of the tensions inherent in English departments working within an assessment-driven and attainment target culture. Sarah's comment is simple and to the point: 'The English Department are mainly concerned with all pupils achieving the target grades and levels.' Chloe, who has written passionately and at times, movingly, about the transformative and redemptive nature of English, finishes her writing by commenting that what matters to her department is being able to show attainment and progression to meet targets and offering a full and varied curriculum. Duncan expands on these rather bleak statements:

> Unfortunately, I feel that some of the passion for the subject has been replaced with the requirement to achieve good results. The irony is, with so much focus on attainment, teachers are less inclined to think outside the box when it comes to designing and delivering lessons, and therefore they don't inspire a love of the subject and the results suffer as a consequence.

Whilst there is a sense of teachers' professional knowledge and passion for the subject being challenged by the 'terrors of performativity' (Ball, 2003) for some, there is also an impression of distance: teachers and their departments being the generic 'other', which do not yet apply to them. Richard, who has a job, does already have a sense of his new department's philosophy built upon cultural enrichment. He is able to articulate this clearly, not simply in terms of his own epistemology of subject but with a wider understanding of current issues facing schools:

> I also think that the school would like to see the English department co-deliver some 'big-ticket items' like school productions, which are sometimes useful proxy indicators for

success, when all schools are trying to compete against a backdrop of falling enrolment.

For Kathy, however, the importance of inclusive practice has been her underpinning philosophy and what brought her into teaching. She recognises the 'dualistic nature' of English which:

> … encourages teachers to be versatile and fluid in their concept of English to allow their students freedom to flourish, whilst on the other hand, imposing the pressures and constraints of a 'core subject' and the all-important target 'C' at GCSE.

Her experience has shown her that whilst creative, co-construction of knowledge might be regarded as laudable and be welcomed by her school, the same teacher is expected to be:

> … the deliverer of 'the knowledge', constructed and agreed elsewhere, and judged as accurately delivered ('effectively taught') against criteria developed by others, that is examination boards, or inspection agencies such as Ofsted (Brindley, 2015:46).

Brindley refers to this as the 'knowledge dichotomy' (Ibid.) and, as Kathy is all too aware, 'the conundrum that English teachers have placed before them is that these two models of knowledge are fundamentally in opposition to one another' (Brindley, 2015:47). However, in recognising the tension, Kathy has sought to act, understanding that she needs to work in an environment that sees education as she does and which will welcome the skills she brings. She has opted to work in a special school recognising their ethos 'is similar to the open-minded nature of English, which has always been difficult to pin down and define, but continues to provide something that I instinctively know to be valuable and worthwhile'.

We hear in her personal voice, dissension and 'radical uncertainty' (Britzman, 2007:1) providing a productive tension which enables agency.

In the personal narrative writing there are tensions emerging between personal epistemologies of English and the student teachers' perceptions of what their schools regard as important in English. There is also a growing awareness of the complexity and conflicts inherent in professional subject knowledge development.

Britzman (2007:1) considers what development as a student teacher actually means:

> We may speak of development as an overcoming conflict, but not
> as conflict itself. We may agree that others develop, but rarely do
> we wonder how our own development affects our educational
> imagination.

In the next section, I explore the notion of development as conflict and what this means in terms of how the subject is *imagined,* with a group of PGCE Secondary English student teachers during 2012-13.

5.3   Challenge and confirmation in professional identity formation

In this section, I draw first on a generic PGCE pre-course piece of writing, which enables student teachers to articulate their early thinking about effective teaching and learning in their subject. Prompts are provided, which ask about personal learning experiences and the importance of their subject in the curriculum. This is an opportunist piece of data and the context of a required piece of course writing with directed prompts must be taken into account. The brief for this piece of writing can be found in Appendix G.

5.3.1 English PGCE Pre-Course Task: What do you believe are the characteristics of effective teaching and learning? September 2012: 7 PGCE student teachers

Seven PGCE Secondary English student teachers responded to my invitation to take part in my research: five females and two males. For further information about the sample please see 4.2.1 Part One: Research Sample Data Set 2a, p.113. All names have been changed to preserve anonymity.

All seven responses offered a personal view of English, which identified English as creative, engaging and enjoyable for pupils. There was a strong focus on pedagogy, which was a requirement of the writing and which provided the beginning student teachers with the opportunity to consider English subject pedagogy from the perspective of their own experiences as student, and to relate this to their future, imagined classrooms. What emerged was a clear understanding of the 'open' and discursive nature of the subject, which places the learner at its heart, collaboratively creating meaning. Thus, Karen says:

> Good teaching shouldn't just be about closed questions, and single-track discussion. Students should be taught that any text has multiple meanings. The classroom should be a safe place to ask questions, explore answers and arrive at a meaning. The school classroom should be alive with debate, with the teacher acting as a guide.

Tim echoes this view commenting that, 'ultimately an open forum is certainly a good grounding for students to develop a passion for English'.

The expectation that underpins this writing is that pupils will develop a love for this subject and that the teacher will be instrumental in enabling this. The view of English emerging here is broad and culturally situated. Lucy says:

> I believe that the broad and wide-ranging aspects of English mean
> that it is a subject that can constantly be taught through material

that is engaging and stimulating. In other words, I believe that there is no aspect of English that cannot be made interesting, relevant and exciting for young people.

All the respondents explore the importance of pupil enjoyment and connect this to effective teaching and learning. Karen is perhaps the most specific about this:

Finally, and most importantly, reading is a pleasure and contributes to people's emotional well-being … The learner should be at the centre of teaching. The personal enjoyment and pleasure to be gained from English shouldn't be lost in the teaching.

Alongside this is an expectation that the teacher will be passionate about their subject and have strong subject knowledge, and this element is also specifically linked to effective teaching and learning. This is reiterated by many of the student teachers who cite the enthusiasm of their own English teachers as making a difference to their learning.   There is a sense of unshakeable optimism in the responses, so that even when Tim sounds a note of caution saying:

Despite my love of English and excitement at the prospect of teaching it at secondary level, I fully recognise that making it exciting to learn for a whole classroom of young people will prove to be a real challenge.

His confidence immediately re-asserts itself with:

… however, it is certainly attainable, especially if the students are convinced that the classroom is a safe place, where they are free to express their opinions and views without fear of being mocked or, worse, told they are wrong.

Tim's view that being told one is wrong in English is worse than being mocked by one's contemporaries, reinforces a strong sense of collaborative meaning making at the heart of English subject pedagogy and echoes earlier comments in the Personal Narrative writing in Section 5.2. The picture emerging is that of the teacher learning with the pupils where learning is constructed and negotiated. At the start of the PGCE, these student teachers see their purpose first and foremost, to engage and inspire, not meet performance targets by ensuring high grades. This confident view of English is a personal manifesto.

At this point, the respondents' 'educational imagination' (Britzman, 2007:1) has been shaped by their own experiences of English and their own beliefs in the value of the subject, for themselves and for those they will teach. What comes through strongly is a vision of English teaching that is empowering and affective. We can clearly connect these responses to the discussion emerging in the Personal Narrative writing in Section 5.2. As already seen in this earlier writing, these views will be challenged during the course – by university sessions and by the constraints of syllabus, curriculum and context and the next piece of data explores these challenges in more depth.

5.3.2   Mid-point Questionnaire March 2013: 13 PGCE English student teachers

This questionnaire, which invited narrative responses, was completed at an English PGCE Subject Conference when student teachers returned to the university for one day during their second teaching placement. There were ten female and three male respondents and this total included the seven who had submitted their pre-course writing, discussed in Section 5.3.1. For further information about the sample please see 4.2.1 Part One: Research Sample Data Set 2b, p.114. All names have been changed to preserve anonymity.

Initially, the questionnaire asked about the aspects of teaching English that had appealed to the student teachers before they began the PGCE. The responses were varied but generally reiterated the points made in the pre-course writing (5.3.1). The responses could be broadly grouped in the following way:

i) The intrinsic value of English as a subject and the wish to inspire pupils to love English

ii) Personal satisfaction and sense of subject identity

iii) The appeal of an exciting and varied profession

iv) English as empowerment

When asked whether their experiences of teaching English on the PGCE had either confirmed or challenged their expectations, there was a general sense of confirmation in that they had anticipated the pleasures or difficulties they might face. However, eleven respondents did discuss ways in which their expectations had been challenged.

Some were surprised by how much time it took to plan, prepare and assess and the amount of paperwork required. They felt a shortage of time in the school day to do this and recognised that it was harder than they had expected to plan for assessment, Ofsted expectations and pedagogical approaches, alongside the recognition of all the factors that might affect pupil progress. Some discussed the constraints of the curriculum, which meant there was little time for leisurely exploration of ideas and not as much creative work due to a focus on literacy skills.

A common thread emerging was that of behaviour management with five of the student teachers recognising that difficult pupil behaviour presented a challenge and that some pupils did not enjoy their English lessons, no matter how hard they tried to make them fun. Lucy, who had initially felt that there was no aspect of English that couldn't be made relevant and exciting, admits: 'no matter how fun I try to make English, they still do not enjoy it!!' The double exclamation mark either suggesting incredulity or a wry admission of her naivety. However, her enthusiasm has not been dampened: 'I learnt not to take this personally and keep on trying!'

Responses to what the student teachers had enjoyed about teaching English fell into two broad areas. Some talked almost exclusively about subject content and subject pedagogy, whilst others focused more on their interaction with pupils and

staff and their role in the classroom. In their writing, there is a sense for some, of personal subject beliefs being challenged and re-shaped. Thus Natalie, who had felt that the appeal of teaching English lay in the opportunity to continue reading books, had been challenged by the difficulties of reading whole texts and had found it hard to promote a love of reading. However, she had discovered that she enjoyed teaching creative writing, providing an insight into ways in which her subject knowledge development had been generative and personally satisfying.

Many of the respondents talked about their interactions with pupils and staff as being particularly enjoyable. Tim's response conveys the tone of a number of respondents who discussed this aspect:

> Meeting like-minded colleagues has been great, as have those few occasions when I've noticed students having their own "light-bulb" moments, when something really sinks in. I'm also enjoying the moments when students end a lesson by approaching me to discuss what we've just been learning, sometimes stretching into break or lunchtimes!

Tim's enjoyment of developing his subject pedagogical knowledge through interaction with the pupils also recognises the importance of support from 'like-minded colleagues'. There is a feeling here of a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) which involves not just Tim and his colleagues, but also his pupils, echoing Stevens et al.*'s* (2006) findings of the importance of supportive departments and continuing to learn alongside pupils. However, such support was not experienced by all the student teachers and when asked about what had been least enjoyable, Caroline noted that she hadn't enjoyed her experiences outside the classroom or the school politics.

Echoing responses to the earlier question which asked about challenges, six of the respondents mentioned that they had not enjoyed dealing with disruptive pupil behaviour. Hilary comments:

I haven't enjoyed behaviour management aspect. V. hard and not what I signed up for!

The aspects of teaching English that had appealed to Hilary before she began the PGCE were:

- Going into detail about a subject I love
- To pass that love onto others
- To explore aspects of creative writing and drama

Her motivation to teach seems focused on her enjoyment of the subject in its academic form and instilling in others, the love she feels for the subject. In the tone of her comment, she appears to be resisting the dialectic of her subject content knowledge and subject beliefs with context and practice and possibly a fixed image of what the role should be.

Some of the respondents also mentioned specific subject content they did not enjoy teaching. These areas included non-fiction, spoken language, grammar or, 'the pit of doom' (Natalie, English PGCE student teacher, citing Watson, 2010), language teaching, literacy skills (not stimulating), Shakespeare (pupil barriers to study). These aspects of curriculum content perhaps did not live up to their imagined version of teaching English, which focused on their own subject interests and strengths. Here we see personal epistemologies of subject being challenged, with Lucy who had listed poetry, literature and creative writing as aspects of teaching English that had appealed to her before she began the PGCE, commenting: 'I'm not really keen on teaching the grammar side of the subject' and finding spoken language teaching 'dull, dry and very boring'. Her use of the word 'side' suggests an affiliation and identification with particular aspects of the subject which privilege on the one hand and exclude on the other, without a sense of how these aspects work together holistically.

It seems that these responses, expose the false dichotomy I was presenting in asking what had been enjoyed or not and whether expectations had been challenged or confirmed. Their experiences are not so easily categorised as this.

The responses in this Mid-point Questionnaire begin to explore issues of professional identity formation within the school context, and the uncertainties that this exposes. We see the respondents' struggles with challenging behaviour and planning for learning, the sheer weight of work, uninspiring subject content and the conflicts of subject beliefs and curricular and institutional purpose. However, this is offset against the enjoyment they discover through teaching their subject, which seems in tune with their understanding of the affective dimension of English: 'The feeling you get after teaching a lesson that students have enjoyed!' (Lucy PGCE, English student teacher).

When asked how they had continued to develop their subject knowledge during the PGCE, responses could be grouped into:
- Reading: for pleasure and curriculum content
- Independent research linked to taught topics
- Discussions with colleagues and observations
- Learning through teaching

However, in their responses it is possible to see a range of interpretations of what subject knowledge means to them. Jane states:

> This is ongoing and I assume it is something that is continual for all teachers, regardless of their experience. Personally, I see it being done through reading research and through assessment of pupil learning. What do I need to extend? What do my pupils need to know?

This view appears quite reductive. Here, subject knowledge is determined by what the pupils need to know to move to the next assessment level. Learning is

presented as a single loop, from teacher to pupil and it is dictated by the curriculum and the assessment outcomes.

Whilst there was a strong focus on the development of curriculum content knowledge, some respondents also identified a separate strand of personal subject development which they saw as complementary to, although not necessarily part of, what they do in the classroom. Tim and Natalie describe this *personal English*:

> I have a passion for reading and writing and I'm still trying to partake in these things as much as possible outside of the classroom to keep everything ticking over (Tim, PGCE Student Teacher).

> I still read constantly for pleasure – not books that people would call quality or elite but I still read all the time. This might not directly affect my subject knowledge but it keeps me loving English and keeps me enthusiastic about the subject I'm teaching (Natalie, PGCE Student Teacher).

This idea of what keeps you 'loving English', is also explored by Hilary, who places her subject knowledge development within a broad arts frame of learning:

> Seeing as many plays, films, festivals, etc. as I can – seeing 'English' in other mediums than the page.

In a similar vein, the first point Lucy makes when asked how she continues to develop her subject knowledge for teaching English is: 'Very difficult as I don't seem to have any time to read for pleasure' suggesting an automatic connection between subject knowledge and her affective response to the subject.

In the responses to the Mid-point Questionnaire, there is a sense of necessity and learning hand to mouth emerging. Thus, Natalie says:

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I am currently teaching myself the AQA relationship poetry before
I can teach it to the pupils, the same with Macbeth. Most of the
time I am teaching myself one or two lessons ahead.

Some of the respondents talked about reading around topics and drawing from a range of sources and Derek says: 'I find out what I need to learn to teach a lesson well; usually through the internet.' There is a focus emerging which identifies subject knowledge as a commodity that can be gained, either to rectify a perceived deficit or to be found in lesson-sized packages at the point of need.

Whilst some of the respondents focus on their independent research to 'top-up' perceived gaps in subject knowledge, there is also an understanding of the importance of networks and collaboration in developing subject knowledge. Derek says: 'I confer with other teachers when I require specialist knowledge of a particular subject.' The use of the word 'require' suggests a functional approach to knowledge which needs to be gained to remedy a perceived deficit and that English colleagues will be on hand to deliver this. Similarly, Lana, who had been anxious about her own depth of subject knowledge, especially with regard to language study, had worked out her strategies for approaching new topics in collaboration with her Subject Mentor. However, such support depends on the experienced teacher's willingness to articulate the substantive subject knowledge they have drawn upon and how this has been utilised to plan for specific curriculum learning. The role of school departments and Subject Mentors in supporting student teachers to develop their subject knowledge is a particularly pertinent point, considering the current reforms to teacher training, which place a much greater emphasis on practice-based learning.

The majority of the responses, 8 out of 13, mentioned independent reading research suggesting that, whilst collaborative practice is seen as important, subject knowledge development is seen as the responsibility of the individual. In these responses, the description of how knowledge will be developed is often vague, without explanation of how such reading might develop thinking in the subject.

Whilst 'reading lots' might add content knowledge, a key question is how the wider substantive knowledge of subject might be developed on the PGCE? This is particularly pertinent for many English teachers who are concerned about their knowledge of grammar and language teaching and might approach subject development in this area without a clear understanding of linguistic frameworks and underpinning structure.

The final piece of writing I draw on in this section, considers how student teachers reflect on the development of their own professional identity at the end of the PGCE course.

5.3.3 PGCE English Subject Development Task, June 2013: The kind of English teacher I am becoming – Hilary, Tim, Lucy and Karen

This piece of course writing forms the basis for discussion between the student teacher and their tutor at the final PGCE Review meeting and is a generic piece of writing with subject prompts. The brief for this writing can be found in Appendix I. It is not designed to problematize or explore concerns and yet individual voices do emerge to a greater or lesser extent. For further information about the sample please see 4.2.1 Part One: Research Sample Data Set 2c, p.115-116. There were 12 respondents in the original sample and the initial analysis of this sample can be found in Appendix J. For the purposes of this analysis, I focus on the writing of Hilary, Tim, Lucy and Karen whose voices have already been heard in the earlier data (5.3.1; 5.3.2). All names have been changed to preserve anonymity.

Hilary's writing is quite brief and she does not mention English, instead focusing on more generic classroom issues. She discusses specific pedagogic approaches and assessment strategies and how these have improved her practice and it seems that the voice of the English teacher has been silenced by the need to demonstrate 'policy knowledge' (Brindley 2015:47-48). In her mid-point questionnaire she had noted that her experience in the classroom had confirmed, 'how hard it would be – particularly in terms of behaviour management and the confidence issues involved'. Her final piece of course writing does not end with a celebration of

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English teaching but with a recognition that she still finds classroom management challenging, concluding that:

> What I need to focus on now is developing a louder, more authoritative voice and ensuring all students are listening and on task when they need to be.

This does not sound like Hilary's *voice* but rather a target taken from a lesson observation. As in her mid-point questionnaire when she stated that behaviour management was hard and not what she 'signed up for', there seems to be a disconnect between her passion for English and the reality of teaching the subject and she seems perhaps unwilling to engage in the dialectic of forging agency between the two. Even her final sentence acknowledging that, 'these skills are very much experience-based and I will continue to improve them as I gain more teaching experience' suggests that the skills are seen as a separate commodity to be gained. The brevity of Hilary's writing raises questions about what she has not said.   Her mid-point questionnaire revealed that she had enjoyed building relationships with her pupils and seeing the subject come to life through them. Her view of subject knowledge development was broad, eclectic and collaborative. However, what emerges in this final writing has little to do with subject and more to do with anxiety about competence.

In contrast, in Tim's writing, there is a strong sense of agency emerging.   He acknowledges the unanticipated challenges which have: 'helped steer me in a direction I perhaps wasn't anticipating'. He recognises that his subject knowledge has been a strength but that it has also led to a 'desire to impart this knowledge, thus creating too much teacher talk'. He notes that the progress he has made has been through collaborative support and this has been important in enabling him to feel like a member of staff himself. In Tim's writing, there is a sense of him working within a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) which has helped him to understand and overcome challenges and forge his own professional identity – 'a likeable teacher' - becoming someone who is comfortable in his professional skin.

He concludes his writing with a reminder of his own motivation for teaching English:

> I feel I am becoming a teacher who can succeed in enthusing
> students in areas of English I am passionate about and I hope this
> can help my students to "get into" English in the same way I did.

Lucy's writing is tightly organised into the prompt headings suggested by the task brief. Her writing is succinct and each of the paragraphs summarises her key learning in each area. However, it is the paragraph focusing on subject beliefs which I find particularly interesting. In the mid-point questionnaire in Section 5.3.2 she had spoken about not enjoying the grammar 'side' of the subject. However, in this final piece of writing, she has realised that to be an effective English teacher, she must 'continue to be an effective learner' and acknowledges how this wider learning has enriched her existing knowledge:

> During my placements I have acquired knowledge of my subject
> that I previously didn't have; for example, spoken language
> terminology, media language, practical drama activities, strategies
> for teaching grammar etc. As well as giving me the knowledge to
> teach new topics, this has also enriched my understanding in
> areas of personal expertise, e.g. literature, by providing me with
> alternative approaches to analysing texts.

Looking back at Lucy's story as it has developed over the year, it seems that while this new understanding has not been easy, it has indeed been generative, building on her prior learning to enable her to integrate new approaches into her personal epistemology of subject.

Karen's writing is very reflective, exploring issues of classroom learning that she relates to her own situation as a learner on the PGCE and beyond:

The idea that mistakes can be made when you are in the process of creation, discovery and growth, is an important one and applies to my own role as teacher.

Like Tim, she is beginning to explore the pedagogical implications of becoming the teacher she wants to be, recognising that to be the kind of teacher who offers pupils agency in their own learning, you have to have trust in your pupils and be willing to 'let go'. She thinks back to her first piece of writing on the course, and, with the benefit of experience, confirms her initial instincts that 'pupil-centred learning and pupil enjoyment is paramount'. As in Kathy's personal narrative writing (5.2), Karen has a strong sense of empowerment through English and the teacher's role in this, and she too has followed the English with SEN strand of the English PGCE. She recognises the importance of academic research to develop her pedagogic practice but also the importance of feeding her own passion for the subject through books, cinema, theatre and crosswords. In this way she hopes to become a role model for her pupils, showing them that English 'is to be enjoyed and discovered beyond the confines of the exercise book'. In Karen's writing we can see Ellis' (2007:455) dynamic model of subject knowledge development as culture, practice and agency, as these dimensions interact to create knowledge that is indeterminate and contextually situated.

Karen describes the shifts in identity that have taken place as content has fused with pedagogy, enabling her to see the subject in a new light, through 'teachers' eyes':

In conclusion, I have realised that, for me, teaching has shifted beyond the status of a job to be an identity. The teacher's identity can be compared to that of a magpie – I find myself eyeing a particularly shiny piece of prose from a favourite novel, storing it up in my mind for a lesson on short sentences. I see a literary map or a set of Penguin postcards and dream up a display in my ideal future classroom, or think of a washing line set of

poetic terms. I mentally bookmark film clips, newspaper articles
and songs, which would perfectly illustrate a point I'd like to make
about media manipulation. In other words, over the course of
September to July, teaching has gradually infiltrated each and
every aspect of my waking life, and there seems to be no escape
from it. I couldn't be happier.

What Karen is describing is not subject knowledge as a commodity but knowledge
that is shifting, indeterminate and above all, serendipitous. In her lyrical and
heartfelt conclusion, we begin to see learning as 'lighting fires' (Stenhouse, 1975,
cited in Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2005).

5.4   Spaces of indeterminacy

In the final section of Part One of the Data Sample, I shift the focus to explore my
role as a PGCE tutor in providing space for subject knowledge development. The
importance of formative experiences and personal beliefs have emerged as
significant factors in shaping personal epistemologies of subject and I explore how
student teachers respond to attempts to open up opportunities in the training year
that challenge certainty and provide 'spaces of indeterminacy' in subject
knowledge development.

The initiatives I discuss aim to allow student teachers to engage with English in
generative and productive ways, so that they become producers of texts where
knowledge is negotiated, constructed and shared. One aim has been to open up
wider discourse about English as a subject, but also to legitimize a re-connection
with personal subject interests at their own level. I was keen to present a wider
view of English where the student teachers could regard themselves as 'architects'
rather than 'bricklayers' (Mortimer, 1999, cited in Grainger, 2005) and develop
confidence to explore the 'intellectual space' Stevens et al. (2006:105) presented
by the creative and indeterminate possibilities of English. I also wanted to explore
the idea of opening up such spaces in what seems like a very constrained and
delineated PGCE course.

One such project is a Reading Trail which I introduce to student teachers as they begin the PGCE. This activity builds on personal reading to provide an early introduction to the role of wider reading in the English curriculum and to engage with teen fiction, as readers themselves first and foremost (Cremin et al., 2008). In this way, it invites student teachers to explore, through their own varied responses, the way readers interact with the texts they study. As Yandell (2011:167) notes:

> If students should be encouraged to deploy the full resources of culture and history that they have at their disposal, if textual meaning is construed as irreducibly intertextual, dependent on and arising out of the readers' experience of other texts, then classroom practice might reasonably be expected to include opportunities for more active and collaborative approaches to text.

To explore such active approaches to text, the student teachers are invited to 'read' around their text to create a multi-layered, multi-modal trail which begins to explore form, ideas, themes, imagery, images, sounds, textures, different perspectives, different readings. They are also asked to include their own writing, both creative and reflective, in response to this wider reading of the text.

The activity is self-directed and open, providing a wide degree of choice which, for some, can feel disconcerting.

5.4.1   Approaches to reading texts 2011: 9 PGCE English student teachers

This open questionnaire, which sought narrative responses, aimed to explore responses to the Reading Trail as part of a wider consideration of the student teachers' attitudes to reading which also looked at the personal and affective dimension of reading. There were nine respondents. For further information about the sample please see 4.2.1 Part One: Research Sample Data Set 3, p.116-117.

It should be noted that although I had offered the opportunity to submit anonymously, I was asking my group of student teachers to evaluate a project I had initiated and the unequal power relations must be taken into account. As the group were self-selecting, it is likely that those who were interested and involved in the project chose to respond. The questionnaire was conducted at the end of the student teachers' first two weeks in university before they began their teaching placement. Thus, their thinking about reading was not contextualized by specific curricular imperatives.

Reading for pleasure

The first question focused on what might be termed *personal English* and asked about reading for pleasure. A love of books had emerged as a significant theme in the Personal Narrative writing (5.2) and had featured consistently in applications to the PGCE and interview discussions, a point supported by Goodwyn (2002) and Ellis (2003). I was interested to know more about this personal strand of subject knowledge and keen to offer the opportunity, through the Reading Trail, of connecting this personal and affective dimension into subject development work on the PGCE.

When asked about reading for pleasure, common themes emerged, particularly about the sense of escapism and entering another world. I was struck by the depth of reflection in attempting to explain why reading was important and although they presented this response as something unique and intensely personal, they were all describing remarkably similar experiences:

> I enjoy silence and the peace one can get through reading. Life is forever moving at a blistering pace, so it is nice to have a respite. There is a sense of transcending reality when reading a particularly good poem or novel (English PGCE student teacher).

I enjoy that reading allows me to escape from the real world and to completely lose myself in the world of the author – very relaxing experience (English PGCE student teacher).

In reading these responses, I am reminded of the affective dimension of Wallace Stevens' (1945) poem *The House was Quiet and the World was Calm*, where:

The reader became the book; and summer night
Was like the conscious being of the book.

These responses provided insights into the personal beliefs about subject described in the Personal Narrative writing (5.2) and the Mid-point Questionnaire (5.3.2). The discussion emerging was not about pedagogy or curriculum content but simply about pleasure derived from reading. As evidenced in the personal narrative writing (5.2) this personal strand of English continued despite negative school experiences and through the stage of critical reading demanded by university study (Goodwyn, 2011:22). One respondent commented: 'If you have a love of books through your teenage years it's with you forever.'

Alan Bennett (2007) in *The Uncommon Reader* concludes with the premise that reading widely inevitably leads to writing and so I asked the respondents if reading for pleasure ever led to writing for pleasure for them. There was a mixture of responses including an emphatic 'No'. However, six respondents agreed that reading did encourage them to have a go at personal writing although five of them felt limited by their own sense of confidence and this remained private writing. One respondent identified creative writing as his 'primary field' and that reading for pleasure was always undertaken to support writing projects.

The Reading Trail

One of the aims of the Reading Trail is to connect personal reading and pedagogy, although at this point in the course the classroom context remains hypothetical.

Responses to this initiative were positive and words such as enthusiastic, fascinating, interesting, imaginative and creative were used. Comments included:

- helps in analytical and critical consideration of the text;
- deeply personal and original – perfect for English as a subject;
- allows me to open up my mind and take the play's meaning to where I want to go.

Two of the respondents whilst enthusiastic, recognised issues to be resolved in terms of ensuring the routes taken fed back into an understanding of the original text, a point raised by Dymoke (2009:9, citing Benton, 1995). They also considered curriculum time constraints. One respondent, who had a linguistics rather than literature degree background, discussed how the trail had supported the development of her own subject knowledge:

> At first it was very overwhelming, as I am not used to completing work with such an open-ended outcome. I was definitely scared of 'not doing it right', but this has been eased by talking to others. I think it is interesting to look beyond the text and ask why, to consider motivations and inspirations, and how the text may have been received.

Finally, respondents considered the benefits to pupils of such an approach to reading. This question does not invite critique and assumes that there are benefits to be gained, but I wanted to focus on a consideration of pupil learning. All the responses explored specific aspects of learning linked to English national curriculum study. However, there was also a recognition of the importance of a personalised understanding and interpretation that invited interaction with the text. Other comments discussed a developing understanding of the reading process and the opportunity to read like a writer:

They would understand how a piece forms from things outside

and that they can take things around them that they like and

make something of them.

There is a sense of enjoyment and genuine engagement with subject discourse in the form of reading, and the opportunity to engage with a text at their own level and in a way that was not constrained by assessment or by the need to prepare for teaching and learning outcomes, was clearly refreshing and perhaps unexpected for some.

5.4.2   Teachers as writers: March 2014 – 10 English PGCE student teachers 7 female, 3 male

In the Approaches to Reading Texts questionnaire, explored in 5.4.1, there had been a mixed response to the idea of writing for pleasure. I was keen to explore this question further with regard to classroom practice and the opportunity arose during an English PGCE University Subject Conference in March 2014, which took creative writing as its focus. The question posed at the conference was: 'Do teachers of writing need to be writers themselves?' The open questionnaire, which invited narrative responses, was written by a colleague and completed by student teachers from all the PGCE English groups. I have focused on the respondents from my group and it must be noted that these respondents were all following the University-based PGCE route as their School Direct counterparts were involved in school placements at this point in the course. For further information about the sample please see 4.2.1 Part One: Research Sample Data Set 4, p.117-118.   All names have been changed to preserve anonymity.

The group were asked when they had last written creatively. Only two wrote regularly, one posting stories on his blog and one writing stories for children and writing and performing songs. One had been a journalist before starting the PGCE. The remaining seven had last written creatively at school, college or university, or were occasional, 'private' writers. All the respondents said they had enjoyed writing poetry and stories as children but for the majority, this had clearly not

continued. Some discussed ideas they had had for personal writing and projects they might start but not finish because: 'most of the time I would lose confidence half way through, feeling that my work simply wasn't good enough'. Others described private and tentative writing projects. One student mentioned taking a creative writing module at university and finding it too prescriptive and restrictive: 'Any experimentation with language was shot down!' Three recognised that they made conscious choices not to do further creative writing, one choosing literature modules and one feeling that she was reliant on 'structured writing'. One student teacher, Louise, discussed her pleasure in creative writing when she was at school and how she had started a creative writing club for Year 7 pupils when working as a teaching assistant.

The respondents were asked if an English teacher who writes themselves, gains insights into helping pupils to write well. This question split the respondents with seven in agreement, although with varying degrees of enthusiasm and commitment. Although there was consensus about the need to have knowledge of the writing process, three respondents argued that it was not necessary for an English teacher to write creatively for them to be able to teach this process effectively. Becky noted:

> Just because you write, doesn't necessarily mean you are a better
> teacher of writing.

Nicola explored this point further:

> Just because a person can't write very well doesn't mean they
> can't identify what makes a good piece of writing and pass that
> knowledge on to the pupils.

Interestingly, Louise, who had set up a creative writing club when she was working as a teaching assistant, commented:

I think the role of the English teacher is to encourage any aspect of the subject whole-heartedly, but as long as you understand the skills needed and the difficulties pupils may face through past experiences perhaps, you don't have an obligation to write as such.

In these responses there is a suggestion that the onus is on the teacher to deliver the skills not to construct learning as a negotiated domain with her pupils to develop a shared understanding of what those skills might entail.

At the other end of the spectrum there was an enthusiastic affirmation of the idea that English teachers should write creatively. This was most noticeable from the two students who were already regular writers but there were thoughtful contributions from all who provided a positive response. Harry's comment is interesting:

I think that teachers should write creatively because it is a good way to reflect on your own weaknesses as a writer and I also think it gives you an introspective view of yourself and your feelings if you write honestly.

I had been used to hearing about the redemptive and transformative qualities of reading but this was the first time the debate had centred on the benefits of writing outside the development of curriculum skills. Harry's comments echo Grainger's (2005:84) study which found that:

Teachers found their outer voices through choosing to converse with their inner voices. They appeared to be listening to themselves, beginning to hear what they had to say and valuing the process of reflective introspection and connection.

Harry goes on to make a point reiterated by a number of the respondents:

It also puts you in the position of the pupil and how they may feel about writing creatively, e.g. apprehensive, nervous, not confident, embarrassed about sharing their feelings.

This is a very different approach to teacher subject knowledge to the one espoused earlier by Nicola, that to be able to identify the features of a good piece of writing means that you can pass that knowledge on to pupils. Nicola is identifying subject knowledge as something external, concrete and quantifiable that can be 'passed on'. For Harry, this knowledge is more internal and fluid, and, importantly, affective. It connects to his understanding of his development, in this case, as a writer. John (a published writer) also begins to explore this *internal* aspect of subject knowledge development in his ringing endorsement of teachers as writers:

I believe you must be capable of practising what you preach; if you do not enjoy writing, you won't enjoy teaching writing. Your enthusiasm and passion will leak into your teaching of the subject, and if you write you will know the terror of writer's block and the frustration of having an idea yet being unable to put it on the page. By being a writer yourself, it adds significant scope, a level of individual understanding, when a child says they cannot write it allows a deeper insight into their issues.

These responses are interesting for the somewhat polarised views, which connect with personal beliefs about English. For Nicola, Aysha and Becky, a view of English emerges that has literature at its core and Aysha states: 'I'd definitely say I was more accomplished at reading rather than writing.'

There is also a view emerging that writing is something personal and private which shouldn't have to be shared. Cassie perhaps identifies one of the issues when she says that sharing her writing would be daunting initially as it is such a personal task. She goes on to say:

> This is a problem pupils face because there is so much to remember when writing – grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, structure of work, character, setting etc. It's a sense of being judged and not meeting the cut of what a good written piece is.

For these student teachers, it seems that the issues about writing and sharing it publically are exactly the same for them as for their pupils. Aysha comments that:

> Sometimes as a teacher it is difficult to be creative in our writing because we focus so much on the technical elements so it takes some enjoyment away.

There is also a marked difference to the confident and enthusiastic subject discourse on reading in 5.4.1.

There is much to be explored here in terms of the opportunities that can be opened up in the PGCE year to allow student teachers to experiment with writing in secure and structured environments. What emerges from the mixed responses is that there are some who are willing to engage in personal and professional learning that offers practical and productive insights into the wider concerns of the subject. However, others who feel less confident in this area, are resistant and happier to rely on 'policy knowledge: a model of knowledge that excludes knowledge as a negotiated domain, and thereby also excludes the teacher (and indeed the student) as being active in the construction of knowledge' (Brindley, 2015:46). Dymoke (2011:149) recognises that these are issues of confidence and considers the potential of the PGCE to provide structured support in engendering student teachers' 'writing voice'.

Ball (2003:226) explores Lyotard's (1984:4) argument that the commodification of knowledge involves 'not simply a different evaluation of knowledge, but fundamental changes in the relationships between the learner, learning and knowledge, resulting in "a thorough exteriorization of knowledge"'.

I wondered how far the classroom learning environment itself contributed to the exteriorization of knowledge? Schools are pressured places where results matter and to deviate from the norm means to take risks, and risks might jeopardise those results. That is one argument but another might be that both pupils' and teachers' expectations of what happens in an English classroom also plays a part. A consideration of the relationship between learner, learning, knowledge and learning space led me and my colleagues to explore developing writing skills in museums and galleries.

5.4.3   Challenge and invigoration in out of school contexts: Art Gallery Subject Development Day Evaluation – 52 PGCE student teachers (Core English and School Direct English PGCE routes)

Working in a city I was aware of the rich variety of resources on our doorstep and, as I was particularly interested in exploring visual approaches to developing writing, I approached the Education Department at the City Art Gallery. Student teachers now spend a day in the art gallery each year focusing on creative and interactive ways of teaching writing through art and artefacts.

The data explored here is drawn from the student teacher evaluation of the English PGCE Subject Development Day at the art gallery in 2014.   There were 52 respondents representing all the PGCE English student teachers attending the day from three tutor groups across two campuses. For further information about the sample please see 4.2.1 Part One: Research Sample Data Set 5, p.119.

I focus on two of the questions for the purposes of this analysis. Initially, the student teachers were asked to consider the benefits of learning in out of school contexts. There were a variety of responses, including:

- The boundaries of the classroom are gone so should open opportunities for independence and creativity
- Exciting opportunities to explore the change in dynamic of a different space.

- A new sense of locality helps generate new ideas, new spaces evokes the unknown. Pupils can respond differently than within school context
- The feel and links between the gallery spaces and the art provides a freedom of thought you may not be able to create in a classroom
- Open creative spaces – away from a setting associated with work/exams/education
- Experiential learning / exposure to different cultural experiences

In the responses there was a strong emphasis on the affordances provided by a different space. Student teachers recognised different dynamics and the potential for different attitudes to learning. The words 'open' and 'freedom' occurred often and it became clear that these words were being used metaphorically but also in the physical sense of escape into the unknown. In this sense, the break from all that the classroom represents was seen as liberating. The question generated a sense of excitement as it seemed to connect with the possibility to construct new learning in shared and open spaces.

Nonetheless, when asked what might support or prevent the student teachers from using galleries and museums to develop skills in English, this sense of excitement did not transcend their uncertainties about such a venture. Whilst recognising that there could be benefits, they were concerned about the pedagogical and practical implications of moving learning outside the classroom. They did not feel that they could trust their pupils to behave; they worried about costs and travel and the difficulties of organisation, often summed up in the words 'health and safety'. One respondent felt daunted that the gallery was in the centre of the city and imagined that 'these activities/trips are easier to arrange and execute in smaller towns'. Then there were curriculum worries: would these workshops fit into the curriculum? Is there space in the timetable given the pressure of exams? There was also the job of persuading the Head of Department that such a trip was worthwhile. One respondent noted that:

It is not a space people associate with English. Schools might be

apprehensive to allow an English trip to go to a gallery.

One respondent, after writing glowingly about the day, rather dispiritingly concluded:

I think it's hard to think of the benefits that outweigh displaying

images on a whiteboard or printing copies. Not all students will

be enthused by the same trip and so, for some, the learning

experience will be lost.

What emerges is the support beginning teachers will need if they are to gain enough confidence to take children out from the safe routines and delineated expectations of school classrooms, systems and practices. In the responses, there was a real sense of the duality of English at play, and a consideration of what might be silenced or *othered* in student teachers' developing epistemologies of subject.

The three initiatives discussed in this section grew from an impetus to connect with personal epistemologies of English during the PGCE year and to see subject development as productive, generative and affective. This had emerged from my writing, as well as the personal narrative writing of my student teachers, and prompted me to wonder how far personal subject beliefs were being silenced and the affective dimension of English being lost. I also wanted to explore spaces for subject development that were open and not constrained by curriculum content or policy directive; spaces of indeterminacy, which would challenge, invigorate, refresh and interrogate.

Chapter 6 Discussion of Part One Data Analysis

The data in Part One of the Data Sample explore the formation of personal epistemologies and their impact on the development of professional subject knowledge for teaching, from multiple perspectives.   They include reflective writing, looking back into childhood and forward into the hopes and expectations of what becoming an English teacher might entail.

The data in Part One do not follow a systematic chronology and the drawing together of all the pieces has felt akin to creating a montage of writing which, depending on how the pieces are placed, might be explored thematically, chronologically or experientially.   In this sense they do reflect the process of *becoming* which has little to do with an orderly progression, despite the discourse of the Teachers' Standards (DfE 2011d).

The following discussion focuses on secondary English student teachers' experiences of the PGCE training year and teases out from this montage of data the key ideas emerging from the conceptual framework underpinning this thesis. These ideas inform the collection and analysis of further data in Part Two.   Thus the discussion in Sections 6.1 to 6.7 illustrates this process of sampling, questioning and recognising troubling issues of space, temporality, inter-subjectivity and the nature of knowledge in English and its associated discourse, which energises and generates further inquiry into the research questions. This further inquiry is developed through Part Two of the data sample and is explored in chapters 7-10.

6.1   The PGCE: a space paradox?

In Chapter 3 I noted that the ideas emerging from my reading belonged to space and indeterminacy.   Massey (2005:9) proposes that space is the 'product of interrelations' where multiple and 'distinct trajectories co-exist'. If we no longer see space as bounded or governed by perspective then we begin to see it as always 'under construction. It is never finished; never closed. Perhaps we could imagine space as the simultaneity of stories-so-far.'   My findings from the personal narrative writing (5.2) confirmed this idea of 'simultaneity of stories-so-far' as

student teachers described their formative experiences of English from their perspective at the end of the PGCE training year. Their writing suggested that these varied early experiences were significant in establishing personal beliefs about the nature of English and what this meant to them. These beliefs largely centred on affective and transformative dimensions of English, which sometimes sat uneasily alongside their reconceptualising of English from the perception of a beginning teacher. These findings raised questions for me about the impact of personal epistemologies of English on subject knowledge development. Massey's (2005) understanding of *space,* connected very well with my thinking about subject knowledge development and the rhizomatic and unpredictable way that it might be formed (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). But here a conundrum began to emerge. Massey (2005:11-12) notes that:

> Space can never be that completed simultaneity in which all interconnections have been established, and in which everywhere is already linked with everywhere else. A space, then, which is neither a container for always-ready constituted identities nor a completed closure of holism. This is a space of loose ends and missing links. For the future to be open, space must be open too.

There is something rather appealing and, in the current climate, strangely subversive, about describing the university PGCE programme as a space of 'loose ends and missing links', however apt it might feel. However, the current discourse of the Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2011d) demands that no link will be overlooked or end left untied. As a professional training programme, linked to Qualified Teacher Status, the PGCE is a delineated space with a start and end point and measurable outcomes, and, in this way, it does begin to feel more like a 'container'. The data suggest that the student teachers do not have 'ready constituted identities' (Massey, 2005:11-12)*,* and they face uncertainty and challenge as they begin to grapple with conflicting epistemologies in the daily realities of teaching their subject.

The irony at the heart of university teacher education is that whilst the underpinning philosophy of the PGCE programme serves to question the certainties of student teachers as they arrive, the professional assessment framework of the QTS award demands the confident assertion of 'Good' in all areas just ten months later when they leave. By the end of the programme it seems there is no place for uncertainty. However, Britzman (2007:1) recognises that the socially interactive nature of teaching renders an unbroken trajectory of progression unlikely:

> We are likely to forget that all of us are subject to the radical uncertainty of being with others in common and uncommon history, and this being with other beings makes development uneven and uncertain.

Thus, although we might recognise that development involves conflict and uncertainty, it appears that the training year requires resolution to satisfy statistically measured outcomes to ensure 'Good' teachers.

Ball (2003:216) notes that the rise of 'performativity' affects all fields of education, and defines 'the worth, quality or value of an individual or organization within a field of judgement'. The challenge of performativity facing student teachers in their training year is also felt keenly by ITE providers, who must ensure that their student teachers meet the required standards or risk their institution being downgraded against inspection targets. Thus the tension of what Brindley (2015:48) refers to as 'policy' versus 'professional knowledge' is being played out in Higher Education as it is in schools, with student teachers experiencing such tensions both as students on a professional course of learning and as classroom practitioners enacting that learning.

The data collected in Part One provide insights into the impact on personal epistemology and subject development as student teachers grapple with the need for measurable outcomes and certainty by the end of their training year. These insights are explored in the following sections.

6.2 What matters in English: the discourse of personal epistemologies

The personal narrative writing and the pre-course writing (5.2, 5.3.1) suggested a strong identification with subject, which was articulated in terms of creative freedom and the transformative and empowering force of English. This was underpinned by a pedagogy that emphasised the active and shared construction of meaning and the affective dimension of the subject. For many, although not all, these personal epistemologies of English were centred on literature and the reasons for this have been well-documented elsewhere (Ellis, 2003; Goodwyn, 2002; 2011; Marshall, 2000; Stevens, 2011; Wilson and Myhill, 2012). The question emerging from the data is how far these personal epistemologies remain fixed or whether they are open to change? The training year itself, presents a complex arena which explores pedagogy in theory and practice, in different settings, encompassing different epistemologies of subject and which demands constant interaction and challenge.   In the student teachers' writing (5.2, 5.3.1) there is a strong sense of intrinsic value embodied in their personal epistemologies, which is challenged as they move into school settings and confront the extrinsic markers of school success shaped by League Tables, Ofsted and the need for continuous and measurable improvement.

The changing face of education also means that many of these student teachers are experiencing a very different subject to the one they imagined, which might require a significant re-positioning of personal subject beliefs and, where convictions are so strongly held, this does not happen quickly. The data I collected evidenced the conflicts the student teachers were experiencing between what they had believed about English teaching, their expectations of the role, and the actual realities of the classroom. For some, as they considered what mattered in English from different perspectives - their department's or their pupils' - there was a sense of their personal beliefs being separated or *put to one side*, while they got on with this new job of English teaching (5.2).

Brindley (2015) draws on Bernstein (2000) who explores the duality of 'sacred' and 'profane' knowledge (after Durkheim, 1946), and re-envisions this duality as a

'knowledge dichotomy of professional knowledge and policy knowledge' *(Brindley, 2015:47)*. Beck and Young (2005:186) provide a closer examination of Bernstein's analysis, noting that:

> Bernstein's … view is summed up in his metaphor of a singular being like a coin with two faces—one of which is indeed the 'sacred' face of inner dedication. The other, however, reveals the 'profane' dimension of singulars and the intellectual fields in which they are rooted—a dimension concerned with mundane issues of economic existence and power struggles.

Durkheim's idea of 'sacred knowledge' and its 'radical otherness in contrast to the mundane world' (Beck and Young, 2005:186) connects to the spirit of the personal narrative and pre-course writing (5.2, 5.3.1) with its overtones of the redemptive and transformative qualities of English. Perhaps we can also see this in the strands of personal subject knowledge development described by Natalie, Tim, Lucy and Hilary, (5.3.2) which are seen as somehow separate to the classroom but which 'keep you loving English'.

This raises questions about the ways in which personal epistemologies of subject are either subjugated, co-exist or enrich the politically-charged field of policy and high-stakes assessment in which these student teachers inevitably find themselves. Brindley (2015:49) believes that 'professional knowledge and its associated discourse have become marginalised, simply by virtue of survival within schools'.

The dialogic space of the PGCE provides the opportunity to explore the syntactic issues of subject to understand the tensions caused by this notion of duality. Whilst universities and subject associations are well-placed to explore the long-view of subject with regard to historical and cultural context, and 'examine the boundaries of 'what counts' as subject knowledge' (Ellis, 2007:459), it is possible that this critical lens might be absent in the busy and assessment-focused climate of schools (Smith, 2001; Leach, 2000; Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2005; Ofsted,

2007). A question to be considered is how far student teachers might feel able to raise and articulate issues of beliefs and dissonance in a busy and focused English department. This is an area which warrants further inquiry.

6.3 Subject knowledge and the affective dimension

The initial data gathered from the personal narrative writing (5.2) suggested that early experiences of English were characterised as broad and expressive generating ideas and possibilities, and were a productive force. These experiences were suggestive of Doecke and McClenaghan's (2015:30) view that:

> Truly worthwhile learning is something you experience, an event
> that might be said to transcend time because it remains with you,
> an ineradicable part of your identity, shaping your engagement
> with the present.

The way early experiences of English were articulated connected with what Heathcote and Bolton (1995, cited by Grainger, 2005:85) would describe as 'innerstanding', emerging from 'deep insider involvement'. For some of the student teachers, this learning appeared to continue as a thread of *personal English*, which ran alongside school or university study or their teaching, but was not necessarily seen as having extrinsic value in the PGCE. The subject development projects I implemented as a tutor aimed to connect with these productive and affective aspects of the subject and explore how they might be drawn into the PGCE *space* to develop subject knowledge and pedagogy. The data I gathered raised questions about subject knowledge development during the PGCE and also provided some insights into the *zeitgeist* of English teaching.

The data tentatively suggested that there was resistance to embracing new learning and pedagogical approaches if this challenged personal epistemologies which encapsulated what was important in the subject. This was evident for some student teachers who were resistant to the idea that English teachers should write creatively alongside their pupils and those who identfied a lack of enthusiasm for

teaching the more technical aspects of subject such as literacy skills, spoken discourse analysis and grammar.   This finding might support Leach's (2000) proposition that student teachers' views about English, which are often literature-based, are not challenged as they progress through their placements. It would also support Wilson and Myhill's (2012) study, which noted the significance of teachers' personal epistemologies in relation to the development of metalanguage, and the need for a clearer understanding of the impact of such epistemologies in the classroom.

Grainger (2005) and Fitzgerald, Smith and Monk (2012) argue that the focus on assessment outcomes has meant that teachers are less likely to take creative risks in their teaching. This was noticeable in the evaluation of the Subject Development Day at the art gallery.   There was an awareness from some, of the lack of support from their departments and the barriers they would need to overcome if they were to attempt to take their pupils out of school to places not normally associated with learning in English.

These findings raise the question of how to effect subject knowledge development during the PGCE so that it moves beyond simple 'auditing' of knowledge into a real sense of the possibilities and ownership of new learning which in turn, becomes part of a personal schema of the subject?   Such shifts in personal epistemology were suggested in some of the data as the student teachers gained wider experience of the subject (Natalie, 5.3.2, Lucy and Tim, 5.3.3). However, it could be argued that such development needs to connect into affective dimensions of subject so that the new learning becomes significant and relevant within personal epistemology. In other words, it needs to 'light fires' (Stenhouse, 1975) and inspire curiosity, interest and enjoyment as well as connecting into the deeper structures of subject pedagogy.

In view of this, I feel that any future development of subject knowledge projects on the PGCE would benefit from delving deeper into the substantive frameworks of subject and how they connect to learning in the classroom. A key issue here is time

on the PGCE to develop such substantive knowledge. For initiatives such as The Reading Trail to be contextualised more successfully, there needs to be a well-developed and ongoing dialogue between university and schools to develop greater coherence of subject development in the training year.

6.4 The commodification of subject knowledge

In the current version of the Secondary PGCE in my university, student teachers spend just 40 days in the university and those following a School Direct route, approximately 32 days. The focus of the university study is on developing subject pedagogical knowledge. Once student teachers in the sample had embarked on the PGCE it seemed that, for many, subject knowledge became curriculum content. It was acquired to satisfy the learning for the lesson and it was being accessed quickly at the point of need, often from the internet or school mentors. When asked how they would continue to develop their subject knowledge, there was an assumption from some of the student teachers in the sample that this would be self-taught through reading appropriate sources or through networking and collaboration.

The picture by the end of the PGCE course appeared to be more mixed with shifts into deeper thinking about the substantive structures of the subject and how this connects to pupil learning (Richard, 5.2, Lucy 5.3.3) and evidence of learning that Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2005:116) describe as 'opportunistic and serendipitous', (Karen and Tim, 5.3.3). These shifts in learning could be described as generative (Daly, 2004; Green, 2006 and Stevens et al., 2006) and also affective, as student teachers identified the mutually enriching process of working with their pupils and the impact on their developing subject pedagogical knowledge. Karen's (5.3.3) lyrical evocation of developing the teacher's magpie mind, beautifully encapsulates this affective and generative sense. However, not all student teachers experienced such positive outcomes or were able to make these shifts and articulate them so effectively, supporting Hodkinson and Hodkinson's (2005) findings about the unpredictability of student teacher learning and Smith's (2001) recognition of the complex set of relationships at the heart of such learning.

6.5 Mentors as gatekeepers of subject knowledge

The data (5.3.2, 5.3.3) suggested that student teachers identified the importance of collaboration in their subject knowledge development and it was evident that supportive departments made a considerable difference to their progress and how they felt about their role as beginning teachers. For some, the idea of a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) extended to learning alongside and with their pupils, as noted by Stevens et al*.* (2006) and this became a generative and affective model of learning. It was also evident that some student teachers regarded the role of the subject mentor as pivotal in supporting subject knowledge development. However, this seemed to be an understanding of subject knowledge as content and deficit and, in this way, the subject mentors could be regarded as *gatekeepers* of subject knowledge.

The PGCE has a clear role in opening up debates about the syntactic issues of subject and in providing opportunities to build on and challenge personal epistemologies of subject but this is a potentially decreasing role if the current reforms to Initial Teacher Education continue apace. Subject mentoring has been embedded in initial teacher education since 1992 when the then Secretary of State for Education, Kenneth Clarke, argued for largely school-based training (Robinson, 2006:25) enacted through the DfE Circular 9/92 (DfE, 1992). Since then subject mentors have had an important part to play in the subject development of beginning teachers (Leach, 2000; Smith, 2001; DfE, 2015) and the Carter Review (DfE, 2015:59) notes that the central importance of this role should be identified through improved status and funding. This would seem to be an important step if subject mentors are to take on a wider role in subject knowledge development.

6.6 Crossing the threshold into liminal space: knowledge as unknown

Brindley (2015:56) found that research provided a vehicle for combining policy knowledge with professional knowledge, generating:

> … authentic knowledge which values the teacher, reinstates
> professionalism and speaks to teacher identity in ways that re-

engage practice and knowledge in identities reflecting Bernstein's 'deep structures of the self'. Policy knowledge is acquired – skills based and responsive to the demands of others; professional knowledge is, however, not about acquisition of skills and facts. It is more demanding than that: it is a merging of self with the 'quicksilver' of English.

This seems like a powerful approach to subject knowledge development in that the student teacher is at the heart of the learning and the focus on praxis and analysis draws on the deeper, substantive structures of subject.

Under current policy, Teaching Alliances must have the capacity to support their schools in six key areas, one of which being Research and Development (National College for Teaching and Leadership, 2015). In the light of thinking emerging from Part One of the data sample, there are questions to be explored about how far such research might be connected to substantive structures of subject and pedagogy and the combined role of the universities and schools within this (Hanley and Brown 2017).

Locke (2015:26) notes that professional knowledge does not happen overnight from reading books, it happens over time through self-reflexivity, but on a one year course the uncertainty and unevenness that Britzman (2007:1) refers to might not be embraced but rather regarded with fear as the possible portent of failure.

Brindley (2015:47-48) identifies professional knowledge as the wider and deeper concerns of English. However, alongside this is the policy discourse of school improvement and student performance on which hangs school and teacher accountability. Faced with the task of ensuring high pass rates in English, and navigating the shifting sands on which such policy is built, student teachers' personal epistemologies which define what matters in English and why, might well be lost in the clamour of policy imperatives. These concerns were beginning to be raised in the personal narrative writing (5.2).

The emerging themes from this data provide a strong sense of the enduring nature of personal epistemologies and the way affect is embedded within them. The data suggest that personal beliefs about subject run alongside but do not necessarily connect with the process of further subject development, which often takes the view of knowledge as acquisition, a commodity facilitated by exterior sources. The insights emerging suggest the importance of engaging personal epistemology dialectically with new learning, to explore issues of disjuncture and to connect earlier conceptions of subject (Hofer and Pintrich, 1997:123-4).

These findings are important for all engaged in teacher education in that they point to a greater emphasis on exploring the knowledge base and beliefs that student teachers bring with them to the classroom. Such exploration also points to the need for space and resources to develop substantive subject knowledge in meaningful ways which acknowledge and work with, rather than negate, resistance and uncertainty. I would argue that such work requires recognition of the individuality and hope in personal epistemologies and a determination to overcome the discourse of deficit and promote a discourse of beliefs.

Chapter 7 Research Analysis and the Researcher's Journey

The data gathered in Part One of the data sample raised questions about how personal epistemologies of subject were constructed and the role they might play in shaping expectations and approaches to developing subject knowledge during the PGCE year. However, to gain more critical and in-depth insights, I realised that I needed place the voices of the participants at the forefront of the analysis. Thus, I decided to build upon the written and *found* data of Part One to explore the research questions through face to face interviews.

The opportunity to question, discuss and explore ideas with the student teachers during in-depth interviews, allowed me to engage with the emerging stories in such a way as to reflexively question and connect my own experiences as a researcher, English teacher and PGCE tutor. This in turn allowed me to consider the role I played in shaping such stories, leading to a more deeply reflexive understanding of the research I was conducting. These insights highlighted the importance of the relationality inherent in the research whereby the student teachers were not objects to be studied discretely at a distance but instead the thinking that emerged developed through intricate symbiosis, with ideas catching, sparking, reflecting and oscillating between us as we shared our stories.

This chapter may be seen as charting my journey as a researcher recognising the shift in my thinking and stepping into the unknown spaces of post-structuralism. As such it forms a bridge between Part One and Part Two of the data sample.

I preface my introduction to the analytical commentaries on the three in-depth interviews which follow, by noting that it is important to understand the contextual issues impacting upon the student teachers I interviewed.   However, I am aware that it is also impossible to separate my context as a researcher from the analysis I am undertaking. As Riessman (2008:105) notes, a story is 'co-produced in a complex choreography – in spaces between teller and listener, speaker and setting, text and reader and history and culture'.   Consequently, I have come to recognise

that my role in constructing the narratives is not insignificant and must be considered as 'an active presence in the text' (Riessman 2008:106).

With regard to my own context, I, like my interviewees, am experiencing transition. I collected the initial data from Secondary English PGCE student teachers in my tutor groups, between 2010 and 2014. At the end of this period I moved into a new and part-time role working with teachers on the Postgraduate Development Programme in the same university. As I explored the initial data I was aware that my career as an English teacher and, for the last sixteen years, as a Secondary English PGCE tutor, had drawn to a close. Two years later in February 2016 as I conducted the interviews in this section, I decided to retire from the university to pursue other interests. I too, am in transition, uncertain of next steps and searching to grasp glimpses of a new identity which I can call my own.   It might be that this particular context has overlaid an elegiac dimension to the analysis. Certainly the sense of leave-taking has been in my thoughts, but I also have to consider how far my role and the contextual issues associated with this have influenced my research design. As Pillow (2003:179) notes:

> Self-reflexivity acknowledges the researcher's role(s) in the construction of the research problem, the research setting, and research findings, and highlights the importance of the researcher becoming consciously aware of these factors and thinking through the implications of these factors for her/his research. In this way, the problematics of doing fieldwork and representation are no longer viewed as incidental.

As I have analysed the personal narratives emerging from the interviews, this self-reflexive approach has allowed me to explore the 'intersections of author, other, text and world' (Macbeth, 2001 cited in Pillow, 2003:179). As I have done so, I have begun to question the chronological structure that has informed much of my research design.   I have allowed this reflexivity to trouble assumptions about progression and linearity but I have also begun to interrogate the way in which my

own situation has unconsciously reinforced this sense of chronology of experience. Pillow (2010:273) notes that a focus on researcher subjectivity involves asking 'how does who I am, who I have been, who I think I am and how I feel, affect data collection and analysis?' This self-reflexivity, which recognises the multiplicity of my identities and those of my research subjects, represents a methodological shift from a phenomenological, interpretive approach to a more dynamic, self-reflexive stance which encompasses post-structuralist thinking, and which focuses on narrative and storytelling. This approach has led me to explore issues of voice and representation and to question and trouble the phenomenological, interpretive approach I had adopted when analysing the earlier data.

The ontological shift this represents reflects my development as a researcher and can perhaps be explored through my approach to the personal narrative writing I collected from my student teachers in 2011 and my own narrative writing produced at the same time. I originally made the decision to include my writing in the thesis to provide positionality. This was an acknowledgement that I had a vested interest in the topics under discussion and that I would not be able to conduct my analysis as an impartial observer. Whilst this is a reasonable rationale, I believe it now bears further scrutiny. By including my writing and keeping it separate from my student teachers' writing, it could be said that I had made myself and my beliefs into a fixed point from which to analyse the writings of my students. I was in effect saying: this is what I believe, and privileging this perspective.

My sense of unease about this gained further traction after reading an interview with the artist, Susan Hiller (cited in Kellaway, 2015:online), who began her career as an anthropologist but notes:

> Anthropology is wonderful but it is my rejection of it that influences my work. I limit myself to studying artefacts in our own society. But I have an anthropological curiosity about them. I don't believe in studying others. Who are others, you know? We

are the others. Once you understand that, how could you be an anthropologist?

Reading this became a significant moment for me as I asked myself whether I had regarded the student teachers as 'the others'? Was I looking down from my lofty vantage point and comparing their epistemologies of English teaching to my own? Was I simply 'mining' their narratives for interesting ideas but not actually entangling myself in the data at all? Was I hearing their voices or were they overlaid with mine? To pick up Hiller's (2015) argument: if I shift from studying others to becoming one of them, then I become part of the data. My viewpoint shifts. I am not looking down from a fixed point to another fixed point. The lyrics of the song *We Were Giants* by Stornoway (2015) conjure a visual image:

Did we see the curve of the earth from where we stood

side by side,

With the clouds around our ankles?

However, as Schostak (2006:82) notes:

There is no totalizing view, no single Archimedean point from which a view can see everything and draw it all under its explanatory gaze and produce a single, decisive view.

Consequently, instead of seeing the whole picture, 'the curve of the earth' I now see the flux and change of the dynamic moment and I become part of it. I become one of many voices that carry equal weight. This ontological shift had awakened in my thinking after reading Derrida (1981a) and Deleuze and Guattari (1987) but I had not actively connected my post-structural thinking to the analysis of my data, which remained stubbornly interpretive. *My* voice was representing the others and the reflexivity in my writing aimed to interpret and fix meaning. Pillow's (2003:180) comment sums up this reflexive turn to the post-structural, providing me with a

stepping stone from familiar firm ground out into liminal space where I might analyse data 'quite differently':

> Many researchers are utilizing reflexivity in ways that are dependent on a modernist subject – a subject that is singular, knowable, and fixable. Thus, if my subject, either myself or an "other" is knowable the possibility that I can then know this subject through better reflexive methods is attainable. On the other hand, an understanding of a subject as postmodern, as multiple, as unknowable, as shifting, situates the purposes and practices of the research, and the uses of reflexivity, quite differently.

There were, I realised, limits to the phenomenological approach I had adopted, which challenged voice, representation and what it means to *know.* Crotty (1998:83) explores the complex nature of phenomenology as a research method and concludes that whilst there is much focus on the subjective experiences of the participants:

> … the emphasis typically remains on common understandings and the meanings of common practices, so that phenomenological research of this kind emerges as an exploration, via personal experiences, of prevailing cultural understandings.

I realised that the approach I had adopted owed much to hermeneutic theory. Hermeneutics has its origins in ''exegesis', that is, within the framework of a discipline which proposes to understand a text – understand it beginning with its intention, on the basis of what it attempts to say' (Ricoeur, 2004 cited in Schostak, 2006:76). Crotty (1998:93) notes that Schleiermacher could be described as the founder of modern hermeneutics offering a twofold dimension to interpretation based on empathy:

Hermeneutics is at once grammatical and psychological. Attention to the grammatical aspect situates the text within its literary context, at the same time reshaping that literary setting by the interpretation it makes of the text. On the more psychological side, the hermeneuticist is able to divine and elucidate not only the intentions of the author but even the author's assumptions.

Crotty (1998) goes on to explore developments in hermeneutic theory, but for all the shifts and re-positionings of narrator/author/reader, the essence of hermeneutics lies in interpretation. This raises questions about what it means to *know*. Ricoeur (2004, cited in Schostak, 2006:77) notes that:

If exegesis raised a hermeneutic problem, that is, a problem of interpretation, it is because every reading of a text always takes place within a community, a tradition or a living current of thought, all of which display presuppositions and exigencies – regardless of how closely a reading may be tied to the 'quid', to 'that in view of which' the text was written.

Our understanding then, is derived from an endless interplay of references that feed into our quest for meaning and back out again 'without ever coming to rest in some positive final reference, an infinite intertextuality without any central point to fix meanings' (Schostak, 2006:77). This raises interesting questions for the researcher about what happens to interpretation if meaning is not fixed. Tierney (2000, cited in Shacklock, 2005:156) notes that:

Continuing debates surrounding the shift from modern to postmodern forms of social research present theoretical and methodological challenges that arise from close scrutiny of the nature of identity, truth, structure and agency, and claims about

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the veracity of individual and collective voices in the representation of lives and experience.

To fix an interpretation means to exclude other views and possibilities and to focus on the general whole rather than the subjective individual. In doing so, the uniqueness of individual voices might be lost in a quest for unifying outcomes which can be applied as learning to benefit other situations in a generalist sense. But what might be lost in this approach? Schostak (2006:82) cites Derrida (1990):

> The Undecidable remains caught, lodged, at least as a ghost – but an essential ghost – in every decision, in every event of decision. Its ghostliness deconstructs from within any assurance of presence, any certitude or any supposed criteriology that would assure us of the justice of a decision.

I like the idea of the ghost, something which is there and felt, but not necessarily seen. It is reminding us, perhaps uncomfortably, that there is something else, something that cannot be ignored. It is an unsettling image which aims to trouble the easy decisions about voice and representation that we might otherwise make. In this idea lies the importance, for me, of post-structural thinking: that it is not about relativism in the extreme sense that stalls at every turn and never progresses. Instead it opens up the possibilities of new ways of seeing through the glimpses of the ghost in the shadows which might otherwise have been overlooked. As Schostak (2006:82) says:

> Undecidability is at the heart of being – is that the 'Truth'? Any sense of a decisive total view already carries within it the shadow of its opposite at least as a possibility and the very possibility sows its doubt.

My thinking about reflexivity, phenomenology and hermeneutics has led me to consider my approach to analysing the initial pieces of data in this thesis and to

question why it took many readings and re-readings to break through my focus on the fixed end-point of meaning into the liminal and rather unsettling space beyond. Schostak (2006:68) notes that:

> Too often there is a naïve acceptance of the 'data' as something like a found object on the beach, a piece of driftwood, or an apple that falls, or points of light viewed through a telescope.

Had I viewed my earlier data in this way and if so, what had prompted this approach? To explore this question required me to consider my roots as an English teacher, initially schooled in literary criticism, the process of which Knights (2015:12) describes as 'grasping underlying connections and patterns of significance, often by following through the significance of patterns of imagery'. However, my interest in literary theory and reader-response theories in particular, meant that I was engaged in much more open and generative approaches to reading through my teaching. Why then, did it take time to apply my developing understanding of research theory to my data? Was this because as an English teacher, I want to search for meaning and fix that meaning, treating each piece of data as an exercise in practical criticism? Or was it because when faced with something new and demanding, the urge is to revert to the familiar and the tried and tested? Is it the desire to seek certainty and knowledge over uncertainty? I'm not sure I know the answers to these questions but I am aware that although my ontological perspective was shifting, I found it harder to make the same shifts in my analysis and relinquish control of the *meaning*.

This shift also applied to my writing, which had always melded imperceptibly with my thinking process so that language, ideas and form seemed to coalesce unbidden on the page. This to the point where sometimes I had to stop to make sure the words that had tumbled out made absolute sense. This was not the case as I analysed the in-depth interviews. Now it seemed each sentence was wrought, pored over, questioned and analysed in its own right. This shift from the phenomenological, interpretive research process I had espoused when analysing

the data in Part One of the data sample, to a post-structural reading of multiple meanings and identities, including my own, in Part Two was however, a liberating experience. My eyes were opened to new ideas and readings which were inspirational and invigorating. One thing I particularly liked was the sense of being in the midst of the data. Clandinin and Connelly (2000:20) note that narrative inquiry is:

> … a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An enquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in this same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives, both individual and social.

This was unsettling at first and my imposition of chronology can be seen as an attempt to control the structure of the story. Shacklock (2005:157) notes that:

> A modernist legacy exists in life history research to build narratives that give the reader a complete picture with linear progression from beginning to end. While this desire to present lives as seriated and coherent is powerful, it may not lead to narratives that reflect the complex interplay between parts of a life.

I had indeed discovered the need to resist the powerful desire to interpret and present stories as linear progression through life and see them instead as *complex interplay.* However, once I had recognised this desire, I could begin to work with it to observe the way the narratives confounded chronology and subverted linearity, providing interesting insights into the ways in which these student teachers drew on personal influences and shaped and developed their understanding of subject.

Such reading:

> … adds to the possibility of what people may become, how they
> may see themselves, how they may see others, how groups may
> unite under different views, or merge, or dissolve, or generate
> new contexts to fill the signifier of being a People (Schostak,
> 2006:85).

This thinking had to be applied to the process of analysis. As Shacklock (2005:158) citing Tierney (1999) notes:

> The challenge is …'not to make the individual into a cohesive self,
> but instead to create methodological and narrative strategies that
> will do justice to those multiple identities'.

To assist me in adopting a more post-structural approach which sought to explore multiplicity rather than focusing on fixed interpretation, each personal narrative was analysed using Riessman's (2008) Dialogic/Performance Analysis.   This approach draws selectively on thematic and structural analysis, adding further dimensions:

> It interrogates how talk among speakers is interactively
> (dialogically) produced and performed as narrative. More than
> [thematic and structural analysis] this one requires close reading
> of contexts, including the influence of investigator, setting and
> social circumstances on the production and interpretation of the
> narrative. Simply put, if thematic and structural approaches
> interrogate "what" is spoken and "how", the
> dialogic/performative approach asks "who" an utterance may be
> directed to, "when" and "why", that is, for what purposes
> (Riessman, 2008:105).

Drawing on Riessman's (2008:112-114) approach to Dialogic/Performance Analysis as a guide, enabled me to read the accounts in a different way. This approach provided a framework for my analysis which included some of the following features of narrative:

- Relational aspects between interviewer and interviewees which explore connections between them and how each position the other
- The use of dramatic presentation and the way that interviewees may include characters in their stories, assigning them speaking roles and exploring their relationship to these characters. Alongside this is the idea of appropriation or ventriloquism which allows narrators to 'borrow' voices that are significant to their story
- The idea of performance and the presentation of the 'preferred self' to the interviewer as audience. The use of direct speech and expressive sounds to draw the listener into the story
- The use of 'asides' to enable the narrator to step out of the story and engage the listener directly
- The use of repetition to emphasise key moments, ideas or feelings
- The use of tense for performance, so that although stories might typically be narrated in the past tense, the present historic tense might also be used to provide immediacy
- The interviewer's background knowledge which might relate to cultural, social or historical contexts may also point to omissions, absences or gaps in the narration, which can be explored. Such knowledge also reveals structures of inequality and power (Adapted from Riessman, 2008:108-116).

The analyses of the three in-depth interviews in Chapter 8 draw upon the above features and encompass the ontological shift in my thinking I have described. Each analysis begins as a phenomenological, interpretive account exploring the perceptions and lived experiences of the student teachers I was interviewing. However, I am aware that there is not one reality in these accounts and there is not a single 'truth' or a fixed point that I am searching for. Thus, each analysis carries a point of 'aporia'; the recognition that there is more than what I might initially see.

This is a point of impasse which forces me to consider multiplicity and step beyond the confines of certainty. Riessman (2008:115) suggests that 'texts play hide and seek with interpreters'. She draws on Wolfgang Iser (1989/1993) who argues that:

> … meaning is not concealed within the text itself, instead we "bring the text to life [with our readings] … a second reading of a piece … often produces a different impression from the first … [related to the] reader's own change in circumstances".

I know too, that each time I return to the transcripts, I will see different signposts and roads not taken. New stories will emerge to remind 'both readers and researchers alike that these accounts, as textual creations, are, at best, insightful' (Gordon, 2005 cited in Pillow, 2010:278).

Chapter 8 Analysis of Part Two of the Data Sample

8.1 Background and context

The analysis that follows focuses on three of the five in-depth interviews undertaken between February 4th and March 11th 2016 with student teachers on the Secondary English PGCE at the university where I worked. Unlike the previous data I had collected, these participants were not my students and, at the time of the interviews, I was no longer working on the PGCE programme. Some, if not all of the students, would have met me before, however, as I had delivered a creative writing session to the Secondary English PGCE group at the art gallery where I now work as a freelance gallery educator. For further information about the sample please see 4.2.5 Part Two: Research Sample Data Set 6: 2016, p.128-129.

Prior to analysis, it is important to consider context. The student teachers I spoke to are all experiencing transition. This can be understood broadly as a transition from student teacher to newly qualified teacher but there are also more transitions at play here. Some are experiencing the transition from student to student teacher or teaching assistant to student teacher, and some are experiencing a career change. For all, the 'end goal' of teacher is still some distance away. Within the structure of the course itself there are transitions. The student teachers had completed a teaching placement before the winter break and had spent the January back in university. They were just beginning their second placement and adjusting to new schools and systems, pupils, curriculum content and teacher mentors. This transition has an impact, as Tony (student teacher interviewee) says:

> It feels like two steps forward, three steps back, almost like you're
> going back to something new.

This sense of transition and provisionality emerges through the shifts and fluidity of their thinking as it filters through the prism of my questions, sometimes coalescing around an idea, other times refracting and diverging as new possibilities are talked into being.

Each account is a snapshot therefore, of a moment in time where the narrative threads of participant and researcher are woven together to create a rich section of a much bigger story, which is itself in constant flux. Each account enables the shift in perspective that allows me to work within the narrative to hear the complex interplay of voices, including my own.

I have presented the three accounts in the order that they were analysed so as to draw upon and acknowledge some of the narrative threads that emerge and which begin to weave themselves across the accounts. Full transcriptions of all the interviews can be found in Appendix O. The interview question prompts are in Appendix P. All names have been changed to preserve anonymity.

8.2 Joseph

I meet Joseph at his placement school. It is the end of the first week of the second PGCE teaching placement and all the student teachers are settling into their new schools.

My opening questions assume a temporal linearity, beginning with Joseph's early memories of English as a child. As our conversation progresses, however, this approach is quickly revealed to be an artificial device, as the conversation flows through chronological shifts and layers and fault lines that play with the ordered notion of time. I realise that although my question prompts might embed a sense of chronology, the reflections that emerge draw back and forth across time, emotions and events to reveal the reflexive positioning and re-positioning of both the interviewee and the researcher.

In response to my first question, Joseph recalls a memory about books, reading and family. These are threads that will continue throughout his story:

> My first memory I think is … I always had a book with me, always
> … so that was kind of like a retreat because I'm one of four, a big

family, so a very noisy family, so I was the quiet one, stoic, literature-focused.

Joseph's repetition of 'always' emphasises the importance of books to him. However, he also places this love of reading within the context of his family. He is the quiet one of a noisy family of four and books provide a 'retreat'. This, coupled with the description of himself as 'stoical', suggests more than just an enjoyment of reading but also a way of coping that provided a respite or escape. 'Retreat' in this sense suggests an escape into the quiet, safe place of his books where he is inured from the busyness of family life – his own place. Joseph's memory reminds me of Francis Spufford's (2002:1) description of himself as a child reader, shutting out the 'fabric of the house's real murmur':

> Flat on my front with my chin on my hands or curled in a chair like a prawn, I'd be gone. I didn't hear doorbells ring, I didn't hear suppertime called, I didn't notice footsteps approaching of the adult who'd come to retrieve me.

In making this connection, I recall a vivid memory of my own, as a child sitting in my window at the top of the house, a book on my knee, oblivious to the world inside and out. Joseph's memories and my response to them invoke in me an awareness of the complex layers entwined in our conversation as I invite discussion about a topic that is important to both of us individually.

Joseph goes on to recall: 'one of the first memories that stands out … I think I was in Year 3 and I just remember getting a copy of Harry Potter 2'. But then there is a sudden intrusion of the current Joseph, an MA English graduate and student English teacher, talking to a researcher, as he comments in an aside: 'and either you love it or you hate it, you know there are a lot of controversies around Harry Potter', before he reaffirms the importance of the memory, 'but I read it and was hooked thereafter'. The use of the word 'but' suggests a defiance of whatever the

controversies about Harry Potter might be and a remembrance of what it meant to him as a boy in Year 3.

I wonder if Joseph had expected me to question the value of the Harry Potter stories as literary texts and if he is acknowledging the controversies to demonstrate his awareness. As I read back through our conversation, I am aware of my role as a university researcher and have a sense of Joseph feeling his way towards an understanding of me and what my expectations might be. His aside perhaps shows that he is keen to establish his English subject credentials and knowledge of children's literature debates. He is establishing a tentative relationship with me as an unknown quantity within our shared context of the university and PGCE programme. I too, am keen to establish this relationship and put him at his ease and I respond: 'I have two children who were exactly the same and started with book 2 and had to go back to book 1!' However, this response is not to whatever controversies might surround the literary worth of Harry Potter, it is as a mother, remembering my children's delight in these books. In doing so, I am explicitly connecting with Joseph's memories and, I realise as I read back later, signalling the direction I wish the discussion to take. Joseph's memories about his family, love of reading and Harry Potter, connect at unforeseen points with my own, to create a shifting interplay between us of past and present, where the themes of family and reading exist both as keenly felt personal memories and the current research narrative we have embarked upon. These relational connections are important in creating an atmosphere where talk comes easily.

It seems that these early memories have set up a dichotomous theme of scale or spectrum which will run throughout Joseph's conversation. I continue with my quest to impose chronology on our conversation and ask Joseph about his memories of English when he was at school and here the sense of dichotomy continues. Joseph recalls a negative memory of a teacher, a 'bullish man' who 'hounded' learning into them. The animalistic imagery is suggestive of a lack of sensibility or empathy and Joseph describes him as a 'horrible teacher' and a 'very old teacher'. He contrasts this memory with the recollection of a 'fantastic teacher'

who still works at the school and who 'shared her love of literature and enjoyment'. Joseph is aware of the dichotomy of 'horrible/fantastic' as he notes: 'different ends of the spectrum'. His use of adjectives conveys to me the simplistic language a pupil might use to describe their teacher and his words seem to convey memories of a child's emotions.   In the memory he has chosen to share there is also a rather simplistic portrayal of pedagogy: the hounding of knowledge into pupils by rote learning contrasted with the teacher who loves literature and shares that enjoyment with her pupils.

Joseph's undergraduate degree was Law with English. His explanation of this choice intrigues me: 'The English modules were my bit of fun … I did them for enjoyment whereas Law was my focus and where I wanted to work.' English here sounds like a treat or reward, echoing his early comments about using reading as an escape. Joseph picks up my question about who has been influential in his personal history of English with a memory in which books do not provide a 'retreat' from family but are inextricably bound up with formative and abiding family experience:

> My grandad was a huge influence. I remember … he had lovely
> leather bound volumes and he would sit there with them and I've
> got them all now because he passed away but … having spent a
> lot of time with my grandparents, they … would always be reading
> and they kind of passed it on, sort of learned behaviour.

There is a strong sense of continuity emerging from this memory that resides in the beautiful leather bound books which seem to embody his grandfather and the love of reading that was passed on to him. This love is deeply rooted in books as emblematic items that are cherished for what they represent, as well as the stories and knowledge they hold. Here are further ideas about pedagogy in English, in the privileging of literature that can be 'passed on'. Once more, his memories spark my own and I respond, telling him: 'I have a set of Dickens from my grandmother as well, and they are treasured.' My response carries my own understanding of the

affective and commemorative association of books and their power to anchor the self and to liberate memories that in themselves become the stories of our lives.

However, I am interested to know more about the route that led Joseph to the PGCE and away from Law. Joseph describes completing his MA and working for a year as a Classroom Support Assistant:

> I enjoy English, it sounds really silly but … I've done all sorts of stuff and it just wasn't fun. So then, you know, going back to your roots, I got my masters funded … and that was so enjoyable … and then it was like what can I do to carry on enjoying this for longer and I had my doubts whether I was doing it for the right reasons but then during my time supporting … you know to teach children to read … you can convey your passion and they're like, Oh sir I hate reading blah, blah, blah. Well no, you've just not found the right book and then I'd use my knowledge to find them a book and then they'd read it, hopefully enjoy it.

Joseph acknowledges the powerful pull of the enjoyment he feels for English. He is reminding me, and possibly himself, of the centrality of reading to those early memories he had chosen to share with me. His rather wry qualifying remark of 'it sounds silly' perhaps serves as a reminder that he had, a moment ago, been describing studying English as a 'bit of fun'. There is a sense of temporal shifts taking place, where the intervening years of work, which were not fun, have begun to challenge his thinking and, in doing so, take him further back into his personal history to consider the idea of enjoyment and the affective response. In 'going back' to what he enjoys doing, Joseph is perhaps exploring the idea that work and enjoyment can be part of the same dynamic rather than opposing forces. However, it is not clear whether this thinking suggests a sense of progression. The number of times Joseph uses the word enjoy, in all its forms, could suggest stasis: books provide him with enjoyment and by teaching English, he can continue to

enjoy reading books. In this, there is a sense of not wanting to *let go* of the image of English teaching as the opportunity to read more books.

Joseph seems to be aware of this tension when he says: 'I had my doubts whether I was doing it for the right reasons.' His attempt to address this doubt, however, remains within the closed circle he has identified. As a Classroom Support Assistant he was able to convey his passion for reading to his pupils and use his knowledge and love of literature to help them to find books that they would 'hopefully' enjoy. Also central to this thinking is a pedagogical view of conveying or passing on, in this case, an affective response.

As I re-read our conversation it seems to me that Joseph presents his story as a journey, a dramatic performance which begins by setting the scene where books provide solace and are intertwined with memories of loving family life. The powerful pull of reading and the study of English are lost in the quest for work only to be re-discovered through further study and the realisation that teaching can provide enjoyment and fulfilment which is still fuelled by reading. In this story, English gains redemptive qualities both for Joseph and his pupils.

I am intrigued by his idea of the 'right reasons' to go into English teaching and explore this with Joseph:

> J: While I was doing my masters I had a lot of friends who were doing their PGCEs and a lot of them were doing it just because they weren't ready to leave university. And there's a lot of people, in my opinion, on the course at the minute - not a lot, a few, that I don't think are ready to let go.
>
> R: Right, let go of what?
>
> J: I suppose their youth and … that university sort of lifestyle whereby they can go to the pub and the sort of lads mentality, they either want to return to that because of the glory days or they're not ready to let go. But I think that having left uni and

then worked professionally and then come back and seen it from the other side - because I've tried to approach it professionally from the beginning - and made sure my reasons were right because I think if you're if you're doing it for the wrong reasons, you're going to be the wrong teacher in the classroom.

This exchange provides an interesting juxtaposition where Joseph explores his own desire not to let go of the subject but qualifies this with his experience in the classroom which confirmed for him that he was not entering the profession for the wrong reasons, contrasted with 'the others' who are not ready to let go of the university lifestyle. His shift from first to second person pronouns serves to set him apart from the 'generalized other' (Riessman, 2008:123) and emphasise the dichotomy of 'right reasons' and wrong reasons'.

It seems that there are two thematic threads here that are being interwoven but which remain distinct, as in contrapuntal form, and they both involve the idea of *letting go*. One theme deals with experience of the world of work and being prepared for the classroom in a professional sense. In this thread perhaps what is being let go is a youthful appreciation of the hedonism or 'glory days' of student life. The other theme, I feel, is more complex and is beginning to explore the letting go of an *ideal* of teaching English, as versions of pedagogy interrupt, shape, confront, enrich and re-affirm this affective dimension.

In this last theme it is possible to see letting go as a beginning and, as I read through again, I realise that I have only read part of the story. Up until this point I have drawn on connected memories and reflections which have provided an interesting interplay as Joseph and I have created a narrative exploring personal epistemologies of English. I have enjoyed engaging with these memories but Shacklock (2005:157) talks about 'the biography in the shadow' and Joseph's comments about 'letting go' and the 'right reasons' for teaching English have shone a sudden light on my own role in this research and have troubled the easy associations I have been making with his narrative. As I reflect, it seems to me that

there is much about *letting go* in this research, for I am in the process of letting go of a career that began as a secondary school English teacher and wound a circuitous route that would take me into higher education. I have felt enriched by all aspects of my career and so any leave-taking is bound to be tinged with nostalgia, hence perhaps, my willingness to engage with Joseph's story and reminisce. On re-reading, I now think that my situation is also a significant factor in the chronological structure that I have imposed on all the interviews I have conducted. At the end of my career, am I looking back more than I am looking forward? Do I see my career as a chronology of experience that is somehow time-limited so that I can mark off the steps and stages to a given end? For Joseph, however, in the letting go there was also the finding of something else, something that reassured him he was entering teaching for the 'right reasons'. It seems to me then, that my research is also part of this process of *letting go* and *finding*.

Joseph's dichotomy of the 'right reasons' and 'wrong reasons' to enter teaching, remind me that his response is likely to be shaped by the fact that he is talking to an experienced teacher educator and that he is keen to demonstrate that his reasons are indeed the *right ones.* I am interested in the way that he expands this simple dichotomy to draw in notions of affect and pedagogy. I think it is possible to see these themes being interwoven as Joseph talks about his experience of working for a year as a Classroom Support Assistant with children with special educational needs. A strong sense of his enjoyment of the social interaction of teaching emerges alongside the affective dimension of the subject.   These interweaving strands contribute to his developing understanding of pedagogy:

> There's a genuineness there that I like and they just come out
> with the strangest and most insightful things that you'll ever hear
> … just that moment when if you've read a line that's resonated
> with you and then being able to pass on … this is going to sound a
> bit rose-tinted but it seems sort of more Socratic and Roman-
> Greek in the sense that knowledge will be passed in that sort of
> verbal way rather than written so that it's more of an enjoyable

thing. You know, Socrates surrounded by all his apprentices and then conveying that knowledge and then questioning back and forth.

The idea of *passing on* knowledge would seem to be rooted in Joseph's early family and school experiences that he has chosen to share.   However, Joseph's year as a Classroom Support Assistant has also opened up a more dialogic approach, which privileges the spoken word over the written, to construct meaning. This shift is perhaps indicated by the quick juxtaposition of 'I've been delivering - we're doing' in his comment below:

I think being in that environment means that you continue to learn … But the way you convey things changes your own understanding of them I think, so at the minute I've been delivering - we're doing Romeo and Juliet, Much Ado About Nothing and Macbeth. So a lot of Shakespeare, but through reading it now I'll pick up on things I've missed before – different interpretations, which is really enjoyable.

There is a discernible shift in Joseph's thinking about pedagogy here, which is to do with how he continues to learn alongside and from his pupils.   I also have a sense of Dewey's (1903, cited in Green, 2006:114) vision of the teacher 'who learns twice' as Joseph reads through the text with a view to teaching it. Underpinning all this discussion, however, is a palpable enjoyment in his own learning, his interaction with the pupils as they learn, creating a fluid dynamic which moves from a 'passing on' of knowledge to an understanding that 'the way you convey things changes your own understanding of them'.

I ask Joseph about how he continues to develop his subject knowledge:

I don't think there's any end, you know, sort of infinite the amount you could know and that you have to know… I think the important thing is to follow your own interests.

Faced with the thought of curriculum content being 'infinite', Joseph moves away from the idea of curriculum knowledge as a starting point and instead thinks about what the teacher knows. He explores the importance of following your own interests using an example of his own developing knowledge of media which he will soon be teaching to A level:

My first port of call is going to be their syllabus so … what they need to learn and then I'll probably retroactively apply things that I know to that, so … I'm quite interested in foreign films … so then I've already got that subject knowledge. I just need to hone my skills and bridge the gap so work out how to apply it.

In this response, I feel that he is presenting to me his 'preferred self' (Riessman, 2008: 113) and demonstrating his confidence in the breadth of his subject knowledge and the eclectic nature of the personal interests which feed into this. In Joseph's discussion I think it is possible to see a process of subject knowledge development which interacts with the curriculum and the context in a synergy which builds on the existing knowledge of the teacher, shaping and directing new learning, but also connecting back to draw on personal interest and expertise. Here, he is not describing knowledge as a thing that is 'fixed and easily codifiable' (Ellis, 2007:448) and considering how to fill the gaps. Nor do I think that he is describing how he might 'transform' his existing knowledge (Green, 2006; Stevens, et al. 2006). Instead, his discussion suggests to me the 'fractal images' (Davis and Sumara, 2000: 840) that have little to do with linear understanding of learning and more to do with complex and embedded forms of knowing that reach out to connect learning in unexpected ways. In doing so, new knowledge is created that 'stretches over' (Ellis, 2009:19 citing Lave 1988), not filling but 'bridging' the gap.

Joseph's focus on literature and reading has suggested that this is largely where his interests in English lie and so I wonder how he might approach the task of developing knowledge in areas of the subject which are less appealing. His response remains literature-focused:

> … part of my Masters … was focused on Shakespeare but I personally can't stand any of the … war ones, like Richard, the Henrys, I just can't stand them.

In terms of expertise, Joseph connects his prior study in Law to the literature he has studied:

> … legal texts, you know Dickens, Donne … Shakespeare because they're the ones I did my Masters in … but then, my enjoyment, which therefore means my expertise, are in Dickensian, Victorian, [whispers] not modern [laughs].

His whispered aside, is almost conspiratorial and I feel I am being let into a secret rebellion. Joseph is asserting his right not to profess a love of all literature. Is this aside whispered because he is in school, where perhaps such rebellion is silenced? This transgression too, I feel is part of the 'preferred self' (Riessman, 2008:113) he wishes to present to me.

I am interested in the way the dichotomies of the early part of our conversation have once again become a strong thread running through the discussion about subject knowledge, and also at the degree of specificity. It seems that there has been a shift from an exploration of knowledge as dynamic and fluid, to knowledge as fixed content that is either liked or disliked. This picks up the theme of pleasure in reading literature and the knowledge of the text which is centred in Joseph as the teacher and is inward looking, rather than considering the text as something to be explored collaboratively.

It seems that there are different understandings of subject knowledge running through Joseph's account: his sense of expertise and his understanding of key texts or genre which, for him, constitute his knowledge in English and then the learning which emerges from engaging with English texts pedagogically and collaboratively. I am intrigued by the way these strands seem to merge and then become distinct. Is knowledge in English being separated into personal and professional knowledge? Is it a case of learning that comes from within and learning that comes from without?

I am interested in the absence of language and grammar discussion and wonder if the omission is purposeful or if it has simply not occurred to him, and so I ask a direct question:

> Researcher: Right, so what about language and …
> Joseph: Dreadful at language [laughs]
> Researcher: … the grammar aspect?

Joseph qualifies his comment with recognition of his implicit understanding:

> Um, grammar we've been having lectures … which have been fantastic but you know, even in those I was like, I don't know, I don't think I can do this … but I can do it, you know. I can write sentences and you know the English, the grammar will be correct. I might not be able to parse it and identify the different things but I can do it.

Joseph is beginning to explore the interface between the practical knowledge of doing with the pedagogical knowledge of teaching. It seems to me that he is presenting this aspect of subject as external knowledge which is needed but which has not been part of what he has chosen to do. I prompt Joseph to tell me how he gains such subject knowledge. I am deliberately shaping the conversation, leading it in the direction I wish to follow. Reading back, I am aware that it is my story as a

researcher that I am pursuing, and Joseph's response shifts from the fluidity of building connections with existing knowledge and interests to a focus on external sources:

> Schemes of work at the schools, there's plenty of books written on it … there's pedagogical stuff, and I suppose through colleagues as well, you know if you draw on their knowledge and resources.

I feel that I might have closed down Joseph's story and shaped it into a more formulaic response that lists resources to develop language skills.   I shift the conversation back to more open ground and ask about current issues in English teaching. Joseph raises the topic of IT in the classroom and I ask him how he feels about it:

> Conflicted. The usefulness of IT is phenomenal … but then … is it going out of fashion? Are we returning to a more traditional way of teaching, particularly English?   But then would I be limiting myself and my students by not communicating with them and imparting information in the manner to which they're used now.

There is a sense of Joseph working through these ideas and articulating his uncertainty. I'm interested in the fact that Joseph recognises the exhortations for teachers to utilise IT while at the same time wondering if it is 'going out of fashion'. There is another dichotomy emerging here: traditional methods pitted against new technology. However, these conflicting ideas also open up the spaces in between, where indeterminacy, for all its messiness and uncertainty allows thinking to happen. Joseph's subsequent discussion about the use of film adaptations in English is one such example of this as he explores his ideas about the use of film in English:

I don't think I like it because it's not inspired and I think you can miss out a lot of stuff and I think you limit kids … I think you're just denying them the opportunity to develop their own characterisation, you know.

However, he is also pragmatic about the usefulness of such adaptations as the Baz Lurhman version of Romeo and Juliet, and acknowledges the conflict where compromises need to be made between what he might want to do, his own beliefs about what is important, and the reality of the classroom:

But at the same time, it's got guns in it, there's blood, you know, how else are you going to motivate a group of boys on a Monday morning? [Laughs].

In response to my query about his use of the word 'inspired', he goes on to describe the lesson he has planned for the following week. He will take his class out into the school where there is a balcony walkway and where the Drama student teacher will deliver the balcony scene from Romeo and Juliet. He explains his rationale:

I think if they can be in that moment then connect the language to their own school and a teacher and things like that, it will then bridge a gap and maybe take it away from overly relying on video.

Joseph's discussion interweaves creative pedagogy and drama with pragmatic understandings, illustrating the shifts and conflicts of teaching. His enthusiasm is evident and I wonder if there is much opportunity for him to talk about the things that matter to him in English, either with peers or colleagues, or in wider networks.

I think [name of tutor] mentioned the other day that he believed when he got into teaching that it would be a place of more intellectual prowess and more higher order thinking, I suppose

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you'd call it, so you'd walk into the English office and they're
debating Keats or something like that, but no, they're just talking
about X, Y and Z pupil and what they've done wrong today and
that sort of yeah, negativity which is, unfortunately, toxic.

There is a juxtaposition here between the imagined academic life of the teacher
where the staffroom offers a haven of literary debate, and an opposing view where
staffroom talk focuses on the realities of the daily job. Joseph's use of the word
'toxic', highlights the negativity of this second scenario. However, it does not seem
to present the whole picture as when I ask about what keeps him loving English, he
enthusiastically describes how his developing pedagogical skills have enabled him
to connect ideas more widely across literature, film and music and to share these
ideas with his colleagues.

So, we were doing … Of Mice and Men and I was teaching them
about Jim Crow … there is a Billie Holliday, 'Strange Fruit' … so I
showed them the video and then I also found them the original
poem by the author and we watched that … I mentioned to one
of the teachers before that it would be beneficial for them to see,
'What happened Miss Simone' for a media lesson because it is a
documentary.

So whilst Joseph might not be walking into staffroom debates about Keats, he is
instead being swept along on a tide of enthusiasm for exploring literature in new
ways in the classroom and drawing colleagues into these ideas. There is a strong
sense of agency here and a subjective response to teaching.

However, Joseph also acknowledges the tensions and contradictions at play which
mean 'that the teacher you want to be and the teacher you are, can be different
things'. Joseph wants to be the teacher who inspires, like Robin Williams in *Dead
Poets Society,* but also recognises the tensions brought about by the need to
ensure the pupils achieve highly to satisfy the person 'breathing down your neck'.

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The use of this particular film example perhaps serves to headline the creative versus traditional debate and the need to engage hearts as well as minds. However, the ideas emerging about pedagogy from Joseph's discussion are so much more complex than these dichotomous labels would suggest. Joseph returns to the earlier debate about the use of film adaptations:

> I watched the same film that they're watching right now, which is really depressing [laughs] and I remember at the time thinking, oh yeah, this is great, we get to watch a film today but then now as a teacher I'm like, what are they getting out of this? Because you can watch a film but, you know, you don't necessarily see it, you don't identify the language but if you can read it and perform it, which is what I'd want them to do, you know it can stay with them forever.

His ideas about pedagogy and subject beliefs are complex involving temporal shifts, taking in his thoughts as a pupil to his thinking now as a teacher. But it does not seem to be the use of film *per se* he is decrying for he has talked enthusiastically about this medium elsewhere. He sees something distancing in film when it is used as a substitute for the text itself which means there is not the opportunity to experience language in affective ways which 'stay with them forever'. This is clearly an ongoing debate, with all its stops and starts and backtracking.

I ask Joseph about his hopes for his first year in teaching. His first response, 'To survive it!' is said with a laugh but his next comment 'and just to not have my passion crushed', has a more serious overtone and seems to connect with his thoughts about the toxic negativity he has encountered in staffrooms. He reflects on his experience of working in an 'outstanding' school where 'the students were driven, but within an inch of their life', and in my mind, his words forge a sudden connection with the 'horrible teacher' who 'hounded' learning into him as a child. I am also intrigued by his verdict on this school which 'did it for the wrong reasons'. This clear dichotomy again of right reasons to be in teaching and the wrong

reasons. This time, the wrong reasons are to do with a single-minded focus on achievement which doesn't recognise the child and their agency and needs. For Joseph, this is one of his hopes: to make a greater connection with the pupils and have 'one-off moments' where he can step outside the curriculum and all that it entails, and explore personal reading which would provide this connection: 'Just like a book club for the year, that would be great.'

Joseph had expressed an interest in doing a PhD and I ask about this. His initial reply highlights the continuing importance of his family but then he backtracks into a more specific response to my question:

> Well I initially wanted to do, um, we have foster children at home
> so I was … I suppose, a young carer, you'd call it? And then now
> I've taken over responsibility for a lot of it so that's interesting
> because then … sorry, I initially wanted to do something to do
> with the bi-lateral influence of law in literature, so how law has
> influenced literature and how literature can influence law in
> terms of reformation.

The sudden shift is noticeable and seems disconnected but perhaps points to the changes in his personal and professional circumstances which lead him to place children at the heart of his thinking:

> So I wanted to do that but now I'm, how could I bring in children
> to that because that's what we're all here for and I was
> wondering … I want to see if … would teaching and giving children
> an awareness of law help them identify and access certain parts
> of literature … So I'd like to see how law and literature can work
> together to influence and develop children.

Joseph is drawing on his knowledge and expertise in Law and his enjoyment of literary texts, especially those with a legal focus. At the same time he is thinking

pedagogically about the pupils with whom he works and what might engage and enrich their experiences, not just of literature but also in connection with the lives they lead and the things that concern them.

Also connected to this thinking, and examined in some detail, is an analysis of the redemptive power of literature. Here he returns to his ongoing debate with film and literature as he describes a powerful film set in a prison in Northern Ireland, called Mickey B, which is a feature film adaptation of Macbeth by serving prisoners. This is law and literature working together pedagogically for Joseph through the medium of film. I feel that this highlights the recursive and nested (Davis and Sumara, 2000) nature of subject and pedagogic development, where development is not a linear route to a predictable outcome but is seen more in line with Davis and Sumara's (2000:841) 'unruly, fractal image which might support a space to think about the importance of false starts, surprise turns and ever-mounting complexity'.

Our conversation has enabled Joseph space to explore, ponder, reflect and question and, in doing so, has opened up insights into the layers of tensions, conflicts, certainties and uncertainties of the student teacher. There are hopes and worries here, and Joseph frequently draws on dichotomous language to explore his ideas. However, a close examination of what Joseph says reveals the dichotomy to be a shorthand which allows the listener to engage with the spaces opened up between, revealing indeterminacy at the heart of certainty and uncertainty at the heart of development.

8.3 Alison

I meet Alison in her placement school at the end of her second week at the school. My list of prompt questions is chronological but my re-reading of Joseph's story has already troubled my easy assumption that a story might indeed have a beginning and an end with linear progression in between like way markers on a road. I am curious to explore what Alison might choose as her 'beginning' and am interested to find that it is a school memory.

> The earliest that I can remember really is sitting in reception class doing phonic work and looking at cards and I always used to struggle, I always used to have to be sent home with these like special learning cards and had to read words and some of the writing and everything.

Alison's recollection seems to connect English to passive 'work', which involves 'sitting' and 'looking'. It is also not a particularly happy memory. The repetition of the word 'always' suggests that her struggle with phonics was ongoing, from which there was no escape. There is also something rather punitive in the language she uses with its overtones of the disgrace and shame of having to be sent home with 'special cards'.

I find myself wondering why she has chosen quite a negative memory to begin her story. I also realise that I don't engage with these ideas and explore them further. Instead I re-direct her thinking, bringing in the wider frame of English at home as well as school and asking her to think about memories from when she was younger. It seems, looking back, that perhaps I let my desire to begin at the beginning become an overriding factor in shaping the direction of the discussion.

However, Alison's memories of English at home do provide a counterpoint to her initial school recollection:

I think my grandparents influenced me a lot because they read a

lot, so they always used to bring me books.

Thus the negative memory of school phonic work is disconnected from a much more positive understanding of herself as a reader at home encouraged by her grandparents:

I've always been a big reader, so I think it's always stemmed from

them, really, inspiring me.

In this story thread, she no longer 'struggles' to read. Her use of the word 'stems' suggests to me a sense of continuity and growth that is developmental and grounded, taking the analogy of a tree or plant. This description of English as something that is rooted and branching, is one that Alison returns to throughout our conversation.

Alison describes the way her grandparents immersed her intertextually and culturally into the wider world of the book:

They're always reading, always asking me what I'm reading. They

always used to take me on trips, to the theatre … like, we'd watch a

film, then they'd take me to the places. So we'd watch The Railway

Children, we used to read the book and they used to take me to

Haworth and stuff.

In this intertextual world, the book did not necessarily come first, instead it was part of a much wider and memorable reading experience which took in film, performance, landscapes and locations.

When I ask Alison about her memories of English at school, however, she returns to the negative memories that characterised her first recollection:

> I remember being in the Year 6 and Year 5 … and I wasn't very
> good at it, didn't enjoy it. I didn't enjoy school at primary. I was
> always being pulled up for my capital letters.   I just hated English
> at this point. Like, I absolutely hated it.

Like her memory of phonics, Alison's memory of why she didn't enjoy English at primary school is very specific.   Once again there is a punitive edge to this recollection as she describes being 'pulled up'. There is also a sense, as in her earlier memory, of struggling or not being 'very good at it', which feeds an emphatically negative response. There is a strong sense of disconnect between the world of primary school English, which is described in 'functional' terms of phonics or capital letters, and her own personal experience of English which is rooted in wider reading and family, and which gives her pleasure.   However, this negative response shifts as she recalls her experiences at secondary school:

> I got to high school and I just found it interesting because it was
> more in depth, it was more like analysis rather than 'right you've
> not done this'. It was more literacy at primary … and I think I had a
> very good English teacher and she was dead lovely and friendly.

There are contrasts emerging in Alison's recollections between the strongly felt emotions created by not achieving teacher expectations, encapsulated in her stern and authoritarian *quote* depicting her teacher's voice and her appreciation of her high school teacher. These recollections are left largely as feelings and reactions and her use of direct speech, I feel, is aimed at drawing me into this narrated moment and the contrast she wishes to emphasise.

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This focus on feelings continues into her description of her degree:

> I loved my English degree, I actually quite miss it. I met up with my
> university tutor the other day because I just missed it that much …
> it was an English Literature course and I just loved everything about
> it … I loved my dissertation.

There are feelings of love and loss conveyed in this story and I have a sense of Alison not wanting to *let go.* I go on to ask Alison about her dissertation topic and, as I re-read this section of our conversation, I suddenly realise what has been troubling me about the relationship I am building with Alison. In the many Secondary English PGCE interviews I have conducted, I always ask about dissertation topics if the applicant is a recent student, and I am asking Alison the same question. I feel as though I have unconsciously adopted the role of PGCE tutor interviewer with all its overtones of power and control. I have slipped into a role that is familiar to me, although in fact, it is no longer part of my professional identity. Could this be about my loss, about my not wanting to let go? What I am certainly aware of, far more clearly, is my own voice, as one of many shaping this narrative.

As Alison considers influences in shaping her view of English she draws on personal family memories of her grandparents, which fuse with her recollections of studying English at university:

> I love history as well. I think it just stems from my grandparents.
> My gran has always been into history so we'd always sit there and
> read history books together.

These memories provide continuous links between enjoyment of literature and history and studying, which seem to be missing in her discussion about primary

school English. I feel that Alison is 'headlining' these messages for me very clearly in her narrative and her decision to begin with a negative memory from primary school becomes rather clearer in this narrative arc. I ask about her hopes as she began the PGCE year.

> I just wanted to be successful. I loved English at high school. I knew when I went to college that it was English that I wanted to do … but when I got to college I was doing English Language and I didn't enjoy that as much and I missed the literature so I thought I'm going to go and do a literature degree and I loved it. I love the history side of it as well.

I am aware that the conversation has not yet opened out into what it might mean to teach English but has remained inward looking, exploring what English means to Alison. The language that she uses – 'loved', 'enjoyed', 'missed' - retains a focus on the affective impact of the subject. In her use of the word 'missed', there is also an understanding of absence, a sense of tangible loss, which she connects to literature. I am struck by the relational aspect contained in this response. Also emerging is a dichotomy of love and hate which is connected to this affective dimension.

I am interested in her focus on the affective dimension but, as I re-read, I become aware of an undercurrent of tension for me as a researcher. I have been asking about what the subject means to her and her personal hopes as she began the PGCE, but my initial analysis is focusing on the absence of discussion about the teaching of English. There is a personal – professional dichotomy running through my questions and analysis, that is troubling me as I realise that I am perhaps looking for responses that I might expect as a PGCE tutor. In this relational re-positioning, what has happened to my commitment to the 'emergent process' (Thorp, 2005:160) of dialogue? Now I am aware of this tension, I begin to hear a further voice shaping our conversation: intruding at times, fading into the

background at others, but unmistakably influenced by the complex expectations of the PGCE tutor–student teacher relationship.

Alison explores what is important to her about English using another tree analogy:

> I think what's important about English is that it's a big, massive branch and you can cover everything, every kind of aspect and what was important for me was to inspire pupils the way that I'd been inspired, because a lot of people hate English because it's a lot of reading, lot of writing but I think if you capture that imagination, like the way I was, like growing up, I think it makes it certainly a lot more interesting.

This description suggests an understanding of the subject as part of something much bigger – a 'branch' of the curriculum. Deleuze and Guattari (1987:21) describe the image of the tree as an 'arborescent' model of thought in which, even though the roots divide and multiply, they still retain a biunivocal relationship with the tree 'which plots a point, fixes an order' (Ibid.:7). As I think about this, I wonder whether Alison's relationship with English is fixed in this way? What she loves is her 'branch' of English – Literature, and because she loves it she wants to nurture that love and does not want it to change:

> Love is not love
> Which alters when it alteration finds
> … It is an ever-fixed mark (Shakespeare: Sonnet 116)

However, as I make this association I am aware of Shacklock's (2005:157) observation:

The flexible boundary between participant roles and the joint construction of the life history through the dialogic interaction between enquiry conversants means that the account often says a lot about the researcher conversant as well.

It seems that when I embarked on this research I was looking for 'ever-fixed marks' in an attempt to understand how personal epistemologies of English are constructed, and the way they impact on student teachers' subject development. Such notions seem increasingly simplistic now in the face of the 'ongoing reflexive positioning' that Shacklock (2005:157) refers to and the way this is revealed dialogically through our conversations.

As I think about this, I see the way Alison's discussion continues to emerge from her understanding of how English has affected her and, in this *arborescent* model, her thinking stems from and leads back to her. As she continues to speak she draws on the voices of her pupils to illustrate the point that her wider and more socio-historically situated view of English serves to make topics interesting:

When I was teaching my Year 9s earlier this week and we were talking about Romanticism, they were like, 'I don't want to do this, it's really boring.' And it is, but then when you start talking about different topics in terms of class you can make it relatable to that child.

This is a key narrative thread that Alison has woven throughout our dialogue. In developing this thinking, Alison explores issues of independent learning and compares her own approach to study with that of her pupils:

English is about the individual and I think a lot of pupils are struggling with going away and being independent and researching

… because my passion stemmed from history I … could … read a poem and think, 'right, I don't understand what's going on here' but then research the history around it … but children now, especially children that I'm teaching, they just don't have that cultural enrichment … or the willingness to go away and be independent and research something. They want everything handed to them.

In Alison's initial discussion I have a strong sense of perspective emerging and lines being drawn that enable her to generalise from a particular point of view that privileges her position and thinking about the subject. The children she is teaching provide a comparison to her own reading-rich home environment.   Her generalisation appears dismissive but there is a sense of re-positioning, as she goes on to describe the work she is doing with her Year 8 class:

So with my Year 8s, we're doing Shakespeare and they were asking about the history. And they were like, 'Oh why is everyone killing the king and why is everyone trying to get rid of the king?' And I started talking to them about the Wars of the Roses … and I've all made them for homework … watch 'The White Queen'. I'm like 'Go away and watch this'.

In this semi-dramatised account, I can hear multiple voices: Alison's Year 8 class, her own personal response as an *enthusiast* and her voice as a teacher, trying to engage her pupils in independent learning to gain wider background knowledge.

I ask whether she believes the English syllabus supports the wider, intertextual approach she is advocating:

I think it depends on the ethos of the school, like here it's - in the department it's very much pushed. You have to culturally enrich them and we have time set aside. Once every two weeks, we have a library session ... .

Her initial use of the 2nd person pronoun 'you' has a formal and distancing effect which connects her to the expected work of the department. The use of the pronoun 'them' also has a de-personalising effect; these are not individuals but an amorphous group who need to be 'culturally enriched'. However, Alison's voice comes through once more as she compares her current placement to her first placement, Block A:

I felt on Block A that it was very much, 'You need to do this and you need' - and I just felt like I was ticking boxes, and I felt like a machine, whereas here it's .... I don't feel like I'm an English teacher, I feel I'm just like a general knowledge [Laughs].

Alison's stern teacher quote and use of imperatives also conveys a sense of powerlessness in the face of teachers in authority. It is interesting that the freedom she has now to draw on wider reading sources means that she no longer feels like an English teacher!

With this freedom to innovate has come an awareness of the pedagogy she is employing and a more complex picture of her pedagogical understanding and development emerges as she begins to explore questions of agency and the beginning teacher:

At first I didn't really know what to do because I'd never been given that opportunity and they'd always been quite tight-ships: 'You have to do this, this and this.' They were like asking me loads of

questions and I knew the answers but it was very boring and I thought, it's just me teacher-led stood at the front going, 'Right, this happened and then this happened'... and they weren't following it so I designed them a little pack and they had to go away on a website and research it themselves, and I understand that's probably more fun than me stood at the front teaching them.

This developing understanding indicates a shift away from her earlier comments about children who are unwilling or unable to work independently. Here she is working with her pupils to encourage that independence.

I ask Alison how she feels her subject knowledge has developed from the beginning of her first placement.

I always felt like I had good subject knowledge, anyway, because I felt like my degree was very enriching ... In terms of subject knowledge I think it's improved in addressing it with the child's abilities and trying to, kind of dumb myself down, in a way, with my language and terminology, that's been quite difficult.

I am aware that my emphasis on this fixed time scale means that I am looking for shifts and development within the PGCE. I am also increasingly aware that such boundaries are artificial. Within our conversation it is possible to see Alison's thinking about subject knowledge range from her perspective as a student of English and how she learns at her own level, to a more pedagogically informed position where she recognises the need to adapt her subject knowledge to meet her pupils' needs.

As Alison continues to talk I sense a tension emerging which leads back to issues of what is privileged within her personal epistemology of English. Alison notes that one of her weaknesses is English Language, *'because I've just not done it for three years'.* She continues:

> I think it's bizarre when people ask me about subject knowledge because I feel that I already … I don't know everything, there's always everything to learn, but … I feel like I've already got a good subject knowledge with my degree … .

There are contradictions here that are thrown into relief by her use of the word 'bizarre' and I wonder about her choice of word. Is it that she finds it strange to be asked about subject knowledge and is confiding in me as a researcher? Or is she frustrated by the focus on subject knowledge in the PGCE and is signposting this frustration to me as a member of the university researching English on the PGCE? The word on the page is elusive.

The sudden tangent that the discussion takes suggests she is *stepping out* of a carefully worded response or familiar discourse about subject knowledge, to engage me directly in this topic. The use of the indefinite article to introduce subject knowledge in her comment seems to suggest a view of knowledge as a commodity rather than ongoing development.

I ask Alison how the new curriculum and exam board syllabuses might facilitate, an approach to English teaching that encompasses opportunities for wider reading around texts.

> In terms of cultural enrichment I think it broadens their knowledge. I agree with the nineteenth century being brought in because I think it's important history, that the kids need to know and

understand, but then I have taught a bottom set class of Year 10s, of all boys, and seen their low levels of literacy can be quite narrowing for them.

There is a tension emerging here between Alison's personal appreciation of the subject and what she feels is important and an awareness of the difficulties that her pupils might experience. I am also aware of the labels she is using to describe her pupils: 'kids', 'bottom set', 'Year 10s', 'all boys'. These labels serve to distance the speaker from the individuals by identifying them as generic groupings. Each label has connotations which encapsulate expectations, both for the teacher and for the pupils. I want to find out more about her expectations and explore what lies beyond this tension, so I ask her to elaborate on these ideas:

They just don't, they don't have the skills or capabilities to stand a chance in that system. I feel that the national curriculum has limited children from achieving good grades that I had as a child because it's very much…I feel like it's going very much … private school and that's not what comprehensive schooling's all about. So, on one hand it's good for me as I find it's interesting but in terms of the benefit for the child it's … it's quite sad really because it's just - like a machine. You're just throwing them loads of boring facts and they've just got to repeat it.

In the hesitations and the language used, I have a sense of Alison thinking through these complex ideas. Her Year 10 class have challenged her thinking about what is important in English and made her think about the curriculum. In doing so it is possible to see her perspective shift from the subject and what she enjoys, to a consideration of what this might mean for her pupils.

In trying to encapsulate the current context in which she is working, she opts for the analogy of 'private school' and 'comprehensive schooling'. There is such potential breadth of meaning here which could take the listener in many directions. My reading focuses on the sense of social justice underpinning her comment, suggesting the principles of comprehensive schooling which aim to ensure all pupils reach their potential, are not being met in a system which privileges high attainment over achievement. In such a system, teaching and learning become mechanistic. Alison has used the analogy of 'a machine' earlier in the conversation but her use of the analogy this time, I think, signals a shift from a focus on her teaching and use of pedagogy into a consideration of the wider constraints of syllabus and school improvement imperatives. In her tentative exploration of these ideas there is also a shift away from her confident assertion when talking about her Year 9 class - that it is possible to make challenging work interesting and relatable to pupils - to a consideration of doubts and troubling limitations. In this way, I feel she is beginning to explore the spaces between the dichotomies of love and hate and boring and interesting. This discussion also raises questions for me about the limitations of hope. If hope keeps you going, what happens when hope is not enough?

Alison is raising important tensions which can be unsettling for new teachers but which form a significant aspect of their development. I ask Alison how much opportunity there is to discuss these issues once on placement.

> We do discuss it but I try and steer clear from it because I just find
> that … there's a lot of negativity about teaching … and you always
> get very negative teachers moaning about the curriculum and then
> it just makes you feel like why you are in teaching? And it's not
> about that, it's about the child, and … how you can inspire them. So
> I do discuss it but I try to stay clear of them teachers because I
> don't want to leave the profession.

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It seems that the negativity she has encountered has the potential to close down discussion about English. She has identified the teachers who moan and they are not her aspirational role models. She also steers clear of discussion on social media as this is 'either political or it's just people talking about stuff they don't know what they're talking about'. So she maintains a distance: 'I just don't want it taking over my life.' I can understand Alison wanting to steer clear of the moaners but I also wonder whether this signals a reluctance to engage with the uncertainties of teaching? This thought gains further traction as Alison responds to my question about what keeps her loving English, as much from the perspective of a student of English as a teacher of English:

> I think it's analysing English. I love reading between the lines and finding different meanings and connotations. I love … all the different trips … especially in my spare time in half terms and summer holidays. I just go to houses that have been in films to do with English Literature. I can't really pin it down, I just enjoy it.

This I think is Alison's certainty. The repetition of the word 'love', reinforces the affective dimension of English which is about her own enjoyment of the subject. It is the thing she can't 'pin down'. But it is English literature that she loves, with all its historical associations and when I ask about how much she has enjoyed the language *side* of the subject, her response is rather different:

> I've not had much opportunity to teach language. It's been heavily Literature everywhere I've been. But in terms of language I think it's still important and I try and incorporate it into my lessons so that it's not a boring English language lesson because that's what it did it for me and I was just like 'I hate this', and my barriers are up, 'I'm not doing this' … but allowing pupils to find features of

language while they're analysing a character. So I'll do it for a starter and then I'll progress that starter into the main activity.

For Alison, language is 'still' important suggesting perhaps that it comes lower on her list of priorities and she 'tries' to incorporate it into her lessons. In the return of the boring/interesting dichotomy, the influence of the past is clearly present in Alison's comments as she introduces her voice as a pupil, emphasising her resistance. She describes her love of literature as something she can't 'pin down', an emotion that is not easy to put into words. However, as she begins to talk about teaching English language, she details specific pedagogical approaches which lack the former emotional intensity.

> I taught a Year 8 lesson this morning and they had to find sentence types … I said, 'Right, spot that feature' and I said, 'you're going to analyse that quotation in relation to the character '. So, it's covering all the skills that they need for the exam at the end of year 11 … but as well it's breaking up that ice of that 'I've got to cover this in this lesson now, as it's an English language lesson, as I find English language very boring so it's nice to mix it in with literature and talk about different themes.
>
> R: And see it as part of the same, I suppose.

On the one hand Alison is recognising the need to incorporate language study into literature and vice versa, but at the same time there is resistance because she finds it 'very boring'. The tick box nature of the activity suggests she is resorting to a less intuitive process that 'covers all the skills'.

My response represents a purposeful continuation of her last sentence. The strata of the conversation reveals itself in interesting ways as I realise how my voice as a researcher slips easily and unbidden into that of a university PGCE tutor. I am

conscious of the power relations in both roles and I make the decision not to pursue the point. As I reflect on the conversation I realise that if I had entered into the discussion it would have been with the purpose of privileging my perspective. I would have been arguing from a position of authority, in effect appropriating Alison's story for my own.

As we talk about who, or what, might have influenced the teacher she wants to be, Alison returns to her high school teacher:

> The kind of English teacher that I want to be is someone who's fair,
> that inspires. I want my lessons to be fun. I want all my children to
> leave the class room thinking, 'Wow, that was an interesting
> lesson' or 'I didn't know about the Victorians then'.

During our conversation Alison has begun to question and voice doubts about how she supports pupils for whom the system is not working.   However, in remembering her high school teacher and how she was inspired, she is able to put those doubts to one side. I conclude by asking about her hopes for her NQT year. Alison's response is that she hopes she will get through the year and 'still love it'. She is well aware of the negatives, the previous day she had worked until 10pm and had asked the question: 'Is this really worth it?' She goes on to say:

> And you ask all these questions but I think my main goal for my
> NQT Year is to still love English and to make sure that I'm in the job
> for the right reasons. Because I love it now but you don't know
> what's going to happen 12 or 18 months down the line.

Alison does not elaborate on what the right reasons for staying in the job might be but the last comment sounds quite an ominous note. Perhaps she realises this and is concerned with straying too far 'off-message' for a student teacher talking to a

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researcher and member of the university because she immediately counters her comment with a more well-worn mantra from the Ofsted assessment framework (Ofsted, 2017): 'I hope to be an outstanding teacher as well.'

Her last words possibly provide some clarification as she returns to one of the key themes of her discussion: 'My main hope is just to still love it, because I think a lot of teachers lose sight of that.' It seems to me that, for Alison, the right reason for staying in the job, is a love of the subject.

Alison's narrative leaves me in no doubt about her passion for English literature and her desire to teach it in a way that connects with social, historical and cultural contexts. Alison presents her love of literature as deeply rooted in family imaginings of intertextual journeys through reading which are personally enriching and give pleasure. It would be easy to provide a reading of this as a dichotomy where literature is privileged and language is largely absent from the discussion, suggesting perhaps a resistance to change or reconfiguring English in a new way. A different reading would suggest that Alison is rebelling against the 'boring' language lessons she remembers from her school days and attempting to explore language study through the literature she is teaching. Our conversation has provided a snapshot of a moment in time which has been shaped by our context and the decisions we each make about the things we wish to talk about.

Alison's focus on the affective dimension of English means that her thoughts often appear introspective. However, there are signs of tensions and unease as her perspective shifts to consider the experiences of some of her pupils. This shift clearly troubles her expectations of English teaching as she searches for, perhaps unfamiliar, language to explore the issues of inclusion and social justice the discussion raised.

I have also been interested in my battle to find the right words as I have looked ever more closely at our conversation. I was conscious initially of a distance which prevented me from moving beyond my first thoughts. Was this because I was

engaging with what Alison was saying more as a PGCE English tutor than as a researcher? I am not Alison's tutor nor do I now work on the PGCE programme but there were times in our conversation when I found I wanted to 're-direct' her thinking in a way which would privilege my own epistemology of English teaching. In thinking about this, I wondered whether my initial reading had stifled Alison's voice by privileging my thinking and my previous status as a PGCE tutor?

It has taken me numerous readings to move beyond this impulse and look more deeply and reflexively at our conversation. In doing so I have heard the multiple voices in this narrative: Alison's voice as an English enthusiast, as a rebellious pupil, a student, and a teacher. I have heard Alison appropriating authoritarian teachers' voices to provide a contrast to what she wants to do, and her own pupils' voices directing her pedagogical choices. I have heard her voice asserting her philosophy of English and tentatively exploring difficult and complex issues that extend far beyond her classroom. In amongst these voices, I have heard my own, as a researcher and, initially unlooked for but growing in clarity, as an English teacher and a PGCE tutor. So many voices: occasionally in harmony, sometimes overlapping, at other times contrapuntal.

As I reflect back on Alison's hopes for the PGCE year and beyond, I find that what I am left with is a worry. Alison, it seems to me, identifies English with her love of subject wherein resides her certainty about teaching and her hopes for the future. However, will this be enough when faced with a relentless and duplicate procession of the Year 10 class she described? What happens if the limitations of hope are exposed? Where is the support to help Alison deal with the many and varied uncertainties of teaching: uncertainty about what is important in the subject, about subject knowledge, about the curriculum, about juggling competing demands, about conflict between what you feel is important and what you are required to do? I believe that in this uncertainty lies the resilience to deal with the negativity and the ability to rekindle hope. Uncertainty means you never lose sight of the subject because you are constantly questioning it and it is constantly challenging you.

8.4 Tony

I meet Tony at his placement school. It is nearly the end of the first week of a new teaching placement.

The first thing I notice is the way in which Tony identifies himself as a beginning teacher from the start. This perspective serves to frame his thinking so that whilst he is looking backwards into his past, it is through the lens of current and recent classroom experience.   This adds both a pedagogic dimension and also an underpinning awareness of the context in which he is working. I also wonder if it perhaps provides a professional barrier to deflect questions that might be deemed personal; a useful distancing device to filter out intrusion.

Thus, in thinking about his personal history of English, Tony begins with a memory of his parents reading to him and he places this memory in juxtaposition with his perceptions of pupils he has worked with:

> I'm very lucky in that … I'm sure I can remember, my parents reading to me and you know learning to read that way from home rather than learning to read at school …   I suppose a lot of the children I've worked with … since I've been on the PGCE and the year before that, a lot of them, I guess haven't had that privilege of being read to from a young age and having that support from home.

His use of the word 'lucky' supports his identification of this reading support from home as a 'privilege'. He immediately draws his pupils into his own memory and his tentative language perhaps aims to guard against generalisations and assumptions, whilst being aware that not all pupils will have shared his experiences. I am also aware that my role as a researcher and a member of the university might account for the fact that he chooses to draw quite specifically on his teaching experiences to frame his response.

In locating this memory in his current context, Tony is travelling through personal recollections and professional understandings, relating each to the other. Thus the fact his parents read to him at home was not just pleasurable, it was 'important' because it developed his 'passion for English': 'and my subject knowledge has to begin somewhere, and without that would it have ever got anywhere? I suppose not'.

I am interested in the way that Tony sees his subject knowledge beginning with this early family reading. There is a suggestion that these experiences provide both the bedrock which is unchanging and a starting point which leads him on – an idea which becomes a narrative thread throughout Tony's story.

However, as Tony talks about his school days there is immediately a disconnect between his private passion for reading and school English, which he didn't enjoy:

> I guess from studying English at school and especially at secondary school, it wasn't a subject that I particularly enjoyed, believe it or not. I think part of that was to do with the teachers themselves and I remember actually bringing it up in my PGCE interview … that the English teacher I had, left half way through the GCSE to go and be a town planner! So he obviously was very enthusiastic for his job [Laughs].

The reasons why Tony didn't enjoy English at school have perhaps become a significant feature of his personal history given his decision to teach the subject and it seems that this is a narrative that Tony has rehearsed before. He is someone with a passion for English, who loves reading but who disliked the subject at school and now wants to teach it. In the disconnections of this narrative, I wonder if Tony feels the need to create a coherent thread which explains this lack of interest in English at school? In his narrative this was because his teachers were neither enthusiastic nor inspiring:

> I think having teachers who were perhaps not the most eager to
> be there and the most enthusiastic, I think that does impact the
> students a lot and really enthusiasm is quite contagious isn't it,
> for your subject, and had I had more enthusiastic teachers and
> more, I don't know, inspirational, shall we say, English teachers, I
> might have gone on to study it at A level.

In focusing on his teachers, Tony is, on the one hand, distancing his younger self from his lack of engagement with the subject whilst at the same time identifying the importance of teacher enthusiasm for his practice now. Once again he is threading his narrative across the past and the present. He also draws me into this narrative and makes me complicit. I find myself nodding in agreement.

Tony returns to the connecting thread of reading which runs through his story:

> I wasn't remotely interested [in school English], although, I always
> read … and I guess that's what sort of came through in the end
> after I did my A levels and I wasn't quite sure what I wanted to do
> and I just thought, you know what I really enjoy, I've always
> enjoyed reading …and it is surprising how that contrasts not
> studying English at school.

Tony's private love of reading that prompted him to do an English Literature degree. His comment: 'I had no idea what I'd do with it or what would come after', suggests that this is not part of a planned career progression but a desire to do something he enjoyed.

This idea of personal enjoyment through reading is further emphasised as he characterises his English Literature degree as: 'just like being in a book club really for three years'. There is a strong sense of personal enrichment emerging; a continuous thread that begins with being read to as a child, and which develops as he chooses topics and texts to study at degree level.

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Tony goes on to describe the next step along the path to becoming an English teacher:

> I didn't really know what I wanted to do after that … and I did a teaching English as a foreign language course in the Czech Republic, which was really useful in terms of subject knowledge … I didn't have any understanding of grammar or the language side of things was pretty weak, so having that, doing that qualification and then going on to teach English as a Foreign language for a year or two has really helped me develop that other side of the English subject, if you like, and now here I am [Laughs] doing my PGCE.

The overlay of his current role is evident as he talks about the development of his subject knowledge but I am also interested in the way he constructs his story. It seems that the English Literature degree on its own did not provide the impetus to apply for the PGCE but rather the Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) experience which has provided him with a pathway to follow.

Tony has also spent a year working as a classroom assistant and his teaching experience has provided him with a confidence which, he senses, sets him apart from others on the PGCE at the start of the course:

> I'm used to being in the classroom … particularly in challenging classrooms as well, with tough kids and kids with all kinds of needs so I was less … worried … whereas I get the sense that a lot of people on the PGCE cohort … that was their biggest concern.

Tony expands on this theme of being prepared for a PGCE course:

> I know, if you think about, say, the typical requirements for getting onto a course might be two weeks of work experience in a secondary school or whatever it might be, I don't know. I didn't look to be honest [Laughs] … but yeah, like you say, it's much more than that isn't it.

This, I feel, is Tony's 'preferred self' (Riessman, 2008), the persona he wishes to present to me. He is confident in the experience he has gained both in terms of subject and the classroom. So much so, that he acknowledges that he didn't look at the requirements for admission to the PGCE. The aside, 'I didn't look to be honest', is said with a laugh but again, it draws me in and makes me complicit – a tacit agreement that his preparation had been thorough and beyond what was required:

> If you had just done two weeks of being in a secondary school you wouldn't have had a clue really what it … involves and you'd have a very superficial view of what a teacher does … but if you've worked in the environment for few years or you've been able to have proper conversations with people who've done the job for years, you get a more of a well-rounded and realistic view of how demanding it is.

Tony uses the second person 'you' and the conditional tense to provide a more speculative argument along with its probable outcome. The effect is to distance him from his peers on the PGCE providing a perspective from a point of competence as opposed to a *generic* PGCE student who had completed the minimum requirements. In effect, he is arguing for and privileging the route he has taken.

He also presents a counter argument to what might be classed as a typical motivating factor for those applying to teach English – a love of the subject. As he explores this argument his ideas become more tentative and exploratory:

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The reality is that you might love your subject and you might have

a lot of knowledge about English but what you're going to be

teaching of it is only the tip of the iceberg, isn't it, often?

I am conscious that the narrative arc that Tony has embarked upon describes, in theory, a perfect preparation for the PGCE course, and in Tony's story there are no stumbles and missteps and no wrong-turnings along the way. Even his dislike of English at school is countered by an enduring love of reading, providing the English credentials but not the motivating force. This last point is perhaps emphasising a perspective that takes in the whole role of the teacher and is rather disparaging of those who might enter teaching just because they love 'English', often in the form of literature. I wonder if he is presenting me with what he thinks I want to hear, the kind of experience that would gladden any tutor or mentor's heart. However, as I re-read his narrative I wonder what I am missing in this story. It is so easy to be swept along and agree with all he says and I wonder if it is partly the context. I am in a school that I know well and where student teachers have been welcomed and have had a particularly good learning experience. Thus, Tony's narrative seems fitting in such a setting and, of course, it does appeal to my sensibilities as an ex-PGCE tutor, and such sensibilities, I have come to realise, are still very much a part of my biography. However, I also think that my questions with their focus on a temporal timeline have influenced the shape and structure of Tony's narrative. As asked, he has provided a linear account of his journey to the PGCE with the major staging posts clearly highlighted and even an ending in place: 'and now here I am … doing my PGCE'. I also think that the professional lens through which Tony is relating his experiences is providing a filter so that what is chosen to be in the narrative is what is considered to be of value in this professional context. This last point leads me to reflect on the professional writing we ask our student teachers to complete and to what extent this is filtered by the omnipresent Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2011d) and Ofsted assessment framework (Ofsted 2017).

The focus turns to language as we talk about the key issues currently facing English teachers and how these issues sit within Tony's personal philosophy of English:

> One of the big things is the grammar and the idea that the primary school children are going to come through with a stronger knowledge of grammar than the teachers [Laughs] which is true in some cases. Like, you know they're talking about complex and compound sentences and you see teachers who haven't had that training, their eyes glaze over in the face of year 7 pupils. So that's quite an issue, of having to develop that aspect of the subject knowledge. But that sits pretty easily with me, I would say … I've had that kind of experience and taught that kind of content before.

Tony's TEFL training has given him the confidence to distance himself from these subject knowledge worries, and from those teachers who have not had his training. He is able to view this issue as a commentator looking on and he reflects on the 'long view' of education policy where initiatives come and go in cycles:

> It's like that with grammar probably isn't it? Where they probably decide we need to teach lots of grammar to our students and then they realise or they decide – they being the government – that it's no longer useful so they take it away. So there's probably generations who have knowledge and generations who don't.

Tony's use of the question tag draws me into the argument he is exploring. I do not read it as a question or a challenge but rather as an expectation that I will confirm his thinking. In this sense there is an assumption that we are both commentators on this issue, looking at it objectively as something that affects *others*.

This view of subject knowledge as being shaped and driven by government policy or matters extrinsic to the subject, prompts him to reflect on the issue of technology and social media use in the classroom. We had been talking prior to the interview about the iPad which I was using to record the interview and he connects this conversation into his argument:

> T: Like the idea of social media and, the texts you study in English should be changing, I think, I mean, non-fiction particularly - using social media and analysing more blog-type texts and web-based type texts and I think that's a more realistic thing for young people to do because it's going to be medium that they are reading through, increasingly, so to have them read anything else … I don't know …
>
> R: It doesn't seem real, possibly …?
>
> T: Yeah, they might not see the connection, I mean, they might study printed newspapers and that kind of thing still but you know, like you said yourself before the interview started about reading your newspapers on your iPad, that's more and more common now and many people get their news just from a single sentence, you know, from Twitter or something …
>
> R: That's an interesting question, isn't it? What's behind that 140 characters?

I have the sense of the tone of the conversation shifting and Tony moving away from the narrative arc he had been following. He seems to be thinking through ideas which are not yet fully formed and I begin to join in, interested in what he is saying and tentatively exploring ideas. My role in this narrative is changing and I am no longer complicit in his thinking but sharing in the development of ideas. I ask Tony if he has the opportunity to talk through such ideas in his school placement:

Yes, so far … I've just come from an hour long meeting with my subject mentor and I've been talking about how I'd like to incorporate grammar teaching into what we're planning to do, which doesn't really have, on the surface, anything to do with grammar, and the challenges of doing that with a Year 7 class who can't sit still for one minute … So, I feel like if there's something I would like to teach … I could do it, you know, or I feel I could at least put the case forward … and what the benefit would be.

There is a strong sense of subject development emerging as Tony talks. He understands his subject strengths but is now looking to challenge and extend his thinking through pedagogy. There is engagement here as subject and pedagogy entangle around the Year 7 pupils 'who can't sit still for one minute'. In his discussion, there is also the recognition of what he is bringing to the department as a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and it seems that the process of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991) can be observed in the way Tony describes his interactions with his mentor. As I re-read this section of our conversation and my interpretation, I am aware of the different strata of my experience processing what he is saying. I am drawing on my expectations as a PGCE tutor, my knowledge of the school and my academic work in coaching and mentoring education, all of this interacting with the words on the page to create a positive joint narrative of this episode that Tony has shared with me.

I ask Tony whether he could imagine himself avoiding teaching an aspect of English. Whilst he admits to 'dreading' teaching Shakespeare 'because I'm really not sure of a lot of it, it's just going to have to be a case of … reading up on it', his answer, as a beginning teacher, draws on issues of confidence - a thread that is woven through his whole narrative:

I don't know, at the moment I find it hard to imagine. You hear a lot of teachers who say they get bored of teaching the same texts all the time … and because I'm so immersed in just learning to

teach and feeling my way around the classroom … I can't begin to imagine myself as someone who would get bored of teaching something I know so well, that's like my rock – I wouldn't want to leave it!

In the discussion it emerges that Tony also has an MSc in Information Technology. He is clearly interested in the issue of IT in the classroom and yet I am intrigued to find that he struggles to connect this prior study into his work in English:

Linking it back to English is quite difficult, I mean, all I can say is that we use a lot of technology in the classroom … and being savvy with it is always good [Laughs] but that's about it! I think - I can't really make - I struggle to make a connection really.

I wonder whether this sense of disconnect is to do with the perceived nature of knowledge in each discipline. He recognises the broad value of drawing on wider work and life experiences in teaching but does not recognise specific connections across these subject domains beyond the practical knowledge of knowing how the technology works.

When I ask Tony about what keeps him loving English, his response is interesting. He thinks deeply and his attempts to answer are hesitant and stalled. I have retained the hesitations and fillers that are such a feature of the early part of his response. His initial answer combines personal and professional experience of the skillset that English offers:

I think I've, erm, well I've always enjoyed reading so I can't say that's what keeps me loving it … Er, I suppose, erm [pause] what … it's a hard question, I don't know … What keeps me loving teaching English is, erm, I do really think it's the most important subject in terms of being able to access other subjects and the opportunities it gives students, you know, to go away and to do

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well in other areas. Even if they're not interested in English, the soft skills that you learn from it are so useful.

I noted at the start that Tony had placed a professional filter on his answers and it does seem that without this filter, he is not as comfortable with the question. The fluency returns once he looks at the question from the perspective of his pupils, applying the professional lens that provides a deflective barrier to personal and affective questions. However, unprompted, he does return to an exploration of the affective aspect of the subject:

> But in terms of just the subject, why I love it, I don't know [Laughs] I just always have, I just always enjoyed reading... I guess I like the philosophical aspects of it and the poetic aspect of it, the interesting quotes and memorable lines and ... there's all sorts.

Tony's response has made me realise more forcefully that his narrative arc has been constructed from what he is happy to share with me. It is the version of himself that he is comfortable presenting and I realise that such versions are also protective of our identities.

When asked about his hopes for the rest of the PGCE course and his first year of teaching, Tony offers a wry: 'Just survive!' He is under no illusions as to the challenges ahead: 'it is one of those jobs, isn't it, where each day has the potential to be either fantastic or a complete kick in the face! [laughs]'. Although he has seemed both confident and reflective during our conversation, the idea of uncertainty is troubling:

> I think it is just a confidence thing when you're starting out, isn't it. Just going in confidently and knowing you can teach the lesson and go on and teach the next one after that ... and knowing that you're going to do a good job whereas when you're first starting out you're not sure how things are going to pan out and whether

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things are going to be successful or not. Whereas the more experience you've had over the PGCE and as you start your NQT year, I imagine you've got more resources to fall back on and more experience to use and you're more confident, aren't you, in terms of knowing what things are going to work out well.

I am interested in the way he talks about confidence as *knowing* and certainty borne of experience. Conversely, uncertainty seems to be equated with worry and lack of experience. Tony is right at the start of a second placement, following on from a month's break spent in university and it feels, 'almost like you're going back to something new'.

I am suddenly aware of the fragility of the identities we build for ourselves. Tony has gained significant teaching and wider work experience and already seems involved and at home in his placement school. His narrative positions him as someone who has studied the *right things* and gained the *right experience* for the job which will, in part, provide this confidence.

It's just about the persona of being confident and if you're stuttering and stumbling your way through an unknown passage and trying to explain … I don't know, I think children can sense that you're struggling whether that's with the subject or with them and that can worsen their behaviour sometimes or that can cause some issues.

Ultimately, I wonder if this is the bedrock of Tony's narrative: 'the persona of being confident'. Tony's story has given me some insights into how carefully that persona is constructed. He is aware of the resilience that experience can offer and seems to equate experience with certainty and knowing. Is this the teacher's default position: certainty and knowledge? Certainly, Tony appears confident and at ease in his surroundings and the teacher persona. However, he is also aware of the fragility of that persona when faced with the demands of the role, especially at

points of transition where uncertainty becomes a dominant feature and one might indeed feel that one is 'clinging to the rock'.

Chapter 9: Discussion of Part Two Data Analysis

9.1 Becoming an English teacher

In this discussion I will aim to uncover some of the pieces in the 'mosaic' which contribute to my understanding of the factors that shape the personal epistemologies of student teachers of secondary English. To do so, I realise that I may need to relinquish my researcher's 'interactive voice' and take up the researcher's 'authoritative voice' (Chase, 2008:75-77) which Denzin, (1997, cited in Chase, 2008:75) describes as 'privileging the analyst's listening ear'. I am mindful of Smith and Deemer's (2000, cited in Etherington, 2004:85) summing up of this position:

> We are finite human beings who must learn to accept, for example, that anything we write must always and inevitably leave silences, that to speak at all must always and inevitably be to speak for the someone else.

I hope that as I do so, I remain conscious of the 'essential ghosts' (Schostak, 2006: 82, citing Derrida, 1990) that trouble the judgements I make.

9.2 The role of memory in constructing student English teachers' personal epistemologies

Over the course of this thesis I have become interested in autobiographical memory and the way in which 'individually and collectively, we shape our identity by making sense of our past and its continuous relationship to our present and future selves' (Reid, 2016:98). The student teachers, Joseph, Alison and Tony, all draw on autobiographical memory as they begin their teaching careers. Their recollections of English provide insights which connect, sometimes uneasily, with practical experience of English teaching as they begin to understand the policies, cultural and local imperatives, heritage and traditions that shape their current context for teaching. These memories are not simply indicative of early idealism (Maynard and Furlong, 1995:12), I would argue that they are more complex in that

they reveal choices about the identities they wish to claim for themselves and the symbiotic nature of identity and personal epistemology. They are in the process of constructing their own personal and collective professional memories (Tarpey, 2015; 2016) and the memories of English shared through the in-depth interviews revealed something of the fluidity and dynamism of this process.

In the interviews memory became part of Joseph, Alison and Tony's *storied selves* enabling them to select experiences and construct a narrative with the subject 'English' at its heart. However, it is important to look more critically at issues of intent in the way in which memory is being used in these accounts. Memory might be seen as a fixed and static point and so it seems as if a *truth* is being presented. However, memories are also personal and subjective – a unique way of knowing. They are inevitably partial and edited. When someone chooses to share a memory it will not be neutral because there is intent in its choosing. They will also have been guided by the interview questions. Some memories might be rehearsed – part of the life-story script that is playing in one's head. Sharing memories can be a pleasurable and empowering experience affording a sense of identity that seems rooted and secure. They provide a version of oneself in a particular context at a particular point in time offered in response to a particular stimulus. Once memories are articulated they become part of a discourse and it is the discourses emerging from these memories that I wish to explore.

In drawing on memories of English, I had hoped to discover how subject beliefs were shaped and how these beliefs fed into personal epistemologies and continuing subject knowledge development. My use of the word 'discover' is telling. It is suggestive of a neatly packaged truth which provides a cause and effect. What I found was much more complex than I had initially imagined. Memories, as shared by the student teachers, became indicative of their lives on the move and suggestive of their sense of transition into a teaching role that was not an end point but something of constant change and uncertainty. In this there was a process of letting go and finding, of re-stating certainties, only to challenge them again. There was a sense of movement, looking back as well as looking

forward and providing connection and re-connection as their current context overlaid personal experience with pedagogical questions. This was evident in Joseph's discussion about the pedagogical worth of showing pupils the film of a Shakespeare play. He drew on his own experiences as a pupil but the argument he constructed wove in elements of value, pedagogy, creativity, innovation and pragmatism. This was not a memory recalled and presented either as nostalgia or an example of good or bad practice; this was memory being put to work to examine a real question for which there was not a simple answer. Memories were also challenged as they came under pedagogical scrutiny. Alison came to question an approach to wider reading which was central to her own memories of reading as a child, as she examined how the GCSE syllabus failed to meet the needs of a low-attaining Year 10 group. In the shifting and sometimes hesitant discussions that emerged from all the student teachers, it was possible to see personal experiences, entwined with pedagogy and policy, as a basis for praxis. Here was a genuine sense of exploration, working towards a different way of doing things that did not feel like an end in itself, but a process.

The memories that emerged from their experiences of English as pupils, were often dichotomous and exact, and they centred on teachers. For the student teachers, there seemed to be no middle ground: their recollections were of 'fantastic' or 'horrible' teachers. These were remembered figures with the power to inspire or crush. The memories also served to present an ideal of what they wished to emulate or the practices they wished to avoid, either claiming or rejecting such figures as part of their own sense of professional identity. In doing so, it was interesting to note how these reviled or revered figures from their schooldays remained with them. Tony's indifferent English teacher who failed to inspire a child who loved reading, was woven into his account of how he became an English teacher despite hating English at school. The indifferent teaching he received provided a key belief in his own practice: enthusiasm for the subject. Alison's stern, authoritative teacher's voice, remembered from when she was a child, was recalled in the guise of teachers at her previous placement school. This appropriation served to show that her 'voice' was very different. For Joseph and

Alison, the features of these remembered teachers were recognised in their current staffrooms as they commented on the toxic negativity of teachers, who moaned about the curriculum, losing sight of what is important about teaching English. They were presented as a destructive force to be avoided. It could be that these negative teachers were simply presented as an opposing force to the very different identities the student teachers' claimed for themselves. However, it should also be considered whether these ghosts from the past could still be troubling the present, raising questions about how such negativity might silence student teachers' voices.

Considering this, I am reminded of teacher educator, Prue Gill's (2016:184) 'quiet anxiety':

> When I work with young teachers heading out into a world of curriculum outcomes, standards, benchmarks and testing, I am conscious they don't have a long past of alternative teaching work to draw on, and hence their efforts to ameliorate the present overwhelming requirements resulting from the 'professionalisation' of their teaching work are surely constrained.

Gill's comment raises questions about the dichotomous view emerging, which presents teaching as defined achievement – either good or bad, without consideration of the wider context in which teachers are working. Such a decontextualized view fits into the hard-edged wording of the Teachers' Standards (2011d) and Ofsted assessment framework (Ofsted, 2017) which, for these beginning teachers has become the dominant discourse: you are excellent, good or inadequate. These student teachers are drawing on memories which have shaped their understanding of what it is to be a teacher. However, it is an *outside in* view and the language is used to broadly define into *types.* I share Gill's (2016) concerns about the limited resources beginning teachers might have at their disposal to 'ameliorate the present' and deal not only with the requirements of standards-based reforms but also the negativity they will inevitably meet. Such negativity for

Joseph and Alison seemed a threat to their beliefs about English and carried the potential to *crush their passion*. However, I would argue that these memories and early experiences provide a recursive entry point to what Doecke (2015) describes as critical storytelling. Such storytelling invites a close examination of who we are and the beliefs we hold, developing:

> … a complex dialectic between our consciousness and our social being, between our vision of what we wish to achieve (what we think 'ought' to be) and the social relationships in which we find ourselves, including the values and aspirations of people who may not share our ideals (what 'is) (Doecke, 2015: 145).

Reflective writing is regarded as integral to student teachers' professional development. However, it is usually focused on practice with reflection on what worked and what might be done differently and why. The emphasis is on pedagogy, often couched in the discourse of the Teachers' Standards (2011d). However, Doecke (2015:148) argues that critical storytelling demands:

> … a reflexive awareness of the language that we speak, the clichés and jargon that we use from day-to-day (Parr and Doecke, 2012, 158). It means continually turning words around, alert to what they conceal as much as what they reveal about our lives, including the stories that we habitually tell ourselves about ourselves and anyone else who is there to listen.

Such criticality begins to explore what we might call the *problematics* of language. The certainties which are enshrined in the everyday language we use and the familiar discourses that emerge over time, prevent us from seeing alternatives. These discourses embed official language, such as the Teachers' Standards (2011d), Ofsted assessment frameworks (Ofsted, 2017) along with familiar teaching jargon, to such an extent that they become taken for granted. They become an abbreviation, contextually understood but denying us the language to challenge

and meaningfully explore. I felt that this was suggested by the way Alison engaged in the discourse of 'bottom set kids' but then found it more difficult to articulate how these pupils' needs had not been met, opting instead for a further shorthand of 'private school' and 'comprehensive school'.

The kind of critical storytelling that Doecke (2015) refers to, can be difficult to achieve and, because it draws on autobiographical experience, memories and beliefs, it can be unsettling. It also needs time, something that can be in short supply on a PGCE course. However, Gramsci (1971, cited in Doecke, 2015:146) notes the need to know more about who we really are before we can truly write reflexively:

> The starting point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is 'knowing thyself' as a product of the historical process to date which has posited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory. The first thing to do is to make such an inventory.

Such an 'inventory' has a place in enabling student teachers to understand more about the dominant discourses in English teaching. Such discourses include the stories which grow up around English, presenting us with accepted versions of what it means to be an English teacher. Doecke (2015:143) explores the ways in which the stories we tell gain traction with each re-telling:

> It seems that rather than securely anchoring us in the present, the stories we tell one another are partly imaginary, driven by other impulses than simply to give an honest account of actual events. And with each retelling of a story, we get better at it.

Doecke (2015) is referring to the stories we tell to make sense of our lives but I believe that the language of storytelling that has evolved around English teaching

has taken the status of mythology (Barthes, 1957), that might be difficult to challenge. The Oxford English Dictionary (2017:online) defines a myth as:

> A traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining some natural or social phenomenon, and typically involving supernatural beings or events.

Untangling how myths are formed and the way they become embedded in our thoughts and actions can be difficult, partly because belief systems are involved. However, it is the language of the discourse surrounding reading, literature and the English teacher that is particularly interesting. This discourse has its antecedents in the Newbolt Report (1921:349) which envisioned the teaching of English as an art and noted that: 'If literature is to be enjoyed by the children it must be entrusted to teachers with a love of it.' No supernatural beings then, but teachers with a passion for English, who Marshall (2000:24) refers to as a 'special breed'. The memories that the student teachers shared about their early experiences of English were important to them as they provided substance for their subject beliefs. However, these memories interact with, and are shaped by, both professional and popular discourses about English teaching. What emerges could be described as *English of the Mind* (McGuinn, 2001, drawing on Heaney, 1980; McFarlane, 2003).

Such popular discourses often focus on reading and include:

- The importance of the family in instilling a love of reading
- Reading as love and passion – a private affair
- Reading as redemptive and enriching for the individual

These discourses, as expressed by Joseph, Alison and Tony, were keenly felt as they emerged from personal experience and so became linked to issues of identity and personal epistemology. However, such autobiographical discourse is also being shaped by professional discourse about what it means to be an English teacher: from the PGCE recruitment process, tutors, peers, teachers and mentors and policy documents. Thus, in this shaping, there is imagining and re-imagining and personal

epistemologies emerging through professional memory are not stable and fixed. This 'English of the mind' needs to be examined critically and I intend to explore this idea with regard to two of the dominant discourses in English that emerge from the in-depth interviews: reading and reading families.

9.3 Reading and reading families

In exploring the factors that shape the personal epistemologies of student English teachers I had asked for early memories of English. This question led all three of them into a discussion about the role of the family in establishing formative ideas about reading and its importance. This echoed earlier findings from Part One of the data sample.

Their responses reinforced the subjectivity of reading where books became powerful symbols of remembrance, affecting in their very physicality, providing a sense of both rootedness and continuity. Early experiences of reading with family also conveyed a sense of identity and belonging, in Tony's words, a 'privilege', *w*hich was reinforced through a shared common language. This became clear to me as a researcher, as Joseph and I talked about memories of Harry Potter and inherited books which provided collective memories that were surprisingly powerful and reassuring. This sense of belonging and privilege provides a strong message about the power of reading: to comfort, save, provide respite and to initiate a lifelong 'passion' (Goodwyn, 2002:70). Thus these memories focus on the affective dimensions of reading and the pleasure and sustenance it gives.

Memories of reading and family as shared by Joseph, Alison and Tony, existed quite separately from school memories – in some cases in opposition to them. Yet in the stories told, the memories became inextricably linked to their ideas about being an English teacher, often in terms of inspiration, enthusiasm or with regard to the redemptive qualities of reading. Such ideas appear unassailable. They are presented as *truths* and they feed into the mythology of how English teachers are made. Tony reinforces this point:

So I think that's obviously first and foremost, that's probably one
of the most important things that's helped me develop my
passion for English.

Being a part of a reading family seems to be an essential component in the story:
English teachers are passionate about reading and this passion is instilled in them
through their family. As Goodwyn (2002:70) notes, there is comfort and security
here. There is also a sense of privileging this experience. Thus, this common
language which speaks of belonging, has its flip side. What about those who do not
belong: the others? In Joseph's narrative, there was a sense of him wanting to
induct his pupils into a wider *reading family*: 'you've just not found the right book',
and a strong conviction that all pupils could find enjoyment through reading. Tony
commented that he was lucky to have had parents who read to him and that many
of the children he had worked with would not have had such support from home.
Alison's early reading experiences took in social, historical and cultural aspects of
texts and drew on multi-modality. In privileging this view, she highlighted the pupils
she is teaching now who appear to lack this wider understanding: 'Children now,
especially children that I'm teaching, they just don't have that cultural enrichment
… or the willingness to go away and be independent and research something'. In
the narratives, the student teachers present their *reading families* as something
singular and subjective, assuming a different experience for the children they
teach. In this discourse of the reading family where reading to children is equated
with love and belonging there is a danger in assuming a perspective that does not
include other lives, lived in different ways. It seems that the 'strong family reading
values' (Goodwyn, 2002:70) identified by the student teachers serve to construct
an ideal of reading as privilege and in this scenario any deviation offers a view of
the *less privileged.* In this sense their pupils are presented as the *generalised other*:
lacking in parental reading support, 'hating' reading, lacking cultural enrichment or
independent learning skills.

What seems to be emerging from these stories is what MacLure (1993:382) refers to as 'iconographies of teacherhood', whereby the dominant discourse of reading and family becomes fixed in the collective consciousness.

As the student teachers drew on memories of English at school and university, it seemed that the powerful and comforting motif of the reading family extended into reading communities (Goodwyn, 2002:73). Here there were strong and inspiring English teachers who became role models for Joseph and Alison. These inspirational teachers also provided a benchmark against which current colleagues in placement schools were measured and sometimes found wanting. Alison hoped she continued to love English: 'because I think a lot of teachers lose sight of that'. It seems that there are dangers being flagged up that suggest loss, and that a casualty of teaching English might be the love of the subject. It is possible that this sense of loss reflects the shift from personal study in English which is pleasurable and often self-directed to the altruistic understanding of teaching as supporting others to learn and develop. This idea is picked up by the student teachers as they explore their motivations to teach English.

While this thesis did not set out to explore issues of motivation, all three student teachers touched on this theme. All had studied English Literature. This had been an enjoyable experience, described variously as: 'going back to your roots' (Joseph); 'just like being in a book club for three years' (Tony); 'I loved my English degree, I actually quite miss it' (Alison). Their university studies enabled them to pursue individual interests in English Literature resulting in a strong sense of personal enrichment unconnected to the world of work. The idea of continuing this enjoyment of subject through teaching prompted both Joseph and Tony to reflect on the 'right reasons' for becoming an English teacher and Alison on the 'right reasons' for staying in the profession. Their choice of language is interesting, highlighting as it does their identification of the *others* who, unlike them, had become English teachers, or stayed in the profession, for the 'wrong reasons'. The dichotomous divide of right and wrong suggests that these reasons are regarded as

defined and set. However, the *criteria* by which they are evaluating choices, remain subjective and unspecified.

This debate contains elements of letting go of the pleasures of being a student, of sustaining a passion for the subject and embracing the wider role. Both Joseph and Tony brought wider work and teaching experience to the course and were disparaging of those they perceived to have brought only their love of subject:

> The reality is that you might love your subject and you might have a lot of knowledge about English but what you're going to be teaching of it is only the tip of the iceberg, isn't it, often? (Tony).

Here 'love' on its own would seem to be naïve or self-indulgent. However, this argument is shifting and nuanced as Joseph also reflects on the way he wished to prolong his engagement with English as a student, which became a motivation to teach.

Goodwyn (2002:77-78) concludes that while espousing the identity of a 'passionate' reader bestows a sense of belonging to a community of readers it can also be a 'potentially distorting influence' in that it focuses on a single aspect of the English teacher's role. In this discourse where reading is privileged and a special relationship evinced, what else is overlooked? There is also the need to consider the type of reading being privileged and how this might connect or disconnect with their pupils' reading. Goodwyn (2002: 78) notes that this relationship with reading is personal, subjective, inward-looking and, as a result, might not acknowledge other kinds of pupil engagement with text:

> In essence they need to distinguish between their own private love affairs with fiction and their professional relationship with the teaching of reading.

However, I would argue that the in-depth interviews revealed a more complex symbiosis between the personal and affective dimension of the subject and its pedagogical dimension. Joseph considered the possibilities of using film and media in the classroom in ways that might seem transgressive when placed alongside the discourse of affect and the redemptive power of literature. Both Joseph and Tony recognised the contradictions inherent in the curriculum focus on the printed word when set within the myriad of digital communication available to their pupils.

This complex entanglement also feeds into popular discourse about grammar and the *sides* of the subject. This has often taken on a dichotomous status privileging literature at the expense of grammar, the latter regarded as separate and lacking the heartfelt connections to early, memorable experiences of reading. Grammar does not appear to feature in the *English of the mind* narratives which draw on powerful versions of English teaching dating back to Matthew Arnold and the later Newbolt Report of 1921. If English teaching can only be entrusted to those with a love of literature then what kind of English teacher do you become if you love language? Such divisions are unhelpful and in the interviews there was a sense of lines being drawn. Alison 'hated' language and found it 'boring'. Joseph described himself as 'dreadful at language'. Is it that the dominant discourse around grammar has made such admissions acceptable? Or that a passion for literature somehow compensates a lack of enthusiasm for language? Or is it that passion operates in inverse proportions on a dichotomous scale? These questions of identity need to be explored by student teachers to begin to understand why such positions are taken up and the messages conveyed in their teaching. Tony who, after a literature degree had worked as a Teaching English as a Foreign Language teacher, was quick to claim a privileged position as someone for whom grammar held no fear. However, as MacLure (1993) notes, such positioning hides the complexities and shifting identities at play and this was evident as Joseph went on to explore how he was developing his grammar skills and Alison, who had taken A Level English Language, described the ways she was incorporating grammar into her literature lessons. It seems that the negative discourse is to do with personal interest and

value and here some critical interrogation as to why such attitudes predominate, might be enlightening.

It seems that admissions of 'loving' reading or 'hating' grammar do not actually reveal the whole story. Such comments emerge from personal and affective sources which can be difficult to articulate, especially in a professional context. Both Alison and Tony found it challenging to describe why they loved English. This might be because it is an individual identifier, the articulation of which might lead one into personal and vulnerable spaces. As a researcher, I was aware of the 'preferred self' (Riessman, 2008) that the participants wished to present and that there were individual lines drawn to protect identity. This insight sounds a note of caution. If dominant discourses which feed into personal epistemologies remain as dichotomous, ill-articulated feelings, then the lack of criticality means that attitudes and assumptions are not challenged. However, I would also argue that their exploration should be respectful and handled with tact and sensitivity.

9.4 English on the move

9.4.1 Subject knowledge as pedagogy
The in-depth interviews suggested ways in which early formative experiences and personal interests in English continued to shape and inform practice as the student teachers began their teaching careers. This might suggest a linear development but the interview responses unravel the simplicity of this idea. The picture of personal epistemology that emerges is one of fluidity and movement as memories are brought into play and perspectives and contexts change.

The three student teachers were all midway through their PGCE year and so were exploring their subject through a pedagogical lens. In their discussions, ideas about reading and pedagogy shifted, re-framed, were re-visited and questioned. There was the idea that you can 'pass on' a love of reading and inspire pupils through your enthusiasm and repertoire of literature. However, there was also reading as a process of renewal and learning, as familiar texts were re-visited through

pedagogical reading with new understandings constructed through the social interaction of teaching. Discussions about teaching literature through film wove through different aims and contexts where learning in literature might be diminished by film or, conversely, enhanced by this medium. A celebration of books became a celebration of multi-modality as different texts fed into and enriched the reading experience. The pedagogical possibilities of utilising new media in the classroom were explored through the tensions of traditional texts overlaid with pupils' familiarity with digital reading and writing. Both Tony and Joseph recognised the challenge identified by Daly (2011:132) of the disjuncture of pupils' experiences of technology, and the curricular expectations in English which do not acknowledge this experience.

Tony explored the importance of confidence to the student teacher. The discussions suggested how ideas flow and connect readily where the content is familiar and where this provides the confidence to connect existing frames of knowledge to new pedagogical approaches. Joseph called this 'bridging the gaps' and this approach was evident as he described the affordances of drama in developing understanding of Shakespeare's language and in his approach to teaching A level Media Studies. Where there was less confidence in subject content, the proposed learning became more theoretical, less to do with pedagogical leaps into the unknown and more to do with lists of resources that could be accessed.

These insights suggest that it might be helpful to explore student teachers' perceptions of knowledge in different domains and also the affordances and openness of such knowledge to enable connections (Chen and Derewianka, 2009).

9.4.2 Subject knowledge as agency

The issue of agency also emerged as a powerful impetus in subject knowledge development. Like Joseph and Alison, Tony was keen to connect his personal interests into his teaching, in this case, language study. His description of his work with his mentor suggested that he had agency to do this within a community of

practice. Tony was aware that he was bringing a significant skill to his department and through 'legitimate peripheral participation' (Lave and Wenger, 1991) his department would benefit, as he would benefit in turn from their knowledge of pedagogy to implement his ideas.

There was also a realisation amongst the student teachers of how different schools provided different opportunities for their learning. The freedom to innovate in one placement school allowed Alison to recognise the need for approaches which focused on pupil learning and investigation rather than teacher exposition.

Conversely, Tony's inability to identify ways in which his MSc in Information Technology might connect to his work in English, suggested that there were instances where personal knowledge and expertise was not valued in terms of contributing to English subject knowledge.

These insights suggest the importance of subject departments engaging with, and actively connecting, the varied types of knowledge their student teachers bring to the work of the department. In this way subject knowledge development is not viewed in terms of deficit but rather building on prior fields of knowledge. This point leads on to the idea of inspiration.

9.4.3 Subject knowledge as inspiration

Alison talked about wanting to inspire her pupils in the way that she had been inspired. On the one hand this idea of inspiration could be likened to hope. Miyazaki, drawing on a Bloch, Benjamin and Rorty (2004:5), describes hope as a 'radical temporal reorientation of knowledge'. In conceptualising knowledge as hope, our vision of the world is not narrowed but is constantly being reframed in forward momentum. As such, hope is not the end point of a process because: 'Any analysis that foresees its own endpoint, loses its open-endedness' (Miyazaki 2004:10).

However, some data suggested that the idea of inspiration might be seen as an endpoint. My misgivings come from the circularity of Alison's thinking where the inspiration imparted comes from the knowledge she has – a single loop as it were. Such inspiration for others would then emerge from her perspective and what she privileges.

It was possible to see how the student teachers were connecting existing subject knowledge in new and interesting ways. However, when I asked Tony if he could imagine avoiding teaching a topic, he commented:

> I can't begin to imagine myself as someone who would get bored
> of teaching something I know so well, that's like my rock – I
> wouldn't want to leave it!

This comment was made specifically in the context of being a student teacher, still finding his way around a classroom. However, the language is interesting. If the subject knowledge content you are familiar with becomes stable and fixed like a rock, what happens if this excludes other aspects of the subject? Where does continued learning occur that provides the confidence to leave the rock and branch out? Tony's prior experience provides an interesting example of such continued learning. His TEFL qualification gave him confidence in language study that went beyond knowledge of content and into how he used language in practice in the classroom. This was purposeful learning that engaged with all aspects of his pedagogical subject knowledge.

If student teachers hope to inspire their pupils, who or what will continue to inspire them to develop their subject knowledge in new ways, so that inspiration is not seen as a single loop feeding back on itself? How might learning re-orient personal epistemologies of subject in such ways so that negative discourses begin to shift?

This point highlights significant questions, that were also raised in Part One of the data, about the time and resources offered to all training providers to enable wider

pedagogical subject learning that moves beyond content into substantive structures of subject. Such learning would explore connections across the subject's domains which move beyond the curriculum, embracing the uncertainty of exploration rather than the certainty and the confines of the known.

9.5 Valediction and hope: losing and finding

I find, contrary to my expectations, that what is running through this research is a rich and troubling seam of contradictions and uncertainties. I did not foresee when I began this research that its ending would coincide with the endpoint of my career in teacher training. However, that is the case and I have no doubt that my sense of valediction has infused the design and thinking. The fact that I am exploring the development of personal epistemologies of student teachers whilst taking my leave of teaching, seems to be strangely fitting as I consider my own subject beliefs and, in doing so, trouble my certainties.

For the student teachers as well as for myself, there is a sense of loss and finding emerging through these in-depth interviews. I began with certainties, about myself and about how I might read the data, and in the process of analysis I have been challenged to think differently. I have heard voices that I had too easily overlooked and have questioned my role as a teacher educator and my part in perpetuating powerful discourses about English teaching. What has disturbed my sense of valediction is the recognition that these were discourses I had thought I was confronting and challenging. Thus, I strongly believe that Gramsci's (1971) inventory is needed for teacher educators, just as much as for the student teachers they are working with. It is vital to ensure that all voices are heard, valued and challenged in constructive and respectful ways. In short, the process for me has been unsettling but invigorating and I have gained a way of seeing that has illuminated new thinking and an acceptance that there won't be any definitive answers.

In the uncertainty of beginning new careers, there is also a sense of loss for the student teachers. This could be explored in many ways: a loss of certainty about

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what they thought the role would entail; a loss of ideals and the worry that they may not be the teacher they wanted to be; loss of their love of the subject; the loss of being a student and entering the world of work. These worries are real but it seems there is no place for uncertainty in the professional discourse of learning to teach. My worry is that there may be no place for them to be discussed in the staffrooms and departments in which they find themselves. Here student teachers may feel that negativity closes down any opportunity for such discussion which may be considered naïve or idealistic and which might leave them feeling exposed or vulnerable. However, working alongside the uncertainty, was a sense of hopeful optimism embedded in their belief in the transformative, redemptive and generative nature of the subject they have chosen to teach. How far this might sustain forward momentum is open to question as I feel there are also glimpses in the narratives of what might be termed the limitations of hope. This emerged through unease about pedagogical practices borne of high stakes testing and unwillingness to engage with these discussions because of the negativity of teachers who 'moan' about the curriculum. Then there are the long hours and the workload. Enthusiasm for English remained a constant in the narratives but the question remains whether this is enough.

Harvey (2000, cited in Miyazaki, 2004:1) refers to critical thought as the 'optimism of the intellect'. I particularly like this phrase, as I believe it encapsulates the work of the teacher educator. In conceptualising the role in this way, I am drawing on Hage's (2003, cited in Miyazaki, 2004:2) idea that societies - and here we could include schools and educational initiatives - should be 'mechanisms for the distribution of hope'. He argues that:

> The kind of affective attachment (worrying or caring) that a society creates among its citizens is intrinsically connected to its capacity to distribute hope.

He goes on to argue that neo-liberal regimes have contributed to the 'shrinking' of this capacity, something that is echoed in Zournazi's (2002, cited in Miyazaki, 2004:

1-2) ethical concerns about the appropriation of the language of hope which seeks to present a future ideal based on a view of the past that never was. Instead, Zournazi calls for:

> … hope that does not narrow our visions of the world but instead allows different histories, memories and experiences to enter into present conversations.

It seems that hope cannot be unlimited without understanding what is fuelling it and what might 'narrow its visions'. Understanding how we have arrived at a particular point and hearing the multiplicity of voices that contribute to our personal epistemologies, might ultimately help beginning teachers to embrace the uncertainties they face and see them as part of their learning – an 'optimism of the intellect' (Harvey, 2000, cited in Miyazaki, 2004:1) that feeds into subject development in constructive and challenging ways.

The themes emerging from Part Two of the data explore issues of memory, family, affect, hope, agency, inspiration and loss as factors that contribute to, and shape personal epistemologies. The interviewees spoke about their experiences of English in ways which emphasised their positive qualities: dedication and passion, inspirational encounters and hopeful imaginings. These responses appeared deeply felt and unassailable in their intrinsic worth. However, this study has troubled and questioned the language of personal epistemology to explore the ambiguity and contradictions inherent within it. What might a passion for reading exclude? What generates inspiration and how does it regenerate? If hope is seen as an end-point, what if it proves unattainable?

The memories of the participants indicated the way in which affect and experience were woven through personal epistemology to provide positionings that were often dichotomous or contradictory, or which relied on familiar descriptors. The data suggest that this discourse was used as a signifier of personal value or an

abbreviation for something much more complex, thus eliding difficult questions of what was being privileged, and the positioning of 'the other' within the discourse.

In exploring these ideas, this inquiry provided the space for me to listen closely to the participants and to myself. In doing so, I was able to hear the complex entanglement of beliefs, identities and understandings as they shifted and re-shaped dynamically around different ideas, memories, contexts and imaginings. This complex interplay encompassed my voice and a sense of my own identity and beliefs in flux. The focus on respecting the many, varied voices of the participants means that questions continue to trouble and open up uncertainties to energise my thinking.

The insights emerging from this inquiry are important because they argue for an ethical approach to exploring personal epistemologies which pays heed to inter-subjectivity and the multiplicity of voices and experiences involved. This approach recognises the inherently ambiguous and ambivalent nature of personal epistemology which is concealed by the dominant discourses which appear to speak unassailable 'truths'. Such an approach would support student teachers and those working in teacher education to examine the indeterminate spaces in between, as critical and uncertain beings (Britzman, 2007).

Chapter 10   Conclusions

This doctoral study, which drew on PGCE secondary English student teachers, set out to explore the factors which construct and continue to shape personal epistemologies of English during the PGCE year.   Entwined in this line of inquiry was a consideration of the ways in which personal epistemology might impact upon the ongoing development of pedagogical subject knowledge.

The focus for the inquiry emerged initially from my experiences as a teacher crossing the boundaries between secondary and primary school phases and realising the difficulties of embedding new learning within my own personal epistemology.   Further impetus emerged from my work as a teacher educator exploring the strongly held beliefs about what was important in English, which student teachers brought with them to the PGCE. This consideration of personal epistemology raised questions about what we mean by subject knowledge development and how this might be conceptualized in a different way.

A significant thread running throughout the research pertains to my role as a teacher educator and also as a researcher who is intricately involved, and not simply a detached observer.

This inquiry was located within qualitative, ethnographic research in the field, notably Britzman (1991, 2007) and Ellis (2003, 2007, 2009) who have both undertaken lengthy studies exploring the professional development of a small sample of student teachers. These studies, the initial data collected and wider reading, particularly in the field of epistemology, raised further questions about the complexity of subject knowledge development and the way in which this might be conceptualized.   In addressing this complexity, I recognised the imperative for a research approach which would hear a multiplicity of voices, including my own, which could take into account the temporal issues emerging. Consequently, this study employed a paradigmatic shift from interpretive, phenomenological analysis to an approach which drew on post-structural thinking.   The analysis of the in-depth interviews in Part Two of the data sample drew on Riessman's (2008)

narrative inquiry, dialogic/performance analysis to enable me to locate myself within the data and hear the intricate ways in which the different voices of researcher and participants construct their dialogue together.

When I formulated the research questions which have driven this study, I had in mind a correlation between formative experiences of English and the beliefs and understandings that inform our practice as English teachers. I did not imagine this correlation as a static cause and effect outcome, but rather a guiding force which shapes the teacher one becomes. In this sense, it seems that my earlier thinking encompassed the idea of an end point: that one might become a certain type of teacher. In this thinking, personal epistemology, while not fixed, takes on a rather more foundational role, providing a 'touchstone' of beliefs and understandings about the knowledge base of the subject. The insights I have gained throughout the course of this inquiry, defy such simplicity. Formative experiences are certainly powerful in their affective remembrances and they provide a sustaining quality of hopefulness. However, my growing understanding of personal epistemology recognises a far greater complexity: a multiplicity of voices. Some are recalled, happily or unhappily, from early memories but all these voices resonate and co-exist across time scales, dissolving temporal boundaries. Threaded through are insistent questions about the future: 'What if..?' 'How do I...?' This questioning provides the indeterminacy that, I would argue, drives subject knowledge development. Here is knowledge unknown, just out of sight, waiting to be experienced. In the in-depth interviews, we hear about Joseph's re-enactment of Romeo and Juliet on the school balcony; Alison's struggle to provide meaningful learning for her Year 10 class; Tony's grammar scheme of work for the Year 7 class who won't sit still. None of these events had yet happened, but in thinking through what they might do, all the student teachers engaged in debates which drew on their subject beliefs, current context and personal learning histories to problematize and question. For such rich complexity to be generative, there needs to be opportunities for student teachers to explore this multiplicity of ideas and influences, and also to recognise and acknowledge issues of worry and resistance.

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A number of studies (Goodwyn, 2002; Watson, 2012; Wilson and Myhill, 2012; Newell, VanDerHeide and Wynoff-Olsen, 2014; Gleeson, 2015) recognise the way that personal epistemologies may influence the development of subject knowledge for teaching and call for further research to be undertaken in this area. This inquiry has made a contribution towards critically examining the factors that construct and continue to shape personal epistemologies, through a conceptual framework which has drawn on ideas of space and temporality, inter-subjectivity, textual meaning, dominant discourses and hope. These key elements work together to offer a dynamic insight into the way in which personal epistemologies intermesh with learning during the training year.

The ideas emerging from this inquiry have challenged the spatial and temporal notions of professional knowledge development which describe learning as bounded and progressive, supporting Ellis's (2007;2009) findings in this area.

As a learning space, the PGCE is unbounded once we begin to see learning as temporally unconstrained. Learning moves fluidly between what has been - encompassing our autobiographical memories and learning histories - what is now, and what might be, in constant shift. These temporal shifts can be seen as the 'simultaneity of stories so far' (Massey 2005:9) encompassing beliefs, pedagogy, context and inter-subjectivity, which meld to provide a sense of dynamism and fluidity. Feeding into personal epistemology are the dominant discourses surrounding the subject English, which work to shape subject beliefs and help to generate an *English of the mind* (McGuinn 2001 drawing on Heaney 1980; McFarlane 2003). These are powerful discourses which also draw on affective dimensions. Subject beliefs, whilst sustaining, and embodying a sense of hopefulness, are also subject to challenge and question. This challenge comes about because such beliefs cannot exist in a vacuum and threaded through personal epistemologies are the relational aspects inherent in every contextual intersection we make. This inter-subjectivity contributes to the ongoing sense of shift and dynamism.

The training year asks student teachers to present their learning, textually through course writing, reflection and review. In this way, student teachers present versions of themselves which draw on the accepted discourses of the subject, and which offer compliance with the expectations of the course progress markers. However, these accounts also suggested a shifting and indeterminate view of personal epistemology and it was possible to see the 'transgressive' versions of themselves, as student teachers, emerging through the interviews and questionnaires. The inquiry also explored how the affective and often dichotomous nature of discourses of English and 'teacherhood' (MacLure, 1993), served to constrain and elide critical articulation and deeper reflexive questioning of subject development. These findings point the importance of implementing an 'inventory of the self' (Gramsci, 1971, cited in Doecke 2015:146) which would enable a critically reflexive understanding of the way we position ourselves within such discourses.

In utilising the conceptual framework underpinning this research, I have drawn on Britzman's (2007) idea of paradox at the heart of teacher education:

> That we grow up in school and that we return there as adults,
> that we bring to teacher education our own history of learning,
> only to meet the teacher educator's history of learning.

In addressing this paradox, the reflexive analysis inherent in narrative inquiry, and the post-structural understanding of multiplicity and 'the other', meant that I could no longer see the student teachers as subjects removed from me to be *worked upon*. Instead my role as researcher shifted as I located myself within the research and applied the same framework to myself. The result was challenging and enlightening. This outcome suggests that such an approach would be beneficial for all working alongside student teachers. I believe it would also raise critical questions about the interaction between the personal epistemologies of student teacher, teacher educator and school mentor, and a consideration of the voices

that are heard and those that are silenced. Such reflexive questioning might also lead to a deeper understanding of the ways in which personal epistemologies may impact on ongoing subject knowledge development.

This inquiry has challenged Ball's (2003:226) view that 'beliefs are part of an older, displaced discourse', by recognising that the personal epistemologies student teachers bring with them to the PGCE are underpinned by affect and can be seen as an important and motivating force (McIlwain, 2007: drawing on Tomkins, 1962; 1963). This point identifies the need for safe spaces to be opened up in the training of new teachers which provide opportunities for respectful, reflexive and transformative questioning and critical analysis that puts the self at the heart of the inquiry. In this way, all practitioners involved in teacher education can begin to consider how they know what they know, and how far that knowing is shaped by dominant discourses which seem to refute challenge.

Entangled with these ideas are issues of loss and finding which become part of the process of 'becoming' an English teacher. As personal epistemologies are challenged and overlaid with pedagogical implications, questions emerge about how subject knowledge development might be configured to generate a sense of agency and inspiration which speaks to the 'deep structures of the self' (Bernstein, 2000, cited in Brindley 2015:56). The findings from Part One of this inquiry suggested that it was difficult to generate time in a busy PGCE schedule to implement subject knowledge initiatives that went beyond interest and enjoyment or that addressed subject worries, in such a way as to connect with the substantive structures and frameworks of the subject. This inquiry highlights the importance of such initiatives which provide agency in learning, developed in partnership between university and schools. This point indicates a need for further research into this area.

Hope provides a key conceptual underpinning of this inquiry, evident both in the data and my analysis. However, there was also evidence of what might be termed the 'limitations of hope' and the shutting down of hopeful voices through negative

discourse, as expressed by both Alison and Joseph. This research argues for the need for student teachers' hopeful voices to be heard, listened to, and explored as part of the multiplicity of voices emerging in the process of becoming a teacher. If they are not, then there is the potential for hope to become fixed, offering a simple dichotomy in the place of complexity. This inquiry demonstrates that hope is a powerful concept running through student teachers' personal epistemologies. However, it too requires a critically reflexive approach if it is to remain a productive and generative force that embraces uncertainty, challenge and multiplicity.

This inquiry has enabled me to research experience in a different way. I have valued, respected and been moved by, the experiences articulated in both the spoken and written texts offered to me. My research approach has allowed me to pause, reflect and move beyond an interpretation of the words written or spoken in a moment of time. Through challenging the personal narratives emerging, my own included, I have begun to explore the ways in which language privileges and habituates thinking through dominant discourses and I have become more aware of the invisible structures of power and how they work with and upon personal epistemology. This has enabled me to unsettle and question the discourse of personal epistemology to explore the ambiguities and contradictions inherent within it. This has been a personal and ethical response to working with experience which has tried to articulate complexity and which has led me to consider whose voices are heard and not heard. My willingness to place myself within the research frame in order to see from a fresh perspective has meant that my learning has been significant.

10.1 Contribution to theoretical understanding

Within the structure of this thesis, the opportunity to collect further data was a significant step in moving my thinking forward and building coherently and constructively on the ideas the initial data had generated. It enabled me to explore the post-structural thinking that had engaged me, and to put it to work. In doing so I learnt a great deal about my personal epistemology. The reflexive nature of the research opened up new avenues of thinking through the unexpected challenges

that were presented. In my work, I had always thought that I used reflective practice successfully, however, I came to realise that I used it at a distance and had not placed myself within the text. This I found hard to do – to let go of my control and overview of the text. In a sense, this also meant relinquishing my control of the language: the way I thought and constructed ideas. One analogy that comes to mind is that of walking along the ridge of a scarp slope. The edge I approached offered two very different views and experiences. I could find myself walking the smooth grassy slope that was the interpretive methods I had used up to this point. Alternatively, I could slip over the edge into what felt like unknown space, a dangerous terrain that was immersive in its experience and which opened up post-structural ideas of multiplicity and uncertainty. This idea of slippage was one that stayed with me - the edge representing a sense of my own limits that I was constantly pushing against and daring myself to go over. When I did finally head over the edge it was both an uncomfortable and liberating experience which forced me to look at my own personal epistemology from a new perspective and challenge assumptions I might otherwise have denied I had ever made. More than anything, it enabled me tentatively to embrace uncertainty. The word tentative here is important, as it signifies the first steps on new terrain. I realised that such reflexive positioning is hard and can bring about uncomfortable understandings but it is not about baring the soul for the world to see. It is more of an internal shift that is transformative. As such, it is harder to articulate because the safe parameters of dichotomies are removed and there is a sense of being in the middle of something that cannot be easily labelled or explained – where things are captured in peripheral vision and are not moving with purposeful travel to an end point of destination.

The insights emerging from this research highlight the dualistic role of uncertainty and affect in the development of new learning. Uncertainty as a positive force was evidenced in the accounts of the student teachers who spoke enthusiastically of learning that emerged in an 'organic and unruly' way (Davis and Sumara, 2000:824) from topics that had inspired them; for example, Alison's experiments with independent learning, Joseph's use of film and music and Tony's reflections on the

uses of social media in the classroom. There was a sense here of the student teachers pushing the boundaries of what it means to know in English (Ellis, 2007) and making individual connections that travelled across their interests and personal learning histories and back into the curriculum. This could be termed experiential discourse, grown from 'innerstanding' (Heathcote and Bolton, 1995, cited by Grainger, 2005). Such discourse contrasted sharply with the language used to describe how they might develop knowledge in areas which did not connect so easily into personal learning histories and where they had worries about *not knowing*. Here, paradoxically, was the language of certainty. Here was knowledge as exteriority, to be gained at the point of need to fill a gap: the discourse of audit compliance. These insights suggest that student teachers might benefit from exploring their assumptions about the nature of knowledge in different fields (Hofer and Pintrich, 1997:89; Chen and Derewianka, 2009:227) and their perceptions of what knowledge development looks like in these fields. They would also benefit from examining the way they position themselves, and why, within dichotomous subject discourse, supporting Watson's (2012) study which recognized the influence of affect and oppositional discourses in grammar teaching. Furthermore, the insights gained from the data suggest the importance of working with student teachers to explore the development of subject knowledge for teaching, as uncertain, relational and emergent (Davis and Sumara, 2000).

This study has enabled me to utilise aspects of post-structural theory to explore the personal epistemologies of student teachers in the training year. It has opened up possibilities to challenge assumptions in ways that are not destructive, or which deny meaning through constant relativism, but which generate new ways of working and opportunities to see from different perspectives. By pushing the limits of my understanding I have experienced a disruptive disequilibrium which has complicated my understandings of what it means to know. This has engendered a new sense of creativity that is energising in its very uncertainty. The data gathered suggest that while uncertainty plays a part in student teachers' subject development it might also be feared, and is therefore often hidden in dichotomous discourse. The conclusion to be drawn is that in order to explore the *spaces in*

between, there must be acknowledgement of both the difficulties and the benefits of articulating the affective dimensions of learning and exploring ambiguity and ambivalence. In the light of the certainties embedded in the discourse of the Teachers' Standards (2011d) and assessment frameworks (Ofsted 2017), I would also suggest that it is important to reassure student teachers that such articulation is not *transgressive* but a feature of reflexive criticality providing the impetus for subject development.

This inquiry has developed an approach to exploring the experiences of student teachers which *problematizes* instead of seeking outcomes. I have adopted an ethical stance that recognises Britzman's (2007) paradox at the heart of teacher education: that to explore the personal epistemologies of student teachers, I must also explore my own. This approach might not deliver quick or straightforward answers. However, it has allowed me to pause, reflect and reconsider ideas that might otherwise have been more cursorily addressed or overlooked.

Bateson (1994:6) notes that out of the *multiplicity of vision* comes *the possibility for insight.* In concluding this thesis, I would like to focus on the strength of these words which have resonated in the discussions of the student teachers I worked with and in my own learning. Responses have converged, intersected, diverged, sparked tangentially and consolidated powerfully across time and space, drawing on memories, emotions, learning, hopes and enthusiasms, fears and worries. The ideas emerging have provided intriguing and challenging insights which begin to capture the uncertainty, complexity and individuality of personal epistemology. Greene (1973, cited in Britzman, 2007:3) makes the point that:

> If the teacher chooses to become a critical subject … what is critical only emerges when the teacher understands herself or himself as subject to uncertainty.

This study argues that such indeterminacy can be a productive and generative force, leading to a reflexive understanding of personal epistemology in English.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

The researcher's autobiographical writing

As I began to trial the data collection for this thesis, I had in mind the verbal difficulties and awkwardness that some PGCE English applicants experienced in articulating the route that had led them into teaching, compared to the more nuanced and deeply-felt appeal of the subject expressed by some in their personal statements. I was interested in motivations to teach English and wondered about how far student teachers had been influenced by family, friends, school and further study. The question of motivation also led me to consider their relationship with the subject, their individual view of 'English' or personal epistemology, rather than an understanding of 'school' or 'curriculum' English. As a teacher educator, I had done some work with student teachers on autobiographical writing when exploring language use and a very open questionnaire right at the start of the course often led into bits of writing and discussion that could be termed autobiographical. I wondered if the responses to the questions I had in mind might be better served by personal narrative writing rather than tightly framed questions or interviews and so in 2008-09 I trialled an autobiographical approach to exploring motivations to teach, with a group of PGCE English and Maths student teachers.

This early trial suggested that a completely open and unstructured approach was unhelpful for some but the focus on autobiography did open up possibilities for exploring memories and early experiences of subject.

As a result of this trial, I began to wonder what might emerge through my own writing. Thus on a train journey heading south to visit my father, I embarked on my own autobiographical writing which explored my early involvement with English. This became quite a personal experience and the context is undoubtedly significant. I was visiting my father who had recently been diagnosed with dementia; I was writing about my early life and the influence of my family in shaping my love of literature and the arts, and so my thinking about what was important in English and the kind of teacher I had aspired to be, became bound up with my family and a realisation of how those early experiences had shaped me.

Rosen (1996:21) draws on Bartlett (1932) as he explores, *the significance of the context in which remembering is done.*

> *Where and when we remember affects how we remember. From what socio-cultural location do we speak? The original events and everything that surrounded them are now perceived by the rememberer in the micro- and macro-world in which he/she is now speaking, and which determined the form and content of the articulated memory.*

The significance of the socio-cultural framing in my own writing, was important as I became aware of the different readers in this text. On the one hand I was writing for my father and drawing on shared memories that might soon be lost to him. Some of these memories were particularly vivid and personal and shot through with an emotional resonance that made the writing both poignant and celebratory. On the other hand, this was a professional piece of writing exploring a social and cultural relationship with English and the arts that had been influential in my own life, recognising *that memory functions by interpreting the past in order to give it meaning* (Rosen, 1996:22 drawing on Bartlett 1932).

What I also became aware of as I began to write, was the way in which particular memories provoked further remembering in what Rosen (1996:25) describes as a *constellation of connected memories.* This meant that whilst I was undoubtedly selective about what I chose to write about and privilege, the writing was free-flowing and unplanned, sometimes taking me in unexpected directions.

This first piece of personal narrative writing, shaped the request I sent out to my PGCE English group for their own writing. This was entitled, *English: a personal learning journey,* and it invited a free response but with some framing prompts to use if needed.

A personal learning journey

When I interview prospective trainees they often tell me that they are passionate about English. On further questioning this often turns out to mean reading literature. Research (Goodwyn 2002; 2008; Ellis 2003) has identified a strong relationship between PGCE English applicants and their love of reading and my own experiences of reading personal statements and interviewing PGCE applicants over a number of years, concur with this.

I was also a passionate reader, working my way through the lower school library and having to ask the librarian for permission to enter the canonical enclave of the senior library to begin devouring the texts, pac-man like, that were there. On holidays, I would have finished my own age-appropriate reading by the middle of the first week and then would start, surreptitiously, on my parents' paperbacks, thus imbibing a heady mixture of teen adventure and angst alongside war-time thrillers, espionage and historical drama. My mother, a Mancunian by birth, loved the author, Howard Spring and, recognising the name, I had acquired a copy of 'These Lovers Fled Away' (Howard Spring 1955). As a sixteen year old synaptically attuned to love, loss and longing, I was entranced by the story of Rose, the pivotal character, but it was the full quotation from which the title was taken which also caught my attention:

And they are gone,
Ay, ages long ago
These lovers fled away into the storm.

I was caught by all that was encapsulated in this quote – the sense of loss and finality, of defiance, mystery and romance. That the lovers fled into the storm intrigued me – the elemental turmoil seeming welcoming in comparison – to what? I didn't know but I had to find out and I read 'The Eve of St Agnes' (John Keats 1819). Some months later, in a junk shop, I came across a large oak framed engraving, browned and spotted with age, depicting two young lovers in a wild, wintry landscape, their clothes tangled together and their hair whipped up around

their heads, running and laughing in defiance of the elements.   I have no idea if this engraving was an actual representation of the poem, but for me it was – they were the young lovers from 'ages long ago', just as I had pictured them.

This was my first conscious memory of an approach to reading that was never simply contained within a text.   My reading gathered in other books, pictures, poems, paintings, music, landscapes, colours, sensations.   It moved around, sampling, sharing, connecting, enriching, in and out of texts – out into the real world and back again, finding voice in my own writing and imagination.

Years later when my aunt died and I inherited some of her books, I discovered that I was not the only member of the family to read in this way. To open up one of my aunt's books was to step into a whole reading experience. As you turned the pages you would encounter postcards of places in the text that she had visited, postcards of paintings, news clippings about the author or reviews of the book. What might first have been taken merely for bookmarks were in fact contextual markers of widening appreciation.

Looking back, I see now that we were a family whose experiences were steeped in creative and cultural arts. We dabbled in painting, acting, music and writing and we all loved films.   But it was my father and I who forged a love of the Saturday afternoon black and white science fiction movie. I saw them all – 'The Day the Earth Stood Still', 'It Came from Outer Space', The Invasion of the Body Snatchers', 'Quatermass and the Pit' and many more – and this in turn inspired a voracious spate of science fiction reading in my early teens.

I associated films with reading from a very early age. As a young child I watched 'Jane Eyre' (Charlotte Bronte 1847) sitting on my father's knee, appalled at the mad woman in the attic and hiding my face in his chest, scared by the fire that disfigured Mr Rochester. This, too, became a favourite book. In one memorable case, the film took the place of the book. As a nine or ten year old I was watching 'A Tale of Two Cities' with my parents.   As Sidney Carton sacrificed his life with the

memorable words, 'It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done' (Charles Dickens, 1859), I left the room and sat at the top of the stairs, sobbing, distraught. It was my first intimation that the good guy might not always win through in the end – so unfair, so unjust. I still have not read the book, the reluctance perhaps stemming from that early sense of moral outrage.

I was lucky to go to a progressive primary school, which encouraged creative writing, music and drama. We had a school magazine completely written and edited by the pupils and our artwork was not just on the walls but framed. When art exhibitions came to town we would have an assembly about the artist and then walk down the road see the exhibition in the local college, the paintings coming to life through the enthusiasm and knowledge of our Headteacher, Mr Brown.

All these memories combine to illustrate my own approach to English which is eclectic and informed by cross-curricular and cultural approaches. This is my *capital* (Bourdieu 1992:98) and I have never questioned the importance of its influence on my teaching or its importance in my field of play. So much so that when I was part of a working party to embed media teaching in English, my reaction to being asked by the English Adviser if I had met any resistance to drawing on popular culture from colleagues, was one of confusion. I realised later that I was very lucky to be working with like-minded individuals, but my response then was one of surprise – cultural awareness which drew on media was a thread running through all we did.

I am also aware that my reluctance to clearly define the boundaries of English as a subject, was reflected to some degree in my willingness to cross the borders into other age phases. I began my teacher training in the secondary phase but finished it as a primary teacher. However, I didn't teach in the primary sector until late in my career, a transition which left my secondary colleagues bemused and surprised. What this meant for me personally, was that the border between KS2 and 3 was no longer a barrier – it was passable. There was no void of nothingness beyond or before, just lively inquiring minds at a particularly tricky point in their own

development – a point made even trickier by the very separate constructions of primary and secondary education.

What these recollections have done, is to throw into relief the fascination I have always had for boundaries and what happens when you cross them. Each boundary crossed, becomes a space for reflection and learning. The act of crossing a boundary, whether internally or externally constructed, provides a space where this dichotomy no longer exists; where looking back becomes part of looking forward and new understanding emerges. In this way the act negates the state – no longer the verb 'to be' but rather the conjunction, *and … and … and* (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:25).

Teacher Training

I hadn't wanted to be a teacher. Really, I had no idea what I wanted to do beyond reading lots of books. A single, bewildering careers interview with my Headteacher only added to my sense of disconnection between the idea of studying and the practical application of what you might actually do with it. In the end it was a twist of fate in the form of unexpected A level results that set me on a teaching trajectory. Perhaps I could have stayed on at school another year to re-take the offending exams but I chose instead to take up my insurance offer of a B.Ed at a teacher training college – "A nice, safe option" in the words of my Headteacher, and, "At least it's not a polytechnic." There was a hierarchy of leaving destinations at my girls' Direct Grant School: Oxbridge first, of course, if you wanted to be a truly successful 'old girl', followed by a Redbrick university and a degree with a recognizably traditional name. If you 'didn't make the grade' then a successful teacher training college was a safe option because it provided you with a respectable career on the fringe of academia. Way down the pecking order were the polytechnics; too new, too radical and political; offering degrees with interesting names, usually ending in 'Studies' and challenging the old order of the facilitating subject. And further down there at the bottom, groaning with the weight of the establishment on top, were the Further Education Colleges – education, but not as *we* know it, my Headteacher might have said.

So I found myself at a Teacher Training College, not where I had wanted to be and not doing what I had intended, but still, it felt like moving on, and for someone who didn't have a clue what they wanted to do, it began to provide me with a sense of purpose. I learnt about philosophy and the psychology and sociology of education and now when I returned home, my rebellious teenage arguments with my father took on a more defined focus. I had not had a privileged upbringing in monetary terms but the sense of social justice that underpinned all the education studies made me realise just how lucky I had been. I also realised that education could be very different to my own experience and I was captivated by the possibilities presented by A.S. Neill's Summerhill School. This was a whole new world opening up to me. But I still craved books and half of the degree was devoted to subject. So not only was I studying new and interesting things under the guise of education, I was also studying literature and discovering a passion for drama and theatre which I knew had always been there but which had never had the chance to blossom.

The first year provided the opportunity to study a wide variety of subjects before specializing, and I made the most of this. It was drama, however, that was the real awakening for me. I knew I loved literature and language but my exposure to drama as a subject in its own right had been non-existent. It was as though I had found a missing key that unlocked all the movement, colour and voice in the texts I read. I had only ever studied plays on the page, now I had the opportunity to produce plays and make choices that introduced shades of meaning. In my first year I directed and acted in N.F. Simpson's (1960) 'One Way Pendulum' and realised that I had broken free of my stuffy, traditional girls' school and renounced its legacy. This was theatre; this was English! The freedom to explore was intoxicating.

In a way, nothing that followed quite matched the sheer sense of discovery of that first year. What it did do, however, was to lay the foundation of an understanding of subject knowledge that was broad, eclectic and experiential. I had arrived with a deficit view of my own subject knowledge; if you had cut me in half you would have

discovered *Rejected* stamped all the way through me. But I learned that knowledge wasn't just about content and set texts, nor did it have to be measured in grades. Knowledge was also about experience and exploration, about doing things that were new and making connections across unlikely fields; about embracing the unexpected and taking the opportunities that were offered. Subject knowledge became finding the confidence to direct a play by N.F Simpson and learn something about the Theatre of the Absurd and still more about myself - and so the experience of doing became entwined with knowing.

How far did this experience shape the teacher I became? I had four years to learn about education in all its forms alongside my subject and subject pedagogy. Perhaps because I wasn't driven by a vocation to teach, I also took time to explore whether I wanted to be a secondary teacher or a primary teacher.   The flexibility of the course allowed me to start off in secondary and finish up in primary although a dearth of primary jobs when I qualified meant that I started my teaching career in a secondary school. What impact did this training have? An interesting question and one which has relevance in the light of current reforms to teacher training. The course I undertook allowed me to explore what education might look like in theory, and then examine the practice, without really having too much invested in that experience; it was always fully understood that this was training. I approached each school placement, not as a potential place of employment but as an experience; it was 'practice' and no one considered that a student teacher was the finished article. Looking back, I can see how my sense of professional identity shifted as I considered the different phases and settings and I tried to work out where I 'fitted in'. Meanwhile, the strong emphasis on English and pedagogy constantly refreshed the idea of 'subject'.

Starting out: a new teacher's story, East Manchester 1980

My first job was in an edge-of-city comprehensive school in challenging circumstances. The previous English department had left en-masse in various interesting ways. I replaced the woman who had been second in department and who had gone to Spain in the October half term and never come back. Some time

later, I received a pile of coursework, all marked, in a large envelope covered in Spanish stamps. The majority of the new department were straight out of college and of a similar age and disposition. The slightly more experienced teacher, who took up the post of Second in Department, found himself Head of Department in a matter of weeks when the current post holder failed to return after maternity leave.

On paper, all this sounds like a recipe for disaster but it was far from that. The way we had come together as a group meant that there was no strong sense of hierarchy. We shared classes and ideas and bickered over who had produced the 'lesson of the week'. We embraced the unexpected so that the lessons themselves became spaces to improvise. Following an English meeting on simulations with the Local Authority Adviser, we decided to write our own. We had all enjoyed Cluedo as children and so 'Murder at Murgatroyd Manor' was born. We each played a character; I was Felicity Murgatroyd, the dim and prim daughter of the evil (and murdered) Lord Murgatroyd. We dressed in character and visited each of the Year 8 classes in turn to be interviewed as possible murder suspects so the pupils could work out, 'whodunnit'. We had planned our alibis and thought we knew who had done it (we had written it, after all) but it soon became apparent that we no longer had control of the outcomes. The more searching the questions asked, the more the teacher/characters improvised their answers and we found ourselves in the middle of a story that evolved as the pupils and teachers created it together. This felt exciting and innovative and, above all memorable. I had regularly explored shared writing with my pupils and I had a drama background alongside English but this went beyond 'teacher in role' into a fusion of drama and storytelling that was truly improvised and creative.

I was passionate about English and my personal interpretation of the subject sat within a broad arts frame. There were posters on my walls of films and theatre productions as well as artworks. I was interested in the way that art and literature combine to create tone and mood and perspective. I taught Drama (and Media

Studies, at a later date) and I co-wrote and co-produced musicals with my colleagues.

My subject knowledge development was largely a collaborative affair. As a department, we shared ideas and pedagogy, we had a Local Education English Adviser and later a LINC (Language in the National Curriculum) Adviser as well. I attended Exam Board meetings and training and later became a Regional Chair for Moderation Meetings and a GCSE Examiner. I co-founded a Media Group for primary and secondary teachers in my LEA and this led to working with the BBC on two educational schools' programmes, involving my pupils – one on media production and one on language and gender. The department was a member of NATE and I delivered workshops for local branch conferences. It strikes me, looking back at this list, how the support networks provided the opportunities for further subject development, and just how enriching this development was.

I started out by thinking that teaching would not be creative enough for me. My experience proved me wrong. The English that I taught blurred the boundaries between literature and language, art, music, drama and media. But the thing that strikes me most about these reflections on my first years as an English teacher was that I didn't just 'teach' - I wrote, acted, sang, produced, filmed - and this, for me, was what teaching English was about. I was lucky to have had such a start to a career amongst such a group of inspired individuals who understood 'English' in the same way that I did, but perhaps what enabled my colleagues and I to explore the boundaries of English with such impunity was the very openness of the intellectual space we inhabited.

Appendix B

Education reforms which have impacted upon those training to teaching since 2010

In terms of this study, the education reforms which have impacted upon those training to teach have included:

- The expansion of academies and the introduction of the Free School programme (DfE 2010)

- Reform of 14-19 education and training, including raising the participation age of those in education and training, to 18 (DfE 2010)

- The introduction of the English Baccalaureate in 2010 (House of Commons 2017 Briefing paper 06045)

- The reform of Initial Teacher Training (ITT), including the expansion of the Teach First programme and the introduction of School Direct (DfE 2011a)

- The introduction of new teaching standards (DfE 2011d)

- The review and revision of the national curriculum - taught in schools from September 2014 (DfE 2011b; 2011c; 2017).

- Reform of Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) provision, including a new SEND Code of Conduct (DfE/DfH 2015)

- The introduction of an GCSE assessment grading scale from 1-9 in England with different grading scales in Wales and Scotland (Ofqual 2014a)

- Reform of GCSEs and A levels, in conjunction with Ofqual, the independent regulator of qualifications, examinations and assessments in England (Wales and Northern Ireland are not part of this reform and Scotland has its own examination system) (Ofqual 2014b)

- KS2 Writing Test removed and replaced by grammar, spelling and punctuation test (Standards and Testing Agency 2015)

- The development of a new framework for Ofsted inspections of schools and ITT (Ofsted 2015)

Appendix C   Eurydice Report 2015 The Teaching Profession in Europe: Country codes

EU European Union	**NL** The Netherlands
BE Belgium	**AT** Austria
BE fr Belgium – French Community	**PL** Poland
BE de Belgium – German-speaking Community	**PT** Portugal
BE nl Belgium – Flemish Community	**RO** Romania
BG Bulgaria	**SI** Slovenia
CZ Czech Republic	**SK** Slovakia
DK Denmark	**FI** Finland
DE Germany	**SE** Sweden
EE Estonia	**UK** The United Kingdom
IE Ireland	**UK-ENG** England
EL Greece	**UK-WLS** Wales
ES Spain	**UK-NIR** Northern Ireland
FR France	**UK-SCT** Scotland
IT Italy	**HR** Croatia
CY Cyprus	**IS** Iceland

LV Latvia	**LI** Liechtenstein	* ISO code 3166. Provisional code which does not prejudge in any way the definitive nome
LT Lithuania	**ME** Montenegro	
LU Luxembourg	**MK*** former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	
HU Hungary	**NO** Norway	
MT Malta	**RS** Serbia	
	TR Turkey	

nclature for this country, which will

be agreed following the conclusion of negotiations currently taking place on this subject at the United Nations (http://www.iso.org/iso/country_codes/iso_3166_code_lists.htm [accessed 25.9.2014]).

Appendix D

ENGLISH – A PERSONAL LEARNING JOURNEY

I am interested in the influences that have shaped your understanding of the subject 'English'.

Below are some questions that you might wish to think about although you are welcome to write more broadly and in autobiographical style if you wish.

- What did you enjoy about English when you were younger?

- What part did family, friends, school play in shaping your enjoyment and knowledge of English?

- What prompted you to study the subject at A level / degree level?

- Why did you choose to teach this subject?

- What would be your personal definition of this subject?

- How do you think a pupil that you teach might define 'English'?

- Do you think that 'English' has defined subject content?

Finally, what do you think matters in English

- to you

- to your pupils

- to your school / department?

Many thanks for taking the time to complete this. Please e-mail to me -

Carole Page   May 2011

Appendix E

Copy of email request to include complete anonymised copies of personal narrative writing in this thesis.

Dear ……

I was one of the Secondary English PGCE tutors at MMU Didsbury in 2010-11. At that time I was conducting research for the early stages of my PhD thesis, exploring the development of subject beliefs in English. You very kindly completed some personal writing for this research and sent it to me (I have attached a copy). I have anonymised and drawn on this writing for a section of my thesis. However, as my PhD is now nearing completion, I would like to include an anonymous complete copy of your writing in the appendices. This complete copy would be used solely for reference purposes in the examination of my thesis and would not appear in any subsequent publication emerging from the PhD.

The thesis explores the following research question:

What are the factors that shape and construct the professional identity of PGCE student teachers of secondary English? How do these factors contribute to their understanding of their subject and their subject beliefs? What are the implications for the development of their subject knowledge for teaching?

If you are happy to consent to an anonymous complete copy of your writing being included in the appendices of my thesis, I would be very grateful if you could confirm this in writing via email to me, using the following wording:

I consent to an anonymous complete copy of my writing being included in the appendices of Carole Page's PhD thesis.
Signed:

Your writing, and my own, provided the starting point to what has been a long and fascinating research journey for me, exploring what beginning teachers feel is

important about the subject English. I have learnt a great deal along the way and I am immensely grateful for the initial support you provided for my research.

I hope you are well and enjoying whatever direction your career has taken you in. For myself, I have now more or less retired from MMU and work mainly as a gallery educator at Manchester Art Gallery – a new direction for me at the end of a long career!

With very best wishes,

Carole Page

Appendix F

Personal narrative writing

Alison (1)

ENGLISH – A PERSONAL LEARNING JOURNEY

I am interested in the influences that have shaped your understanding of the subject 'English'.
Below are some questions that you might wish to think about although you are welcome to write more broadly and in autobiographical style if you wish.

-   What did you enjoy about English when you were younger?
    I enjoyed using my imagination. I have always been devoted to reading from a young age and being able to explore texts at school was perfect for me. I soaked up every interpretation presented to me and I even found the language side fascinating.
-   What part did family, friends, school play in shaping your enjoyment and knowledge of English?
    My mother is a librarian and during the school holidays my elder sisters and I had to go to work with her. We had to read or we would have nothing to do. I struggled with my reading at primary school and I was put on to special books. I can remember being so upset as I wanted to be able to be as good at reading as my sisters. They would regularly discuss the plot of a good book with my mum and I wanted to be part of it. My mum and sisters spent hours with me reading books that were of more interest to me and by year 5 I was top of the class. I now spend hours reading with my 3 year old niece as my sister is too busy, she can now recognise common words and her speech is fluent, very advanced for her age.
-   What prompted you to study the subject at A level / degree level?
    I have a passion for reading and understanding texts. I have a varied interest in styles and where styles have emerged from and developed. My A-level was largely focused on dialect and accent, something which has fascinated me from being a child and it still does. My degree was English and History. I believe that you need to have a solid knowledge of both areas as they complement and enrich each other so well. The course was so well integrated with the history side explaining why the literature at the time was as it was, for example Darwin's discoveries prompted the dark Victorian poetry which questioned religion.
-   Why did you choose to teach this subject?
    I hope that I can pass on my passion for English. I had a very inspirational English teacher at school. (who I have had the pleasure to work with during my block A placement.) She made

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Alison (2)

English come alive for me. I want to be that teacher! I believe that a love of reading, no matter how basic or what sort of text allows you to be entertained stretches the imagination and gives a holiday for the mind. On a deeper level a solid understanding of English is the foundation for our society and how well we are integrated into it. Let's not forget that the majority of the ever popular film industry is based on original texts!

- What would be your personal definition of this subject?
  The teaching and learning of the linguistic and grammatical terms that shape our language and through this the discovery and understanding of how our culture has also been shaped through text.
- How do you think a pupil that you teach might define 'English'?
  Through experience most would say that it is pointless and boring. I hope that years down the line my students say that English opens new worlds for them.
- Do you think that 'English' has defined subject content?
  English has its own set rules, but despite this I think anything and everything goes with English. English is not just written words but also our speech and culture. I have taught a unit on brains versus beauty and how each are portrayed in society, this was very enriching and created much debate, some may argue that it is more suitable to PHSE, but I think that it suitably fitted with English.

Finally, what do you think matters in English
- to you- That my students have a clear understanding and develop a love for the subject.
- to your pupils- That they get the grade that they need and that lessons are interesting.
- to your school / department?- the students are inspired and this in turn will result in good grades.

Many thanks for taking the time to complete this. Please e-mail to me - c.page@mmu.ac.uk
Carole Page   May 2011

Beth (1)

ENGLISH – A PERSONAL LEARNING JOURNEY

I am interested in the influences that have shaped your understanding of the subject 'English'.
Below are some questions that you might wish to think about although you are welcome to write more broadly and in autobiographical style if you wish.

- What did you enjoy about English when you were younger?

I used to love writing stories, and I suppose I feel a bit guilty about the fact that I just don't write anymore, when this used to be the best things about English for me. I was always an advanced reader, and I remember feeling quite proud of the fact I was told off by the year 6 teacher at primary school for reading year 6 books when I was in year 4! As I got older it was literature that became more appealing.

- What part did family, friends, school play in shaping your enjoyment and knowledge of English?

My parents read a lot, and my Dad constantly bought books so there were loads around the house, I think that played a big part in my wanting to read so much. My English teachers were among my favourites at secondary school, and they encouraged me to get involved in drama and wanted me to do the subject at degree level.

- What prompted you to study the subject at A level / degree level?

It was one of my best subjects, I liked the teachers, and I wanted to study more Shakespeare. I also had ambitions to be a lawyer and knew this would be a good subject choice. When I left school I did an art foundation course, and carried on with art based subjects for the next few years. In all honesty this was half because I loved it and half because I was infuriated by my Dad constantly referring to the foundation course as my 'hobby year'. I think he still expected me to do law. I switched back because I spent more time reading than doing work for my course and I missed writing essays.

- Why did you choose to teach this subject?

Beth (2)

Because I love spending my time engaged in 'English' and when I knew I wanted to teach I knew I wanted to take on a core subject.

- What would be your personal definition of this subject?

At heart I think it is about communication. Anything that communicates something can be brought in, and that communication can engage with all models of English.

- How do you think a pupil that you teach might define 'English'?

Hopefully, as a space to express their opinions and be creative. Possibly a lesson where you get lots of sheets!

- Do you think that 'English' has defined subject content?

Absolutely not.

Finally, what do you think matters in English
- to you: that pupils enjoy the lessons and meet/surpass their personal targets
  to your pupils: too many variables here!
- to your school / department? Not sure yet.

Many thanks for taking the time to complete this. Please e-mail to me - c.page@mmu.ac.uk
Carole Page   May 2011

Chloe (1)

ENGLISH – A PERSONAL LEARNING JOURNEY

I am interested in the influences that have shaped your understanding of the subject 'English'.
Below are some questions that you might wish to think about although you are welcome to write more broadly and in autobiographical style if you wish.

- What did you enjoy about English when you were younger?

When I was younger I enjoyed the escape of reading: the endless possibilities and the richness of a book. I could get lost for hours and feel like I'd been to another world and back. I was fascinated with the author's craft and would often write poems and stories. I found writing a way of dealing with personal issues. I found solace in writing poems after a family bereavement and still, when I read over the poems today, realise that writing helps me to trace my journey. For me, English is a personal realm, one where I can interpret things in my own way and find meanings in the richness of the language all around us.

However, in some ways English has caused me much dejection and angst. Since junior school my handwriting and spelling has never been as strong as my reading. I am able to punctuate reasonably well, although during my PGCE it has come to my attention how little I was formally taught in my compulsory education and I find it interesting to think that I achieved a degree in English Literature without understanding how language works in a grammatical sense. I constantly worry about my handwriting and spelling and become embarrassed when people have to attempt to read my writing. My junior school teachers at year 6 and 3 told my mum my spelling should improve because I read a lot and had an extended vocabulary for my age. However, I think that because my reading was always so strong I could continually skim read and it was often vowel sounds that I could not distinguish in my spelling between 'a' and 'e's as I didn't have to look at the detail to be able to 'read' the words in a sentence.

- What part did family, friends, school play in shaping your enjoyment and knowledge of English?

My mum encouraged me to read and when I was younger would read my books to me, prompting and encouraging me as I began to learn and would

let me pick out a new book to add to my collection each month from WH Smith. My Dad, even after he left home, would ask about the books I was reading and would sometimes buy me books for Christmas. My family are not very literary, my mum dislikes reading (something I was never aware of until I became an adult), although when I think about it now, I never saw my mum read. My dad left school without any qualifications to join the army at 15, where much to his disappointment he was made to re-take his o levels and there found a love of the work of Tolkin. It was my dad who introduced me to The Hobbit and then Lord of the Rings and the Silmarillion, after which the genre of high fantasy has remained a firm favourite of mine. My Dad has always inspired my desire to further myself in my studies of English, reminding me in times of uncertainty of the concept of deferred gratification.

My year 6 junior school teacher had a large impact on my love of English, she was passionate about the subject, and to this day I recall reading Alan Garner's 'The Owl Service'. I remember how the whole class would love to listen to her read and to become immersed in the story.

- What prompted you to study the subject at A level / degree level?

As I reached college I spread my studies across English Literature, Biology, Media Studies and Sociology, however I soon dropped Biology but because I had a high GCSE points score was forced to take another subject and was placed into Film Studies. I was fascinated with the study of Angela Carter's The Magic Toyshop but was equally fascinated in the study of Sociology and after much thought settled on an English Literature with Cultural Studies degree. This combined my love of Literature and the study of Sociology, Criminology and History. I found my lecturers delightfully engaging and chose modules that placed texts within historical periods and varying schools of thoughts, including Marxism, Feminism, Postmodernism and Pyscho-analysis.

- Why did you choose to teach this subject?

Firstly and practically, I am educated and qualified to be able to teach this subject, but fundamentally and much more than that I honestly want to open this subject up to others. It is perhaps clichéd and a little pretentious to believe that everyone should experience a love of reading, but why not hope for the pinnacle? I grew up and associated with many people who struggled to read and write, who had parents who believed that there was little reward in education and some of who are now in

prison or on benefits. I understand that people make their own decisions and can be more than the sum of their parents but I firmly believe in the difference education makes in helping to raise the aspirations of young adults. I chose to teach English because for me language is power. Many young people feel they do not have a voice, that they cannot be heard in society. This they feel, renders them powerless, frustrates them and results in them attempting to gain power in deviant ways. The feeling of being unable to articulate yourself renders you silent, even if others give you the space to express yourself, if you do not feel you are equal you cannot, and perhaps will not, risk the humiliation of failing to 'perform' on a given stage. It saddens me that many creative pupils cannot get what is inside them out, what a waste of precious thoughts and emotions! Their frustration and lack of belief in their ability may be translated in poor behaviour or an 'I don't care' attitude. I chose to teach English because I want to give pupils voices, I want them to feel that what they have to say is valid and to show them that being able to justify and explain yourself, to take in and appreciate other's perspectives enables us to grow and evolve ourselves. This may be something that can be taught across the curriculum but without the ability to communicate confidentially in a written form, to take in and respond pupils' life chances are very limited. I briefly took part in an East Manchester Council project called the Home Tuition scheme which offered one-to-one tutoring with adults who had never learnt to read and write. It was amazing to realise how they had learnt to hide this and how it affected them but with the changing economy I cannot help but feel that the recently identified 'underclass' of young people who feel their future is to be found living off benefits will continue to grow.

- What would be your personal definition of this subject?

English encompasses reading, writing, speaking and listening. At a basic level English requires functional skills of comprehension and the ability to write in a grammatically correct form. However, more than this, English is about analytical skills and about looking to understand the reasons and tensions of the construction of texts. English asks pupils to put themselves in both the position of the reader and the writer in order to experience texts as an active meaning maker but also as the consumer of texts. In contemporary capitalist society pupils are asked to be savvy about the non-fiction texts they are presented with and English gives them the space to analyse and examine evidence and then to communicate with confidence in verbal and written forms. English also give the

opportunity for pupils to respond personally and to take part in discussions which may challenge their views, allowing them to consider the importance of being able to mediate and inform their thinking through interacting with alternative perspectives. English is an individual space but it should also be the space of collaboration.

- How do you think a pupil that you teach might define 'English'?

For pupils English might be about reading and comprehending, being asked to think about the 'whys' and 'hows' of a text. It is a mixture of contemporary and perhaps seemingly archaic texts. English is a central platform for learning across the curriculum and moving on in their educational carers. Sometimes the texts encountered may be detached from their own lives, poetry and Shakespeare are often questioned for their relevance to pupils but hopefully I can show pupils the connections and skills.

- Do you think that 'English' has defined subject content?

In some respects yes, depending on the school's long term plan there is usually a subscribed content that must be covered during each key stage year. Often it is the skill sets that are more defined than the specific text, although some texts must be covered such as a Shakespeare text during each year. Often it is the literary 'worth' of a text or the content it can offer that results in its inclusion.

Finally, what do you think matters in English
- to you:

Using a wide and varied range of texts.
Covering all skills and elements of reading/writing/speaking and listening.
Being able to offer texts that will engage and encourage enjoyment for pupils.
Demonstrating the relevance of English to pupils in their future.

- to your pupils:

Enjoyment and engagement.
Having the opportunity to become confident and fluent in reading and writing.

Chloe (5)

Connecting to texts that are interesting and have relevance to pupils.

- to your school / department?

Being able to show attainment and progression to meet targets. Offering a full and varied curriculum.

Many thanks for taking the time to complete this. Please e-mail to me - c.page@mmu.ac.uk
Carole Page   May 2011

Kathy (1)

Personal Learning Journey

It is difficult to pinpoint where my interest in English 'started'. Before going to school, I was already an avid reader and speaker. My language acquisition was delayed due to moving between Germany, Zimbabwe and Scotland at the critical age with the result that I spoke my own 'babble' language for longer than most children. My parents have taken pictures of me 'reading' stories to my teddies using my own language and imagination. Once I started to speak, I gained language rapidly and I was fascinated by words. I always wanted to be a part of the 'grown-ups' conversations and once I learnt to read, I consumed books with voracious hunger.

During my childhood, I experienced further continental moves between the UK and Zimbabwe and frequently found myself to be 'the new kid' at school. Thus fiction offered me a world of escapism and companionship during those years of regular solitude. I would often be found in the library at lunch times, and developed my own preferences and the beginnings of a kind of literary critical analysis. From the age of 12-13 onwards, I started to keep journals and derived a lot of pleasure from expressing myself in writing.

My actual experience of English as a taught subject was less enthralling than my private hobbies. In Africa, the subject was taught in a fairly traditional manner. My handwriting and spelling was considered to be very bad and the focus of corrective teaching. There were competitions for writing and speaking and listening (which they called Debate), but I did not really connect my personal passions with the ability to excel in these arenas where there was a lot of pressure from peers and teachers.

By contrast, when I came to England in Year 9, I found there was very little expectation placed upon me. Instead, I would complete my work and then assist my dyslexic friend, where I started to discover a real enjoyment of teaching and

applying my understanding of English to this new role. My teacher appeared very sarcastic and only enjoyed working with his brightest students. All the lessons were heavily based on reading and listening to teacher-talk; which my less academic friends in a mixed ability class found difficult to grasp. I was not inspired by the teaching I experienced to want to be an 'English teacher'…rather it was my sense of personal enjoyment that drove me to study English at A-level and degree level. I think that my current interest as a teacher in making English relevant and accessible to all my students has come out of the belief that there are different ways for them to experience pleasure in a story, or expressing their ideas in speech and writing just as I did.

Another key influence on my understanding of the importance of English is my sister, Kirsty, who has a neurological illness called Leukodystrophy. Due to her disabilities, many schools in Zimbabwe were unwilling to enrol her. Fortunately, we found a school with more inclusive values. My sister demonstrated a high ability in language with an extensive vocabulary, but she really struggled to grasp the concept of written language and many of her teachers believed she was incapable of doing so. However, one teacher refused to accept this, and spent her own free time meeting Kirsty daily and eventually they had a break-through and Kirsty learnt to read and write. I am so grateful for this intervention because of the impact it made on Kirsty's quality of life later on. I have vivid memories of introducing Kirsty to the pleasures of fiction using 'Anne of Green Gables', which really captured her imagination and turned her into an avid reader like myself. Also, Kirsty developed a passion for music and in her teens began to write her own songs, which became a powerful creative outlet for coping with the on-going struggles of a degenerative illness.

As a result of these experiences, I have a strong belief that nobody should be 'written off' because of their learning or communication difficulties. Furthermore, my understanding of English is centrally focused around 'empowerment for the individual' where they are enabled to express themselves and to be enriched as a result. Thus, I have a very broad understanding of 'English'- essentially it is about

communication: both giving students a 'voice' and learning to listen to the voices of others. Most students have some curiosity about the world and some desire to 'have their say'. I do not think that my preferred cultural heritage takes precedence over my students, or that English should be based upon a narrowly prescribed curriculum and agenda. Rather I see the content as subservient to the goal of creating spaces for dialogue, creativity and thought in a manner that will inspire and engage the students. I think that many students are discouraged from sharing their ideas and developing their potential due to a perception of 'failure' in their school experience, which leads to an avoidance of reading, writing and speaking in the context of the English lesson (even though they may be expressing themselves in other contexts such as instant messaging etc).

From my experiences this year on the PGCE, I have witnessed a lot of creative approaches to English, which suggest that many teachers have a similar attitude to the subject. However, English as a subject appears to suffer from a dualistic nature, which on the one hand, encourages teachers to be versatile and fluid in their concept of English to allow their students freedom to flourish, whilst on the other hand, imposing the pressures and constraints of a 'core subject' and the all-important target 'C' at GCSE.

Having taught several low-ability classes, it has been quite a task to show the students that this subject is also 'for them', rather than simply something they are required to do. In one of my classes, it was such a pleasure to witness the students' growing enthusiasm for reading when the approach was tailored to their needs, including extensive guided reading sessions in small groups inspired by the primary literacy strategy. Nonetheless these kinds of approaches are severely limited by the fact that the English department's energy and resources are focused upon exam preparation and intervention for those 'target C' students who are deemed worthy of personalised attention. I am now moving away from mainstream education towards special provision. I think that one of the reasons I am attracted to special schools is the greater degree of flexibility around what is taught and valuing student's progress. The focus is upon providing an enriching educational

experience for the moment, as well as preparing students for their futures in whatever form best meets their needs. This ethos is similar to the open-minded nature of English, which has always been difficult to pin down and define, but continues to provide something that I instinctively know to be valuable and worthwhile.

Richard (1)

ENGLISH – A PERSONAL LEARNING JOURNEY

I am interested in the influences that have shaped your understanding of the subject 'English'.

Below are some questions that you might wish to think about although you are welcome to write more broadly and in autobiographical style if you wish.

- What did you enjoy about English when you were younger?

It was the subject where I was able to express myself through speaking and listening and writing, plus my own choice of reading; in yr7/8 (1st and 2nd yr) we were required to bring in our own readers every week and we got credits for the number of pages we read.

I liked debating, and the structure of the class – specifically, a class debate enabled me to have a voice. Looking back, this was particularly important for me, because I did not really fit in to school life (11-16) as much as I would have liked. Without the particular focus of speaking and listening I would not have been able to develop my confidence in school.

- What part did family, friends, school play in shaping your enjoyment and knowledge of English?

I used to take a long 40 minute train journey everyday to school. I wasn't encouraged to sit with the boys my own age (by them), so I sat with boys who were in the year above me. They were bright, scholarly and camp, talking about books and ideas, 'bitching' about others. It helped me to realise that books and ideas were cool and fun.

In addition I had a natural aptitude for English, always getting good marks. I was praised by my teachers for my creativity.

My parents always encouraged me with my English at school.

- What prompted you to study the subject at A level / degree level?

I studied English Literature at A-Level because I was good at it and I always enjoyed it. Going into 6th form I decided to change schools, choosing a boys' school nearer home. This was so I could have a social life, which was becoming more important, and also a 'fresh start'; as a whole, I was not happy in my GCSE yr.

I had always had fun in my English lessons and expected this to continue at 6th form. For the most part this was the case, however, I had a shaky start with my teacher who took me for Hamlet. I was at a disadvantage to the other boys because they had all studied Macbeth for GCSE, whereas I had never encountered Shakespeare before. This resulted in my teacher for Hamlet openly questioning whether I should be studying English at A-Level. My marks improved and I was able to

contribute more as the course went on. I liked English, because we were encouraged to talk and think aloud.

I did not choose English first time round for my degree course. I started out aiming to become a Chartered Surveyor at the Royal College of Estate Management. I jacked this in after 6 weeks, when I realised that I wanted to write poetry and comedy revues and drink sherry in the afternoon. I switched to English and was able to do all of these things and it was seen as 'good'.

- Why did you choose to teach this subject?
I left university in 1994. I thought that those of my cohort that went on to do PGCEs lacked imagination. About four years ago I began to look around me and realised that those people who had become teachers and had stuck at it really enjoyed it. In addition, the teaching profession had never been out of the headlines – it looked like an exciting profession to be part of. Allied to this, English had always been my strong subject; I had a degree in it. The chance to 'professionalise' my excitement about my own subject; to be the enthusiastic amateur who actually gets paid had real appeal for me.
- What would be your personal definition of this subject?
This is a difficult question. I think that it is about being able to look at the world through a series of different lenses and then being able to describe what you see or what you think you can see. This personal journey is made possible by being able to play with and master different ideas and frameworks illustrated through texts, from drama to poetry to pictures to adverts to blogs and everything else in between.
- How do you think a pupil that you teach might define 'English'?
Many pupils would see it as being able to read and write properly; using the correct grammar and punctuation. Some pupils might define it as the subject where they get to talk and write about themselves. A more engaged and enthusiastic learner that likes to read might also see it as being about books and poetry.
- Do you think that 'English' has defined subject content?
As I get closer to the reality of teaching and the 'business' of education, I can see how it does have a defined subject content. At the most reductive level, English is defined as being what is on the syllabuses of the exam boards. What is tested for is what matters.

Going beyond this, I think that English consists of basic components, that pulled together can sit alongside each other, because they all contribute to the ability to communicate more effectively. For example, basic rules about syntax enable learners to not just become better written communicators, but also enable them to better understand the complexities of texts. The deeper they are able to dive on their own, the more they are able to develop independent creative thoughts.

Finally, what do you think matters in English
- to you

Richard (3)

I think that English is about creating happy and successful individuals, who are able to communicate effectively and challenge ideas with ideas. This means creating learning environments that are both noisy and reflective, where potential is recognised and encouraged. Importantly, this means being able to reference texts (all kinds of texts) that enable learners to level up and see the world differently.

- to your pupils

Being able to have a voice and use it to express themselves. This can be in speaking and listening or in their writing or choice of reading.

- to your school / department?

I have not even begun at my new school, but I have a view of what my department thinks matters in English. This is in part because the senior school leaders have discussed it with me. English is seen as being allied to culture and the expressive arts. The school has a sports profile, which has proved very successful for the school and its students. It is now seeking to broaden its appeal, to include 'culture' within its proposition. I think that this idea of 'culture' being an 'approach goal' is a way of raising achievement with literacy, by embedding the learning in things that are visible, aspirational, creative and fun. I also think that the school would like to see the English department co-deliver some 'big ticket items' like school productions, which are sometimes useful proxy indicators for success, when all schools are trying to compete against a backdrop of falling enrolment.

Many thanks for taking the time to complete this. Please e-mail to me - c.page@mmu.ac.uk
Carole Page   May 2011

Sarah (1)

Research request from Carole

Here is my response to your research questions:

During the GCSE years, I enjoyed reading texts as a class, e.g. 'An Inspector Calls' and later I enjoyed the in-depth analysis and close reading of texts.

My Father was an English teacher and so passed on an appreciation for the subject. My close friends at school mostly enjoyed the subject too and a couple went on to study this at University. I continued to study the subject at A Level myself, as I was inspired by both my Father's interest in the subject and my GCSE teacher's passion for the subject. I also thought it was a 'staple' A Level which developed useful communication skills.

It was my interest in English and my desire to continue reading and learning about the subject that led me into teaching.

I would define English as a mixture of key skills as well as an investigation into the power of language and how it can be used as a tool, alongside an exploration of inspirational cultural and heritage texts.

I think that a pupil would define English as mainly reading and writing skills, depending on their interest in the subject. The wider-read pupils might see the opportunities English presents to read and analyse a range of texts.

I don't think that English has a defined subject content. The variety of texts used in English lessons is expanding and English skills can be applied to a wide variety of tasks.

In the classroom, it is important, in my point of view, that all pupils are engaged and interested in the subject. Therefore, it is important that the texts used are

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appropriate for the age range, in order to instil their interest. Similarly, from the pupils point of view, it is essential that all pupils can get involved in the lesson and that the work is pitched at the correct level for all pupils. The English Department are mainly concerned with all pupils achieving the target grades and levels.

I would be willing to continue this discussion, so long as I manage to fit it into the NQT year. Thanks again for all the help and support.

Appendix G

English PGCE Pre-course task September 2012: What do you believe are the characteristics of effective teaching and learning?

(N.B.This brief, which was sent out in the form of a letter to prospective PGCE trainee teachers, has been anonymised to remove reference to my HE institution and individual members of staff).

Student and Academic Services

Faculty and Campus Student and Academic Services

Summer 2012

Dear Prospective Trainee Teacher

SECONDARY PGCE EDUCATION COURSES PRE-COURSE TASK

Please find below a brief pre-course writing task "Effective teaching & learning". Complete the task ready for submission on the first day of term when you will meet your tutor. After that, you will receive guidance from your tutor about developing the task further.

PRE-COURSE TASK

Learners are offered a wide range of experiences in schools and colleges. Many different factors contribute to this variety, such as the type of institution, the curriculum offered, peer influence, teaching approaches. These and other influences will have an impact on pupils' learning. You will encounter many different contexts and ideas during your ITT programme. We would like you to consider some of these issues before you join your course:

What do you believe are the characteristics of effective teaching and learning? You should reflect upon the following areas and write a personal account based on your learning and teaching experiences to date and the questions below (approx. 500 words):

- A reflection on learning: what type of learning do you enjoy / feel successful in? What ways of learning have you found to be easier / more difficult?

- What you believe is the value of your subject in a young person's education.

- What are the implications of the above for effective teaching and successful schools?

You will be invited to reflect upon and review this piece of writing in the later stages of the induction programme.

You will not necessarily be expected to base this on any pre-course reading, but if you have made use of any literature please add a bibliography. You should use the Harvard system of referencing: reference in text followed by (Author, Date), then alphabetical listing of sources used in a bibliography.

Your subject tutors may, in addition to this generic activity, request that you undertake some preparation specific to the subject. Please ensure that both pieces of work are brought to the IoE for the first week of your programme.

Appendix H   Mid-Point Questionnaire

Name: March 21st 2013

Before you began the PGCE, what aspects of teaching English appealed to you?

How has your experience of teaching English either confirmed or challenged your expectation of what it would be like to be an English teacher?

What have you enjoyed about teaching English? What has been less enjoyable?

In what ways do you continue to develop your subject knowledge?

In what ways do you maintain your own interest in the subject English?

What do you think your pupils enjoy most about the subject English?

Your responses to these questions will form part of my PhD research into subject identity and the teaching of English. Your identity will remain anonymous at all times and your work on the PGCE will not be affected in any way by your decision to take part in this research.

I would also like to ask your permission to draw on the following sources for my research:

- Your personal statement on your GTTR application form
- Your Pre-Course task – Effective Teaching and Learning
- Your final Subject Development Task: The Kind of Teacher I am Becoming

If you do NOT wish to give me permission to draw on these sources and your responses to these questions, please put a cross in the box.

Many thanks for your help.

Carole

Note: This was an early attempt to gather data and, at the end of the questionnaire, I inserted a request to use three other pieces of data: the personal statement on the GTTR PGCE application form, the PGCE Pre-course Task and the PGCE Subject Development Task. A box was provided to tick if participants were not happy with this data being used. However, my ongoing reading into ethical considerations when collecting data meant that I did not make use of this approach:

- **I did not collect or draw on personal statements on the PGCE GTTR application form for this thesis**
- **I requested copies of the PGCE Pre-course Task and the PGCE Subject Development Task, following a group discussion then via email, ensuring ethical considerations outlined in Section 4.2.3 of this thesis were followed.**

Appendix I

PGCE Course Writing: SUBJECT DEVELOPMENT TASK: SUBJECT BELIEFS /
PREPARATION FOR INTERVIEW AND REVIEW 6

PURPOSE: To reflect on developments during the course

TRAINEE TEACHER ACTION:

At your final review with your personal tutor, you will come prepared to sustain a discussion about your subject beliefs. You will be briefed about this in a University session at the end of Block B. You will also be asked to hand in one side of A4 entitled: "The kind of teacher I am becoming" – in effect, your notes for the discussion. We recommend you use

- bullet points;
- highlighted key words/phrases;
- headings and sub-headings.

It may help to remember that during Block B a tutor or a mentor will often ask herself/himself these questions while observing a lesson:

- What pedagogic principles inform what I am seeing in this classroom?
- What beliefs and understandings about English as a subject am I seeing in action?
- What views of pupils as learners are being implemented in this lesson?
- Does this trainee teacher reveal any aspects of teaching that make the lesson distinctive and memorable?
- How does this trainee teacher show her understanding of inclusion issues in this lesson?
- What is there in the School Experience File that adds to and supports what I am seeing?

You will see that there are three main emphases in the above:

- Pedagogy (teaching and learning; monitoring and assessment; classroom management);

- Subject Knowledge;

- Professional Values.

This reflection on your developments throughout the course will also inform your preparation for interview and your writing of the Career Entry Development Profile.

Appendix J

PGCE English/English with SEN Subject Development Task June 2013: The kind of English Teacher I am Becoming

Initial Analysis

Group size: 16   (14 females and 2 males)

Sample size: 12   (9 females and 2 males)

This is a PGCE end of course requirement. It is a written subject development task which asks for personal writing, with prompts and guidance provided. The writing is not assessed but forms the basis of the tutor/student teacher discussion during the final course review. As such, this is generally a structured piece of writing which is connected to achievement in the Teachers' Standards (2011d) and incorporates reflection on further professional development.   Within this framework, however, there is the opportunity for student teachers to present their writing as they wish and adopt either a more personal and individual tone, or a more structured and formal approach.

First analysis

Not surprisingly, given the focused prompts in the brief, student teachers' writing gave significant emphasis to pedagogy. However, as the task asks student teachers specifically to explore their beliefs and pedagogic principles it is interesting to note which aspects were most commonly mentioned:

- 7 respondents comment on developing inclusive pedagogy
- 6 respondents comment on developing independent learning strategies and pupil centred learning
- 3 respondents mention developing strategies to engage pupils in the classroom and make learning relevant to their lives

These comments suggest a view of teaching which puts pupils and their learning at the heart of their pedagogic principles. It also suggests a view of teaching and learning where understanding the pupils and their needs is paramount.

- 4 respondents mentioned the importance of developing good teacher-pupil relationships
- 2 respondents commented that they felt they were encouraging teachers who made use of praise
- 2 respondents discussed how their knowledge of the pastoral dimension of the teacher's role had grown, in one case through experience of a Pupil Referral Unit experience.
- 1 respondent commented that their understanding of SEN had developed
- 1 respondent commented on seeing their role as one of nurturing and caring

Alongside this, the student teachers recognised the ways in which their understanding of assessment had developed:

- 4 respondents commented on their developing knowledge of assessment for learning strategies

The student teachers also discussed ways in which their own subject knowledge had continued to develop:

- 3 respondents mentioned being part of a team and the importance of this for their own further development
- 2 respondents discussed learning collaboratively and 1 commented on becoming the kind of teacher who listens to pupils and learns from them. Another student teacher talked about how their confidence in exploring ideas together with the pupils had grown
- 3 respondents discussed their developing understanding of drama and media
- 2 respondents discussed their willingness to take risks in the classroom
- 1 respondent talked about how their passion for English had grown
- 1 respondent saw their subject knowledge developing through academic research and wider personal experiences outside the classroom

These comments provide a view of learning that is collaborative and emerging proactively from the process of teaching. There is a strong sense of learning alongside and from the pupils and also the role of the English department in supporting this learning.

Areas that were identified as ongoing and developing:

- Subject knowledge development
- Behaviour management
- Voice and presence

The role of reflection:

- 4 respondents identified themselves as reflective practitioners

Appendix K

Questionnaire 2011: Approaches to reading texts

Approaches to Reading Texts

Dear All,

I am looking at arts-based and personal response approaches to reading texts as part of my research and I would be really interested in hearing some of your thoughts about your own experiences of reading and studying texts at school and university and your thoughts about the 'Reading Trail' approach we are developing on the course.

If you could take some time to consider the following questions and jot down a few ideas, I would be very grateful. You do not have to take part in this research and you can withdraw any contributions made, at any point if you wish. This research is completely separate to the PGCE and your contribution or otherwise will not affect your progress on the PGCE in any way.

Carole

Name (optional):

1. **Reading for pleasure**

   Do you enjoy reading?

   If so, what makes the experience pleasurable?

   How far is your reading experience 'confined' to the text alone? What kind of connexions do you make when reading a text E.g. Would you watch the film of the book – before or after reading; research aspects of the story on the internet; read other texts mentioned in the story; listen to music, etc? If possible, please give examples.

Does your reading for pleasure ever prompt writing for pleasure?

2. **Reading when you were at school**

What texts do you remember studying at school?

Why were these texts memorable?

Did this study provide any opportunities for personal responses to the texts? E.g. drama; artwork; personal writing or creative writing; wider reading inspired by the text? Please give examples if you can.

How would you describe your reading experiences when you were at school?

3. **Reading at degree level**

How would you describe the approach to reading texts at degree level?

4. **The Reading Trail**

Which book did you choose for your Reading Trail?

Why did you choose this book?

Where has the trail taken you so far?

What are your early thoughts about this multi-layered, intertextual and personal response to reading?

Do you feel that you have gained any insights into the text from this approach, at this stage?

What might be the benefits to pupils from such an approach to reading texts?

Appendix L

Challenge and invigoration in out-of-school contexts

Evaluation of Subject Knowledge Day: Bridges into Writing

City Art Gallery   Thursday 23 January 2014

1. Which sessions did you find particularly useful and enjoyable? Why was this?

2. Are there any ways in which the day could have been improved?

3. What do you consider to be the benefits of learning in out of school contexts?

4. What might support or prevent you from using galleries and museums to develop skills in English?

5. How might you use your learning from today in Placement B? Your future practice?

English Team

May 2014

Appendix M

Participant Information Sheet: In-depth interviews February 2016

Participant Information Sheet

 Carole Page – Senior Lecturer in Education, MMU

Study Title

PhD Research question:

What are the factors that shape and construct the professional identity of PGCE student teachers of secondary English? How do these factors contribute to their understanding of their subject and their subject beliefs? What are the implications for the development of their subject knowledge for teaching?

I would like to invite you to take part in my PhD research study. Before you decide, you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part

What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of the study is to explore the ways in which our personal histories shape our subject beliefs and our professional identities. I am interested in your beliefs about what is important in English and the sorts of experiences that may have motivated you to become an English teacher. I am keen to talk to you about these experiences and also your early experiences of teaching English on the PGCE course, as well as your hopes for your future English teaching.

Why have I been invited?

I am asking Secondary PGCE English student teachers on both the Core and School Direct routes if they would like to take part in this study.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide. Your tutor will go through this information sheet and then give a copy to you. If you would like to take part then it would be really helpful if you could contact me by Friday 29th January. We will then ask you to sign a consent form to show that you agreed to take part. You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

I will ask you to take part in one, face to face, 1:1 interview. This should last between 45 - 60 minutes and will be recorded on audio equipment only. The interview will take place in a location that is convenient to you, either in your school or in the university, if you would prefer.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

You would be contributing to the development of research evidence in an important area, which may help to shape future training and professional development for English teachers. You may also find the process of taking part in a research interview to be a valuable experience as you approach your own research assignment, the Curriculum Development Assignment.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, then please contact me and I will do my best to answer your questions (Carole Page xxxxxx c.page@xxxxx) If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally you can do this through the University complaints procedure.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Yes, data will be audio-recorded and any quotes I use from it in writing up the research will be completely anonymised. Electronic data will be stored on a password protected computer known only by researcher. Once the interviews have been transcribed, the sound files will be deleted. No-one will be identified in any way, and schools will not be mentioned by name.

What will happen if I don't carry on with the study?

If you withdraw from the study I will not use the data you have supplied when writing up my thesis.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results will be written up as part of my PhD thesis. The data emerging from this thesis may also be written up in articles for academic journals. You will not be identified.

Who is organising or sponsoring the research?

MMU: carrying out research is part of a university lecturer's role.

Next steps:

If you would like to take part in this study it would be most helpful if you could contact Carole Page by Friday 29th January to arrange a convenient time and place for the interview to take place.

Many thanks for taking the time to read this information. Your participation in the study would be greatly valued.

Further information and contact details:

Carole Page

Appendix N

Informed Consent Form : In-depth interviews February 2016

Carole Page PhD Thesis: Research Interview

Research Question:

What are the factors that shape and construct the professional identity of PGCE student teachers of secondary English? How do these factors contribute to their understanding of their subject and their subject beliefs? What are the implications for the development of their subject knowledge for teaching?

CONSENT FORM

 If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below

Please Initial Box

☐   I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above project and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.

☐   I understand that my participation in the enquiry is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without any personal detriment

☐   I understand that interviews may be audio-recorded

☐   I agree to the use of anonymous quotes

I agree to take part in the above project :

 Name of participant (print) . . . .

.

Signed . . . . Date: . . . .

.

Name of person taking consent: Carole Page . . . .

Signed . . . . Date: . . . .

.

Appendix O

Transcriptions of five in-depth interviews

Joseph Interview transcript

Researcher: OK so the purpose of the research is that I am interested in exploring personal histories of English, um, what motivates you to teach English and also how you see your development as an English teacher. So I suppose the first starting point is to go back into that history a bit and can you tell me any of your early memories about English broadly as a child and what stands out for you.

J: My first memory I think is, I think I always had a book with me always um so that was kind of like a retreat because I'm one of 4, a big family so, a very noisy family so I was the quiet one, stoic, literature-focused. Um one of the first memories that stands out even now, I think I was in y3 and er I just remember getting a copy of Harry Potter 2 and either you love it or you hate it, you know there are a lot of controversies around Harry Potter but I read it and was hooked thereafter. Um yeah

R: I have two children who were exactly the same and started with book 2 and had to go back to book 1 so yeah, um lots of books there. And what about your memories of English at school. You mentioned when you were in y3 you discovered Harry Potter but what about your memories of English when you were at school?

J: I remember secondary school better, um I had a horrible teacher in, I think Y7 or 8, and um a very driven, um very, quite a bullish man really. He made us recount, um a Midsummer Nights Dream, er, the raging rocks, even now I can remember it, not- it's a kind of a negative thing but I can still remember it, recall it because it was absolutely hounded into us, so it was very old teacher but then the other end of that scale, um I had a fantastic teacher called Vanessa who still teaches at the school now and um, I worked with her not long ago and she sort of shared her love of literature and enjoyment that way, and so different ends of the spectrum.

R: So those, in terms of those memories who would you say, who or what would you say have been particularly influential in that personal view of English and it might be moving ahead to university did you do English, an English degree?

J: No I did a law degree – I did law with English

R: Ah, right

J: and then I did an MA in English but the English modules were, my bit of fun, you know I did them for enjoyment whereas law was my focus and where I wanted to work. Um, but my grandad was a huge influence, I remember, um, because he had lovely leather bound

volumes and he would sit there with them and I've got them all now because he passed away but you know having spent a lot of time with my grandparents they, you know, they would always be reading and they kind of passed it on, sort of learned behaviour.

R: Yes, and like you say those beautiful bound books. I have a set of Dickens from my grandmother as well and they are treasured. So you didn't choose um, choose, you didn't choose to do English straight away you focused on law, um, so what shifted do you think along the way?

J: I don't know and even now I'm like, oh you know I'll go back to law one day you know, I'll er, you know, I'd like to lecture I think, that's where I want to be um but I don't, I really don't know. As part of the course we did, um, why we wanted to teach English, sort of thing and then the earliest memory I have is, er, we went to a car boot sale or something like that and I got a big chalk board and I was about 8 years old and my little sister was maybe 4 and I was teaching her things on the chalk board and it was just, one of those obscure memories that you know I don't know when it was, I don't know where it was but I remember doing it, yeah and enjoyment from that.

R: so you applied for the PGCE after doing your MA then.

J: I did my MA and then I began applying for a PGCE , then I went into a school where I used to work, used to attend and spoke to the professional mentor there who was an old teacher and she advised me to hold for a year and get some experiences as a CSA support so that I made sure it was what I wanted to do and then yes, I started the course.

R: So can I ask you then, when you, when you started the PGCE course, and it wasn't that long ago really and it goes so quickly doesn't it, um, but what were your personal hopes when you started the PGCE English course, what did you feel was important about the subject, and what were your hopes as you started the course?

J: I, I enjoy English, it sounds really silly but, um, I've worked as an estate agent, I've done all sorts of stuff and it just wasn't fun. So then, I, you know, going back to your roots, I got my masters funded so then it was kind of like and that was so really enjoyable you know, it had its difficulties but it was enjoyable and then it was like what can I do to carry on enjoying this for longer and I had my doubts whether I was doing it for the right reasons but then during my time supporting, um, being able, you know to teach children to read you know just things like that, you know you can convey your passion and they're like, Oh sir I hate reading blah blah, blah, well no you just not found the right book and then I'd use my knowledge to find them a book and then they'd read it hopefully enjoy it.

R: I was just interested in what you said, you wondered if you were doing it for the right reasons. What did you mean there?

J: While I was doing my masters I had a lot of friends who were doing their PGCEs and a lot of them were doing it just because they weren't ready to leave university.

R: Right, yeah,

J: And there's a lot of people, in my opinion, on the course at the minute - not a lot, a few, that I don't think are ready to let go.

R: Right, let go of what?

J: I suppose their youth and that point in that university sort of lifestyle whereby they can go to the pub and the sort of lads mentality, um, they either want to return to that because of the glory days or they're not ready to let go. But I think that having left uni and then worked professionally and then come back and seen it from the other side, because I've tried to approach it professionally from the beginning and made sure my reasons were right because I think if you're if you're doing it for the wrong reasons you're going to be the wrong teacher in the classroom.

R: and you're seeing the whole teacher role in there. And you were talking a little bit about what you'd enjoyed, you know prior to starting the PGCE, um, what had really stood out for you in terms of what you enjoyed in that year you took out and worked in classrooms?

J: Erm. I'd been doing support, and I was doing a lot more special needs, special educational needs and additional needs, so, you got to spend a lot more time with students, you know, children, and, they're nicer than adults (laughs). You know, if they don't like it they'll say something. And if they don't get it, nine times out of ten you can figure it out, rather than them having well-rehearsed and well-practised, you know, lies essentially, um, there's a genuineness there that I like and they just come out with the strangest and most insightful things that you'll ever hear, so and um, just that moment when if you've read a line that's resonated with you and then being able to pass on its you know, it sorts of reminds me, this is going to sound a bit rose-tinted but it seems sort of more Socratic and Roman-Greek in the sense that knowledge will be passed in that sort of verbal way rather than written so that it's more of an enjoyable thing.

R: Ah, right

J: So, you know, Socrates surrounded by all his apprentices and then conveying that knowledge and then questioning back and forth.

R: And it's that, that questioning – is it that what comes back, as well because you were talking about you know,those wonderful questions that …

J: I think being in that environment means that you continue to learn, which is something I want to do because I want to carry on and do my PhD and things. But the way you convey things changes your own understanding of them I think, so at the minute I've been delivering, we're doing Romeo and Juliet, Much Ado About Nothing and Macbeth, so a lot of Shakespeare, but through reading it now I'll pick up on things I've missed before – different interpretations, which is really enjoyable.

R: And, I suppose, at university you often read quite quickly because you are covering a lot of ground, don't you. So, thinking about where you are now, I suppose half way through the PGCE what would you identify as, I suppose we could say the dominant discourses or key issues, if you like, in English teaching, as you see them at the moment, um, what would you say?

J: I read something in TES, I think it was this week or last week that said one school in particular is doing a process where the trainees didn't plan lessons. The lessons were planned by the lead in the department because then they are the masters of planning because, you know, they're at that level now, so then the focus for their first few months was to develop their subject knowledge because, you know, the argument of that headteacher was that how can they teach if they're not the masters in that subject? Which I thought was interesting. So I think that is a predominant issue but it sort of depends on, um, on your own drive and your own focus because I think you can be really good at planning but then you might not be able to transfer those skills to … from the page into the classroom, um, so if you're focusing all your time on that, there's that and I think you can miss maybe the aspect of literature that you're covering um and then you've maybe not had the time to re-read it and then you can be a bit maybe nowty or your enjoyment isn't coming into the classroom, so ..

R: … because you're … you're not aware of all the different things, you're saying that you could bring in, is this it, yeah?

J: Yeah, um and your too focused on what could be, rather than what's actually happening so I think that some people could be potentially not be able to move on from their lesson plan and react to things in the classroom. Does that make sense?

R: Yes … no, so did you think that initiative you were describing, was that quite a … would you quit like that? Does that sound like quite a positive thing?

J: I think it sounds interesting. I think planning is incredibly important, but if you're planning, you know, you can plan a siege but it doesn't mean it's going to work out that way [laughs]. It's like playing chess, you can plan your attack, you can use your strategy,

you can move your piece here or you can move your piece there but if they move the other way or they don't react in a way that you predict then, you know, your plan goes out of the window and you can't then, you need to focus on what's happening there and if you've got subject knowledge to then back up what they're saying whether you need to add to their knowledge or develop it, so stretch them or support them, I think if you can do that to a higher degree then I think the planning might become less important.

R: So, that takes us on to another point really, um, n that how do you continue to develop your subject knowledge um and think about that perhaps broadly because I suppose subject knowledge, as you said, you know is very wide um … so how do you continue to develop? What, what sorts of things do you do?

J: Ah … I think for English its particularly difficult because you could translate something from French into English and then you could still study it in an English classroom so in that respect I don't think there's any end, you know sort of infinite the amount you could know and that you have to know um, so I think subject knowledge is important to stay focused on current affairs particularly if you're doing things like, um, writing to persuade writing to argue things like that you can use an exract from a newspaper um, and then I think you could also go further back, so, ah … I think the important thing is to follow your own interests, though, because I mean my subject knowledge isn't great in media but then I'm going to be delivering some media lessons so, to A level as well, er, to AS level as well so I'm going to develop my subject knowledge that way.

R: And how will you do that? How will you go about that?

J: I think I'll … firstly, my first port of call is going to be their syllabus so, um, what they need to learn and then I'll probably retroactively apply things that I know to that so, um, I'm quite interested in foreign films, particularly like French films so um but then they can be categorised and used in media lessons for particular modules so then I've already got that subject knowledge I just need to hone my skills and bridge the gap so work out how to apply it. If that makes sense?

R: it does, yes that's a lovely way of putting it, you know as you say you've got the knowledge, it's how you actually apply it in the classroom. So are there any areas you think in terms of developing subject knowledge are more difficult than others in English? Or any that don't appeal to you as much, maybe not so much difficult but maybe don't appeal to you as much?

J: Absolutely, I mean part of my Masters was in, was focused on Shakespeare but I personally can't stand any of the, his like, war ones, like Richard, the Henrys, I just can't

stand them, I don't know why, I just can't get into them, it's not my thing, but then if I go to a school where, 'Oh we're doing Richard the Third this week this term you know, brush up on it, OK [laughs] you know, nothing to be done about it, so but then I can apply my knowledge of other areas to that and then my own experiences and my own expertise, I suppose, will dissect the play.

R: So where would you place your expertise, then, thinking about you know, yourself, and er, where does that feel comfortable?

J: Um … well on paper I would probably say that it is, um, legal texts, you know Dickens, Donne, um, Shakespeare because they're the ones I did my Masters in, um, but then, my enjoyment, which therefore means my expertise, are in Dickensian, Victorian, [whispers] not modern [laughs] um and then early modern, I suppose, Shakespeare, Donne.

R: Right, so what about language and …

J: Dreadful at language [laughs]

R: … the grammar aspect?

J: Um, grammar we've been having lectures from xxxx which have been fantastic but you know, even in those I was like, I don't know, I don't think I can do this but then you know I doubt my own subject knowledge … but I can do it, you know I can write sentences and you know the English, the grammar will be correct, I might not be able to parse it and identify the different things but I can do it.

R: Yeah, so in terms of tackling that kind of aspect of your subject knowledge how will, how do you feel, you know you mentioned university lectures, any other things that will help you in terms of developing those wider aspects, I suppose the aspects where you feel less comfortable or that speak to you less in terms of enjoyment?

J: Um, grammar, definitely, I mean apart from Huw, I don't know many people that are as passionate as him about grammar, um language, I didn't do at A level so then I've never, I'd never done language, you know I've done aspects of it, but …

R: So what will you do, do you think, in terms of developing, what kind of resources will you draw on, what kinds of things are out there?

J: Schemes of work at the schools, there's plenty of books written on it, I had a few of them, um, one of them was in drama, delivering GCSE drama or something like that, because again, I've not got a huge amount of skills in teaching drama but I've been in plays and things like that so I've acted but it's then teaching acting, again, bridging that gap. Ah … there's pedagogical stuff, um and I suppose through colleagues as well, you know if you draw on their knowledge and resources, um I did some stuff, I created a lot of resources

when I was working as a support because that was part of the role, so through teaching um, spelling, punctuation and grammar intervention, my own skills were sharpened and developed , which was good.

R: Yes that's right, so, you know, in terms of um, you mentioned planning you think about, what the issues are, the issues, any other issues that you are seeing in English teaching at the moment that you feel that's emerging for you personally?

J: Just in English

R: Just in English teaching.

J: Er, there's, I wouldn't say it's a problem but the new national curriculum is er, something to overcome I think, but for a trainee, I think, less so, because we are not as familiar with the old one.   So for us it couldn't have come at a better time because we're trained to deliver this new curriculum.   You know, it might change in a few years with the new government but, you know, then we'll be at the same level as everyone else, um …

R: It's a good way of looking at it.

J: The … I think IT in the classroom is a big buzzword and it can be a benefit or a hindrance depending on your point of view and how well you can access it. Um …

R: So how do you feel about it?

J: Conflicted. The usefulness of IT is phenomenal and I was thinking of using it for parts of my CDA but then I know that, is it going out of fashion, are we returning to a more traditional way of teaching, particularly English? But then would I be limiting myself and my students by not communicating with them and imparting information in the manner to which they're used now.   For instance the average attention span these days in terms of online stuff can be about 3 – 7 minutes I think because they're so used to watching short clips on Youtube and things like that – the how to videos. The standard upload for Youtube is about 3 minutes 50 but then anything beyond that, you know. So they're used to watching blogs and everything else, so how, you know, I think there's been a digitalisation of English in particular, audio books, um, more adaptations. For instance a lot of teachers seem to rely on showing a particular version of a film, for example they might show Romeo and Juliet with Leonardo di Caprio. I don't think I like it because it's not inspired and I think you can miss out a lot of stuff and I think you limit kids. You say, ok we're going to watch the video today because it will help you. I think you're just denying them the opportunity to develop their own characterisation, you know.

R: That's an interesting argument isn't it and you hear both sides of it that debate

J: But at the same time, it's got guns in it, there's blood, you know, how else are you going to motivate a group of boys on a Monday morning? [Laughs].

R: That was interesting that use of the word, you know, your use of the word inspired, um what were you thinking of then?

J: I'm teaching them on Tuesday and we've got like a weird balcony walkway um, so I've asked one of the drama trainees if she's free if she will be on top of the balcony and then I'm going to see if she can deliver the balcony scene down to them and I'm going to take them out of the classroom and put them there and rather than … Joe did a lecture for us on modelling, showing, telling, er seeing and being, I think it was, um and it's something I reflected on in a REAL but I think if they can be in that moment then connect the language to their own school and a teacher and things like that it will then bridge a gap and maybe take it away from overly relying on video.

R: Yes and I like that, you know you're thinking about bridging that gap, how you bridge that gap – I love that idea.

J: [Laughs] Just hope it works

R: Do you have the opportunity then, I mean it's nice to be talking about English, and does that feel like a luxury or do you have the opportunity to talk about the things that matter to you in English with your peers or with colleagues or in wider networks?

J: I don't think, as a trainee, I don't think you do because so much of our time is spent on developing pedagogy, and things like that you know, the majority of my reading for the minute you know I'm not reading anything for pleasure, which is a travesty, really [Laughs] but there are other things that are more important, I suppose on paper but then … I don't know.   I think, Joe mentioned the other day that he believed when he got into teaching that it would be a place of more intellectual prowess and more higher order thinking, I suppose you'd call it, so you'd walk into the English office and they're debating Keats or something like that, but no, they're just talking about X, Y and Z pupil and what they've done wrong today and that sort of yeah, negativity which is, unfortunately, toxic.

R: Yeah? So I suppose the question is, you mentioned you're not reading, you've not got time to read, so what keeps you loving English, would you say?

J: Reading in the class, that … that's good. Block A, just linking back to the other question, Block A, I got the comment that the board was becoming a divide between me and the pupils so I took it away and after that we able to communicate more and then I could convey more important stuff so, we were doing … er … not Much Ado … Of Mice and Men and I was teaching them about Jim Crow so I, um, there is a Billie Holliday, 'Strange Fruit',

um, so I showed them the video and then I also found them the original poem by the author um, and we watched that and we dissected that so that was fantastic because then I could get their interpretation and show them something that they'd not seen before, you know none of them had heard the song, which was an absolute travesty [laughs] but you know in in the same way that I mentioned to one of the teachers before that it would be beneficial for them to see, um 'What happened Miss Simone' for a media lesson because it is a documentary and then it will also teach them something and I think that's good about the new curriculum because if you can take yourself out of it and say OK these are the constraints that I have to fit into but then I've got all this wide subject knowledge, I just need to frame it in such a way that it does fit into that and there is educational wealth and benefit from it.

R: That's a really positive way of seeing it. So I suppose, thinking about all the things we've talked about, um, in what ways, if at all, do you think your personal history of English has influenced your ideas about the kind of English teacher you want to be? Think about everything that's gone before and your hopes for the kind of teacher you want to be?

J: Having experienced bad teaching and good teaching and being able to reflect on that, I can say OK, I'm not going to do that, or you know, that's the teacher I want to be but … the detriment is that the teacher you want to be and the teacher you are can be different things, so everyone wants to be, um, you want to be able to inspire every pupil and make excellent progress and um, in more of a clichéd idea, um, Robin Williams in 'Dead Poets Society', My Captain, my Captain, idea, they're going to be so inspired they're going to cast off this, um, dead book, you know, that they're just reading and analysing that way, um and then they will ignore the author and then focus on what it means to them and that way. That being said, if you've got a class of Y10 pupils and er, you know, A levels are looming and you've got levels and everything else to consider and someone's breathing down your neck, Ok, you might show them the film a few times. We watched it, I watched the same film that they're watching right now, which is really depressing [laughs] and, I remember at the time thinking oh yeah this is great we get to watch a film today but then now as a teacher I'm like, what are they getting out of this? Because you can watch a film but, you know, you don't necessarily see it, you don't identify the language but if you can read it and perform it, which is what I'd want them to do, you know it can stay with them forever.

R: So just to finish up, I suppose, thinking ahead to next year and your first job, what are your hopes then for that first year as an English teacher? What are your hopes for teaching English in that first year?

J: To survive it! [Laughs] Um, and just to not have my passion crushed because this is the third school I've worked in, this is the best. The other two, one of them was outstanding, one of them was good but this is the best. The outstanding one … oh … did it for the wrong reasons and the students were driven, but within an inch of their life. One student committed suicide because of the pressures that were on him and it's, you can't really get over that and I don't know how you can impose such strict rules and regulations on someone that they have to attend revision every single night for different subjects. If they don't like … If you have presented a book in a certain way that they do not like then, they're not going to want to do it. You know if you're just sitting them down in front of a film then, OK then why do we have to do this? We've watched the film. So there's that. Um … Next year, I'd like to make more of a connection to students. I'd like to just have one off moments when you can say OK, this is what I'm reading, have you read it as well? Well, OK what's going on there, you know. What do you think, have you read this bit yet? Just like a book club for the year, that would be great. But … um … Yeah, develop my own knowledge, reflect on things, yeah, just find more stuff to read and keep on learning, I suppose.

R: You mentioned wanting to do a PhD. Have you thought about … I know it's a while off yet but have you thought about what area?

J: Well I initially wanted to do, um, we have foster children at home so I was um, er, I suppose, a young carer, you'd call it?   Um, and then now I've taken over responsibility for a lot of it so that's interesting because then … sorry, I initially wanted to do something to do with the bi-lateral influence of law in literature so how law has influenced literature and how literature can influence law in terms of reformation. Um, my focus for my masters was the court in Chancery in Bleak House and then I did, um …

R: A favourite book

J: [Laughs] I absolutely hate it and love it at the same time which is just so literature, I suppose to make it a verb. But, so I wanted to do that but now I'm how could I bring in children to that because that's what we're all here for and I was wondering … I want to see if … would teaching and giving children an awareness of law help them identify and access certain parts of literature.   So at the minute, looking at Shakespeare for instance they all know murder's wrong and OK you've killed Tybalt, great, but then he's not real, but

then what is the real world connotation of that. Yeah, he's killed someone and he gets banished whereas in those times you'd have maybe a death sentence or some form of reparation. So I'd like to see how law and literature can work together to influence and develop children and one great way that I've seen this, is um, there's a film called Micky B. It's an independent film, filmed in Northern Ireland in a prison and they use Shakespeare to reform these stone cold killers who are in there for life and get them to sort of empathise and have some emotion and connect that to what they've done and change their attitude to murder. And you can get the video of it, I think it's about £12 – you just google Micky B and it'll come up but it is … its dark and its interesting and its scary - its everything that Macbeth should be but they are real people and they've done that killing and it's the change that Macbeth – Micky B - has in particular because you know, he would kill people for the IRA and yet you know, when you talk, when the actor talks about it afterwards, how it made him feel it was quite powerful. I would love to show it to the kids but [Laughs] it's a bit too … I think it's a 15

R: Right, so well, choose your group carefully. Thank you so much J, that was really interesting, I was fascinated in your plans for your PhD and how you are connecting your previous study, you know, into what you're doing now and looking ahead and how that might develop. Really interesting. Thank you so much for sharing this.

Alison Transcript

R: Perhaps if you could tell me a little bit about some of your early memories of English as a child and what memories stand out for you.

AH: Erm, the earliest that I can remember really is sitting in reception class doing phonic work and looking at cards and I always used to struggle, I always used to have to be sent home with these like special learning cards and had to read words and some of the writing and everything.

R: Any memories of the wider idea of English maybe at home or, erm or when you were younger?

AH: Erm, I think my grandparents influenced me a lot because they read a lot, so they always used to bring me books. Erm, I've always been a big reader, so I think it's always stemmed from them, really, inspiring me, so …

R: Right

AH: Erm, yeah, I'd definitely say it's my grandma and grandad, they're always reading, always asking me what I'm reading, they always used to take me on trips, erm, to the theatre. They always used to take me to - like, we'd watch a film, then they'd take me to the places. So, we'd watch the Railway Children, we used to read the book and they used to take me to Haworth, and stuff, so I think it's kind of stemmed from them.

R: How lovely, that sounds wonderful. I like doing that [Laughs]. What about memories of English when you were at school? You mentioned the phonics when you started to learn to read. Any other memories of English as you moved through school?

AH: Erm, I remember being in the Year 6 and Year 5, Upper school and I wasn't very good at it, didn't enjoy it. I didn't enjoy school at primary. I was always being pulled up for my capital letters. I just hated English at this point. Like I absolutely hated it and I got to high school and I just found it interesting because it was more in depth, it was more like analysis rather than 'right you've not done this'. It was more literacy at primary. Erm … and I think I had a very good English teacher and she was dead lovely and friendly. So, yeah, it stems from that really. I found the lessons at high school more interesting than I did at primary.

R: And did you go on to do an English degree?

AH: Yeah, I love my English degree, I actually quite miss it. I met up with my university tutor the other day because I just missed it that much. Yeah, I studied at Manchester Metropolitan, erm and it was an English Literature course and I just loved everything about it. We covered Classics in Year 1 and then in Year 2 it was a bit hit and miss. Didn't really like Year 2 but I loved my dissertation.

R: What did you do in your dissertation?

AH: I looked at Homosexuality and Class in British Literature. So I started at Oscar Wilde and then moved through. It was quite interesting.

R: Right, interesting. And, in terms of who or what was influential, if you're thinking back to your personal history of English. Erm, you know, you've mentioned your grandparents and you've mentioned the English lecturer, any other… people or things, or events, that were influential, do you think in shaping …

AH: Er, I think I've always found fascinating just history. I love history as well. Erm, I think it just stems from my grandparents. My gran has always been into history so we'd always sit there and read history books together. Erm, so I used to love anything to do with the Victorians and I just found it fascinating - and Jack the Ripper and the Gothic. So I think that's what influenced my dissertation, really as well, because I just loved that era …

R: Right

AH: … So when I came to study it and I chose a topic at University, the fin de siècle, and I loved that, and I just… I find everything about that time period fascinating, about the position of the woman and how it's changed over time. Erm, so … yeah.

R: Right. So moving ahead then to when you started the PGCE , erm, what were your personal hopes, do you think, when you started the PGCE?

AH: Erm, I just wanted to be successful. I loved English at high school. I knew when I went to college that it was English that I wanted to do. Erm, I originally wanted to be a PE teacher,

R: Ah, right

AH: Because I was absolutely a sports fanatic. I'm not any more 'cos I got lazy. I prefer a book than going to the gym. Erm, but when I got to college I was doing English Language and I didn't enjoy that as much and I missed the literature so I thought I'm going to go and do a literature degree and I loved it . I love the history side of it as well so every time I analyse something, I always look at it from the history point of view. Erm, so … yeah.

R: And in terms of the subject, English, I mean what would you say, in your opinion, so when you were starting, what did you feel was important about the subject, as you started the PGCE and do you think that feeling about what's important has changed at all, because you're halfway through it now?

AH: Yeah, I thinks what's important about English is that it's, it's a big massive branch and you can cover everything, every kind of aspect and what was important for me was to inspire pupils the way that I'd been inspired, because a lot of people hate English because it's a lot of reading, lot of writing but I think if you capture that imagination like the way I was, like growing up, I think it makes it certainly a lot more interesting. And when I was teaching my Yr 9s earlier this week and we were talking about Romanticism, they were like, 'I don't want to do this, it's really boring.' And it is but then when you start talking about different topics in terms of class you can make it relatable to that child, and that's what makes it interesting, I think.

R: Right. Ok. In your opinion then, what do you think are the key issues affecting English teaching at the moment or, we might refer to them, as the dominant discourses in English. What are the issues facing English as you see them, do you think?

AH: In terms of the role of the teacher?

R: In terms of the subject … But, yes, I think in terms of the role of the teacher as well.

AH: I think it's a very demanding subject, and it's very independent. It's not like Maths or Science where you can go in and 'this is a strict formula, and you have follow this and you'll pass your GCSE'. English is about the individual and I think a lot of pupils are struggling with going away and being independent and researching . Erm, because my passion stemmed from history so I understood it, I could go into read a poem and think right, 'I don't understand what's going on here' but then research the history around it and then can find key words in there to broaden the deeper message but children now, especially children that I'm teaching, they just don't have that cultural enrichment … or the willingness to go away and be independent and research something. They want everything handed to them. Erm, so with my year 8s, we're doing Shakespeare and they were asking about the history. And they were like, 'Oh why is everyone killing the king and why is everyone trying to get rid of the king?' And I started talking to them about the Wars of the Roses and I'm absolutely fascinated by it, I love, I love watching DVDs, I love watching anything. If anything's on the TV, I watch it, BBC, erm, and I've all made them for homework, over half term, watch The White Queen. I'm like go away and watch this and we've done like a little project on it so I think it's - I think that's the main problem, they're not willing to go away and look at it themselves and try and broaden their knowledge. Because I think you've got to have a lot of knowledge about everything to be able to understand.

R: And do you think the, erm - that's an interesting point, really. Does the syllabus allow you to have that wider knowledge, do you think? Do you find you are able to encourage that in your teaching?

AH: I think it depends on the ethos of the school, like here it's - in the department it's very much pushed. You have to culturally enrich them and we have time set aside. Once every two weeks, we have a library session.

R: Ah right.

AH: So I make it quite focused. They're doing the Tempest so I'm doing everything on the War of the Roses with them so that they understand that and looking at Elizabeth the First, erm, the relationship with the woman, Queen Mary the First, because I think it's all relevant, they need to know what's going on in Shakespearian times. But … at other schools it's very much – you need to plough through the workload [apart from?] the context. So it's been quite nice coming here because it's… I felt on Block A that it was very much, 'You need to do this and you need' - and I just felt like I was ticking boxes, and I felt like a machine, whereas here it's, erm, I feel very much …. I don't feel like I'm an English teacher, I feel I'm just like a general knowledge [Laughs].

R: That's interesting

AH: …which is nice. It is nice.

R: And I'm interested, you know, in the way you use you Library lesson. Did you expect to use it that way? When somebody said, 'It's a Library lesson' did you originally think 'Oh they can bring - find a book in the library and read' or did you immediately think,' Oh, actually, I can use that library lesson in this way?'

AH: Erm, at first I didn't really know what to do because I'd never been given that opportunity and they'd always been quite tight-ships: ' You have to do this, this and this,' and I was just in a lesson and erm, I just thought.. and we started talking about it. And I was like actually they can research this themselves and they were like asking me loads of questions and I knew the answers but it was very boring and I thought it's just me teacher-led stood at the front going, ' Right, this happened and then this happened, and then Richard the Third did this,' and they weren't following it so I designed them a little pack, erm, and they had to go away on a website and research it themselves and I understand that's probably more fun than me stood at the front teaching them, but I understand as well … so that's why I set them a homework over half term. I said, 'Go and watch this programme, I said, because it does everything for you in ten hours… you'll take it all in.

Because I find it more fun to watch things and that's where my knowledge comes from anyway … so.

R: Right. You know in terms of … thinking about subject knowledge and thinking back over your PGCE, erm, so what developments in your own subject knowledge could you identify say from those first two weeks of your Block A through to now, the first two weeks in your Block B? How has your subject knowledge developed and how has that happened, would you say?

AH: Erm, I think…I always felt like I had good subject knowledge, anyway, erm, because I felt like my degree was very enriching, erm, and I love going off and finding stuff out myself. In terms of subject knowledge I think it's improved in, erm, addressing it with the child's abilities and trying to erm kind of dumb myself down, in a way, with my language and terminology, that's been quite difficult. Erm, also, for me as well, one of my weaknesses is English Language cos I've just not done it for three years.

R: Right

AH: So, the way that I've been approaching that is just independent, looking things up and thinking back to Block A … I feel like I know so much more now than I did at Block A. I think it's just with experience and trial and error, erm, and trying to make the lessons more approachable, to the younger ages. I think it's bizarre when people ask me about subject knowledge because I feel that I already…I don't know everything, there's always everything to learn, but erm, I feel like I've already got a good subject knowledge with my degree, so…

R: Yeah, are there any areas that you particularly want to develop, are there any times where you've felt, 'Oh, gosh, I'm not sure about teaching that?'

AH: Well, erm, I came to Block B and I'd never taught Shakespeare and I'd never taught poetry and well, I've taken both them classes on in the two weeks and now I feel completely at ease as I've realised Shakespeare is a passion for me, anyway, and I love it so, I wouldn't say it's been a walk in the park but it's definitely been … been quite surprising how much I already know and how to teach them and poetry as well and obviously, it's the technical side that I need to improve on like iambic pentameter and all the literary devices, but in terms of analysing it and understanding it , erm…

R: Those areas, the things you want to develop, like you, say it's never ending, isn't it, it's always ongoing but how would you go about it, in terms of developing that knowledge. What sort of things… what would facilitate you in developing that knowledge?

AH: I try and make it fun. So I go to the theatre quite a lot.

R: Ah right

AH: Erm, I don't go to museums or anything or the library because I just don't have time, but I go to the theatre. I try and google box sets or find out any visual images I can watch, because I find, as well, as an English teacher I've not got much time … So I try and make it a leisurely activity.

R: Right, that's nice.

AH: But, yeh, I try and do that.

R: Thinking about the curriculum, you know the national curriculum and the exam board syllabuses, do you think - I don't know, do you think they narrow or broaden the scope for developing wider subject knowledge?

AH: Erm, in terms of cultural enrichment I think it broadens their knowledge. I agree with the nineteenth century being brought in because I think it's important history, erm, that the kids need to know and understand but then I have taught a bottom set class of,Year 10s, of all boys and seen their low levels of literacy can be quite narrowing for them.

R: Right, in what way?

AH: They just don't, they don't have the skills or capabilities to stand a chance in that system. Erm, I feel that the national curriculum has limited erm, children from achieving good grades that I had as a child because it's very much…I feel like it's going very much erm, private school and that's not what comprehensive schooling's all about . So, on one hand it's good for me as I find it's interesting but in terms of the benefit for the child it's … it's quite sad really because it's just - like a machine. You're just throwing them loads of boring facts and they've just got to repeat it. I don't think the exam papers are suitable for low-level abilities because there's no tiers any more so …

R: No … no. And in terms of these issues that concern you do you feel that you get the opportunity to talk about English, to talk about English knowledge and things that concern you about the subject with colleagues either in departments or in wider social networks?

AH: Erm, yeah we do get - we do discuss it but I try and steer clear from it because I just find that, especially from being on Block A and coming to Block B, there's a lot of negativity about teaching … and you always get very negative teachers moaning about the curriculum and then it just makes you feel like why you are in teaching? And it's not about that, it's about the child, and what you can, how you can inspire them. So I do discuss it but I try to stay clear of them teachers cos I don't want to leave the profession so I don't really want to…

R: So what are your channels for discussing English would you say?

AH: Erm, I'm very old school, I'm very verbal [Laughs]. I try and stay clear of social media just because I find it very…it's either political or it's just people talking about stuff they don't know what they're talking about. So, it is more verbal, more one to one, especially in school, I talk to other colleagues about it but, erm, that's about it. I just don't want it taking over my life.

R: What would you say keeps you loving English as a subject then?

AH: Erm … I think it's analysing English. I love reading between the lines and finding different meanings and connotations. I love, erm, all the different trips, I love, especially in my spare time in half terms and summer holidays. I just go to houses that have been in films to do with English Literature. I can't really pin it down, I just enjoy it. It's like I've been born in the wrong time period [Laughs]. I think I love the simplicity of English as well, like all the topics and themes you can talk about, understanding them. I think I'm more history side if it, I think I prefer that, that's what I love about it.

R: And what about the language side then because you've spoken a lot about the Literature side. Any thoughts about teaching the Language side of English? How you enjoy that?

AH: I've not had much opportunity to teach language. It's been heavily Literature everywhere I've been. But in terms of language I think it's still important and I try and incorporate it into my lessons so that it's not a boring English language lesson because that's what it did it for me and I was just like 'I hate this ' and my barriers are up, 'I'm not doing this' … but allowing pupils to find features of language while they're analysing a character. So I'll do it for a starter and then I'll progress that starter into the main activity.

R: And do you think that works with a few pupils? Do they enjoy that?

AH: Yes, I taught a Year 8 lesson this morning and they had to find sentence types like derogative [sic], interrogative, declarative, exclamatories. I said, 'Right, spot that feature' and I said, 'you're going to analyse that quotation in relation to the character '. So, it's covering all the skills that they need for the exam at the end of year 11, erm, but as well it's breaking up that ice of that 'I've got to cover this in this lesson now, as it's an English language lesson, as I find English language very boring so it's nice to mix it in with literature and talk about different themes.

R: And see it as part of the same, I suppose.   So in what ways, if at all do you feel that your personal history of English has influenced your ideas about the kind of English teacher you want to be?

AH: Quite interesting, really … I think the person that's influenced me the most is my high school teacher and the kind of English teacher that I want to be is someone who's fair, that inspires, I want my lessons to be fun. I want all my children to leave the class room thinking, 'Wow, that was an interesting lesson' or 'I didn't know about the Victorians then' or … that's the kind of teacher I want to be. That's how I hope every pupil leaves my lessons.

R: And I was simply going to say, what are your hopes for teaching English next year? You talked, I suppose, a lot about them then, but anything that you could add to that, your hopes for next year, once you've finished your training and you start teaching?

AH: I hope that I get through my NQT Year and I still love it. Because it has - it's got its positives and it's got its negatives but when you're in that classroom in front of them kids, that's the most fun part of the job.   Erm, like yesterday I did a 15 hour day and I was still working at 10 o'clock at night and I was like, 'Is this really worth it ?' And you ask all these questions but I think my main goal for my NQT Year is to still love English and to make sure that I'm in the job for the right reasons. Because I love it now but you don't know what's going to happen 12 or 18 months down the line. So that's my main hope. I hope to be an outstanding teacher as well but my main hope is just to still love it, because I think a lot of teachers lose sight of that, so ….

R: Thank you very much, thank you.

Tony – Transcript

R: Thank you very much for agreeing to talk about English, erm and if we could start off, er , the question is, could you tell me a bit about your early memories of English, as a child and then perhaps later on into school.

TB: In primary school or learning to read

R: Well we could go back even further if you want. Think about who or what has been particularly influential in your personal history of English

TB: Well, I suppose er right back as far as I can remember , I mean I'm very lucky in that I can almost remember, I'm sure I can remember, my parents reading to me and you know learning to read that way from home rather than learning to read at school. But I do remember, erm, I do remember learning to read in school , er as well, through phonics and all that kind of thing so, erm, I suppose a lot of the children I've worked with in the last, well since I've been on the PGCE and the year before that, a lot of them, I guess haven't had that privilege of being read to from a young age and having that support from home. So I think that's obviously first and foremost, that's probably one of the most important things that's helped me develop my passion for English, and my subject knowledge has to begin somewhere, and without that would it have ever got anywhere? I suppose not. Er, I guess from studying English at school and especially at secondary school, it wasn't a subject that I particularly enjoyed, believe it or not. I think part of that was to do with the teachers themselves, erm, and I remember actually bringing it up in my PGCE interview for MMU that the English teacher I had, left half way through the GCSE to go and be a town planner! So he obviously was very enthusiastic for his job [laughs]. I think, erm, having teachers who were perhaps not the most eager to be there and the most enthusiastic, I think that does impact the students a lot and really enthusiasm is quite contagious isn't it, for your subject, and had I had more enthusiastic teachers and more, I don't know, inspirational, shall we say, English teachers, I might have gone on to study it at A level and things. I didn't do it, I didn't even study it for A level.

R: Right … I was going to say, did something change to inspire you to take it for A level?

TB: No, I wasn't remotely interested in it, although, I always read. I've always read for pleasure. I've always read books, er, and I guess that's what sort of came through in the end after I did my A levels and I wasn't quite sure what I wanted to do and I just thought, you know what I really enjoy, I've always enjoyed reading, I've always enjoyed novels and things and it is surprising how that contrasts not enjoying studying English at school, but like I say, I think a lot of that is to do with the environment you're in and who's teaching

you and how they are doing it, er, so I decided to go do it at university and I had no idea what I'd do with it or what would come about after it. Obviously loved studying it [Laughs].

R: So what sort of an English degree was it?

TB: It was Literature, English Literature, so very little else, it was just like being in a book club for three years really, [Laughs] so it was great fun and, erm , and I studied well, the whole breadth and depth of it really, all kinds of English, mainly English but also I did quite a lot of American literature and looking at the, er, my wife's American and I've always been interested in America so I was interested to study all the … it was a lot about the setting of America and how that influences the literature that comes out of it – the space and place … erm. But, yeah, I suppose I didn't really know what I wanted to do after that and I thought I would try teaching and I did a teaching English as a foreign language course in the Czech Republic, erm which was really useful in terms of subject knowledge and developing that aspect of my English experience in terms of that, I didn't have any understanding of grammar or the language side of things was pretty weak, erm, so having that, doing that qualification and then going on to teach English as a Foreign language for a year or two has really helped me develop that other side of the English subject, if you like, and now here I am [Laughs] doing my PGCE.

R: So, as you came up to the PGCE and I suppose it's not that long ago, you know, we're only talking about six months, aren't we, what were your personal hopes then as you started the English PGCE course? What was important about the subject to you then, do you think as you started?

TB: Er, good question. What was important to me about the subject? I suppose I felt reasonably confident in my knowledge of literature and being able to just pick up a book and analyse what was happening and going on there and like I say, the grammar, language aspects, particularly grammar and, erm, that side of things, I feel pretty comfortable with, so really I suppose I was a bit nervous about the idea of teaching things like drama and media and not being so strong at those aspects of the course, so that was what I was probably most apprehensive about. Erm, in terms of teaching, actually being stood up in front of a secondary class, again I wasn't that, I wasn't that nervous about it because I've worked as a teacher before and prior to this I'd worked over at Saddleworth School for a year as a TA so I'm used to being in the classroom. Erm, particularly in challenging classrooms as well, with tough kids and kids with all kinds of needs so I was less, I think I was less worried about standing up in front of a secondary school classroom and that age

group whereas I get the sense that a lot of people on the PGCE cohort, are probably that was their biggest concern was how do you manage the behaviour of the kids; how do you stop it turning into a riot.

R: So I suppose, you'd actually … there was a lot of preparation there along the way before you actually arrived at the PGCE

TB: Yeah … yeah, definitely, I'd say, it wasn't, I know if you think about, say, the typical requirements for getting onto a course might be two weeks of work experience in a secondary school or whatever it might be, I don't know. I didn't look to be honest [Laughs] but, er, but yeah, like you say, it's much more than that isn't it. If you had just done two weeks of being in a secondary school you wouldn't have had a clue really what it, what it involves and you'd have a very superficial view of what a teacher does, I think, but if you've worked in the environment for few years or you've been able to have proper conversations with people who've done the job for years, you get a more of a, well, rounded and realistic view of how demanding it is and erm and really the reality is that you might love your subject and you might have a lot of knowledge about English but what you're going to be teaching of it is only the tip of the iceberg, isn't it, often?

R: Right, yeah ..

TB: Although, it does … you can bring other things into play, often you are just looking up maybe the same few plays and texts each year but I suppose it's what you bring to it from all your other experiences and I think having done lots of things prior to the PGCE, like you say it does help a lot to give you a more realistic expectation of what it's going to be like.

R: And so what sort of experiences?   Because I'm interested in that, you know, you say: well actually you only teach a little bit of what you know, and that's often the case, isn't it, and it is … you talk about other experiences and what would be significant, do you think, in terms of those other experiences that you described then?

TB: What, in terms of teaching English …?

R: In terms of teaching English, yeah.

TB: … English specifically. I think … [pause] I suppose the most significant is obviously teaching English as a Foreign Language [Laughs]. I think that's, that's a very different kettle of fish to teaching in a secondary school because firstly you're teaching students generally; you're teaching students who really want to be there or who are paying to be there, or, er, for whatever reason generally, they're really motivated.   So that makes big difference in terms of, you really can focus on the subject, er, you don't have to worry about monitoring behaviour and the pastoral side of things is less relevant and it's really what

do you know about grammar and how clearly can you put it over.   And I suppose that in terms of the teaching I do now, having that experience has really helped me think about the language I use in the classroom; how I level instructions, how I level my language in terms of who I'm talking to, erm, the speed that I talk at … all communication skills really is what it has really developed. But, erm , likewise I've done other jobs that have nothing to do with English teaching, you would think, like working as a retail manager or working in a shop or I worked in business before and that's all similar, it's a lot of communication even if the job itself has not much relevance to English as a subject, the language is, that language element – how you use language to influence people is still a big part of it, isn't it.

R: Absolutely. I mean thinking about where you are now what would you say are, I don't know, the key issues in English teaching ,erm, as you see them at the moment for teachers of English. What are the things that are emerging for you and then how do these issues sit, I suppose, with your personal philosophy of English? I mean do they sit easily or do they sit uncomfortably?

TB: I guess that, I think that one thing that teachers I have come across here and in my last school and on the PGCE one of the big things is the grammar and the idea that the primary school children are going to come through with a stronger knowledge of grammar than the teachers [Laughs] which is true in some cases, like, you know they're talking about complex and compound sentences and you see teachers who haven't had that training, their eyes glaze over in the face of year 7 pupils. So that's quite an issue, of erm, having to develop that aspect of the subject knowledge. But erm, that sits pretty easily with me, I would say, I've done that kind of, I've had that kind of experience and taught that kind of content before.

R: And as you said, you know, you've made that recognition that language is at the heart of what you do

TB: So yeah, I think the grammar, the grammar thing is becoming more and more prevalent. I don't know, it's probably something that comes in cycles , so I'm making a hand gesture that your recorder's not going to pick up! [Laughs]

R: [Laughs] it's all right you've just explained it!

TB: But as the foxes go up the rabbits go down, those kinds of cycles where things go up and down all the time. It's like that with grammar probably isn't it, where they probably decide we need to teach lots of grammar to our students and then they realise or they decide – they being the government – that it's no longer useful so they take it away. So there's probably generations who have knowledge and generations who don't of the

grammar side and this generation, or the one coming through is the one that perhaps needs it, to teach English and er, they might not have it.

R: No, because of that, sort of lack of that, in their own education, going back.

TB: But really also, perhaps, technology as well. Like the idea of social media and, erm, the texts you study in English should be changing, I think, I mean, erm, non-fiction particularly; using social media and analysing more blog-type texts and web-based type texts and I think that's more realistic, er , more realistic thing for young people to do because it's going to be medium that they are reading through, increasingly, so to have them read anything else … I don't know …

R: It doesn't seem real, possibly …

TB: Yeah, they might not see the connection, I mean they perhaps, they might study printed newspapers and that kind of thing still but you know, like you said yourself before the interview started about reading your newspapers on your iPad, that's more and more common now and many people get their news just from a single sentence, you know, from Twitter or something like that , so how is language evolving in that way, that's something …

R: That's an interesting question, isn't it? You know, what's behind that, what is it – 140 characters?

TB: Yeah

R: So thinking about those issues, do you think you have the opportunity to talk through things that matter to you in English erm, with your department or in wider networks?

TB: Yes, so far, yeah, I mean I've just come from an hour long meeting with my subject mentor and I've been talking about er, how I'd like to incorporate grammar teaching into what we're planning to do, which doesn't really have, on the surface , anything to do with grammar and the challenges of doing that with a Year 7 class who, erm, can't sit still for one minute, so how are we going to go about teaching them grammar and what kind of approaches could we take. So, I feel like if there's something I would like to teach, or certain aspects of English I would like to teach and bring forward, I could do it, you know, or I feel I could at least put the case forward for why we should do it and what the benefit would be.

R: We talked about … you were saying that you were feeling fairly confident because of the work you did, that kind of preparation and how helpful that was when you were doing your teaching English as a Foreign Language, erm, but how do you continue to learn? You know, you talk about things that you would like to incorporate in your teaching but how do

you continue to develop your subject knowledge, would you say and what sort of things do you do to keep developing?

TB: Typically, er, well I mean … I suppose, typically I read if there's an area I'm not sure about or something that's coming up that I have to teach or just something that interests me, then obviously I would just grab a book on it as an English teacher [Laughs]. But no, it's true, for example the Shakespeare. I've started teaching Shakespeare now here, whereas I haven't taught Shakespeare ever before, erm, and the play they are doing, 'Much Ado About Nothing' is one I've never read before, so I'm just going about reading the text, reading the criticism on the text. Not just books as well but I suppose, going online and what people have written about it, erm, just hunting down different resources and just chugging my way through them, I suppose [Laughs].

R: I like that idea of 'hunting down' the resources.

TB: Yeah, I mean it's hard because it's … I wouldn't say I go home from work or from the course and go and, oh I don't know much about, er, such a thing - I can't think of an example from English - I don't know much about erm, Renaissance poetry, I don't know, so I will now go and read volumes about it. I would only do it out of necessity, if I could see I was going to be teaching something, I would go and read up about it. I would only do it out of necessity or if it genuinely interested me.

R: So I suppose that's, sort of, I mean, could you see yourself sort of avoiding teaching things or, or would that be …

TB: Er … I don't know, at the moment I find it hard to imagine. You hear a lot of teachers who say they get bored of teaching the same texts all the time and you hear teachers who want to have something new to teach all the time and because I'm so immersed in just learning to teach and feeling my way around the classroom, erm I'm not, I can't begin to imagine myself as someone who would get bored of teaching something I know so well, that's like my rock – I wouldn't want to leave it!

R: I understand

TB: So, I could see myself at this stage in my career definitely avoiding teaching Chaucer or whatever it is that I'm not so sure about, even the Shakespeare, to be honest, I'm dreading it because I'm really not sure of a lot of it, it's just going to have to be a case of, like I say, reading up on it. But, er, yeah, I can see as I get more confident with the teaching, the idea of wanting to teach things that are of interest to me, or things, just new things, just to keep things fresh and to keep growing, as an English teacher to learn more texts, erm …

R: So I suppose that brings me on to, I suppose, another question that maybe you touched on, what keeps you loving English do you think? I mean, you made an interesting point, erm, right at the start of the interview about, erm, you weren't inspired particularly by the English teaching at school but there was something that, you know, privately quite enjoyed.

TB: Yeah, I think I 've erm, well I've always enjoyed reading so I can't say that's what keeps me loving it, er, I suppose, erm [pause] what … it's a hard question, I don't know … what keeps me loving teaching English is, erm, I do really think it's the most important subject in terms of being able to access other subjects and the opportunities it gives students, you know, to go away and to do well in other areas, even if they're not interested in English, the soft skills that you learn from it are so useful, erm … Put it this way, I mean, like I say, I have a masters in something that has nothing to do with English, it's in IT and I had no experience, really, in IT before I did it, but I got sponsored to do it through an employer, but I have absolutely, I really believe that I couldn't have done so well at it if I hadn't done the degree in English because the English in the degree and the skills I got from studying English is what equipped me to go on and do something completely irrelevant to English, seemingly, because you're, because of the skills it gives you for being able to quickly read, work out what's important, what's not, sift through things, judge things – de-de-de, so that I really think it's got importance for young people in helping them go on in whatever they want to do whether its English or otherwise. But in terms of just the subject, why I love it, I don't know [Laughs] I just always have, I just always enjoyed reading, erm, … I guess I like the philosophical aspects of it and the poetic aspect of it, the interesting quotes and memorable lines and erm … there's all sorts.

R: And do you feel that you've connected it in, you know you've talked about your MA being not connected at all with English but one of the things you said is a major issue with technology. Do you see that connection then, in terms of coming back into English? You know, you did an MA in IT …

TB: It was an MSc, that's how disconnected it was from the English [Laughs]

R: Ah, an MSc in IT, but does it disconnect or does it connect on an element, I don't know.

TB: Ooh, good question er, [Pause] Not obviously no, … erm. It uses … to do what I did on that course needed someone who was very proficient in English and very good at reading texts, erm, but linking it back to English is quite difficult, I mean, all I can say is that we use a lot of technology in the classroom and this kind of thing, and being savvy with it is always good [Laughs] but that's about it! I think - I can't really make, -I struggle to make a

connection really. I mean, it's a good question, I'm sure something will come to me of how it relates. I think when you are teaching English, I just think the more experiences you have and the more varied and more broad, the more you can relate to the texts that you teach and the students you are teaching, and having different life experiences, even if it's something that's got nothing to do with English, can sometimes just crop up and help you, you know.

R: I think you are probably answering the last thing that I was going to ask, which is along those lines. In what way, if at all, do you think your personal history of English has maybe influenced your ideas about the English teacher you wish to be?

TB: Er …

R: Going back into that personal history and the experiences you've talked about.

TB: I like the idea of, yeah I like the idea of erm being able to bring, you know, things I've experienced from the real world and the experiences I've had from working in a few different jobs and , seeing different things and travelling the world, de-de-de- … to bring that into the classroom and to erm I like the idea of being able to relate what you are studying to real world issues and real world experiences and showing kids the value of what they're doing in terms of how they can use it in the real world. Erm [Pause] I don't know really, I just try to be as, I try to be as enthusiastic as possible, because like I say I really think that one of the things that put me off succeeding in English erm secondary school was the lack of an enthusiastic teacher, a consistent person who was always there, the English teacher to go to. There was always chopping and changing and whoever it was really just wanted to get out of there at 3.30on the dot and go plan a town [Laughs]. But the, erm, that enthusiasm, I think, is all I can hope for so that is what I would like to do, you know to spread that enthusiasm for English and for words and for whatever it is you're teaching.

R: I think you've just answered my last question which was what are your hopes for the rest of this year and as you progress into your first year of teaching ? But I don't know if you want to add anything because I think that was, I think you were answering that in a way, but you might want to?

TB: Just survive! [Laughs] Continue to survive, I don't know, it is why you do feel like you just take each day as it comes and if you got through the day, then well done, because it is one of those jobs, isn't it, where each day has the potential to be either fantastic or a complete kick in the face! [laughs]

R: So I suppose it is quite hard to envisage, maybe next year and sort of starting out, with your own …

TB: I think I would expect it to be far harder in terms of hours and, erm, I mean the PGCE is very hard. What do I mean by that? I guess like harder in the sense that the responsibility is more real, urgent whereas on the PGCE it's like, OK you have a responsibility for teaching the class but really if it does go terribly wrong you , you know, you're not going to be fired or anything like that, you're learning and that's understood, whereas once you're doing that NQT year it's probably, you feel the pressure a bit more, don't you to get things right.

R: What are you looking forward to in that, do you think?

TB: Er … continuing to learn and be more confident in teaching. I think it is just a confidence thing when you're starting out, isn't it. Just going in confidently and knowing you can teach the lesson and go on and teach the next one after that and go on and on and on and knowing that you're going to do a good job whereas when you're first starting out you're kind of, you're not sure how things are going to pan out and whether things are going to be successful or not whereas the more experience you've had over the PGCE and as you start your NQT year, I imagine you've got more resources to fall back on and more experience to use and you're more confident aren't you in terms of knowing what things are going to work out well and what lessons plans are going to work and which one isn't. That's it, just survive, basically.

R: Well you are right at the very start of the second placement so I know you have that to look forward to.

TB: it's quite hard as well to come back to it after you've had such, a quite substantial break of a month or so, or slightly longer than a month, but it feel s like two steps forward, three steps back, almost like you're going back to something new, and like, whereas before I wouldn't have worried at all about planning a lesson tonight and teaching it tomorrow, suddenly I feel like that sort of anxiety again.

R: Yes, it's interesting, isn't it, sort of getting back into it and regaining that, as you said, those steps forward again and that confidence

TB: I think it is, that it's more to do with a new set of faces rather than the actual teaching process, it's more to do with, OK , I don't know this class so I don't know what's going to work whereas …

R: And a new context …

TB: Yeah,

R: … and a completely new school …

TB: Yeah, and a new language of, 'New Hope' and 'Do not cross the red line' and 'DABITs' and 'HABITs' and …

R: You have to learn all of that as well

TB: You have to learn their protocol, which is …

R: I haven't seen that

TB: It's good, it works. They have a behaviour management policy that everybody sticks to across the school, everybody follows it and so when you know the procedures, you're more confident in dealing with the kids when they act up and the kids know what the punishments are going to be. What the, er, they know what they can get away with and what they can't, so it does make it a bit easier.

R: Do you think it's the same with subject knowledge, you know, sort of … I don't know, the more confident you are with what you're teaching, erm, the more confident you are with managing the class. I don't know, do you think that that follows?

TB: Yeah, I would agree with that, I think, er … yeah definitely. It's hard to put into words why but, er, it's just about the persona of being confident and if you're stuttering and stumbling your way through an unknown passage and trying to explain, trying to think through an answer that's not already on auto pilot from when you've studied this text before, it's difficult to think through things on the spot and erm, I don't know, I think children can sense that you're struggling whether that's with the subject or with them and that can worsen their behaviour sometimes or that can cause some issues . Er, yeah, the more you know your subject the more confident you come across.

R: Thanks very much for talking to me.

AC – Transcript

R: So what I'm interested in exploring for my research - I'm looking at personal histories, personal histories of English and I'd like to talk to you about your experiences of English when you were younger, what you considered to be important in the subject then, what you consider to be important now as you progress through your PGCE. So, I suppose to start off, could you tell me a little bit about your early experiences of English when you were a child and the memories that stand out for you?

AC: I would say the main thing is that when I was really quite young, every night me and my sister were told a bedtime story and it was a different one every night because we had the Date Book, it was called - there were 365 stories in it.

R: I had that one …

AC: And there was one for every day of the year and when we got a little bit older we started - he started reading us bigger books and that was my main, my first experience really I think, and that was what spawned my love for reading and then that was where it all – that's the start of my story.

R: So tell me a little bit more about your love of reading.

AC: Erm, Roald Dahl and Jaqueline Wilson were big influences in my early life. Roald Dahl, especially because they were some of the stories that we used to get read and then we sort of started reading them ourselves, in our own time and reading the bigger ones. We started off with Fantastic Mr Fox and the Magic Finger and then we could read like the BFG and Matilda and stuff, the bigger ones, ourselves, and then I think, Jaqueline Wilson. Jaqueline Wilson was a big influence for me, well not influence, but I spent a lot of time reading her books - really enjoyed them, and then obviously Harry Potter came into my life.

R: Ah, well, yes and I suppose both of those books that you've mentioned, like Jaqueline Wilson and Harry Potter, they sort of grow with you. The Jaqueline Wilson ones, they start with quite young readers but the story – subject matter gets older.

AC: Yes, definitely, I remember reading, it was one of the girls' books that talks about eating disorders and I must have been about thirteen when I was reading it and it didn't seem shocking or anything, it just - it was introduced to us in a nice way, if you like, where it's not a taboo thing to talk about and I think that's really important, especially for girls of that age.

R: Yes. And the Harry Potter books – did you grow older with Harry?[Laughs]

AC: Yeah, I did [Laughs]. I read them in a really odd way, though. I started with the third one and read the fourth, then read the first and then the second, because I was reading them in the school library and only the third one was there. So I just went about it in a really haphazard manner. Oh yeah, but I remember I was in, I think I was fifteen, queuing up at midnight for the seventh book to be released.

R: I did that, with my children, I was there at midnight.

AC: So my dad was doing the shopping in Asda and I was there in the queue.

R: Were you dressed as a wizard then?

AC: I wasn't … I wish I had been.

R: My daughter was.

AC: I ruined it for myself though. In the car on the way home, I looked at the back page. I do it all the time [Laughs]. I just ruined it for myself.

R: So erm, thinking about school, then, moving on from this love of reading, did that carry on through school and have you got any memories of English when you were at school?

AC: Yeah, it carried on throughout until now really, but I've just not had as much time to pursue it and doing an English Literature degree puts you off a little bit, for a while.

R: Go on, tell me about that.

AC: Well sometimes we had to be reading like four books a week. Like because we were doing four modules, they sometimes expected you to have more than one book read per week and I found that really difficult, especially in my second year when I sustained a head injury and I was told by the doctor that I wouldn't be able to concentrate properly on, like concentrated tasks for at least two weeks. Yeah - because if you see - the scar?

R: Oh right! And that was it was it, was it?

AC: Yeah, so I really couldn't concentrate for longer than five minutes and I remember it took me all day to write a 500 word essay and it wasn't even a proper essay, but it took me so long, I couldn't read. So that did have a bit of an impact on my ability to make progress on the course.

R: It must have been so difficult.

AC: It was and you can't - like audio books just aren't the same, especially like, they're quite mechanical and you're just not interested in reading them or listening to them even.

R: It's an interesting distinction, isn't it, because the words – the words are the same, so what do you think the difference might be?

AC: The Stephen Hawking effect, I think, where it's a bit like - 'it's talking to you like this' [in mechanical voice] so it's difficult for you to engage with it when it's not Stephen Fry

reading you Harry Potter, where it's easy for you to sort of melt into it and listen. I found that was very difficult. But then as I moved on into my third year the thing that I enjoyed the most is that I was able to choose my own texts for my dissertation which I really enjoyed – I maybe didn't towards the end because it took me seven months to write [Laughs].

R: And what did you choose?

AC: I did the portrayal of conflict in Renaissance drama. So I did Richard the Third, Othello, Tambourlaine the Great and Edward the Second, so Marlowe and Shakespeare. But my second proposal was going to be erm, Class as a Performance in Victorian Literature, so that would have been equally interesting.

R: Yes – I can see that.

AC: Like Vanity Fair and stuff like that.

R: I still remember that from my A levels

AC: I've never actually read it, so that was going to be my excuse but that wasn't the one that got accepted.

R: So, in terms of that personal history of English, who – or what – would you say, was particularly influential in thinking about the way erm, you see that history of English as a, I suppose, not as subject initially but er, as an area?

AC: Yes, I definitely didn't see – it was an area to me for a long time, it wasn't a subject because it was … when it started to become a subject it was when I sort of realised that I was good at it and when I was being acknowledged as being quite proficient in it, which did make me enjoy it a little bit more and make me see it, like the binaries a little bit more clearer, as a subject and then as an area, if you can understand what I mean, like the subject being in school …

R: and the area, your interest …

AC: … Yeah and I think it was more like … not that I didn't know what to do, but I carried on with things that I enjoyed at school, so I did well and I enjoyed English at school. I got two As so I continued to do it at A level and then I enjoyed it there and did well in it there, so I continued to do it at university. And when I was at school I did always think that I would be an English teacher - so that was always in the back of my mind but I didn't do it purely because of that. I just was carrying on with things that I enjoyed doing and that I was quite good at doing. It was never going to be Maths [laughs].

R: [Laughs] Okay. So when you started the PGCE course, erm, what would you say you thought was important about the subject, English, then?

AC: Erm, it's one of the things that you sort of hear all the time but it's a building block and it's a fundamental building block for a lot of things. Like, you can't write a letter of application with numbers, you need to know how to string a sentence together for people to take you seriously in life, I think, especially now, like where there's no reason for people to talk in text speak. That drives me mad - because there's no reason for it any more – everybody's got free texts and you don't need to shorten words anymore. But I think that it is – it's fundamental for you to make progress. I know that a lot of people don't see it as that - where they think it'll sort of come with time, it'll come with age and you can always resit. It's one of the things that I think has taken the pressure off people.

R: And I suppose, thinking back to when you started what were your hopes then for the PGCE?

AC: That I would pass [Laughs]. That I would make it to the end. No, but seriously, it was that I would make it to the end. Not like - only because of - not horror stories, but you do hear that it is hard and it's one of the hardest things you'll ever do and even throughout teachers have told me, it's not like this – this is the hardest year. So it's been a bit of a worry but I think I'm on the downwards slope now towards the end, so hopefully I'll make it towards the end.

R: I'm sure you will.

AC: But I think I did - in terms of the subject, I'd wanted to just share my enjoyment of it with young people and hope that something stuck. Because I'm not – I'm not greatly ambitious. I don't want them to sort of love it as much as I do or go on to be English professors, I just want them to take something from it. Or acknowledge that they are good at a part of it or think, 'Oh, well actually that's not as bad as I thought it was, I actually quite enjoy that'. I know that it's not very ambitious [Laughs].

R: I don't think it has to be. Erm, so in terms of thinking about the subject English, what do you see as the sort of dominant issues in the subject facing English teachers at the moment?

AC: Erm, engagement, I think is a big one.

R: Right.

AC: The amount of times – I'm sure you've heard it as well – 'It's boring, this is boring'. And I made the mistake of yesterday saying, 'Well what do you want me to do with it? And I got – I couldn't even hear any of the answers but - 'Just change it into something else'. Because they want to write more creatively, I think. But I think it's because we've been doing a lot of poetry analysis as well so they are sick to the back teeth of analysing and

annotating poems. And I think that engagement, it can be a massive issue, especially with certain groups, where they're just like - who don't read at home or don't take any pleasure in reading or claim not to have any pleasure in reading, because it's not cool after a certain age for certain – like especially for boys, I think. Sometimes, it gets to a point where it's not cool any more.

R: I mean do you - do you enjoy poetry?

AC: I never did at school, not really.   But I've grown to appreciate it more and … I was … it was just never something … I'm quite literal as a person so I find it quite difficult to infer meaning sometimes, especially with poetry. With literature, I'm a lot better at it because it's more cut and dried but with poetry, it can be - it's on an even deeper level and sometimes, like when I was at school, I just couldn't get my head round it. I can be quite … my mind is sometimes quite cut and dried and like 'well that not what it means' and so I can understand where they're coming from because when I was fifteen I was like, 'Well he's not saying that, he's just saying …' When I can remember our teacher saying what do you think he's saying and I was saying,   'Well I don't know'. So I think that I - I appreciate it more now that I've studied it at uni and I've had to flip it around in my head. So I'm not the student anymore and I've got to translate it in a way that the students can understand, and that is a lot more difficult than I'd anticipated.

R: Right that's how you actually translate your knowledge into the knowledge that will be meaningful to pupils?

AC: And it's like poems that I've not done before so I've got to be the learner first and think about how I would interpret it and then – so I've got to do the learning and then try in a really quick turnaround to flip it to teach it and it's been a - it's been a learning curve, that's for sure.

R: If, I mean, just sort of then talking about, that subject knowledge because I suppose you're talking about what John Dewey describes as the learner who learns twice. You know, the teacher learns first of all at their own level, they learn the topic matter and then they learn to share it – how you're going to teach it. Erm, if you think back to your subject knowledge when you started Block A, right at the beginning of the year and your subject knowledge now as you're coming towards the mid-point almost of - well, I suppose you're two thirds of the way through aren't you? What's the difference would you say?

AC: Erm, I don't think my knowledge of the subject has got any – well it has got greater because I've had to read different texts, but I think that the way that I approach things has changed. Because, whereas before, I would just read something for the readings sake and

think about what I thought of it, whereas now I will read something or find something and I will approach it in a different way, like how will my pupils see this? How will … like what will they think of it? Which parts will they find difficult? And I think that my approach to certain texts has just changed.

R: Right so, erm … so it's more - so how would you describe the process then of developing subject knowledge for an area that maybe you're [indecipherable].

AC: I think it's been practice because I've got … in my Block A I did go into lessons where I wasn't as prepared as I could have been and I wasn't as well-knowledged. So my subject knowledge has gone up, I think because I've had to look into things in a deeper way and I've had to read more of a variety of … because on my Block A we were doing texts, some of them I'd never even heard of – some of them, young adult books, I think, 'Uglies' I think one of them was called, and I read Percy Jackson which I'd never heard of or read or watched the film or anything like that. I like to look into things as well. I don't - I like to know about, not everything about it, but just in case, I get asked a question. I'm not scared of saying I don't know because I'd just be scared all the time! But I'd like to be sort of well-knowledged so they are able to have confidence in me teaching them because I think, in my Block A I had a Year 11 class and I refused to take them because I didn't feel confident teaching them and they in turn wouldn't have confidence in me and …..

[Tape paused as class lines up next to us in the area where we are talking]

R: There was just an interruption there as there is a group of pupils coming through so we are starting talking again here. Erm, I was interested in erm what you were saying when you said to a class, 'What do you want me to do'? You couldn't hear all the answers but what sorts of things do you imagine they might have said?

AC: I think I heard … one was writing stories: 'Let us write stories. Let us write our own poems'. Which I did let them do last week, but they all moaned about that. Erm, I think, a lot of them just wanted to get creative, I think. That's what is missing a little bit sometimes. I know that in my Block A school they weren't allowed to draw in English like, and that's fine, if that's their policy. I found it a little bit strange because I think that it is, especially for lower ability pupils, it helps them, for them to be able to get their ideas across, not in like a massive work of art, like with paintings and stuff, but just to draw, especially with characters. If there's a definite – if there's a description of a character the lower ability think it's sometimes more beneficial to be able to translate that in a way, like drawing it rather than translating it into a PEE paragraph. So if they can translate it into a drawing first, then they can translate it into a PEE parargraph, I think that it's… Sometimes

the creativity helps the process along rather than making it into a monotonous, 'We're going to annotate, we're going to analyse, we're going to write a PEE paragraph. We're going to analyse this, analyse, analyse, analyse', and they're sick of it, I think a little bit and I can understand why.

R: Right … so, what sorts of things do you do to try and overcome that, would you say?

AC: Erm, I've been doing … I did a little bit of drama with them the other day. So we were doing the poem, 'Mother, any distance', the Simon Armitage poem.

R: Oh, that's one of my favourite poems

AC: So I'd let them get into their own groups so they would be more likely to engage, and I got them to do a freeze frame as a part of the poem and I have done, erm, a bit of art with poems as well for my CDA, with - where, you know, like the home décor canvases, like with quotes on that you know you can get to stick around your house . I got them to choose what they felt was the most important line of the poem and make it into a canvas quote but then the most – like the assessed part, was that they had to do a paragraph description on why they'd done that quote and why they felt it was the most important. And that was good, they quite enjoyed that. I think it was a little bit of a break from just like, break from routine.

R: That's interesting. Erm, I was thinking you know, that's - it's nice to talk about English. Would you say, do you have much opportunity to talk with colleagues or your peers on the PGCE, either in departments or in wider networks, about English?

AC: Erm, I think … well I've been on School Direct - we do it through xxxx in xxxx – I'm not sure if you know it, but it's not just English, it's different subjects come together every few weeks or so, like for our training courses and we've had discussions about literacy and stuff like that, as our group and there's two of us that are English and we've had quite an opportunity to talk like that, like the importance of literacy in the school and should it be the English department's job to enforce it.

R: Well, yes, that's an ongoing discussion, isn't it?

AC: Yeah.

R: It's been ongoing throughout my teaching career as well.

AC: Because I remember there was never really much of a drive on it when I was at school. I was at primary when Literacy Hour came in.

R: Yes, 1998

AC: I do remember that. So Numeracy Hour and Literacy Hour, but that was one of the only things really that I remember talking about literacy. When I was at secondary school,

it wasn't really an issue, I don't think, or it didn't come across to me like a whole school drive like it can be now.

R: Perhaps it's one of those things that you're more conscious of once you start teaching?

AC: Yeah, because I think that at uni on Tuesday, Maths trainees are coming round to Professional Practice to talk about numeracy in the curriculum. Yeah, but I - not that I disagree with it, but I don't think that it will be – I don't think that it should be implemented in English lessons. But that's just personal opinion.

R: And have you had a go at putting it into English?

AC: I have and I find it really difficult and it's forced. So it's just – sometimes it can be a bit of a sidebar, I think and the kids are like, 'I don't understand why I've just done that', so I've tried to do it and I feel like it's a little bit forced in English because it's just – they are very opposite ends of the spectrum aren't they? So I do think it's quite difficult – well, I think it's quite difficult to integrate them together. Maybe after this session I might think differently.

R: I suppose so. So I suppose that takes us on to you know, thinking about subject knowledge and are there any areas erm, that you want to develop further in subject knowledge?

AC: Erm, I could always do with more on poetry, like I said before because I'm not all that confident with it, but I do feel – because like with our subject knowledge audit like we've got the sections, like media I find difficult to get anything written in there because I'm not sure. But I feel generally quite confident with the aspects of drama and literature – I love literature, it's my favourite.

R: And Language?

AC: Language I'm okay. I could probably do with more – not focus, but sometimes I do forget, certain parts of it. Because it was just never my – not that it wasn't my strong point, I did well with it - but it was not the aspect I was interested in, so sometimes it goes to the back of my mind. Like we did some sessions at uni about grammar, like with xxxx and some of it I was like, 'I have no idea what he's talking about'. But I think that like, I've got the basics and the stuff that I do know I'm confident teaching and hopefully it's enough [Laughs].

R: So what are the opportunities to develop subject knowledge further do you think, you know looking ahead to the rest of the PGCE and later?

AC: I – like we're encouraged to observe other members of staff quite a lot and I think the biggest resource we have is other members of staff. Like with a lot of things, with my

observing of other members of staff I can see what other people's strengths are and what their confidences are so I think if I did want a bit of a refresher on my own subject knowledge and how to translate that into teaching, then I'd probably just ask around the department. If anyone thought that it was their strength or if I'd seen it in a lesson then I would ask.

R: And you mentioned reading around, and how do you go about that sort of process? You mentioned earlier, wanting to know more than just …

AC: It's bad but Wikipedia is good [Laughs]. Because if you do put in like a text it brings up when it was, what it - how it was received and it gets its stick but for somethings it's quite good, I think. I don't know, I was reading … what were we watching the other night - Grantchester, sorry it's a bit of a …

R: No, I know it

AC: He - the lad's writing his dissertation in pencil and I went to my sister, 'I can't imagine having to have done that without a computer or typewriter or anything. Or having to research stuff when you couldn't just google it. Having to actually search, I thought, we don't know we're born [Laughs].

R: I know, I know that was probably me [Laughs].

AC: Well, I would have done it.

R: Erm, so what do you think keeps you loving the subject? What keeps you loving English?

AC: I'm not sure … [Pause] … I don't know if it's just instilled in me and it will always be like if – like when you're younger and you love Take That and then you always love Take That [Laughs]. I think it's always been the reading thing and I do find it fascinating and I think that it's also sort of spanned into – it's become a merged thing with my love of English and my love of teaching. I love interacting with young people. I think that – I think they go hand in hand a little bit for me now. Like because, I do them together all the time and it's become a little more difficult to differentiate the subject from the area of interest … because it is what I do all the time now.

R: Right - and if you think about where we started – you know you talked about your personal history of English, erm do you think in any way, that personal history of English has influenced the kind of teacher that you feel want to be?

AC: I think that, like if – obviously I said it started with a love of reading, when we read you identify with certain characters and I think that the type of teacher that you are ultimately comes from the type of person that you are, and being influenced by certain characters influences the character that you become - you turn out to be. So I think that if you read

'Matilda' for example, and identified more with Miss Trunchbull than Miss Honey then you are more likely to be a more forceful person and therefore a more forceful teacher.

R: So do you want to be a Miss Trunchbull or a Miss Honey?

AC: I would like to be somewhere in the middle – firm when necessary but approachable.

R: And so what are your hopes then for teaching English next year?

AC: I hope to still be doing it! Erm … I hope to build on my confidence because I think that looking back to the beginning of my Block A , like I've looked at the lessons that I've planned -like the first lesson that I planned and it is nothing like the lessons that I'm doing now, every day and I think my confidence has grown, so much that hopefully it will continue to bloom and I'll come into my own. Because it's so difficult I think when - you are doing your PGCE – it's difficult obviously - but you know if you think that teachers want you to emulate what they do, so it's difficult to find your feet. That's what I found anyway, so I would like to get into my own groove.

R: And that's a lovely way to finish – to find your own groove and good luck with that. Thank you very much.

SK Transcript

R: OK so, what the research is about is I'm interested in exploring personal histories of English and talking about experiences of English when you were younger and also the things that you consider to be important about English as you progress through the PGCE. So perhaps if we could start off if I could ask you to talk a bit about your early memories of English.

SK: English as a specific subject?

R: Or it doesn't have to be as a specific subject, I suppose. Thinking back into childhood, erm, things that you might associate with English and memories of what they might be and then if you want you could talk through, you know, into school and beyond.

SK: Yes, OK. Erm, one memory that stands out clearly is early reading and I specifically remember, I think I was three, my mum heard – my mum taught me to read very early, so erm I remember pulling apart the word 'the' and finding it incredibly … unusual and not really understanding and saying, 'How is' - and I remember saying the letters over and over - how is t-h-e, how is that 'the' and repeating it - and that was something in relation to a Mr Man book, I had lots of Mr Men books …

R: Ah yes

SK: And I remember Roger Hargreaves' death being announced on the TV in the news, so I remember being quite invested in reading, but obviously at that age, it's not a subject, it's just something you enjoy. And when I got to primary school, it just, my interest just had really capitalised on that and really became - it became a massive part of my identity. It was hugely important that I was good at Literacy, I suppose we would refer to it now, erm, in the 80s, the new national curriculum at the time. So yeah, I think I did very well in primary school and was a very good writer and analyst - that's probably where my strengths lie, and had quite a dip in secondary education, I was troubled really. I suffered from depression and anxiety and all various mental problems and academically didn't do very well at all but I maintained very high success in English and it was always … I performed well in exams so I would consistently get higher grades in my exams than other students who were much more diligent and had better attendance but I think just being able to answer the question was key to that success. And then I didn't do as well as I should have done at GCSE, took English and English Language to A level and then decided to repeat Lower Sixth, so I've only got the AS in English Lit but I do have an A level in English Language. And again, underachieved in grades but really enjoyed the engaging with the subject and - English Language in particular I found quite fascinating. Again,

enjoyed analysing the words and the breakdown, and the grammar and then I've done Linguistics at university too, here at MMU. That was part of my degree alongside Education, so … yeah.

R: You've talked about, erm, the importance of reading. Do you want to tell me a little bit more about, you know, how reading … was reading a thread that ran all the way through this?

SK: Absolutely. Erm, at xxxx now they have an initiative, being a reading school, and I found that quite interesting but the pupils are only really encouraged to read for five or ten minutes at the start of every lesson which I feel quite strongly about is not a very good strategy but obviously I'm a trainee so I have to adopt their strategies – with zeal [Laughs]. And, erm … but I think you're probably asking the pupils to engage for five minutes, just doesn't - they will never get into it really and they won't particularly enjoy that experience if it is so fragmented. But I do remember always reading for my leisure time, that was something I did and I'm absolutely one hundred percent convinced that the - with my reading the way I read, so widely, it was completely connected to my academic success at writing myself.

R: So, the interest in writing – can you tell me a bit about the interest in writing and where that began?

SK: Yes, again I've got some quite clear memories – I'm a September birthday, so I don't know whether that helps, being a bit older than people in my class. So I remember, very clear, very, very clear memories of being very young at school, so from nursery right through, I remember specific events and conversations even, and one of the things I do remember writing and I don't know why I remember this but I remember being quite proud of it, being an interesting sentence starter. I was in, er, I call it top infants, Year 2? And I remember starting my story or piece of work that we did with speech and the speech was 'Rachel' and I still remember what I did, 'Rachel' - exclamation mark and somebody shouting, and it was I think it was her mother shouting her daughter. That's all I remember about that story but I remember thinking, 'Ah, I've got a really good starter to my story here!'

R: And did you read, er, write apart from at school? Was this a personal thing or was it just at school?

SK: Erm, mostly at school but a little bit at home, yeah. I remember I wrote a poem once and brought it in and the headteacher , you know, went through that process of, 'Oh well done, here's a sticker', or something. Erm, and I remember using similes in Year 4 but you

know, all what everyone else was doing too, but I still remember particular pieces of work that I did.

R: Yeah, it's funny, isn't it, but I can as well …

SK: Yeah, it's really weird

R: … and I go back an awful lot longer than you [Laughs]

SK: We used to have like a section of books, probably reserved for junior readers – for juniors and I was allowed to choose from them and that was really – that really incentivised, I felt quite superior, I suppose, to some of my friends. There were three of us in our class who used to be removed for comprehension and we felt like, yeah. We didn't do anything, you know, there was no sort of negativity towards other people but we were really – yeah – competitive almost.

R: Right, and who would you say, I mean, thinking back, erm, to that sort of personal history of English, that starts, I suppose, before it is a subject, erm, who or what would you say, was particularly influential, do you think?

SK: In my life or in what I was reading?

R: No, generally in your personal history of English, I suppose, your sense of English.

SK: I think my mum. There are quite big gaps in our family so my brother's nearly eight years older and she's never worked, my mum, not really so she devoted a lot of her time to talking - a lot of talking, and conversations and also sometimes, I don't think it's that positive but I was kind of treated in a fairly adult way so I was treated as if I was a bit older than other people my age and I had very good empathy, so I think again, through reading so widely, I think that encouraged that side of my brain so I was always treated with a lot of maturity. Now my sister's nearly six years younger than me and I remember her being an early reader too. It's just something my Mum did with us. Which - she didn't really do much else, we didn't do anything active, or – and she wasn't a real – she reads a lot but she's not very academic, she couldn't use punctuation or – still to this day she asks me to proof read anything she writes. Erm, she's quite weak academically, she dropped out of school at about thirteen and had my brother at sixteen but, erm – yeah, I think, yeah, mostly.

R: So thinking about, erm, when you started the PGCE, back in September, what did you feel was important about the subject back then?

SK: Erm – that's tricky … I didn't feel I that Iwas particularly well-equipped to teach English. I thought I didn't know enough, I hadn't read as much of the canon of literature as expected – and still haven't really. I'm trying to catch that as we go

R: That's never ending [Laughs]

SK: [Laughs] Yeah, I know, I'm gathering that! Erm, but the subject itself … I feel … I don't know, it's really hard to explain, I think … Go on …

R: … I was just going to say, just from a personal perspective, you know, I suppose, I suppose it's partly what brings you into the subject, you know ,in what you think is important, maybe?

SK: Yeah, OK. Well, I think everybody has the skills to do well in English. It's just finding how to bring that out of people, so, in analytical terms particularly, I like to say , 'Ah what else could that mean?' And it's bringing that side and seeing the pupils' reaction when they realise 'Oh I do know that' or 'I have thought of that before' and also the fact that you can just look at a pronoun and talk about that you know give them something to write about and, rather than relying on like specific structured paragraphs to … I think they're quite restrictive and again, when you're in a school that does that you have to - use what they do, but …

R: Yeah, yeah. Would you say that those things that you thought were really important then, which I suppose are a lot to do with, I suppose, that sort of analysis and - but also individuality …

SK: Yes, very much so

R: … are they still the same things or has that thinking shifted as you've progressed?

SK: No, I still think it's really important, I think. My last subject mentor in my Block A school had probably a very similar philosophy and she's got a son the same age as me because [indecipherable] went to primary school together – we didn't know each other that well, but yeah – and she would always say to her older students, 'Just say something, just say something and then tell me why.' And that was very much my philosophy before I got there. Just say something, just use your time, write something, justify it and move on. Go into detail if you can, look, we're testing those skills not the right answer all the time. Er, yeah and I think that's key. Is that answering the question?

R: Oh, yes – oh, there are no answers, it's - I'm just interested really in, in your perceptions of English really. And I suppose that brings me onto another question about what you would see as the key issues facing English at the moment, you know. I suppose you're half way through the PGCE and learning more about the subject, more broadly, I guess, but , what would you say are the key issues?

SK: I absolutely feel that feel that teachers feel they are teaching to the test quite regularly, especially for exam classes and … I feel that that's a shame and also something that's come

up in my school now is, that they've looked at their schemes of work and realised that there's not enough creativity in there and they're working to improve the writing at Key Stage 3 having worked with primary schools and noticed that the primary children are very capable of doing things that they're not producing in early Key Stage 3, possibly because teachers don't have the awareness they can do it, so their expectations are lower.   So they are really trying to raise teacher expectations in Year 7 and 8 at the moment, and 9, I suppose but it will hopefully – naturally - progress through and yeah. And I don't - personally – I don't know – you need a structure sometimes because some pupils just don't have … and also once you … but they are over-reliant on it as well, so I think … I'm in a top set Year 10 at the moment and they're still using it quite, in quite a formulaic way and they don't need to. They have more creativity and I think in that way it can stifle their writing.

R: But you mention a - you know, one of those tensions, isn't it- because how does this, that particular issue – how does that sit with your own subject beliefs. You know, you've mentioned a couple of times, well you know, you go along with it, erm, so how do …

SK: Yes, it's not that I don't believe in it, I just think, I think some people do need that. Some children, pupils do have to have a structure, and also as teachers and professionals we do have tests that will reflect on us as well as the pupils and their parents.   You know, everybody wants those pupils to do well, it's not that the teachers all think that this is the only way to write - you have to kind of get them through the exam, but I just think, the more we can encourage other styles of writing then that will come naturally.   I think they're doing all the right things in encouraging that because they're changing the way they teach Key Stage 3, so I'm hoping that as I enter the profession it will hopefully – [Laughs] I'm not convinced - but, there are …

R: [Laughs] But that's a hope, that is a hope.

SK: Yes, definitely, because I don't think teachers are – think – that this is the be-all and end-all, I think they're just trying to get their pupils to achieve highly.

R: So do you think, I mean, do you get much opportunity to talk with either your colleagues in school or your colleagues on the PGCE or in social networks, about these sorts of issues, the things that matter to you in English, would you say?

SK: Not so much. I do speak to my friends, but that's on a casual basis, they're mostly teachers and social workers really, that's the kind of the group I'm in with. I've got children myself so, erm , yeah and my children's friends' parents, yeah, so we discuss issues.

R: But not much opportunity, you know, within school?

SK: Well there is but we're quite tentative as PGCE students. I'm sure once we take on our first jobs we will feel more … but you're always aware that you don't want to offend anybody, or …

R: No, and I suppose there is, as you say, you know, that kind of tentativeness, actually is part of that role.

SK: Yes, I picked up very quickly that my subject mentor has kind of implemented this speed paragraph in XXXX at the moment and she's , I think she's led that so I'm quite conscious that that's her baby almost, so I'm not going to dispute any of that. It would be … she's younger than me … but quite … you know.

R: Yes and sort of aware of those kinds of relationships …

SK: Yes, and it works, it works, she's tried to get them to achieve the results and it's working, it's just some of the children don't need it and they're still using it. I think that's where - that's what really grates with me.

R: Right, so it's how you move them forward on to – away from the scaffolding. And have you, sort of, discovered anything interesting about that?

SK: Not yet, but my Year 10 teacher, I think, again, it's awkward, isn't it, but I think he has a similar philosophy to me so – because he's 'Oh it's hard, they're always relying on the structure', because they're a top set they don't need it and it's just dull to read twenty eight essays, all the same and you know what's coming, but … erm, yeah, but we have to do it because that's what the school are doing, so. And it does give them structure, some of them really do well on it.

R: Erm, thinking, then, you mentioned a little bit about subject knowledge of the canon and everything, erm, I was just thinking about subject knowledge and if you think back to, erm, the first couple of weeks in Block A back in September, October and where you are now at the beginning of Block B, how has your subject knowledge for teaching English developed, do you think? How has that happened, what has facilitated that development?

SK: Erm … it's happened naturally just through having to teach things, I've had to engage more with. So Shakespeare for example, I was really quite nervous about teaching Shakespeare and it's just, it's just happened. I've just started doing it and I feel quite confident now. Erm …I don't really know how.

R: Could you unpick how? You know, what's the process?

SK: Well, XXXX being such a high – such a big school, has a resource, a huge resource bank and they've also provided many lesson plan templates so I think that has helped, as my last

block, they didn't give me any learning objectives or it was a very loose scheme of work, much more organic and much too – too organic for a trainee … erm, approach

R: Right

SK However, now there is such an approach I am quite aware, 'Oh, they need to learn this, they need to learn this' and then I can sort of read it beforehand , as long as I can read the scene or the act - I know the stories and I am quite good at analysing the language. It's just you don't want to say something wrong and that's with my confidence of knowing that it's OK if I say something that's not right or if I don't know everything, you know that's OK too. So yeah, teacher confidence is improving and that helps.

R: So confidence helps, the schemes of work, the opportunity to go and read. I suppose, you say you read, I mean do you carry on – do you manage to read for yourself?

SK: No, not really and I think that's a real shame and if I was in charge, which I'm not, I think I would, erm, I would absolutely create time for teachers who've been teaching ten, twenty, thirty years, to think they must have time to develop because if - they just can't move forward they will stagnate if they haven't got an opportunity to read and engage with what the pupils might be reading.

R: That's interesting. How would you see that developing because that's a really interesting idea.

SK: I don't know because it's time isn't it. Because it's such a shame, I'm already thinking about how to do my NQT year part time with three children – it's going to be tough to manage but I want to do the best job I can. At the moment the only way I can see being able to do that, is to work part-time and use the extra days to, erm, to swot up almost, which I think is a shame because I there will be hundreds of thousands of teachers who are full time who haven't got, in every subject, I imagine – who haven't got that opportunity, but.

R: So you'd like to see the idea of more established subject development

SK: Yes, definitely …

R: Built into …

SK: … a teacher's working week, really, yeah.

R: And would you see that sort of working with peers; would you see it as working with universities? How would you …?

SK: I haven't thought it through at all in that sense, really but yeah, university would be fantastic. This has just been the most amazing six months of my life, I've really enjoyed it and I'm developing so much personally, and I just keep thinking about next year and

thinking, 'Oh I won't have time to do that, I won't have uni days' and I think that's a real shame because I would be a much better teacher if I did and it is putting me off starting next year. I want to do another year or part time to be able to continue with that thread.

R: Because in some countries, erm, they, it's a much longer process which is quite different to ours which, if anything, our process of becoming a teacher is shortening all the time whereas if we look abroad it's actually going in the opposite direction

SK: Yeah I feel that would be a big – make a big difference.

R: And I really liked your idea about, erm , teachers to connect with what their pupils are reading. Er, do you get much, er, you've got children as well so presumably , do you read what they're reading?

SK: Yeah, a little bit. My eldest is ten this month, so she's similar to how I was, not the same but she reads well and writes okay. And so she's reading a lot of what the 7s, 8s and 9s are reading. So I do have some knowledge but I don't think it's anything more than what the other teachers have, it's just if you've read it yourself or if you're aware of what's going on, it gives you that connection and I think ultimately the whole profession is about building rapport and that relationship and making a connection and if you can do that, you can probably teach anything to that age children. And also, it's probably connected to this, I would rather see a cross-curricular approach to many things, not everything, you do have to have some time for your, sort of, baby on its own but, yeah, I think they can learn much – like I had to do a context lesson the other day – so it's history really, isn't it – Shakespearian context – I loved it. I found it brilliant. I haven't got the history content knowledge to teach history but it was a different approach to my lesson and I really enjoyed it.

R: That is interesting and do you find yourself - with the knowledge of your pupils' reading – do you find yourself making those connections in class?

SK: Yeah, yeah. I've got many weaknesses as a trainee teacher but the one that keeps coming back to me as a positive strength, I've had it six or seven times already, this block, is, 'Oh, you've got a great relationship with the pupils' and I think having my own kids helps.

R: Right, yeah

SK: And being a bit older than the other trainees

R: So, you know, thinking about, erm, developing your own subject knowledge. You know you talked about the sorts of opportunities that might be available to do that. Are there any areas that you now feel are less appealing in terms of teaching English?

SK: Because I don't enjoy it or lack confidence?

R: Well, both, I suppose

SK: Yeah, I still lack confidence with poetry. The Shakespeare, I think because it is so widely available, you can always find something or watch a film or you can engage the pupils in a different way, whereas poetry, I'm still a bit nervous and scared about poetry. And also I would like to see, potentially on a PGCE in future, if we could somehow choose how to develop our subject knowledge because at the beginning there was a lot of language which I'm more confident with whereas maybe more sessions in the early days on literature would have been useful to some of us but not everybody, so, yeah, that would have been a nice way to address it … but obviously …

R: Because people do come in with different specialisms, don't they.

SK: Yeah, Jacob's a law trainee so he's presumably got different …

R: But it's quite nice to see those connections and how they run across, you know, and as you mentioned, your language, your knowledge about language and how that feeds into other areas of the curriculum. Erm, so what keeps you, erm, you know, you mentioned how busy you are, what keeps you loving English would you say? What would keep you going? You've already mentioned that you can see it being a busy time next year – what will keep you going?

SK: It's not a very unique answer but I suppose it will be the pupils developing, seeing that positive progress that they are making, the that impact you can have will be key to that, so hopefully they will make some progress [Laughs].

R: And, in terms of your hopes, you know, thinking ahead to next year because you are already thinking ahead, erm, what are your hopes for teaching English next year?

SK: For me?

R: Yeah

SK: Erm, I want to become a good classroom teacher over the next year – two or three years and then that's my main focus. I've not got a big plan or fast track towards anything else, I just want to be a good classroom teacher.

R: So if I could unpick that, because I know there is so much Ofsted language out there and those words have almost been hijacked by Ofsted, you know good and outstanding and everything. If I was to say well, when you talk about being a good teacher what does that mean in your version of what good is.

SK: Yeah – I want to be able to inspire pupils to read more, to write more and to develop their creativity more. I think that is hugely important and completely undervalued in

modern teaching, creativity - there's just not enough of it. And that's one thing that I do remember from my early years, is I never … I mean , even my own kids will come home from primary school and say 'Oh we're not doing that ' and it's all very compartmentalised, so they'll do a week on similes and then another week on … fronted adverbials and that you know and it's just really false and it's a bit …

R: … Yeah But I suppose that, that takes you back to where you started and that something and I suppose the last thing I was thinking about really is how far, if at all, you think that personal history that we started off talking about, how far do you think that might or might not influence the kind of teacher that you see yourself becoming?

SK: Yeah, I think it will influence it because it's part of who I am and because I was taught in that different way, many of my teachers were old school teachers who, er, who were quite old when they taught me so they'd been doing it for a long time and in some ways …

R: When you say taught in that different way, what do you mean?

SK: Yeah, well I don't think Ofsted would like many of their methods, I assume and also being one of the higher ability students, it might not have been very nice to not be a high ability student – I don't know that, do I, I don't remember - but all I can safely remember is that there was a lot of creativity and we were encouraged to spend an afternoon writing stories and that was OK that was - seemed to be good practice for a teacher – they could allow you to write a story, differentiation by outcomes, I suppose and some pupils were taken out for booster sessions, we would call them now. We knew who they were and there was no stigmatisation to that, it was fine. But they needed a bit of additional help and they received it. And that was, yeah, that was early 1990 I think I'm remembering now. So I think I will be a different teacher to somebody ten years younger but whether or not that's better, I don't know [Laughs]. I couldn't tell you.

R: And I suppose everyone has different formative experiences as well and you've talked about the importance of reading and that experience as well, as that kind of critical writing. Thanks very much indeed, Sarah, that was really interesting . I was really interested in your ideas about subject knowledge and erm , that was fascinating.

[Recorder switched off and then switched on again]

R: We were just talking then about – we were just talking at the end of the tape about opportunities for teachers to develop their subject skills and you were just talking about opportunities at your school.

SK: Yes, the school I'm currently in hold a staff book club and they do two different books clubs, one of them is a pedagogy book club where they will read current, erm, thinkers or

theorists, I suppose, about education and discuss ideas in the main book and then adopt their practice as necessary – they'll change what they do.

R: And you were saying that there was a staff reading club as well .

SK: Yes, there is, there's a staff book club too which is for literature, I guess.

R: So popular current literature?

SK: I think so, yeah – I've not been asked to go or invited but it does run and they get CPD points for attending these things as an incentive, yeah I think.

R: So could you imagine – is there one for the pupils?

SK: There are book clubs and we do paired reading as well paired reading schemes to encourage the weaker students so they're paired with a member of staff who oversees it but they are paired with sixth formers who again, can do it as part of their Duke of Edinburgh or there's an incentive there – something that they get from doing that , but it's also a bit less threatening than a teacher being in charge. Yeah, so there's somebody there but it's the sixth form girls [indecipherable] who fill in the cards for them. And it's just to hear them read aloud.

R: And the staff book clubs are they at the end of the school day or in the lunch hour?

SK: Yeah, I think they're at the end of the day

R: Thank you very much, that was really interesting and thank you for letting me switch the tape back on again.

Appendix P

Question Prompts: In-depth interviews February 2016

Interview questions

I am interested in exploring personal histories of English and I would like to talk about your experiences of English when you were younger and what you consider to be important about the subject English now as you progress through the PGCE.
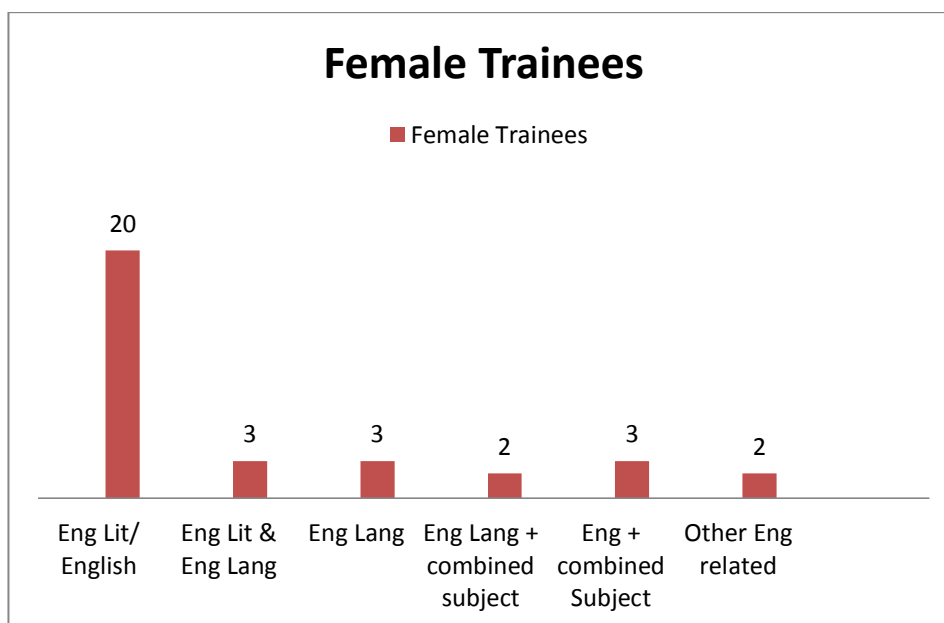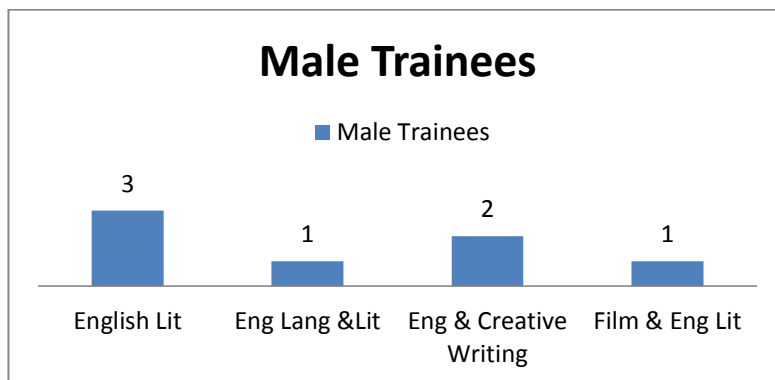
1. Could you tell me a bit about your early memories of 'English', as a child. What memories stand out?
    What are your memories of English at school and further study?

2. Who / what has been particularly influential in your personal history of English?

3. What were your personal hopes when you started the PGCE course? What did you feel was important about the subject then? Do you feel the same now?

4. What are the key issues in English teaching as you see them at the moment? How do these issues sit with your own personal beliefs about English and the things that you feel are important?

5. Do you have the opportunity to talk to colleagues, either in your department or in wider networks, about the things that matter to you in English?

6. Thinking back over your PGCE experience so far, what developments in your own subject knowledge can you identify from the first two weeks of Block A to the first two weeks of Block B? How has this development happened? How has your learning been facilitated?

7. Are there any areas of subject knowledge you would like to develop further? What kind of opportunities might be available for you to do this?

8. Do you think the NC or the Exam Boards narrow or broaden the scope for developing wider subject knowledge?

9. What keeps you loving English as a subject?

10. In what ways, if at all, do you think your personal history of English has influenced your ideas about the kind of English teacher you want to be?

11. What are your hopes for teaching English next year?

Appendix Q

Secondary English PGCE 2010-11: breakdown of first degree titles by gender

The following graphs provide a breakdown of the first degree titles by gender for the PGCE Secondary English PGCE cohort 2010-11:

Male Trainees

■ Male Trainees

Category	Count
English Lit	3
Eng Lang &Lit	1
Eng & Creative Writing	2
Film & Eng Lit	1

Female Trainees

■ Female Trainees

Category	Count
Eng Lit/ English	20
Eng Lit & Eng Lang	3
Eng Lang	3
Eng Lang + combined subject	2
Eng + combined Subject	3
Other Eng related	2

Appendix R

Contextual Information: The Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)

The Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) is a well-established route into primary and secondary teaching in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It is offered largely, though not exclusively, through Higher Education providers and is coupled to the professional qualification of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS); this duality of assessment procedures suggesting the potential for tension, which is explored in this thesis. The academic award of the PGCE, which does not, on its own, confer QTS, is assessed through programme requirements within the framework of the university assessment regulations and universities can offer between 60 and 90 academic credits for their PGCE. The relative autonomy of the university Education departments in deciding the content of their PGCE courses is however, balanced against the national framework of Teachers' Standards (DfE 2011d) by which the award of QTS is assessed. This is the practical, teaching element of the PGCE, assessed by school mentors and university tutors in partnership, in Practice Credits measured out through school experience blocks.

To gain entry to a PGCE, applicants will have a good undergraduate degree. The providers themselves will determine the degree classification and content required but typically for secondary English teaching, this might be a 2:1 (or possibly a 2:2) with approximately 50% of the degree content in English. Blake and Shortis (2010:30) noted the prevalence of applicants with English Literature degrees accepted onto PGCE courses, in the study they conducted but also noted that a key finding from their research was that there was no *perfect match* between the undergraduate degree studied and the demands of teaching English in secondary schools.

The PGCE in its current form is a complex course with its mix of academic, pedagogical and professional knowledge and practical experience. It is also a short, intensive course, lasting one academic year: ten months in practice. Existing in a relatively harmonious way alongside the PGCE in the past, have been other routes

into teaching, including school-based routes such as the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) and School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT). Until recently, the PGCE was the route of choice for the majority of graduate entrants to secondary teacher training. However, from 2011, the government embarked on a reform of teacher education which closed the existing GTP route and opened up a new school-based route, School Direct. The aim was to systematically and significantly increase numbers of trainee teachers enrolled on school-based routes at the expense of the traditional Higher Education PGCE route.

The setting for this inquiry

The setting for this inquiry is a Secondary PGCE English and English with SEN Postgraduate Certificate in Education in a large Education Faculty in a university in England. In total, student teachers spend 120 days in schools or colleges on placement. PGCE content in terms of subject pedagogical knowledge and professional knowledge is assessed through academic assignments assessed against Masters Level 7 criteria leading to an award of 60 credits. The award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) is assessed through Practice Credits.

Those student teachers who had applied to do the English with SEN strand of the course are expected to gain a greater depth of SEN experience whilst on placement. They have a dedicated SEN university tutor in addition to their English tutor and have an additional SEN mentor whilst on placement. Their academic assignments are expected to have an SEN focus within English. In addition, these student teachers spend their placement in an SEN setting, either a special school or a dedicated SEN unit. The English with SEN strand of the PGCE in this setting, was phased out in 2014.

In 2013-14 the secondary PGCE programme in this setting introduced the 'School Direct' PGCE to run alongside the PGCE 'Core' programme. There is a slightly different structure to the PGCE Core and School Direct programmes allowing School Direct student teachers to spend longer in their placement schools, and time in their Lead Schools before joining the university at the start of the PGCE

programme. The structure of placements is also configured differently across the
two routes.

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