'I'm going to tell you what this poem means':

A study of literary critico-theoretical concepts in the practice of secondary English student teachers during their PGCE programme.

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This is a statement of declaration that that the work submitted is my own and also, that the work submitted has not previously been submitted and/or examined for any other award.

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List of terms and abbreviations

Subject English	English as a curriculum or academic subject used to distinguish it from 'English' as a nationality or a language
Pupil-reader	A more precise identifier of 'the reader' in literature lessons and which signifies the pupil as a maker of meaning
Teacher-reader	A more precise identifier of 'the reader' in literature lessons and which signifies the teacher as the maker of meaning
Analysis	Used to refer to reading for interpretation and possibly to develop critical responses
Exam English (Bleiman, 2018)	The notion that in the secondary school, subject English is taught for the principal purposes of achieving optimal examination outcomes
Real English (Bleiman, (2018)	The notion that in the secondary school, subject English is taught according to its potential for learning of a broad range of skills, knowledge, information and experience
Literary theory	Theoretical approaches to analytical reading and literary scholarship which interrogate where meaning is situated and how meaning us made
Textual theory	A term which refers to how reading occurs according to the close reading practice of the reader, attending to the text's structural, linguistic and stylistic elements
Practical criticism	A method pioneered by I. A. Richards (1929) and which requires the reader to prioritise the text before their eyes, attending to its structural, linguistic and stylistic elements, devoid of contextual or authorial information
Reader-response theory	A branch of literary theory which prioritises the relationship between the text and the reader
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate in Education
Placement A	PGCE students' first school-based practicum
Placement B	PGCE students' second school-based practicum
UVT	University Visiting Tutor
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
PAD	Progression and Achievement Document
SPA	Subject Pedagogy Assignment
HEI	Higher education institute
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
SBT	School based training
SCITT	School Centred Initial Teacher Training
DfE	Department for Education
CCF	Core Content Framework for Initial teacher Training
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education

A-Level	Advanced Level qualifications in England

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X

Abstract

This thesis investigates PGCE Secondary English student teachers' knowledge of literary theory and its relationship to their English literature teaching and the value afforded their pupils' reader-responses. The research developed from my time as an English teacher and my current role as a PGCE English course leader.

The research question, 'what substantive knowledge do student English teachers have of literary theory and how does this change throughout the PGCE?' arose from two literature reviews. The first of these examines literary theory in 11-19 English teaching and explores practical criticism and reader-response as coordinating facets of GCSE and A-level assessment. The second explores whether English teacher knowledge and expertise, particularly where literary theory is concerned, influences current 11-19 English teaching and the future of English literature pedagogy in the school classroom.

The study was undertaken using an interpretivist paradigm. Participants include six secondary English student teachers and four subject mentors attached to four of the student teachers during their second and final school practicum. Data was gathered from interviews with student teachers and school-based mentors before and during school placements, field notes taken during lesson observations of the student teachers and a focus group at the end of the PGCE course.

Findings of the study suggest teachers' lack of understanding of structuralist literary theory which underpins GCSE and A-level approaches to literary reading. Student teachers reported the need to develop their practice according to whole-school approaches to pedagogy. In the focus group, they shared candid insights not shared during earlier interviews. Findings suggest they valued experiences while studying A-level literature related to the development of empathy and matters of identity and representation. The research challenged my initial speculation that student teachers had a secure knowledge of literary theory from their undergraduate studies and that this came to be side-lined during their time on school placement. This was found not to be so, and knowledge of theory bore little relationship to the type found in GCSE

and A-level assessment criteria. Finally, the study also suggests that English teachers pre- and in-service, do not have a clear view of themselves as teachers of reading which is a component of keys stages three and four, and do not prioritise reading skills of reader-response and critical literacy due to pressures to cover syllabus content and to prioritise terminal assessments, particularly at GCSE.

Chapter One: Introduction

A summary of this thesis

This thesis is a study of the literary critico-theoretical knowledge of student English teachers. The student teachers were enrolled on a full-time, university-led, secondary PGCE English programme. As leader of the course, I have responsibility for the design and content of the English programme and am heavily involved in the assessment of these students.

Six student participants in this study were recruited from the PGCE English programme and each took part in two interviews, a lesson observation and a focus group. All students had completed an undergraduate degree in English Literature within the previous five years of joining the PGCE. In addition, four teachers acting as English subject mentors to the students whilst on placement, were interviewed once each.

Data collection was conducted through one-to-one online interviews, lesson observation field notes and one focus group, attended by five of the six student teachers. The method of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019) was used to analyse the data.

Research questions were formed as a consequence of my literature reviews, which sought to examine aspects of current English teaching practice and pedagogy. The questions which guided the research are:

- Does student English teachers' substantive knowledge of literary theory change throughout the PGCE?
- What concepts from literary theory do PGCE English student teachers bring to their teacher education course?
- Is it possible to detect concepts from literary theory in student teachers' PGCE progress?
- What does the use (or not) of concepts from literary theory in PGCE performance, progress and assessment tell us about English literature pedagogy and teacher specialism in secondary schools?

The conclusions of the study found that the student teachers experienced most enjoyment of studying English literature during their A-levels. This was largely due to the perception that they developed as a reader through the teacher's invitation to them to make meaning from literary analysis and to develop critical responses from their own relationship to the text they were studying. These experiences are summed up as being characterised by a

combination of close reading and reader-response, with the latter proving to be the most personally satisfying and valuable aspect of studying literature.

In contrast, experiences of studying literature at university were less straight-forward because reading practices and the role the students played as readers, less clear. Students' relationships with literary theory and its influence on their reading and analysis is less clear or personally satisfying because theory is viewed as somewhat separate to their study of literature. Moreover, the students view theory as something which is not only difficult to understand due to the way it is taught but also because its role in analysing literature is unclear. It is suggested that theory in essence performs the reader's job of interpreting and the student operationalises the theory. Furthermore, no students were taught critico-theoretical models of literary analysis other than those broadly referred to in this thesis as post-structuralist (see section 2.1).

Further conclusions suggest that students whilst on teaching placement in schools, adopt pedagogical methods of teaching English literature which ignore critico-theoretical practices learned from their own educational history, even those spoken of with great positivity (see section 4.1) from A-level studies. Analysis shows this is due to imperatives placed on PGCE students by schools and mentors. Whilst the students articulate dissatisfaction with this, they express a belief that they will assert their beliefs in teaching English according to critico-theoretical principles once they have gained further experience as teachers and completed their initial phase of induction as Early Career Teachers.

1.1. Personal context of the research

I left school with two GCSEs in 1989. One was in Drama, the other in English literature; both of them subjects which require a certain degree of action, agency and autonomy from its students. My other grades ranged from E to G with the majority sitting as Fs. The reasons for such a profile relate to a complex circumstantial tangle which began to unravel over decades to come. At my school, on my estate and in my family, such results were hardly out of the ordinary or a cause for concern.

Years later, I dared to return to education in my early 20s and was taught by Annique. She taught me how to read for meaning and how to formulate responses to texts from my own perspective, often about subjects such as the Lockerbie bombing,

which I had little cause to think, was any of my business. Under her tutelage I achieved a grade A in English Language and went on to study A-levels and eventually read for a degree in English Literature. I have said with only a touch of melodrama that discovering English literature changed my life. What I really mean is that English literature provided me not simply with a gateway to realising my academic interests and abilities but enabled me to realise that I had perspectives and opinions that came to mean something in much broader personal, social, cultural and political contexts.

Having been taught in isolation for most of my GCSE years, school had never been a self-affirming or developmental experience. Studying English with Annique and later as an undergraduate introduced me to so much lost learning: a consequence of being a persistent and chronic school truant. After graduating with a first, I trained to become a teacher. I taught English for fourteen years and completed a part-time Master's degree in English Literature.

As an undergraduate I had many adventures with literary, textual and critical theory. My first year as an undergraduate introduced me to literary theories which Peter Barry refers to as 'theory before "theory"' (1995: 11) but which Eagleton refers to as 'structuralist' because this refers to a 'belief that individual units of any system have meaning only by virtue of their relations to one another' and uses the examples of images within a single poem (1996: 82). Such a definition pertains to the close reading of texts and narratives found in literature lessons with the added phenomenological dimension of reader-response. The Literature Review in section 2.1. explores this in more detail.

My undergraduate and postgraduate theses used the poststructuralist theories and methods of Foucault and Derrida respectively. Theory which, borrowing from Eagleton (1983), I refer to in this thesis as *structuralist*, alongside the student-centred pedagogy of Annique, made me realise that I possessed the ability to exercise an increasingly disciplined, analytical mind as well as a critical perspective which served me well and were not restricted by prior experiences as a child. Later, as an English teacher, I put this to use in my classroom to help students achieve success and interest in English beyond their A-levels.

As a result of this, I cannot comfortably accept assertions that addressing attainment 'gaps' principally through the teaching of powerful knowledge or cultural capital are fair, accurate or suited to English literature. This thesis is born out of experiences which are personal but which are inextricably bound to the professional. My early-life experiences continue to influence my perspectives on schooling, literacy, reading and education and, in particular, the need to convince children of the potential they have to develop responses to what they read. However, they have graduated far beyond the personal or subjective, and have become solidified and galvanised to address social injustice in the classrooms I occupy.

My positionality as a researcher is infused with fury and it is fury which has been a recurring force throughout my professional and academic endeavours. My own school years amounted to little more than an opportunity to (anti)socialise and for a council estate child from a single parent family, this was untroubling to all who knew me. Meeting Annique when I returned to re-sit my GCSE English Language exam at the age of 21, I was introduced for the first time to a subject which charged me with the requirement to form opinions on and responses to what I was reading. If I had not met her, the likelihood of me continuing on my journey of righting the educational wrongs of adolescence seems slight to say the least. I am grateful for what she showed me but furious that it appeared to be good fortune alone that permitted the opportunity.

Much later as a teacher educator, no longer bestowed with the power to directly influence how children learn, as I did as a teacher of English in the years before becoming a lecturer, my fury mounted once more. The teaching which I had committed to undertake with passion and conviction and which was loaded with bullets of wisdom, experience and a meaningful arsenal of knowledge about English and the teaching of it, was blocked by a barricade of teacher practice and school policy which situated children as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge; knowledge which promised cultural capital and empowerment. My fury was fuelled further by listening to teachers tell me that this was how disadvantaged kids could be given an equalised chance to prosper. All they had to do was absorb and memorise, repeating knowledge for the purposes of assessment. It was the opposite

of this experience which led me to return to education, to teach and to undertake a doctorate.

It hardly needs pointing out that these experiences have influenced this research and I do not claim neutrality in my analysis. This research seeks to articulate a problem according to my history and my (pre)occupational relationship with English, its curricula, its teachers and their pedagogy. Above all else, it seeks to express a dissatisfaction with the experiences that many children have of learning, that I perceive, in English lessons in the secondary school classroom.

1.2. Professional context of the research

This section provides a more professional context for the aims of this thesis. I have occupied a place in teacher education in a large university in the Northwest of England for the last nine years. The focus and shape of my research has principally been informed by my role as leader of a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in Secondary English course. Since taking up that role in 2015, I have become immersed in internal and external discourses and debates regarding the training and education of pre-service teachers. As part of my role, I make frequent visits to around twenty to thirty different schools and English departments over an academic year. These schools are part of the university's 'partnership', engaged in Initial Teacher Training and Education (ITTE).

My role requires me to visit schools to observe PGCE English students on placement[1] and contribute to a process of development, assessment and quality assurance using the DfE's Core Content Framework (CCF) (2019) and Teachers' Standards (2012) as well as the university's own curriculum plan which offers a unique enhancement to the CCF. Through this experience, I gain unique insights into how different schools address similar priorities, from attainment gaps and pupil outcomes to mental health

[1] Secondary PGCE students undertake a nine-month programme course which begins in September with a month of university taught input before moving to a three-month block placement in October, with occasional days in the university for more taught content. Once the placement is concluded in mid-January, students return to university for a taught block in Jan-Feb before commencing a second school placement which ends in June.

and well-being; from literacy intervention to pupil aspiration and ambition. Any or all of these might be presented as a context within which decisions are made about pedagogical methods and approaches across the curriculum and subjects.

Through my school visits I have also witnessed a set of pedagogical changes driven by what Caxton (2021) describes as Direct Instruction, Knowledge Rich (DIKR); The DIKR approach situates itself in a discourse of filling attainment gaps, improving outcomes for all and providing a levelling up opportunity by typically using knowledge of cognitive load theory (Sweller, 1988), the concept of powerful knowledge (Young et al, 2014) and methods of direct instruction (Englemann et al, 1988; Rosenshine, 1997). Widespread adoption and adherence to such ideas and methods has persevered despite an EEF (EEF, 2021) report warning of the wholesale adoption of the former, whilst Young has offered a qualified explanation of his concept as well as a concern about the misuse of it (TES, 2022) in schools. In subject English, recent guidebooks for English teachers by English teachers and predicated on such ideas and methods continue to be published (Needham (2023); Mann et al (2021); Webb (2021); Didau (2021); Tharby (2017)).

In his book, *The Future of Teaching and the Myths that Hold it Back* (2021) Caxton gives (ironic) thanks to a number of educational personalities, researchers and consultants in the acknowledgements. It is these people who have in many ways led, with great influence, the battle cry of the DIKR and whose opinions I have found myself bristling against after completing one school visit after another. During these visits I have witnessed my own PGCE students eschewing knowledge, experience, beliefs and values about the subject of English literature, alongside knowledge I taught to them during the initial block of learning at the PGCE's outset. I have noticed that many of my students surrender to modes of teaching, largely (but not exclusively) without question or dissent, which follow the way of the DIKR and in the process marginalise the individual pupil's development as an analytical and critical reader.

Against a backdrop of regulation and standardisation, selectivity (Turvey, 2023) and scientisation (Hordern and Brooks, 2023) of pedagogy to be found in the CCF, such practice has presented a strong pattern of teaching English literature typically

through PowerPoint slides and visualisers, led by the teacher-reader towards the notion of a ‘right answer’.

To see this accepted as a *de facto* approach to teaching English Literature has forced me to ask myself why exactly this presented me with such tension and discomfort. One answer was that such approaches are in conflict with my own learning as outlined in 1.2. and with pedagogy informed by disciplinary knowledge within literary studies which interpolates readers into a process of analytical or *close* reading to produce interpretations based in part upon their own feelings, perspectives and experiences.

Furthermore, they are in conflict with much of the literary theory which provides the discipline with a set of coordinates and routes for developing conceptual understanding and skills of critical reading and interpretation. In addition, my concern was exacerbated by reports (inews, 2021) of a 23% slump in A-level entries for English literature between 2017 and 2021, which points to a potential correlation between DIKR and pupils’ experience.

1.3. Thesis structure

The order and content of this thesis is comprised of this Introduction (Chapter One) which seeks to provide a broad context and aim for the study. Following this are two literature reviews (Chapter Two). The first (2.1.) examines the place, purpose and status of literary theory in the subject of English literature and does so within the context of GCSE and A-level English literature assessment objectives which are characterised by a humanist, formalist and structuralist paradigm of interpretation and criticism. The second (2.2.) provides an examination of English teachers’ historical and contemporary influence on subject development to give direction and purpose to subject knowledge and methods of pedagogy deployed in secondary school classrooms, and how this may provide insights into how PGCE English students develop during practicum experiences in schools. The second is connected

to the first because it seeks to examine the future potential for English teachers to direct the theoretical and pedagogical coordinates of their own discipline.

Chapter Three describes the methodological approach chosen to explore the research questions emerging from my literature reviews. The chapter explains my use of Reflexive Thematic Analysis as a method for analysis of interview and focus group transcripts as well as observation field notes. I also give an account of the method's similarity to reader-response theory itself which I assert is a methodological tenet of GCSE and A-level curriculum design and assessment. Chapter Three also outlines my research design, methods, analysis as well as matters pertaining to participants, settings, access and ethics.

Chapter Four presents the analysis from semi-structured interviews, lesson observation field notes, post-lesson discussions with student teachers plus semi-structured interviews with four of the student teachers' placement subject mentors. In turn, analysis is presented according to four themes and subthemes and each concludes with a 'discussion' section.

Chapter Five presents analysis from focus group discussions conducted after the PGCE had ended, practicum experience concluded, and when all students knew they had successfully achieved their PGCE with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

Chapter Six addresses each research question in turn, considers the potential for further research, the limitations of the study and a brief reflection on my research journey on the EdD.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review has two parts. The first (2.1.), comprising three sub-sections, examines the status and uses of literary theory in the secondary English literature classroom to explore the role of the pupil-reader. This is situated in the wider context of GCSE and A-level curriculum design and assessment criteria which exhibits its own critico-theoretical principles.

The second (2.2.), also comprising three sub-sections, examines English teachers' historical influence over the curriculum and pedagogy of secondary school English teaching and explores the potential for English teachers to use substantive knowledge of critico-theoretical approaches in their practice to safeguard the importance of reader-response approaches in literary reading.

Literature was accessed using key word searches and Boolean operators consisting of combinations of the following: *secondary teaching, high school teaching, English teaching, English teachers, literary theory, reader-response theory, reception theory, practical criticism, critical literacy, literary analysis, literary criticism, literary interpretation* and also in conjunction with names of key figures in the world of subject English, such as Brian Cox and John Dixon, milestone events such as the Dartmouth Seminar (1966) and seminal policies such as the Kingman Report (1988). I used the university library database as a starting point for locating current journal articles and this introduced me to databases such as Taylor & Francis Online which gave me access to *English in Education, Changing English, Theory into Practice* and *Journal of Education for Teaching,* amongst others.

2.1. 'A Geography of the page'

2.1.1. The coordinates of critico-theoretical concepts in the English literature lesson.

To explore the coordinates of critico-theoretical approaches in English literature lessons in England's secondary schools, the work of M H Abrams (1953) acts as useful means of navigation. In *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1953), Abrams describes the 'coordinates of art criticism' (1953: 6) to present the work of art (or text) as the centre of a three-way relationship between the text and the world (or the context of its genesis), the text and its audience (or reader), and the text and the artist (or author). For Glover (2018) each coordinate reveals the critic's ontological view of how meaning-making occurs.

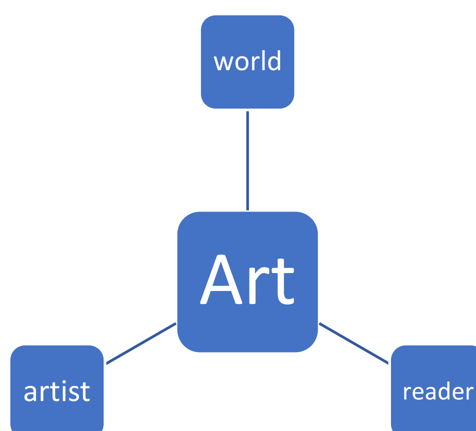

Figure 1: Coordinates of art criticism (Abrams, 1953)

Each of these, Abrams suggests, provides a potential route along which criticism may legitimately develop and which acts as a coordinate to orientate the 'critic' towards potential reading practices which may yield different outcomes as well as signalling pitfalls and interpretive dead-ends. Such a critico-theoretical model of meaning-making and interpretation seems therefore to provide the English teacher with a clear set or coordinates to best understand the impact of their teaching. Chambers and Gregory (2006) argue, [literary] 'theory […] is a way of specialising the study of literature such that only professionals can do it' (2006: 4) and it is theory which permits the English teacher's making sense of the subject's purpose and possibilities

and clearly understanding the impact of their teaching on pupils' relationship to reading.

It may be seen that Abrams builds upon an already established practice of developing interpretation and criticism according to the text's formal composition and context having synergy with one of the three elements mentioned above. Post-Romantic literary and critical theory in English studies has typically placed text and author as the least meaningful or least scholarly pairing. Chambers and Gregory assert that biographical criticism, that is, the coordinate between text and author, was the 'traditional paradigm' (2006: 4) which dominated the academic practice of studying literature, beyond its intellectual roots in philology, rhetoric, classics, belles lettres (ibid: 3), only to be superseded by the more formalist and highly selective New Critics of the United States, led by John Crowe Ransome.

Abrams's text/world pairing equally runs the risk of overlooking the text's formal properties in favour of using it as a lens through which we can read histories. The argument here (and partly, the motivation for I. A. Richards developing his analytical method of 'Practical Criticism (1929)) is that the structural 'literariness' of the text is relegated in favour of its status as historical source material or its ability to provide a window onto a historical world. The pairing of text/reader has more recently dominated the field of literary studies and in particular, has, in varying ways, been central to the very disparate and distinctive tenets of Romantic sensibility, phenomenology, New Critical formalism, reader-response humanism as well as poststructuralism's deconstructionism and Affect Theory's posthuman turn. Giovanelli and Mason (2018) present close reading of the text's formal properties, typical of Russian Formalism, and reader-response theory as early proponents of Richards' Practical Criticism method, which views the text as containing the potential for interpretation within its linguistic and literary structures as well as leading the reader to avoid 'disorganised' critical procedures (Gray, 1992: 250).

Abrams' model of literary criticism has been added to many times so that a further branch of criticism has grown according to the text's relationship to post-structuralist critical theories which trouble, disrupt or queer the text's hegemonic power-plays in relation to gender, sexuality, race, colonialism, class, economics and the

environment. Asking, ‘Has Academia Ruined Literary Criticism?’ Merve Emre (2023) in her *New Yorker* review of John Guillory’s book *Professing Criticism*, refers to ‘method wars’ fought by the ‘tenured radical’ (2023: 12) in the space of the academy. Indeed, such critical orientations arguably dominate literary studies on university degree courses and, according to Guillory, reflects the individual academic’s own interests and preferences.

According to the Halcrow Group (2003), critical and literary theory was the most widely taught compulsory course in UK university English departments at the start of the twenty-first century. Although the above report is now rather out-of-date, it perhaps lends some weight to an assumption that English literature graduates begin their PGCE courses with a knowledge of critical and literary theories of analytical reading. Indeed, in 2023, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) published a Subject Benchmark Statement which describes how undergraduates of literature should ‘engage with stylistic, formal and rhetorical properties of texts, sometimes drawing explicitly on ideas from modern language study’ as well as theoretical approaches to and debates about literature, literary and critical theories.’ (2023: 10)

It would be fair to assume therefore that a typical literature graduate would possess familiarity with how critical interpretation functions, and to ask whether this knowledge is instantiated in the practice of PGCE student English teachers, charged with teaching key stage three, GCSE and A-level English Literature. Furthermore, it prompts the question, how do pre-service and in-service teachers of English view critico-theoretical principles as an aspect of their subject specialism and perhaps more importantly, its influence on their pedagogy and practice?

John Hodgson’s 2010 report on undergraduates’ experiences of studying English sheds light on this by examining the approaches to literary analysis of English literature undergraduates, in particular ‘their capacity for close analysis and their understanding of theoretical approaches to literature’ (2010: 2). His interviews with undergraduates from six different universities suggest that students lacked certainty about the nature and purpose of theory in their studies. This involved adjusting to their own tutors’ theoretical groundings and preferences, problems in grasping the

relationship between their experience of literary analysis at A-level and then encountering theory as something unfamiliar to them as undergraduates, and finally developing the opinion that the analytical methods of 'close reading' (2010: 26) are atheoretical. Overall, Hodgson's report indicates that literature undergraduates seem to struggle to understand how and where the theories they are introduced to in their lectures and seminars, fit into the study of literature as they have come to know it from GCSE and A-level. Ultimately, Hodgson asserts that students' 'reading practices [are] inflected by their sense of what was required to construct a good essay' (2010: 27), rather than perhaps, a clear realisation of theory's role within the subject. The work of Snapper (2009; 2010) also examines the disconnect between A-level and undergraduate literary studies and finds a number of issues related to university lecturers' assumptions about their students' theory knowledge and expertise and which impact on student motivation and teacher / lecturer pedagogy.

The post-structuralist critical theories of the undergraduate literature degree present meaning as a body buried beneath the words on the page and a borrowed theoretical lens will reveal its whereabouts to bring meaning into view. In this scenario, reading is driven by a 'moral conviction' as Barry put it (1995: 32) and theory is the vital instrument of interpretation rather than the reader herself, in direct relationship to the text. Locating the text's body of meaning no longer simply relies on spadework of digging with structural precision, stylistic nous, and imagination, but now has a theoretical radar to locate its whereabouts. Moreover, the body in question always holds unspoken truths which can be exhumed and made to speak about life (Barry: ibid). Indeed, Guillory's (2023) book makes a plea for a return to humanist approaches and the kind of aesthetic criticism which permits readerly judgement and critical discernment such as that conceptualised in Abrams' coordinates. Prezioso's (2023) call for a 'reorientation of English literature education' similarly seeks to acknowledge humanist analysis in the school literature lesson, as does Perry (2022) who argues that current teaching of literature in schools is at odds with its social, political and humanist intentions.

The early twentieth century dominance of 'Cambridge English' is perhaps a useful touchstone for this discussion. Davison and Dowson (2003) note that the twentieth

century saw a shift from literary appreciation to literary criticism and they assert that Practical Criticism, further to the launch of the Leavis's journal, *Scrutiny,* in 1932, became the dominant approach to the analysis of English literature in classrooms; forming what is retrospectively referred to as 'Cambridge English'. The formalist critical methods employed by I.A. Richards in his seminal text, *Practical Criticism* (1929) and his subsequent influence over literary critics, Q.D. Leavis and F.R Leavis as well as on the 'New Criticism' of United States scholars and critics, insisted on a scholarly and disciplined approach to interpretation and criticism. This involved the reader applying critical thought to the text before her, alongside an avoidance of mere appreciation, literary biography or an undisciplined, 'Romantic' response to the text which emanated from the myth of poetry as a 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' as William Wordsworth put it in the preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1801). Matters of canonicity and knowledge of very particular literary traditions as part of the critical process would surface in the work of the New Critics and in particular, in the criticism of T.S. Eliot (1922) and later, in the dogmatism of F.R. Leavis' work.

This is not unrelated to the secondary classroom. The teaching of English to GCSE and A-level students in England has long been characterised by 'close reading' of the text in order to suggest its meaning to be found within its structures; to assemble a critical interpretation which is based on evidence and which typically flourishes when equipped with an armoury of literary terms and techniques, something of an enduring and tenacious legacy of Practical Criticism and New Criticism of the early twentieth century. Still a mainstay of literature classrooms and curriculum design, students are encouraged to 'top this off' with a concerted and confident personal response which is indicative and illustrative of independence and personalisation. Interestingly, a frequent belief which limits the typical nature of this, is that only the highest attaining students are capable of such work, something which has been highlighted as a problematic tendency in teachers of English and Maths (Mazenod et al, 2019). Moreover, such assumptions are inscribed in the assessment taxonomies of examination grading rubrics too with pupil-readers' analytical independence and personalisation presented as characteristics of the most skilful and confident close

readers. Culler (1997) provides an overview which connects the phenomenology of reader-response with close reading, presenting this as structuralist, not in terms of semiotics, but in terms of how it uncovers underlying 'structures of language, of psyche, of society.' (1997: 125)

In 11-19 English literature classrooms, teachers continue to rely on the formal properties of the text and GCSE assessment criteria which requires students to attend to the 'language, form and structure' (Edexcel, 2019: 5) of any text studied. However, the figure of the reader is also an essential component of the process of making meaning of the texts that pupils study with the same criteria calling for 'informed personal response' (ibid). Practical Criticism is generally oriented towards the agentive reader's 'close reading' of texts and essential to its method is the materiality of the text, devoid of contextual trappings of any kind and maintaining it's 'separateness from contextual factors' (Gray, 1992: 276). Close reading seeks to prioritise the formal qualities and constructed-ness of texts, by requiring the reader to scrutinise the meaning of the marks on the page. Chambers and Gregory (2006) suggest that the practice of 'close reading' came to dominate classroom practice for so long due to its 'teachability' (2006: 4) and this perhaps partly explains its enduring status and significance in 11-19 curriculum and assessment design.

However, in discussing the close reading approach to teaching literature (poetry), Gabrielle Cliff Hodges (in Davison Dowson, 2003) offers caution to literature teachers by suggesting that close reading itself could lead to pedagogies which rely upon the direct and one-directional transmission of knowledge from the teacher to the pupil and which fail to interpolate pupils in a process of making meaning. She gives the view that teachers of English should be familiar with a wide range of theoretical views of teaching poetry. She cites Scholes's (1985) *Textual Power* in asserting that interpretation is triggered by the choice of texts which stimulate and provoke responses like riddles to be solved. Cliff-Hodges also suggests that the way in which the poem is presented to pupils is critical. She uses the example of teaching metaphor (deficiently) where the concept itself is simply defined and explained by a teacher; in other words, propositional knowledge of metaphor as a literary or

linguistic device is *given* to pupils and there is greater focus on defining and identifying rather than, exploring its affect.

Curtis (1993), similarly to McGuinn and Stevens (2004) and Stevens (2012), uses fable as an example of an aspect of the subject which could be taught not through the feeding of propositional or background knowledge by the subject specialist but by asking the right kind of questions which will draw out pupils' conceptual understanding (see also: Prezioso, 2023) to develop knowledge of generic characteristics and judge its impact on the narrative of the fable. Here then, understanding of the conceptual elements of a stylistic technique, form or genre is developed through a teacher guiding pupil-readers to aspects of the text which permit them the greatest chance of developing appreciation of how it works within an example but this still clearly resembles a structural approach to a text and its elements. Cliff-Hodges (2003) also identifies the need for time, space and opportunity for the exploration of the metaphor's affects. She asserts that otherwise, 'the knowledge acquired is merely superficial [because] [p]upils need to understand what metaphor can do so that they can judge [for] themselves.' (2003: 252).

Such views suggest a concern about the methods of literary reading and interpretation. Carter and Long (1991) make a similar point that the teacher should identify questions around which understanding of the text develops, and enables an activation of experience alongside an ability to relate, empathise, feel and respond to an unknown text. Furthermore, Daly (2003) stresses the importance and impact of the English teacher's knowledge of theory as a basis for distinguishing between Gregory so that pupils are given a 'more explicit understanding of what the critical process involves' (2003: 255). A core element of this process for her is the sharing of ideas to generate a range of interpretations which can be evaluated and critiqued. In making a distinction between interpretation and criticism, she claims that the latter is more difficult than the former precisely because it requires the reader to distance herself from the text (2003: 258). By this, she presumably refers to a need to maintain a scholarly method rather a purely appreciative, emotional or subjective

one but nevertheless, the reader is central to the process of reading to produce meaning.

However, more recent studies in England (Perry, 2021), Ireland (Hennessey et al, 2018) and Australia (Weaven and Clarke, 2013) have also suggested teachers feel less able to make such pedagogical choices due to pressures of performativity (Ball, 2003) and pragmatism such as using poetry to teach literacy (Creely, 2019). It is also claimed (Perry, 2022; Barnard, 2023; Prezioso, 2023) that presently, literary interpretation in the school classroom, has given way to a more knowledge-oriented approach in the classroom (or the DIKR method according to Caxton (2021)), influenced by a more didactic pedagogy which situates the pupil-reader as the receiver (rather than the producer) of important or powerful knowledge about the text and its contexts. Such a pedagogical approach shares similarities with Freire's (1970) concept of the 'banking' model of teaching and which acts in a contrary way to many tenets of reception theory as explained by Glover (2018) in her appraisal of the reader's vitality in making texts mean something, according to the varying theories of Harding (1962), Fish (1967; 1980), Iser (1974, 1980), Rosenblatt (1985), Culler (1975), Barthes (1975), Benton (1992). In such a schema as Freire's, the pupil-reader becomes inducted into an epistemological domain decided by someone else (the teacher, the author, the critic) or something else (biography, historical context, literary techniques) and transmitted by the teacher as authoritative knowledge to be retained. In such a one-way transaction, the text is presented as a fixed entity (Glover, 2018: 67) and the reader situated as spectator (ibid: 70).

What is suggested here, is that approaches which front-load propositional knowledge of any kind are unlikely to develop critical reading practices. Atkinson, Fawcett, and Protherough (1989) identify English teachers' need to avoid 'mechanical' delivery of the literature lesson in favour of a need to create space for the interaction of knowledge and response, something which Glover (2018) foregrounds in her appreciation of Iser (1974). However, Fleming and Stevens (1998) make a claim in favour of teachers providing background and textual knowledge and blame New Criticism for a marginalisation of historical and social contexts, presumably because they see this as being a useful complement to the pupil-reader's

response. They claim reader-response theory is in danger of doing the same if it is wrongly interpreted as meaning that people should be given no guidance at all" (1998: 167) and reinforcing the idea that there is no 'right answer' in English literature.

Similarly, Doeke and Meade (2018) do not dispute that propositional knowledge is important but this is research published closer to the current context of curriculum design which dichotomises skills and knowledge. Their view is made clear by their reference to the Newbolt Report (1921) and its plea for an 'intercourse' of imagination, with experience on the one hand and factual knowledge on the other (Newbolt, 1921: 8). As a sidenote, it should be noted that they are not alone in lately returning to Newbolt as a touchstone for reviving the subject's once inchoate and hopeful intentions (Roberts, 2019) at a time when the numbers of pupils choosing A-level English courses dropped by 23% between 2017 and 2021.

Whilst Doeke and Meade's (2018) reference to the 'intercourse' of imagination and experience (Doeke and Meade, 2018: 260) seems to share similarities with Dixon's (1967) reference to the interplay between what pupils already know and knowledge they are to be taught, there is perhaps a distinction to be made between experiential knowledge and background knowledge. Most recently, Prezioso (2023) expresses concern over the dominance of rote, instructive and didactic pedagogy in literature education in the US and UK which over-states the role of propositional knowledge at the expense of pupil-reader understanding and imagination. Such a view is contested however (Gordon, 2012, 2018) and will be returned to in the following section.

2.1.2. Reader-Response Theory: handing the reader her own compass

This section builds upon the previous one by exploring further the role of the reader and her relationship to the text. Currently, the reader appears to emerge as a latter-day priority for many writing about English literature teaching. Giovanelli and Mason (2018) assert that the figure of the reader is central to curriculum design and reflects the democratisation of interpretation as part of reading in classrooms. Such a view

is shared by Barnard (2023) who argues for recentring the coordinates of classroom analysis towards the reader's relationship to the text, to activate social justice and decolonisation (Barnard, 2023).

Such assertions are not new, however. As if to summarise the development of literary theory along the lines of M. H. Abrams' (1953) model of critical orientation (see page 16), in which a text can be interpreted according to its relationship to the reader, author, or contexts, Stevens (2012: 65-66) offers teachers three theories of readership in literature that have developed in literary and cultural studies particularly in the UK and US. The first is a cognitive information-processing model. The second, an expressive model which privileges the reader and her life experience and thirdly, a socio-cultural model as one that privileges the cultural context in which reading occurs. He sees all three as dialectically related or engaged. However, such dialecticism seems rather idealistic in the current context, given school English departments' preference for the third and first model very much at the expense of the second. In contrast to Stevens' preference of all three strands being intertwined, Pike (2004) referring to Rosenblatt's (1978) model of reader-response theory and drawing on her recommendation of selective use of background information (in teaching poetry), argues for its inclusion only when relevant, necessary, and when 'assimilated into the student's experience' (Pike, 2004: 164).

Fleming and Stevens (1998) refer to poetry teaching in the 1970s and 1980s which sacrificed personal response in favour of analysis as Practical Criticism was wont to do. Similarly to Eaglestone (1999), they oppose the relativist view of making meaning from reading which suggests there is no such thing as a wrong answer. However, they identify the pupil as the reader who is her own context and so may bring something unique to the interpretation. They advocate for a method of guided reading which directs students to particular aspects of the work but still permits individual, though textually informed responses.

In 1979, the Schools Council's *Education 16-19: The Role of English and Education,* authored by Dixon, Brown and Barnes, described A-level English Literature as still 'stubbornly Leavisite' in spite of the burgeoning influence of 'progressivist' reader-response approaches at 11-16. Dore (2019) claims that whilst such progressive

approaches have been the most common method in school classrooms latterly, widely used approaches to reader-response theory still require the pupil-reader to pay close attention to the formal, linguistic, stylistic and contextual dimensions of the text in order to cultivate interpretations. Indeed, GCSE examination criteria expects 'informed personal response' to 'textual references', arising from analysis of 'language, form and structure […] using subject terminology' (Edexcel, 2015).

Such a combination of aspects of practical criticism's formalism with the augmented potential for reader-response's interpretivism, was, according to Stibbs (1993), pioneered by English teachers who moved literary reading away from the 'myopic' perspectives of practical criticism (1993: 50). However, such teacher-pupil discussion of texts will frequently revolve around the issue of what 'the reader' understands by 'the author's' use of one technique or another and indeed, the same GCSE assessment criteria directs teachers and pupils towards the figure of the 'writer' who 'create[s] meaning and effects' (Edexcel, 2015). Such approaches to making meaning through close reading and reader-response still typically rely upon the notion of a general reader and what they know of an author's techniques, aims or intentions.

Pupils are typically presented with a coordinate of: a text written by an author who had intentions for the text to mean something, and which is understood and expressed by a general reader. Uncertainties surrounding the concepts of author and reader are still the focus of debate (Glover, 2018) and notions of author and reader in relation to meaning making when reading literature are sites of disagreement, even amongst proponents of reception theory, such as Fish, Rosenblatt and Iser (Glover, 2018).

As Ika Willis (2018) explains, 'reader-response criticism foregrounded the communicative aspects of texts which the New Critics sought to minimize' (in particular, the reader's response in favour of an application of knowledge regarding the canon and intertextual relations between one great work and another) and strived to democratize interpretation and criticism.[2] Quoting Barthes (1970), Willis

[2] The New Critics were, however, dismissive of attending to the author's biography or the notion of literary genius / genesis as a means of developing literary criticism.

asserts that the text was not ‘closed’ by an appeal to authorial intention, but opened up by and for the reader’s productive play’ (Willis, 2018: 23). However, within 11-16 English lessons currently, such play is subjugated to the ‘spade work’ of unearthing fully formed meaning buried beneath the text’s surface, using the tools of literary terminology and technique spotting which are prioritised as essential to the act of excavation. This tendency, alongside potential allusions to authorial intention as a reliable, inarguable seam of knowledge about the text’s meaning, may marginalise the reader as a dynamic and agential maker of meaning. In addition, the focus on context should move beyond a fixation with the historical to focus on matters more literary, for instance, critical reception throughout time, genre conventions, publication, consumption, performance and adaptation. Such a shift in focus foregrounds the text itself and avoids the possible subjugation of the reader.

There is, most certainly based on my observations of many 11-19 English lessons each year, a lack of clarity around what is meant by author intention. Whilst some teachers see this as a paraphrase for grappling with the author’s methods, others use it to refer to an authoritative account of what the text means according to its creator. Other teachers use the phrase ‘author intention’ to refer to both at the same time. Gibbons (2016), sees this as a problem. Speaking as an English PGCE teacher educator himself, he refers to the methods of literary analysis typically employed at present in school classrooms as accepted, as a given, a neutral approach which works through an assumed epistemological and axiological universality and which is therefore ‘benign’ (ibid: 36) because it is presented to pupils as already established through mutual negotiation and agreement between *the reader* and *the author*.

Returning to the concept of the ‘general’ reader as opposed to the individual pupil-reader, Gordon (2015) refers to pupils’ awareness of an abstracted reader who is central to making meaning from reading and that this happens alongside a metacognitive process of awareness, understanding and reflection of their own responses, suggesting that there is a process of comparison in which their own criticism is secondary and possibly to that of ‘the [general] reader’s. This has similarities to what Hogue-Smith (2012) describes as a ‘deferent stance’ when making meaning from literary reading (2012:51). Building upon Rosenblatt’s (1978)

schema, she identifies the value of the general reader, that mythical figure who might serve as strong a purpose for the pupil-reader as the other students they study alongside in discursive co-constructionality of meaning. Similarly, Gordon (2015) does not advise against inviting 'the reader' into the English classroom but rather to set objectives which draw upon the 'notional reader' (2015: 48) as well as the pupil-reader. He suggests that focusing on only one of these, potentially limits responses but he nevertheless appears keen to prioritise the agentive pupil-reader in this process.

Such an approach may also help in addressing the issue of relativist and overly-subjective interpretations, leading to 'wrong' answers. Fleming and Stevens (1998) cite the work of Peter Benton (1988) in developing young readers' responses to poems as an example of the use of reader-response theory. They explain how Benton's priority is setting parameters and preventing pupils from falling into the opinion that all personal interpretation and response should be accepted and that "poems are problems or puzzles to which someone else usually has the key" (1998: 166-167). They cite Benton's work (1988) once more when they refer to reductive, 'inductive question and answer' (1998: 170) sequences, typically following on from reading the poem, and which focus on comprehension & criticism as opposed to reading and response. Dias and Hayhoe (1988), according to Fleming and Stevens (1998), argue that the task of answering another's questions invalidates one's own responses, so that once again, the pupil-reader is side-lined by the prioritisation of the mystical, all-knowing reader-figure or utility of propositional knowledge about the author, the text as literary artefact or socio-historical context.

Louise Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional model of reader-response theory presents a model of reading in which the poem is created through the interaction of reader with text. For Rosenblatt, without the reader, the *poem* simply cannot be and exists only as a *text*. The reader's role is to embody the text and to bring a consciousness and a pulse and purpose to its form and structure in order to create an 'event' (Rosenblatt, 1978: 6). It is possible to see how Rosenblatt's model of reader-response, made explicit in teachers' pedagogy could (re)invigorate pupils' relationship with poetry and literature due to its power to make them think about

their interactions with themselves, their worlds, ideas and feelings. All of this, according to Rosenblatt's schema, carries the reader towards an 'efferent' reading (Rosenblatt, 1978: 24) of the text. Here, she attends to the materiality of the page, but 'carries away' with her meaningful content infused with attachment and significance. Alongside this, an aesthetic reading produces pleasure derived the text's materiality.

Such a model suggests that otherwise, the reader's potential disconnectedness between herself and the text's meaning leads to disengagement and readerly diffidence. As I suggest in the discussion which follows, such diffidence is reinforced in the ways in which the conceptual general-reader is frequently and uncannily presented as an omniscient being to whom the pupil-reader is clairvoyantly connected in order to second guess what meaning already exists, buried beneath the words laid down in another time and place. Here, the job of interpreting has already been completed by a more knowledgeable, other: the general reader. However, Hogue-Smith's deferent reading model (2012), which builds upon Rosenblatt's schema, argues that this can be beneficial, especially when students encounter difficulty in understanding a text and the views of another reader helps to shed light on what interpretations may be possible. The idea of deferent reading is different to simply re-stating the interpretation of others as an authoritative response, but rather, involves creating an opportunity to enter into dialogue with multiple, possibly conflicting views of what a text may mean. For Hogue-Smith and Gordon (2015), the pupil-reader encounters other readers' views and a dialectic is created.

In the section which follows, the role of the pupil-reader in the literature classroom is taken forward to examine the potential for reader-response to activate critical literacy.

2.1.3. Reader-response for critical literacy in textual spaces

Snapper (2009), in studying the relationship between A-level literature and first year undergraduate literature seminars, asks, 'what is the difference between a reader and a critic?' (2009: 201) before suggesting that to separate the two is problematic

because they are inextricably linked. That said, to appreciate the act of reading as related to skills of literacy *and* the realisation of a critical self ought to be considered as something which requires explicit acknowledgement and then furthermore, nurture and development. If the rallying call to empowering the impoverished is to be trusted, perhaps this is the more profound way to do so, rather than through a filtered and selective notion of knowledge which is focused on passing examinations by relying on what Snapper calls 'certificated reading' (2009: 204) which is issued by the teacher-reader or general reader.

Dixon's (1967) notion of the 'interplay' between what the pupil already knows and what they need to be taught to analyse texts, recurs in the work of many teachers, scholars, critics and theorists who have a love for and interest in subject English and English literature teaching. Often, this is driven by the motivation to develop pupils' critical literacy and their skills and confidence to express their own responses and perspectives on what they read as well as forming a critical relationship with language, culture, politics and society to be found in the nexus of ideas, media and technology around them. Drawing on the work of Freire, Giroux (1989) argues that not only does a critical education require collaboration and interaction for the purposes of co-construction of knowledge but it also provides learners with an opportunity to consider themselves as subjects inscribed in discourses. Yandell (2017), also drawing upon Freire (1970), asserts that knowledge is more than information and 'literary praxis' something which, through social relations creates pedagogic relations (ibid: 596) and generates many forms of understanding. It could be suggested that critic-theoretical tenets, explicitly acknowledged in English teachers' practice, instantiated in their literature lessons, could advance that very same thing. Barnard (2023) argues that 'textual space is political space' (2023:2) and so the teacher's theory-informed praxis has the power to make analytical reading in literature classes, a liberating project to realise each pupil's positionality as a basis for the development of perspectives and opinions.

Writing 30 years before Barnard, David Curtis (1993) asserts that the subject should teach critical, cultural reading skills to enable pupils to 'recognise when their emotions are being manipulated against their better instinct or judgement' (1993:

54). That said, Curtis does not overlook the cognitive dimension of textual study but rather, suggests that cognition and understanding develops from affect and that in literary study, this is wholly desirable. He presents a three-stage schema for teaching literary reading and response in which, like Rosenblatt's theory (1978) the pupil-reader is primary, followed by knowledge about the text and then about the wider literary form or genre. He suggests that all three amount to the 'affective development' (1993: 44) of the 'wholehearted active reader' (1993:11). Curtis' work, published after the first National Curriculum (1989) had been mandatory for state schools for four years, can be read as an argument in favour of English as a skills and concept driven subject, rather than one which is a knowledge-based subject which has a dogmatic or edifying purpose, to teach literary heritage (Cox, 1989) or a particular notion of canonicity.

The role of the reader as a meaning maker and critical voice is also a focus of the work of Haworth, Turner and Whiteley (2004). They encourage teachers to find opportunities for pupils to develop multiple interpretations of texts and recognise the 'many points of connection between pedagogic developments and literary critical theory (2004: 75). Specifically, they identify reader-response theory as an approach suited to the 11-19 English literature classroom because it 'recognises the importance of what the reader brings to the text, in terms of culture, race, gender, social class, age, experience of life and the like. The meaning-making process is about the interaction of text and reader as opposed to the view that the text contains meaning inserted by the writer for the reader to extract' (2004: 76). In addition, they suggest that such a method also works to destabilise a canon which 'others' many readers.

A similar view is shared by McGuinn and Stevens (2004) who, writing at the same or similar time as Pike (2004), Lawson (2004), Daly (2003), and Haworth et al (2004)[3] refer to 'genuine meaning making' (2004:11) and this being a skill of an English

[3] Speculatively, the rallying call for reader-response at this time, may have been a response to what was referred to as New Labour's nanny state, the introduction of the third incarnation of the National Curriculum (1999) and the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy (1998) which re-presented English as 'literacy' and required teachers of English to deliver lessons in a set format similar to key stage one and two 'literacy hour' lessons and which were content heavy.

teacher who can 'give credibility to [pupils'] insights and experiences (2004: 10-11). Daly (in Davison and Dowson, 2003), similarly, states that:

> [t]hrough reading we are able to interpret, comprehend and respond critically to the ideas of others. We learn about the particular ways in which texts helps to formulate and express those ideas; we reflect upon the relationship between our own experiences, and those we discover in what we read' (2003: 109).

She makes particular reference to the 'centrality of the reader' in the reading process and highlights 'issues of difference in the cultural and social history in which pupils bring to their reading' (2003:113). An enthusiastic advocate of reader-response theory both for English teachers' practice and pupil learning, Pike (2004) similarly asserts that reader-response 'empowers' pupil-readers to recognise their learning is 'not just more information divorced from the reality of their lives because it can begin with the way they read' (2004: 111) which in turn is coloured by the way they live.

Like Lawson (2004) but writing more than a decade on, Gibbons (2016, 2017) alludes to the English teacher as one who, subjected to the tyranny of accountability metrics, functions as a cog in an *ostensibly* apolitical machine. Gibbons' work can be read as a plea for radicalism where the content and pedagogy of subject English is concerned. Whilst Lawson spies the potential for English teachers to resist in minor ways in the space of their classrooms, namely by recognising the double bind of 'autonomy' and the standards against which they are measured, monitored and assessed, Gibbons desires a greater rift with assimilation through the sounding of the expert's voice. In either case, the call and perceived need for resistance is a priority.

Such views clearly stand in conflict with those UK schools latterly influenced by the work of Hirsch (1987, 1996, 2006) and Young (2008) who present knowledge as the foundation and core of learning which will liberate the culturally impoverished and economically disadvantaged. However, John Yandell, in 'English & the Formation of Teachers' (2017) argues that within the English lesson, knowledge is not the possession of the teacher, waiting to be transmitted to pupils but rather is 'accomplished through interaction' (2017: 584). This is frequently not how 'knowledge-rich' curriculum design is instantiated, however. Rather, knowledge is

presented to pupils as a stable system of ideas cut adrift from social and emotional learning and linguistic experience (Popkewitz,1998:27). Yandell's analysis of objectivist learning, centres around a critique of Shulman's (1986) concept of Pedagogical Content Knowledge and its assumption that all subject pedagogy relies upon teacher knowledge as a precept; locked inside the teacher, awaiting transference rather than through co-constructionality, interaction and relational understanding (Yandell, 2017: 589) (see also Atwood et al, 2010; Esposito and Bauer, 2016; Shepherd, 2014; Tiberghien et al, 2014).

Yandell uses the example of an English PGCE student, Michael, and again, appears to draw upon Freire's critique of a 'banking' model of pedagogy (1970; 45). Michael's transformational learning occurs not by acting as 'container to be filled' with teacher knowledge (ibid: 45) but through transactional and dialogical pedagogy; such learning Yandell refers to, as a 'social semiotic process' (2017: 588). There are similarities here with Hogue-Smith (2012) and also, Le Blanc's (2020) view of learning in English which takes place through a series of Bakhtinian dialogic exchanges during which interpretive and critical reading develops across multiple readings of a variety of thematic, structural and lexical events. Here, pedagogy is viewed as a series of dialogic events 'unfolding' in a process of emergence (2020: 3) and which necessitate pupil engagement.

Similarly to Yandell (2017) and LeBlanc (2020), Doeke and Meade (2018) argue that in English, knowledge develops from interaction and interpretative action and that this is a unique feature of the subject. The polarisation of knowledge and experience is dissolved and Young's (2008) belief that curriculum knowledge 'is not continuous with everyday experience' (2008: 82) cannot hold with the reading of literature. For instance, how might any reader ever pick up a text about a subject they have no experience of and manage to make meaning and offer responses? Cushing (2018) argues that pupils can occupy 'text worlds' which are almost exclusively created by the pupil's awareness of what they *see* and *imagine* when they encounter the text's linguistic content.

Conversely, Gordon (2018) argues that a poem such as Yeats' 'Easter, 1916' requires some background knowledge and he does this in the context of trying to unite the

typical classroom method of Practical Criticism with the current emphasis on propositional or background knowledge. Previously, however, Daly (in Davision and Dowson, 2003) disputes that each text carries with it a 'body of uncontested knowledge' (2003: 115) and that the publication of 'volumes of 'pass notes' (ibid) are testimony to the view that knowledge can exist in an uncomplicated way for pupils which can be handed on by teachers in order to produce standard responses about what a text means, for test purposes. Underneath this, perhaps lies the assumption that a book's meaning is not subject to the reader whose own individual history will in fact confer an infinite range of significance on that text" (ibid). She also makes clear the impact that an acknowledgement of this determines the teacher's choice of pedagogical methods so that they are 'designed around what pupils can learn about the reading process and what can be taught about the book' (ibid).

Stevens (2012) draws together theorists whose views of reader-response theory are divergent. He claims that Beach and van Leeuwenhoek (1996) tarnish reader response theory as an approach which overlooks the text in favour or the reader's liberal interpretation. Kress and van Leeuwenhoek (1996) suggest that literary genres already 'demand hegemonic allegiance and inculcate readers in a world view that is not their own' and to see reader response as asserting the freedom of the subject is politically naïve (in Stevens, 2012: 14). However, Stevens argues that Rosenblatt's transactional model permits 'special meanings' to occur that are unique and powerful (2012: 14-15) as a result of the relationship between reader and text, which only becomes itself through the powers of the reader, her experiences, circumstances and selfhood.

Summary

Perhaps there is no need for an explicit use of theory in English teaching? The contemporary focus on social and cultural inclusivity, diversity and representation seems to have brought to the fore a tendency to theorise in order to interrogate colonisation of the curriculum and of pedagogy as well as permit spaces for readers and writers of all kinds to articulate a variety of experiences and perspectives.

Indeed, according to Chambers and Gregory (2006), theory has been 'profoundly feeble' in dealing with events of the twentieth century (2006: 4) (See also Duguid, 1984) but maintain that all opinions are theoretical and that the question regarding the utilisation of theory in teaching literature ought not to be *whether* but *how*. They continue to view literary theory and English teaching informed by theory, as a means of challenging an 'exhorted view' of literature and 'articulating disillusionment' (2008: 4) with the world and the many acts of oppression, war, genocide and humanitarian transgressions which footnote the twentieth century. Such statements reveal their view of the importance of its role in English teachers' own conception of the subject. Theory is presented by Chambers and Gregory as offering a range of lenses (ibid: 5) through which the 'heuristic purpose' (ibid: 17) of the theoretical turn (ibid: 4) is fulfilled, in order to destabilise and deconstruct normalising tendencies of a hegemonic world view. The question of what kind of theory, however, remains unanswered and its relevance in the secondary school lesson is not considered.

Willinsky's view (1998) is that teaching literature *is teaching theory* and to distinguish one from the other is itself a theoretical position (1998: 244). One might therefore claim that the very act of reading is a process which implicates our political as well as intellectual and cognitive faculties. The reader's responses can never be separated from the act of making meaning and yet, in school classrooms, such responses are typically not acknowledged. Ergo, there remains a need to establish a theoretical awareness in English teachers about what critical practice they employ when teaching literature. To rely on author biography as a means of interpreting a work of literature or to discount the presence of an author (implied *or* actual to borrow Wayne Booth's 1961 concept); whether to adopt a purely formalist approach or encourage purely affective responses, this should be a deliberate and intended move and should also carry a clear grasp of what kind of interpretation that will produce, as well as the kind of critical reading skills that are being nurtured and encouraged.

This kind of knowledge and intent should not lie outside of the English teacher's specialism or disciplinary autonomy. To teach literature without a clear critico-theoretical orientation to one's own pedagogical practice is to overlook what the subject is for and what may be learned from it.

Whilst some may advocate the explicit teaching of critical theory in the English classroom (for instance, Webb, 2019) or doing as Wallinsky (1998) proposes, to present the literature class as a practice in theory, teachers themselves should have a very clear awareness of how their own theoretical stance affects the pedagogy of the literature lessons. They should also welcome its capacity to orientate their practice. Theory is part of the pedagogy of the English literature lesson. As Wallinsky (1998) suggests, the adherence to formalist approaches which attend to textual form, structure, as well as literary and linguistic conceits denies pupils an opportunity to examine the epistemological, axiological and ontological structures of local and global societies. In this way, theory represents a means of providing fields of resistance to pupils and in so doing, help students to name the forces that govern their education and identities. For Beach (1998), Shrofel and Cherland (1998), Sumara (1998), Wallinsky (1998) reading is where the self and world are narrated negotiated, explored, and even altered.

In the next chapter, I examine how the subject has evolved and the extent to which teachers of English can be engaged in steering the direction of change for the subject and its pedagogy, informed by knowledge of literary theory, or whether they are arguably interpolated in systems and processes which make it more challenging and complex to drive change as English teachers once appear to have done.

2.2. Mapping the decline of English teacher expertise

This literature review provides an examination of policies from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s and which are presented as significant for the development of curriculum design for English as well as its pedagogical methods. They are also presented as important for any discussion of the potential marginalisation of English teacher agency in shaping the subject, and autonomy in deciding how best to teach it in their own classrooms. From here, the discussion focuses on research which examines English teacher perspectives on the purposes of English.

2.2.1. The (d)evolution of subject English

The Kingman Report (HMSO, 1988) is viewed as an important milestone in the gradual move away from English teachers being involved in curriculum design, defining disciplines within the subject and crucially the values and purposes embedded within these (Gibbons, 2017; Goodwyn, 2018). Often the Dartmouth Seminar of 1966 is seen as a point at which the 'growth through English'[4] (Dixon, 1967) model was established, having argued the case that Cambridge English was unsuited to an age of comprehensive schooling. The pupil-centred 'growth through English' movement was led by those who taught the subject, particularly in London comprehensives as well as leading members of the London Association of English Teaching (LATE)[5] (Gibbons, 2016, 2017; Hodgson, 2017; Hardcastle, 2016; Doeke and Mead, 2018; Tarpey, 2017, Goodwyn, 2018).

Dixon's child-centred model of subject English promoted a focus on pupils' own language use; a move which reflected the growth of comprehensive education as well as greater awareness of the psycho-social needs of children (Gibbons, 2017) and represented a more democratic, less elitist, and less canonical conceptualisation of

[4] Growth through English was a model of subject English which favoured 'English as language' rather than 'English as literature' with the children's own language use and experience as the foundation for learning.

[5] LATE is described by Gibbons as being 'teacher dominated, respected and influential. Also, that it sought to nurture a strong relationship between theory and practice. (Gibbons, 2017: 17)

subject English. This perspective is later evident in the Bullock Report which states that each pupil is a 'knower' who brings knowledge to life via her own efforts (DES, 1975: 50). Both, it would seem, place the pupil at its core and nurtures a space for knowledge to grow from reading and discussion. Personal responses, that is, those which reflect the reader's personal, emotional or psychological response to a text, took precedence over literary critical analysis (Gibbons, 2017: 18). The latter anchored the pupil's response to the formal aspects of a work and favoured a more systematic scrutiny of meaning produced by style, form, genre. Personal response also eclipsed any tendency towards a cultural heritage model (Cox, 1989) of English which sought to acknowledge the influence and lineage of tradition in a work, as favoured by proponents of Cambridge English (Gibbons, 2017: 20).

Gibbons' (2017) *English and its Teachers* offers a perspective of the last 50 years of English teaching and locates the Dartmouth Seminar of 1966 as a pivotal moment for the curricular and pedagogical development of the subject and one which evidenced the power of teachers' expertise, knowledge and opinion regarding the subject's future. The outcome of the seminar as Gibbons presents it, and what might be considered as the democratisation and demoticisation of subject content, establishes a point from which we might track the gradual decline of teacher-driven change and autonomy in relation to curriculum design and pedagogic methods.

In the second half of the 1980s, a shift occurs in the subject's values, purposes and coordinates and which appear to be much more under the control of government ministers. Gibbons (2017) identifies the cessation of the Schools Council in 1982 as a moment which denies English teachers a voice in decision-making about the subject and its 'redesign' for the first National Curriculum. According to Gibbons, its 1982 abolition marks the start of the marginalisation of teachers in curriculum and assessment reform. Like Day and Smethern (2009), Gibbons mourns the erosion of the kind of teacher autonomy which drove great shifts of change due to the work of 'progressives' such as Harold Rosen and John Dixon.

Gibbons' (2017) book is an impassioned and comprehensive discussion of English teaching since the Dartmouth 'revolution' of 1966. He makes strong links between highly ideological policy choices and changes in pedagogy as well as teachers'

professional identity, agency and participation in discourses about the subject's future. In providing a genealogy of English teaching, principally in the UK, Gibbons concentrates his work on 3 periods. Firstly, the mid 1960s to the mid-1980s map a landscape of the growth of comprehensive schooling, progressive pedagogy informed by a psycho-social model of schooling[6] plus the advent of new technologies. Between the late 1980s and 2000, Gibbons identifies the dawning of the age of standards reform and the growth of centralised control, instrumentally via the introduction of the 1988 Education Reform Act[7], the publication of the first National Curriculum, national strategies, teacher performance and Ofsted. Later, the New Labour[8] move towards academisation triggers another new era of schooling in English. Finally, Gibbons considers the period of the mid-2000s to the present as one which is marked by the loss of teacher autonomy over what and (crucially) *how* they teach, an acceptance of the status quo, characterised as teachers' possessing 'no fight' and enacting an acceptance of forced change predicated on evidence-based need for reform. This is something I will return to later in this chapter.

It is not insignificant that there have been a number of recent appraisals (Hodgson, 2017; Tarpey, 2017) of Dixon's *Growth through English* (1967) and the work of LATE (Gibbons, 2013) and I suggest that this is due to the light they may shed on the current complexion of subject English in England's secondary schools and the pedagogies deployed by its teachers. It is perhaps significant that such appraisals have been read as a call to arms for English teachers to be once again much more involved in the subject's design and delivery (Fleming & Stevens, 2015), for pupils themselves to be far more agential and aware as readers, and for teachers to enact more dialogic and transactional approaches to literature learning.

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[6] Margaret Mathieson's (1975) The Preachers of Culture and David Shayer's (1972), *The Teaching of English in Schools 1900-1970* are seen as seminal works from this period. (Gibbons, 2017: 4-5).

[7] Gibbons refers to eras pre and post 1988 Education Reform Act as respectively characterised by 'invention' and 'intervention' (Gibbons, 2017:6) and denoting a 'absolute paradigm shift' in English teaching.

[8] Gibbons takes issue with New Labour's Michael Barber describing teaching of the 1970s as 'uninformed professionalism', followed by the 'uninformed prescription' of the 1980s, the 'informed prescription' of the 1990s and 'informed professionalism' as the 'way forward'. (Gibbons, 2017: 7) Barber's derisory view of uninformed teachers serves to glorify the policies of New Labour's control over curricula and pedagogy.

Arguably, subject English is never free from ideology and its content and pedagogy are liable to change with socio-cultural and politico-economic forces, tastes and agendas (Dore et al, 2019) and what Barnard (2023) refers to as 'cultural and epistemological securitisation' (2023:1). As Simon Gibbons (2017) claims, it is 'ludicrous to view English as anything but political' (2017: 35) and McGuinn & Stevens (2004) refer to 'internal philosophical and practical divisions" as well as 'externally formulated governmental and quasi-governmental policies and targets' (2004: 1) as a more faithful representation of rifts related to subject English.

2.2.2. Subject English and the politics of pedagogy

Gibbons identifies the 1980s as a watershed moment in another regard: in particular, the conservative government's decision to overlook most of the recommendations of The Cox Report (1989). As Marshall (2008) notes, Cox, co-editor of the educationally infamous Black Papers[9] was perceived to be an unlikely advocate for the liberalisation of language and the centring of the child and her experiences within the curriculum. Cox himself refers to the intention to build upon the 'innovations of recent years', perhaps in reference to the work of stalwarts such as Dixon and Rosen and clearly sought to present, arguably for the first time since the publication of The Newbolt Report (1921), a question which probed the purpose of subject English.

Goodwyn (1992), Hardman and Williamson (1993), Goodwyn and Findlay (1999), Findlay (2010) have written of the impact of 'the Cox models'[10] and the enduring role his schema has had in educating and developing English teachers as well as a means

[9] The five Black Papers co-edited by Cox and Tony Dyson were published between 1967 and 1977 in the Critical Quarterly. A reaction to aspects of progressive and child-centred education following the publication of The Plowden Report (1967) which saw Cox objecting to the teaching English 'as though it were sociolology […] that English could ignore the craft of the writer, getting pupils to write endless free-verse poems…' (Marshall, 2008: 39). The Black Papers have been described as right-wing responses to the left-wing progressives, including those advocates of 'growth English' (Gibbons, 2017: 33), but such political polarities are presented as Gibbons as somewhat misleading. Rather, he suggests that the Black Papers should be read as a critique of 'progressive' education and the failings of comprehensive schooling.

[10] Cox's 5 models of English included a 'personal growth' view, a 'cross-curricular' view, an 'adult needs' view, a 'cultural heritage' view and finally a 'cultural analysis' view. (The Cox Report, 1989). Cox insisted the model was not comprehensive and its categories not easily distinguishable.

of assessing shifting perspectives and values in regard of the question, what is English teaching actually for? Goodwyn and Findlay's (1999) work illustrates a number of changes in the perspectives of practising English teachers. Prioritising the personal growth and adult needs models has remained a constant according to the ethnographic studies conducted by Goodwyn (1992), Goodwyn and Findlay (1999) and Findlay (2010).

Whilst the introduction of versions of the National Curriculum[11] correlate with a reluctance to accept change[12] (identified by Goodwyn as periods of 'destabilisation and external imposition' (Goodwyn, 1992: 5)), 'personal growth' has remained as a priority. Goodwyn's 1992 research presents English teachers' reluctance to accept 'cultural analysis' and aspects of cultural media and cultural studies as being 'English'. However, by the time Goodwyn and Findlay's 1999 follow-up study was conducted, 'cultural analysis'[13] took centre stage alongside the longstanding priority of 'personal growth. Daly (in Davison and Dowson, 2003) describes Cox's cultural analysis view as teaching pupils to be 'critically aware as readers' (2003: 110) rather than ascribing a shared heritage model for all. She refers to the 1999 National Curriculum's recommended development of pupils' own readings of texts, characterised by criticality and confidence arising from independent responses at the same time as 'inducting pupils into the literary discourse of examinations, with its assumptions that some readings on more acceptable than others' (113). Around the same time, Williamson and Goodall (1996) suggest that the idea of personal response as part of literary study is a fallacy. They argue that texts and readers are so implicated in cultural discourses that acknowledgement of such influences is essential in developing how pupils make meaning, respond critically and draw upon a range of textual and contextual influences when reading. In regard of 'cultural analysis', English teachers' changed views of its burgeoning import in 1999 was not reflected in the latest National Curriculum (2014), in which the singular mention of 'm-e-d-i-a' occurs only within the word 'immediate'. Moreover, the values of the

[11] Versions of the National Curriculum were published in 1989, 1995, 1999, 2014.
[12] See Goodwyn's (1992) analysis of English teachers' view of the Cox models.

then Secretary of State, Michael Gove, were further evident in the reformed GCSE which no longer included a specific focus on Media as part of the subject.

Findlay's 2010 study even more bleakly identifies a future for the subject driven by the needs of assessment, eschewing Cox's 5 options in favour of an outcomes-led agenda which informs not only the 'what' and 'why' of the subject but also '*how'* English is taught so that pedagogy is altered by the prescriptions of syllabi, examinations and Ofsted inspections. The suggestion that a sixth 'view' of English (that is, an outcomes / assessment- led model of the subject) be added to Cox's five (Goodwyn and Findlay, 1999: 24) suggests an increasing level of accountability for teachers and the way in which this may influence their classroom praxis as well as undermine their own values and philosophies regarding subject knowledge and subject pedagogy.

Goodwyn's perspective of the 'cultural analysis' view of English teaching is that it enables pupils to 'deconstruct the ideologies of power and value that helps to keep them politically, and in class terms, firmly in their place' (1992:8). This would appear to have much in common with Freire's (1976) notion of 'critical literacy' as one which activates awareness of social class and justice and which ought to be at the very heart of an education. A more recent controversy regarding English literature in the National Curriculum (2014) centred around Michael Gove's intention to bolster what Cox would likely identify as a 'cultural heritage' view of literary study by prioritising texts and authors of British origin. For many, this became an issue not simply of nationality but one of race and ethnicity as well as cultural and linguistic diversity (Goodwyn and Findlay, 1999; Yandell, 2017).

Goodwyn argued in 1992 that English teachers who, under prescription, teach the canon, serve to enforce the 'civilising' or 'missionary' role of literature, reinforcing 'channels of repression' (1992: 8). By the time of Goodwyn and Findlay's 1997 research (published in 1999) there was opposition amongst teachers to the 'cultural heritage' view and it ranked as the least important of the 5 'views'. (1999: 21). The disconnect between this and the 2014 version of the curriculum serves to support Gibbons' (2016) assertion that English teachers were no longer leading change and

had little autonomy to ascribe epistemological and professional specialisms to curriculum content and design.

2.2.3. Making English teachers: training or education?

The Department for Education's 2017 introduction of a government-funded, eight-week Subject Knowledge Enhancement (SKE) course in subject English enabled graduates in subjects other than English to apply to complete a PGCE with QTS in secondary English. Speculatively, the impact of this is that fewer English teachers are likely to be in a position to influence the direction of curriculum design and to construct an academically informed view of the potential purposes of the subject, oriented by theory, by, for instance, consulting a schema such as Cox's, or any other which presents the subject as multi-faceted and multi-purposed. Although current recommendations by the Department for Education as part of a market review of ITTE (July 2021), alongside the 2019 publication of a Core Content Framework for ITTE providers, situates the development of subject knowledge in the provider's realm as has been the case for many years (Heathcote, 2000), arguably, all is not what it may seem.

Recommendations of the market review also include a reduced period of time in university and more time spent on placement. This is likely to increase student teachers' development occurring in accordance with school practice and philosophy rather than in a space where criticality and interrogation are characteristic. Furthermore, Ofsted published its Research Review of English in 2022, in which an evidence base was presented to teachers, teacher educators and school leaders. The review attracted much criticism from subject organisations such as the English Association, NATE and the English and Media Centre who felt compelled to publish highly critical responses to the review, largely because of its preference for particular pedagogical methods and the selective use of 'research' to justify its recommendations. Teacher educators are expected to have adopted the recommendations of the review in their own teaching programmes from 2024.

Similarly, within teacher education, government support for Teach First plus encouragement of schools to start their own school-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) models, prioritise time spent in school over time spent in university or remove the need for any university involvement at all, induct student teachers into a mechanism of observation, development through imitation, and profiling performance against the DfE Teacher Standards (Yandell, 2017). Teach First does not require its secondary teachers to have a degree in the subject they will teach because summer schools and training is provided during the year-long course. Set amongst such models of teacher training, the university is viewed as one of several routes of teacher 'training'[14] but which is likely to facilitate and encourage criticality around pedagogy, epistemology, axiology and 'professionality' although now, as Yandell (2017) states, there seems to be a requirement for the university to become 'complicit' in compliance given the introduction of a *Framework for Core Content in ITT* (DfE, 2016) to which all providers must show adherence and compliance.

Besides the move to recruiting non-English graduates and changes to what is taught to pre-service English teachers, as well as how and by whom, there is the matter of how subject knowledge is conceived as part of a student teacher's journey towards qualification. Daw's view, as far back as 2000, is that having a discrete standard[15] for subject knowledge is too narrow and that it should not be disconnected from *how* subject knowledge is used (2000: 4) when it is put to work in the English classroom. If we agree with Daw's assertion, it is not hard to see how the status of subject knowledge could be treated as disconnected from and even subjugated to the import of classroom pedagogies which are determined by methods and theories underpinned by evidence bases, across every subject in a school, as a means of providing comparable and measurable impact which, according to Wastell and White (2012), serve to execute maximal surveillance over teachers' practice. John Gordon's (2012) view is that it 'does not suffice to specify what and how much should be read'

[14] There is debate regarding the terms 'teacher education' and 'teacher training' as well as the acronyms of ITT and ITE. The need to acknowledge that training and education are both vital in the context of developing pre-service teachers and so many use ITTE.
[15] Referring to the Department for Education's (2011) Teachers' Standards, which are composed of 9 standards against which pre-service and in-service teachers have their competencies assessed. Subject knowledge is included in Teachers Standard three.

(2012: 375) and that teacher knowledge extends far beyond content knowledge. Drawing upon Shulman's (1986) model of Pedagogic Content Knowledge (PCK), Gordon argues for a great consideration of how content specialism becomes expert pedagogy. Although not mentioned in his paper, the explication of theory in English teachers' disciplinary knowledge could support such a move.

The separating out of knowledge and skills into standards (of planning, assessing, behaviour managing) seems to represent a lack of appreciation for how subject knowledge itself is part of each of these. It also represents a lack of consideration given over to teachers' prior knowledge and experience as well as concomitant perspectives and values, within their specialist subject. Daw (2000) makes clear his view that all considerations of a teacher's pedagogy and practice derives from subject knowledge, rather than being separate from it. Clearly, the move to the recruitment of non-specialist pre-service teachers in several subjects, including English, suggests a further decline of the importance of specialist subject knowledge as something which characterises teacher identity and practice. For Daw (2000), such a situation begins to affect pupil engagement with and enjoyment of English, including inspiring creativity and nurturing intellectual curiosity (ibid).

As an illustration of this, 2019 Ofqual figures published by *The Guardian* newspaper (14/8/19) show that the number of pupils electing to study English Literature for A-level dropped by 13% on top of a 15% decline in the previous two years. The report quotes one headteacher as saying that the reformed GCSE is 'sucking the joy' out of the subject and Michael Rosen refers to the approach to learning in literature being 'mechanical' because the 'student's response is not seen as relevant' (ibid). A further 6% drop in uptake of A-level English was reported by *inews* (27/5/21). The report suggests that governmental transformation of the subject into a 'joyless slog' has led to an overall 23% decrease across all three English subjects between 2017 and 2021. In 2022, *The Independent* newspaper reported a further drop of 9.4% between 2021-2022, meaning the subject dropped out of the top 10 most popular pupil A-level choices in the UK for the first time. Alongside this, closures of university literature departments were reported during the same academic year with *The Critic* (2021) hailing 'The Death of the English Lit Degree'.

The situation outlined above and Rosen's assertion that the subject is now a 'joyless slog' returns me to the matter of how critical reading practice is taught in subject English and the ways in which structural, infrastructural and systemic change affects disciplinary knowledge and classroom pedagogy alongside English teachers' autonomy and agency within teaching. It returns also, to the contested site of pupil reader-response; from Cox's earlier objection to free response in the Black Papers, to his later presentation of the subject cut to reveal 5 facets of purpose and practice in 1988. Shift to the present day and reports and figures such as those above suggest that pupil enjoyment has been affected by the teacher's reluctance to 'hand over' interpretation to pupils, in favour of a more dictated approach to cut a sixth facet: that led by outcomes by which the teacher herself is judged.

As another, earlier illustration of a burgeoning problem, in the year 2000, Pike undertook 'The Keen Readers' project order to examine the impact of direct instruction pedagogy and knowledge induction on pupil enjoyment, enthusiasm and engagement. His work suggested a reduction in all areas of pupil experience when studying poetry and he concluded that the connection between the poem and the life of the reader was a crucial component of successful interpretation and the production of critical responses (2004: 164).

Returning the discussion to training (or educating) English teachers, Andrew Green's (2006) analysis of the relationship between English graduates' experiences of learning at university courses (see also, Peim (1993; 2000); Leach (2000); Snapper (2009; 2010); Hodgson (2010); Knights (2017)) and the subject they go on to teach as qualified English teachers raises similar issues to Daw's (2000). Green writes in the context of what he describes as dichotomous paradigms of English', referring to the proliferation of curriculum change and strategy implementation post-Curriculum 2000 (2006: 111). He refers also to the way that teacher subject knowledge is assessed by the Teacher's Standards (DfE, 2012) and Ofsted inspection frameworks but argues that subject knowledge is more than knowing content (2006: 111). Green's claims are informed by his belief that in order to teach English, the English teacher must necessarily have an understanding as well as opinions and perspectives on its functions, purposes and identity as a curriculum subject.

Clearly, such a model depicts the English teacher as a subject with agency and whose subject knowledge fuels the specific pedagogical principles they employ and even shapes its evolution in subsequent curriculum reforms. Green's concept of a 'personal deliverable model' (ibid: 121) is perpetually informed by a process of negotiation of the relationships between teacher, pupil and curriculum. Green specifically raises the issue of redefining English so that it becomes a 'workable classroom model' because although, he claims, ITTE has been a popular choice for English graduates, degree courses do not prepare them well for subject English as a secondary school subject (2006: 112).

Drawing on Dewey's view (1903) of the interrelatedness of teacher knowledge and their pedagogical choices, as well as the subject knowledge development models of Banks (1999)[16] and Grossman (1989)[17], Green goes further to argue that the English student's personal construction of subject knowledge is a characteristic of learning in and about the subject. This, for Green, is an important element in negotiating the transformation from English undergraduate to English teacher (2006: 114) and is what leads the development of a 'personal deliverable model' of English. Green refers to a 'reconstructive dialogue with degree-level knowledge' (2006: 113) as a critical element in learning to teach one's subject. He goes further by suggesting that subject knowledge is fluid, changing (ibid: 117) and influenced by the interface between knowledge gained from prior learning and that knowledge which is gained from experiences with students, within school and the broader context of education. I suggest that such an argument must include the subject specialist's knowledge of critico-theoretical principles as a staple of how learning can happen but that this appears to be an issue given student teachers' knowledge, understanding and deployment of literary theory during their time at university and embarking upon a programme of ITTE.

[16] Banks et al (1999) presented the teacher's subject knowledge as being composed of the inter-related elements of subject knowledge, school knowledge, pedagogic knowledge and their relationship to personal constructions of knowledge based upon experiences and circumstances. (Green, 2006: 115-117)

[17] Grossman et al (1989) described 4 categories of 'subject matter knowledge' all of which underpin the subject specialist teacher's knowledge: content knowledge, substantive knowledge, syntactic knowledge, beliefs about subject knowledge (Green, 2006: 119-120)

2.2.4. English teachers: autonoms or automatons?

Gibbons (2017) argues that between the late 1980s and the start of the 21st century, standards reform and accountability measures, centralised control of teachers' knowledge and pedagogy, alongside a new marketisation of schools in the form of academisation, triggered an era of status quo, characterised by a paucity of resistance, a decline of professional autonomy and a rigid adherence to evidence-based practice (Gibbons, 2017). Situating the current state of subject English in the dominance of centrist and conservative politics in England is a fair one but I would argue that in addition to political ideology, the subject has undergone specific epistemological, ontological and axiological change as a result of the growth of Claxton's (2021) DIKR phenomenon. As a teacher educator conducting qualitative research, I have, through my frequent interactions with English teachers, heads of English departments and teaching and learning leads in secondary schools, encountered attitudes towards scholarship, research and concepts belonging to English (namely literary theory) which are suspicious at best; derogatory at worst. Instead, I have encountered unerring commitment to whole-school, cross-curricular approaches to teaching and learning which do not seem to me as an English teacher of fourteen years and a teacher educator of nine years as a good fit for the subject of English literature.

However, Lawson (2004) suggests that there is a need to approach the notion of dwindling teacher autonomy with caution. Whilst it is easy to frame the issue in terms of teachers' surrendering their voice and power as Gibbons (2016) is inclined to do, Lawson previously identifies autonomy as an instrument of control rather than liberation; one which harbours an agenda. It should be said however, that Gibbons, like Thomas (2019) who encourages teachers to experience discomfort in executing their agency, invites risk taking and an awakening of personal politics in their practice. Within education however, Lawson argues that autonomy is offered by management to teachers as a strategy of empowerment for embedding more deeply the organisation's own interests. Such a situation can be found in guides written by and for teachers of English, which provide an illustration of English teacher

professional development presented in the language of closing attainment gaps or raising achievement but which plainly sit within the context of improving pupil outcomes, again reinforcing Goodwyn and Findlay's (1999) sixth model of English teaching which is driven by assessment.

Lawson's (2004) argument that the notion of teachers as self-governing individuals is in fact a form of disciplinary power presented as continuing professional development (CPD) and drawing on the work of Furedi (1996) represents a form of 'moral authoritarianism' (2004:6) in the guise of liberal intentionality. The same might be said of other areas of school life, such as student voice – a gesture made towards the student as a client or customer) but which enmeshes the pupil in institutional discursive practices and acts to establish a set of standard concerns which are presented as 'client-led.' Furthermore, this suggests that the liberation of the teacher, free to choose their own developmental path, is a means of reducing costs of CPD as well as the administration and organisation of staff training and development (Lawson, 1994; Tight 1998; Coffield, 1999). The introduction by the Department for Education of National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) direct teachers to a suite of whole-school priorities, such as behaviour, teaching, leadership, literacy. NPQs are delivered by DfE partners, such as the Ambition Institute (who also offer 'ITT' in competition with HEI-led ITTE) and which are fully funded by the DfE, unlike university-led, postgraduate courses.

Such options give licence to the idea that teachers are free to steer the direction of their own professional development but perhaps compliance becomes the driving force of teacher education and development and generic training leads not only to an erosion of subject specialist knowledge in favour of approaches which lead to maximal performance (for pupil and teacher) but arguably increases docility, passivity and compliancy at the expense of creativity (Dore, 2020; Thomas, 2019) so that self-regulating teachers 'experience the goals of government as their own because their subjectivity has been constituted by the practices of the institutions that they inhabit' (Lawson, 2004:6).

Gibbons (2017), who claims that teachers have 'no fight', also rightly refers to the popularity and currency of the views of the 'Twitterati'. Such 'experts' extol views on

pedagogy and curriculum which are 'far from radical' according to Gibbons (2017: 42). He argues that the widespread use of social media and 'teachmeets' function as little more than a 'swap shop for top tips' rather than a platform to discuss and debate potential change driven by English teachers themselves (ibid). All too often, teachers who dispute the effectiveness of the latest pedagogical innovation are accused of being opposed to tackling inclusion in schools, or of not wanting the best outcomes for the most disadvantaged learners. Steve Watson (2020) refers to this as new-right micro-populism, which he conceives as creating divisions through discourse and which arise due to teacher uncertainty and a lack of confidence in their own expertise. The growth in number and influence of the self-styled guru and teacher-turned- consultant / author appears to capitalise entirely on teachers' uncertainty about how to perform their roles. Such gurus compete in the consultancy[18] and publishing world for a foothold in the commercial possibilities of offering magic bullets and fixes for problems that are situated as obstacles to teachers realising their 'effective', 'outstanding' and 'impactful' practice.

Some years earlier, McGuinn and Stevens (2004) made a series of similar points, referring to Rex Gibson's (1984) notion of instrumental rationality in which teachers become 'functionaries' performing to diktats. They do however identify hope in the form of 'the possibility of a new synthesis between the functional aspects of the subject English and its creative facets based on a radical reinterpretation of the romantic foundations of English teaching' (2004: 5). Using concepts which are reminiscent of Cox's models, they challenge the notion of the subject as a means of culturally cultivating the raw nature of the pupil. Rather, they advocate for 'adventurous English teaching' to 'recognise, develop and celebrate what is already there' (ibid: 6) The challenge against instrumental rationality is reinforced by their quoting of Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) who claim, "the role of the English teacher has moved accordingly, it could be argued, from autonomous professional to something more akin to that of the technician, where responsibility for curriculum implementation and assessment is accompanied not by corresponding rights, but by

[18] Consultancy.co.uk (2018) reported a 196% increase in educational consultancy spending between 2002-3 and 2016-17 https://www.consultancy.uk/news/18534/uk-education-consulting-spend-rises-196-in-14-years

a series of monitoring and policing procedures designed to keep teachers continually on the defensive and in a state of "manufactured anxiety" (2004: 75).

Summary

The identification and unification of the subject cluster 'SHAPE' to represent the interests of Social Sciences, Humanities, Arts, for People and the Economy / Environment has led to a reaction against misinformation that graduates of SHAPE subjects underperform professionally and financially in contrast to their STEM peers. Just recently there has been clear mobilisation of subject communities to contest this with empirical and statistical evidence to the contrary. Organisations such as the Bank of England[19], the British Academy[20], the World Economic Forum[21] and Google have publicly stated their support of SHAPE as a vital and influential group of subjects in the domains of business, industry and technology by focusing on the critical skills behaviours and competences that SHAPE graduates are said to possess.[22]

If we consider that within this contemporary context, skills of the future rather than knowledge of the past is a priority for the twenty first century's relationship with technology. Tech is now fabricated in society, economics and culture and the opportunities and risks of artificial intelligence require human input and endeavour.

What has any of this to do with literary theory? I suggest that English teachers need theory to orientate their pedagogy and practice so that they can embed praxis which advocates, nurtures and encourages critical literacy in pupils. If the political and agentive teacher is to be, within a context of performative pressures and pedagogical uniformity, theory is the compass for their praxis. If English teachers practice without a degree in literature, then theory, which is already heavily implied in the assessment

[19] 'Limiting skilled, controlled migrant labour is a mistake,' says ex-Bank of England chief economist | News UK Video News | Sky News

[20] SHAPE Skills at Work | The British Academy

[21] World Economic Forum's top 10 skills for 2025.

criteria for GCSE and A-level, must be taught, acknowledged and understood as a driver of pedagogy.

Pre-service English teachers should be clear about the genealogy of critico-theoretical approaches from school to university so that the textual theory (as one English literature lecturer described it to me) inscribed in GCSE and A-level syllabi has a clear relationship with the critical and cultural theory which is, according to the Halcrow group (2003) the most widely taught module on English literature degrees. For graduates of English literature not to have a clear sense of theory's role in their discipline, and how this is instantiated each time they read with purpose (and without) is a problem, not only for those who pursue teaching as a career, but it is a problem for theory itself because its lineage does tell an important story about the subject itself but also about those grand narratives which still infiltrate epistemological and ontological exchange of many kinds.

Theory should be made to work much harder than it is. Its current status as an appendage to the study of literature and to the practice of teachers in their classrooms is wrongful. Discourses proliferate about raising attainment for and challenging underachievement of the economically and culturally disadvantaged by teaching background knowledge and contexts at the same time as pupil-reader response occupies a neglected and overlooked space. Moving forward, this should be a matter of discussion for scholars and teachers involved in literary studies.

Summary of Literature Reviews

The suggestion that 11-19 English is still characterised by close reading and reader-response has clear implications for English teachers, heads of department and headteachers with oversight of staff development as well as teacher educators.

The literature shows that the fine grain of reader-response theory reveals subtle variations in function and that this can make a significant difference to the way literary reading approaches meaning making in the secondary literature lesson.

The implications of these literature reviews are that there is more to understand about the knowledge and experiences that PGCE student teachers of English who

have studied literature as undergraduates, have of literary theory. Syllabus design and assessment criteria clearly incorporate aspects of structuralist (as described by Culler (1997)) theories of reading, interpretation and criticism, so the question arises regarding what PGCE students know about literary theory, what happens to what they know once they begin teaching, and what elements and sources of influence direct their literature teaching in ways which see them assimilated with pedagogical methods and practice which does not value the role of the reader. Furthermore, this also raises the matter of whether secondary school English teachers consider themselves to be teachers of reading, charged with developing children's reading knowledge and skills of analysis and do they see themselves as agents of influence and change as subject specialists.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods

This chapter outlines the methodological context to my research. I describe the research design and methods used to conduct the study, matters pertaining to access, settings, participants and ethics before explaining how the data was analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis.

3.1. Research questions

My survey of the field in the previous chapter led to the formation of the following research questions:

- Does student English teachers' substantive knowledge of literary theory change throughout the PGCE?
- What concepts from literary theory do PGCE English student teachers bring to their teacher education course?
- Is it possible to detect concepts from literary theory in student teachers' PGCE progress?
- What does the use (or not) of concepts from literary theory in PGCE performance, progress and assessment tell us about English literature pedagogy and teacher specialism in secondary schools?

3.2. Research design and methods

The methods used for the study were interviews, lesson observations and field notes during the PGCE course, followed by a focus group at its conclusion.

I had always intended to work with spoken language as data, partly because of my own experiences teaching spoken language through transcripts as well as identifying it as the richest way of capturing student teachers' own perspectives of themselves as PGCE students/pre-service teachers. At an early stage I had considered discourse analysis to be the likeliest method for analysing the language data captured in

interviews but once I encountered RTA, I realised that this, provided a parallel for the very method of literary reading I was advocating for in my research.

Having settled on semi-structured interviews as well as lesson observation field notes, I created interview questions (Appendix E and F) to guide the interviews. The questions I wrote were guided by my research questions further to completing my literature reviews. I wrote separate sets of questions for the first interviews (Appendix E) which were held in February / March, ahead of my visit to schools to observe English lessons throughout April and May. Each observation was followed up with a one-to-one post-lesson interview (Appendix F) which was largely based upon my observations from the lesson itself. However, I asked the same two questions to all student teachers:

1. Was today's lesson a reading lesson?
2. Do you consider yourself to be a teacher of reading?

Mears (in Coe et al, 2017) identifies semi-structured interviews as providing opportunity to go beyond the surface with a smaller number of participants and aim for depth not breadth as far as generating 'rich and detailed' data is concerned (Bryman, 2012). Mears also advises that the interviewer should not approach the interview with the intention of having the participant answer research questions, but rather, generate broad areas of interest arising from research questions which allow for participants' experiences to speak. Schostak (in Somekh and Lewin 2011) similarly advises that the data should reside in the world of the participant rather than the researcher. I did as Mears suggests by phrasing my questions in an open fashion, relying on 'what' and 'how' questions. Such an approach is important in semi-structured interviews to allow for flexibility in participant digression and departure (Bryman, 2012) and which was complemented by my own intuitive approach to interviewing; something I would say was easier having got to know the students over a six-month period and having established lecturer-student rapport.

I had previously requested that students identify lessons for me to observe which taught literary reading of either fiction or non-fiction. In the end, only one student

taught a lesson different to this and even then, because the children were writing stories, there was a focus on using knowledge of genre features to write for a particular readership. Throughout, much of the work required pupils to think as readers and writers and so the student teacher, Frances, was able to engage with the same issues as the others student teachers.

Acting as an ‘insider’ researcher (see section 3.4.), I was able to carry out unstructured observations of each student teacher on placement in school. This meant that for the purposes of the study, I observed without any specific schedule of behaviours to focus on (Bryman, 2011). Rather, I sought to observe all approaches to teaching pupils how to engage with literary reading. This enabled me to build up a narrative about what occurred in the lessons, taking into account variation of context, class, resources and importantly language-use pertaining to aspects of literary theory. All observation fieldnotes were handwritten in a notebook, kept separately from the formal PGCE proforma which was completed on my laptop and which referenced the Core Content Framework learning outcomes.

My initial interviews with the student teachers were completed online via Teams before (see section 3.9.) the lesson observations commenced and all post-lesson observation interviews were held face to face, directly after the observed lesson. Initial interviews with student teachers were carried out over the half term holidays when they felt as though they had a little more time. It was imperative to stick to a tight schedule of interviews so that I could complete observations and subject mentor interviews before the conclusion of the PGCE course at the end of June. Interviews with subject mentors (Appendix E) were conducted whilst I was in school carrying out observations, with Tilly and Roisin and via Teams link with Steve and Nat. In each case, the arrangement was at the mentor’s behest and typically determined by their availability during the school day or evening. As my participants were volunteers, one student teacher could not take part because she had not completed a literature degree and two subject mentors did not respond to my participant information and consent forms even though they had verbally agreed to do so during my observation visit to Stuart and Ali at the same school.

Finally, I invited student teacher participants to attend a focus group whilst recognising that focus groups can run the risk of being contrived (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). The focus group had a very different atmosphere because it was held in the university the day after the students officially completed the course and had been given verbal notice that they would be recommended for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). I brought refreshments and booked a private classroom that was familiar to all with chairs and tables arranged into one large 'nest' with food in the middle. Combined with relief, the students also seemed to be jubilant and open to talking about their school experiences, drawing on their full PGCE journey in university and working in two separate schools with two separate subject mentors. It was the first time they had met together as participants but seemed already to have talked about their experiences of being involved in the project and besides, they had been in the same student cohort for a full academic year. Ali and Stuart had spent their final placement in the same school and had bonded as good friends throughout that time.

I used a semi-structured interview approach once more (Appendix G) but allowed the students to determine the length of time they talked about a topic and also permitted their candour into the talk, even when this was critical of their placement, their mentor or the PGCE programme. It should be noted however, that the student teachers were well versed in matters related to professional conduct and are assessed for this in the CCF.

My focus group was a 'focussed interview' (Bryman, 2011) because all of my participants were drawn from the same group, to talk about the same situation and had been involved with the project since its beginning. Gibbs (in Coe et al, 2017) states that focus groups have benefits such as establishing a broad consensus or dissensus to facilitate synthesis of a broader range of views. This proved to be complementary to my 1:1 interviews which were aimed at generating depth. In addition, reassurance and confidence may be experienced by some participants, although this may also be seen as a weakness of the method in that less confident members of the group may feel obliged to concur with a majority view as I suspected Stuart did. Conversely, Robson (2024) identifies the group dynamic as a circumstance

which encourages less confident contributors to participate and share their views, especially with those who may be like-minded. It is therefore important to account for an established dynamic between the group members. As I have explained elsewhere, this was the first and only time that all participants met as a group. Whilst Ali and Stuart had become friends and colleagues in school, the other students were not friends and had not worked together on placement.

Gibbs (in Coe, et al, 2017) stresses the role of the moderator in the focus group, in steering the discussion, keeping some control of the discussion and moderating dominance. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) helpfully point out that interaction should, however, occur between participants rather than in dialogue with the moderator / researcher. Robson (2024) identifies some of the difficulties of this, however. He suggests that the researcher, in moderator mode, may find it difficult to follow-up on participant responses without breaking the discussion. Moreover, he advises that group allegiances and hierarchies can have a strong influence on participation and this is something I had taken account of, as explained above.

Robson (2024) in outlining the advantages of the 'focus group interview' (Robson, 2024: 387) refers to the efficiency of the method for collecting a large amount of general data at one time but simultaneously warns that this can be less useful for generalisability. Moreover, he suggests that the researcher / moderator might be inclined to place more faith in the results of the interviews, simply due to the dynamic, 'live interaction' (Ibid: 388) of the discussion and Flick (2023) suggests that this may surface during the analysis of the data. Both of these points are reasons why I kept the focus group interview separate to the 1:1 interviews conducted for the study. The other reason was the timing of the focus group interview. It was held after students had passed the course and perhaps felt freer to talk with candour and criticality, having had the benefit of a phase of reflexivity.

All data was recorded via Teams or on a voice recorder device. Recordings were uploaded and stored on my student One Drive cloud storage before being erased from the original device. Participants were given pseudonyms which I felt assisted in giving them an identity. I used these pseudonyms throughout for all writings and file names further to securing participant permissions and approval.

3.3. Participants

All participants were provided with a Participant Information Form (Appendix A and B) and separate Participant Consent (PCF) were issued to student teachers (Appendix C) and subject mentors (Appendix D). As I had used convenience sampling to draw volunteers to the project, I had presented all students with a one slide briefing on my project and to indicate that I would send out electronically information which explained the project, its aims and questions, as well as the methods of data collection. I also explained the criteria for being involved in the project. This stipulated that all participants should be graduates of an English literature degree, have some experience of studying literary theory as part of their degree studies and have passed all PGCE assessments to date. Several students responded to my message but some had not completed a degree in literature so were unable to take part. The six student participants below (see 1-6 on Table 1, below) were all of the students who volunteered to take part and who did match this criterion.

The four subject mentors listed below were already attached to each student teacher as subject specialists in the school English department and who had undergone training to act as an ITE mentor. I did not impose any additional criteria to their taking part in the study.

I chose to invite subject mentors to take part in the study (see 7-10 in Table 1, below) due to the nature of their role, the influence they have over the students' practice and as employees of the host school, the fact they are very likely expected to act as agents of their school's curriculum design and preferred pedagogical methods. Moreover, the student teacher is regularly observed by the subject mentor and targets related to their classroom teaching are formally set and reviewed by them on a weekly basis as well as summatively at the conclusion of the placement.

Student teachers are principally and frequently assessed and mentored according to the host school's particular involvement with ITE and its CPD offer to school staff. Thus, including the mentors would allow me to gain their perspective on educating

and training English teachers alongside capturing the significance of the specificity of the school setting, for instance, where a whole-school adoption to a specific model of pedagogy had been adopted. Furthermore, it provided opportunity to explore how mentors, as qualified teachers themselves, view their subject specialist teaching and their capacity to execute autonomy regarding how they taught English.

	Pseudonym	Role	Qualifications	Setting
1.	**Ali**	PGCE English student teacher	BA (Hons) English Literature; MA Linguistics and TESOL	11-16 mixed school
2.	**Christina**	PGCE English student teacher	BA (Hons) English Literature	11-16 mixed school
3.	**Frances**	PGCE English student teacher	BA (Hons) English Literature	11-16 mixed school
4.	**Sadiya**	PGCE English student teacher	BA (Hons) English Literature	11-16 mixed school
5.	**Robert**	PGCE English student teacher	BA (Hons) English Literature	11-16 mixed school
6.	**Stuart**	PGCE English student teacher	BA (Hons) English Literature; MA English Literature	11-16 mixed school
7.	**Nat** (Robert's subject mentor)	PGCE English subject mentor / teacher of English	BA (Hons) English Literature; PGCE with QTS	11-16 mixed school
8.	**Roisin** (Frances' subject mentor)	PGCE English subject mentor / teacher of English	BA (Hons) Performing Arts; PGCE with QTS	11-16 mixed school
9.	**Steve** (Christina's subject mentor)	PGCE English subject mentor / teacher of English	BA (Hons) English Literature; PGCE with QTS	11-16 mixed school
10.	**Tilly** (Sadiya's subject mentor)	PGCE English subject mentor / teacher of English	BA (Hons) English Literature; PGCE with QTS	11-16 mixed school

Table 1: Table of participants

3.4. Methodology

The following discussion starts with an acknowledgement of recognised research paradigms of positivism and post-positivism, critical theory, constructionism and interpretivism. Drawing upon the work of Kuhn (1970), Waring (2017) explains that a paradigm 'represents a person's conception of the world, its nature and their position in it' (2017: 17) and suggests a typical spectrum polarised by positivism on one side and interpretivism on the other. However, he also advises caution against 'methodological fundamentalism' (ibid: 19).

In seeking to answer the above research questions I situated myself within an interpretivist paradigm and chose methods which supported inductive analysis of qualitative data to theorise about the problematic of PGCE students' English literature teaching. Whilst situating myself within an interpretivist paradigm, I also took heed of views such as Mason's (2018) who offers the qualitative researcher advice regarding what taking such a methodological stance might mean working within the field of education. He advises the researcher beginning 'qualitative researching' to identify the essence of their enquiry before expressing this as an 'intellectual puzzle' (Mason, 2018: 4). For Mason, this is related to 'thinking qualitatively' (ibid: 31). Such activity, he suggests, replaces a preoccupation with *producing* qualitative research. Moreover, Mason suggests that the *process* of thinking qualitatively requires the researcher to ask questions of the emerging research and correlative assumptions and that this is preferable to working within a research paradigm 'blueprint' (ibid).

Waring shares this view and addresses the polarity of such paradigmatic orthodoxies and encourages the researcher to acknowledge 'grey areas' (Waring, (in Coe et al, 2017: 19) in their approach. He also refers to the complexities associated with educational research due to potential failures, at least in regard of positivist researching, to recognise the relevance of contexts as well as a tendency to

dichotomise theory and practice; something which considerably troubles teacher education for those involved.

A similar view is shared by Biesta (2020) in regard of theory. He seeks to challenge orthodoxies of educational research by advocating for pragmatism over 'confessional' approaches which expects the researcher to state their theoretical commitments rather than asking, what do I need theory to do for me? Such a challenge arises from his assertion that we should be more concerned with asking what educational research is seeking to achieve, and in doing so, acknowledge that schools are 'open' systems, characterised by 'complexity' and occupied by 'reflexive' individuals.

Along the same lines to Mason and Biesta, Robson (2024) argues that research questions provide guidance for research methodology and methods. The questions which guided this research were concerned with understanding what knowledge student English teachers had of literary theory, how they used it in their classrooms and how practicum experience affected it. These questions rested on the notion that the relationship between such theory and practice was socially negotiated through a series of relationships and experiences that the student teachers were invited to consider. It seemed to me that what Robson refers to as 'social constructionsim' (Robson, 2024: 30) acts as a direct parallel for the approach to teaching literature which acknowledges that meaning is made through a series of exchanges, interpretations, borrowings and negotiated meanings in which the individual is always a part. The deferent reading of Hogue-Smith's (2012) reading of Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory of reader-response acts as both an example in action and an example in theory (see sections 2.1.2. and 2.1.3.). These questions also permitted me to execute thinking qualitatively (Mason, 2018: 31) rather than becoming fixated on the paradigmatic rules of qualitative research.

Thus, my research questions led me to seek understanding of how my participants might read, interpret and evaluate their subjectivity as pre-service English teachers who arrive at the PGCE with a body of learning about English literature in their possession. The same applies to pupils in the English classroom for it is they whose experiences might trigger my own fury, lest they are deprived of the chance to be

appointed interpreters of the literary worlds they are required to inhabit as part of their schooling.

Robson stresses that researchers operating in such a space of subjective and social interpretivism do not readily accept the notion of an objective reality (Robson, 2024: 30) and once again, this serves to parallel the critico-theoretical model of literary reading. This is so because providing literary reading attends closely and methodically to the data of the text, that is, its structural, stylistic and linguistic content, there should be no such thing as a purely objective meaning, or in literary terms, a 'right answer'. Just as the constructionist / interpretivist researcher will accommodate many realities, so should the English teacher accommodate many interpretations. A clear knowledge and understanding of literary theory as the means of facilitating such accommodations, is key.

The positionality of the researcher and reader should not simply be acknowledged but invited into the process of interpretation and seen as an asset to the particular perspective given to the data. Returning to my research questions for a moment, May and Perry (2022), suggest that subjectivity and the meanings that people attach to the world, for the constructionist researcher, are the only or preferred way of viewing reality. They ask, how 'can we know the world independently of people's interpretations?' (May and Perry, 2022: 12) and that perhaps understanding *how* they come to interpret the phenomena of the world they live in and the meanings they give to them is our best hope of certainty. That is, *if* we even have certainty as our goal. Certainty was not an anchor I sought in this project, but what was, was an understanding of how individuals interpret the data of their lives and the world they live in as I was invited to do at the age of 21. Once again, I argue that this ought to be the goal of learning in English literature due to the subject's potential to create critically literate young people who are invited to recognise the apparatus of restriction, oppression and compliance.

Dean (2017) suggests that the qualitative researcher must look to their own positionality in order to find the problem they are grappling with and in my case, this stemmed from my own experiences as a child, as a teacher and as a teacher educator (see section 1.1.). Broadly, I perceived there to be a conflict between teaching as a

profession on the one hand and on the other, the negative judgement of student teachers who exerted their experience, knowledge and reflective practice to challenge dominant expectations of teacher practice. More narrowly, I observed that the specialist subject knowledge which I acquired throughout my return to education and throughout my 14 years in the 11-19 classroom, was no longer valued as it once was. English teachers could now teach from pre-written materials and acquiesce to teaching methods ill-suited to the subject of English literature, many of which currently misrepresent the process of literary reading and meaning-making.

This is the site of the fury I write about in the introduction to this study (see section 1.1.). I perceived in my school observation visits as an English teacher educator that discourses which claim to prioritise the most disadvantaged do so by prioritising the didactic teaching of background knowledge. In so doing, they deprive the same children of the opportunity to explore, understand and mobilise themselves against their disadvantage. In Freirean terms (1970), a banking model of education negates any opportunity to nurture critical literacy.

3.5. Research settings

My research took place within two settings, the academic space of the university and the professional space of the school. Both of these situate me as an 'insider researcher' because I am, 'facing the situation or trying to develop [my] practice' (Munn-Giddings, in Coe et al, 2017: 72).

In addition, Dean claims that the insider researcher must develop the skill of 'playing it by ear' (Dean, 2017: 113) and demonstrate a flexible responsiveness to their participants' perspectives. In my case, I could see the two worlds the student teachers occupied and the criteria against which they had to demonstrate compliance and success. I understood that they wanted to show their appreciation of university input at the same time as satisfying the often-singular requirements of the school placement. Students were aware from my own teaching, mentoring and personal tutoring that I understood the difficulties they faced in school, occupying

the status of a student teacher, in exerting their professional judgements and preferences. My frequent call to them to nurture a critical relationship with school practices was often a source of discussion in my teaching sessions in the university.

Flick (2023) highlights the potential for such ‘familiarity’ to be problematic for the participants and proposes that its opposite, ‘strangeness’ may yield more interesting results for the researcher. In the case of my interviews, I felt that the participants often bristled against my teaching and ideas as a teacher educator, largely because they sought to assimilate to their mentor and school’s preferences and expectations about how to teach English literature. Moreover, I was an insider insofar as I understood the tension they experienced between the domains of school and university, and once they were on placements for around six of the nine months of the programme, I visited them in school only once. In this regard, there was a ‘strangeness’ to my visit, in which they would explain to me, how things were within the school. The close relationship with their mentor, regardless of how positive or negative the relationship may have been, working together on a daily basis during times when I would not have contact with the student, meant that I was most likely viewed at the outsider. In such situations, my insider status as a researcher was much less based on familiarity and never involved me ‘going native’ as Flick puts it. (Flick, 2023: 305).

During all interviews and observations for this research, my contact with the participants was minimal and infrequent due to the structure of the programme and the nature of ITE PGCE courses which by necessity, dedicate the majority of time to practicum experience.

The matter of setting is also important here in regard to my participants. The PGCE students, or ‘trainees’, occupy two roles on the PGCE: as postgraduate student and as pre-service, professional practitioner. The Teachers’ Standards (DfE, 2012) and the Core Content Framework (DfE, 2019) straddle both contexts but are allocated different levels of status in each and are also subject to varying interpretation and implementation in each. Moreover, each context has its own Ofsted inspection framework and accompanying agendas to work with and this arguably characterises differences in conceptualisations of teaching as an occupation. In many ways, the

student teachers' dual experiences and their accounts of them, represented something of a crucible for them making sense of how they become a teacher of English. For this reason, it was important to me that I was able to gain access both to the student teachers who negotiated both contexts and to the qualified teachers they were taught, mentored and assessed by.

3.6. Access

Flick (2023) identifies the challenge of locating participants and accessing individuals who are suitable and willing. I used convenience sampling for the study, drawing from the large number of students on the PGCE course I lead. Bryman (2012) suggests that it is common in qualitative educational research in comparison to purposive or probability-led sampling, due to cost and time-constraints. Furthermore, opportunity (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011) and pragmatism may be other reasons for selecting it, as was the case for my study. Moreover, Mears (in Coe et al, 2017) identifies convenience sampling as especially well-suited to interviewing due to the researcher's proximity to the context and the participant's experiences. That said, I did introduce one main criterion for my volunteer participants, of having an English literature degree, which according to Mears (2017) could aid generalisability. Bryman (2012) suggests that even when convenience sampling does not easily accommodate generalisability, it does act as a springboard for further research.

I invited students from a cohort numbering approximately sixty to contact me if they were interested in taking part in the research. Having six student teachers respond to my invitation to take part in the research, I then decided to request interviews with each student's subject mentor at their placement school. In hindsight, I would have included mentors from the beginning as I later came to see their contribution as invaluable for exploring tensions between the world of teacher education in the context of the university and of the school.

3.7. Ethics

This study was granted ethical approval by the university's ethics committee. My application detailed the process for working with student teachers as participants, recruited from the cohort of students on the English secondary PGCE programme and their mentors on placement.

As a tutor on the course it was necessary for me to explain how I would carry out a dual role of researcher and course tutor and how this would be executed during my school observation visits. My initial interviews with students were held at the very beginning of their placement before I had visited the school, observed any of the student teacher's teaching or met their mentor. I had also not acted as the University Visiting Tutor (UVT) for any of the six participants during their Placement A practicum. I had, had no access to the Placement B school's curriculum and pedagogical methods before I made my visit. In this regard, none of the initial interviews were focused on placement experiences past or current, or an awareness of how the student teachers had been directed to teach for Placement B.

The focus group was held after all assessment had been concluded and students informed that they had passed the course and would be awarded QTS. Ergo, nothing they said during the focus group discussion could affect this outcome and students were aware of this.

During school visits to conduct observations, my UVT observation was recorded on a university proforma (see Appendix H and Appendix I) which guides the observer to assessing the student against nationally set criteria drawn from the Core Content Framework (DfE, 2019). The observation was dually conducted to focus on how the student teacher presented to students, the task of reading for meaning as well as the role they played in making meaning. My notes were handwritten in a notebook and made no reference to the CCF or any other frameworks or criteria for the assessment of student teachers.

Students were only permitted to take part on the study given that they had not been subject to any kind of underachievement or intervention measure and which could

affect the outcome of their time on the course. Further explanation of my recruitment of participants is explained in 3.6., above.

Participation Information Forms (PIF) and Participation Consent Forms (PCF) were issued to student teachers and subject mentors, which explained the 'hard ethics' attached to my commitment to safeguarding confidentiality and anonymity of data. Separate forms were issued to students and mentors to reflect the different levels of involvement required of them. As no children's voices, images or examples of pupils' English work were used, I was not required to secure consent from children, care-givers or school leadership. Both the PIF and PCF documents provided detail about the methods of collection, storage, deletion, use and publication of data and explained that all data would be pseudonymised.

Aside from the focus group, participants were interviewed individually and with a high level of privacy. This made it straightforward for me to contextualise and explain the focus and purpose of each interview and provided multiple opportunities to employ a 'soft ethics' approach to participants, reminding them that withdrawal from the project or preference to abstain would be accepted without question or qualification. I believe that having developed positive relationships with student teachers before commencing data collection made it easier for them to inform me that they felt unable to maintain commitment to participating in the project. In fact, many of them expressed their enjoyment in participating and offered to take part in further interviews should the study require it.

3.8. Research timeline

I re-commenced Phase B of the EdD in September 2021 having undertaken initial work on a literature review prior to Covid lockdown measures necessitated suspension for all doctoral researchers at the university. I secured ethical approval in March 2022 and immediately commenced interviewing student teachers ahead of my school observations beginning in April 2022. I completed 16 interviews in total by June 2022. All interviews were transcribed between July and November2022 and this

was followed by an initial stage of analysis in December 2022 into January 2023. I produced an initial draft of data analysis by March 2023 and a second stage was completed by June and a third by September 2023. I produced a first draft of the thesis by mid-October 2023.

3.9. Undertaking the research and analysing the data

The initial round of six interviews with each student teacher was conducted online via Teams. Two of the four subject mentor interviews were also conducted online via Teams due to mentor availability, whilst the remaining two were conducted in person in the mentor's classroom. The Teams interviews, which were approximately 60 minutes long, were recorded by me. Questions were posed synchronously (Flick, 2023) and initial questions were designed to create some comfort by asking 'fact-finding' questions such as where did you study? What was your degree title? And, when did you graduate?

Teams produced a transcript of each interview, which eventually proved to be unhelpful due to the number of errors it produced, largely due to poor recognition of regional accent. Before I started interviewing, I drafted fully structured questions (See Appendix E) but the interviews were in fact only ever semi-structured because I realised that responding to participants' answers, recurring feelings, references and motifs in their explanations was exactly what I sought in the interviews to address my research questions. Adhering to the fully structured interviews would not have permitted me the flexibility (Robson, 2024) to pursue areas of interest and relevance to the project. That said, there was consistency of coverage of key areas of interest, for instance, if students had compulsorily and / or electively studied literary theory across the three years of their undergraduate degree. At all times I was guided by the questions I had written beforehand but permitted myself the flexibility to digress and probe.

Interviews seemed the best way of capturing data because I knew I wanted to work with language and how students might articulate their experiences and perspectives

using verbal accounts of their learning and practice. This was coupled with the observations I was to conduct of the students teaching English and the follow-up interview about the observed lesson (which were conducted in person) with all six student teachers. The online interviews were conducted with cameras as well as microphones activated and in the case of the student teachers, I had already established a relationship with them as a result of being their course tutor for, at that point in the year, 6 months. This set-up was the easiest way to replicate a face to face, in-person interview and permitted me to notice behaviours which may have indicated discomfort about participating or responding to certain questions. Online interviews also had the advantage of accommodating the meeting taking place during the Easter holiday, and allowing the students to remain at home (as all of them did) in a familiar and comfortable space with time enough to speak to me without the burden of travelling or the matter of finding a neutral space which also permitted privacy. Another advantage was that I could conduct the interviews at times which were of greatest convenience for the participants, so that it felt as comfortable and convenient as possible for them. In some cases, this meant conducting the interviews around childcare or during the evening.

I commenced transcribing interviews (see Appendix L) as soon as possible after each had taken place. I commenced analysis after all data was collected and transcribed at which point, I began reading and re-reading each data set, for instance, focusing on Interview One transcripts with the six student English teachers, followed by Interview Two transcripts with student teachers and so on.

The data was collected in the following order:

1. Interview One (pre-lesson observation) with six student English teachers;
2.i. Interview Two (post-lesson observation) with six student English teachers;
2.ii. Field notes taken during an observed lesson of six student English teachers;
3. Interview Three with four subject mentors (conducted according to subject mentor availability);
4. Focus group with five student teachers at the conclusion of the PGCE course.

My immersion from transcribing and repeated readings with initial notes kept of my thoughts meant that I built upon a strong familiarity with the data, after which I

began manual coding. This meant that transcripts were annotated in the margins to keep a record of observations and potential codes. I had intended to make use of software due to the volume of data I had collected but naturally fell to annotating, using an inductive system of coding which was reminiscent of literary study and the method of close reading and identifying patterns in and across text (Appendix J).

I approached each of the data sets (i.e., Interview 1) separately at this stage and repeated the process of reading each interview within the data set, adding annotations as I went along. This process generated a large number of codes which were then tabulated on a Word document (Appendix K). Handwritten annotations initially created a level of messiness and complexity but also permitted me freedom to work in a way that moved back and forth in describing, defining and crafting codes and later, subthemes. I repeated this method across each transcript within each data set.

The next step was to notice similarities in the codes within each transcript and then within each data set. In addition, I began to notice codes which did not appear to fit with an emerging bigger picture, within a data set, because they did not recur across the data set. Whilst there were more singular codes that were of interest to me, I did not pursue them as I sought intensity across sets of data.

During the following stage, I grouped codes into subthemes. I used a simple system of colour coding using coloured highlighters, again working on paper. I generated as as many subthemes as I felt necessary and useful. The next step was to electronically cut and paste highlighted data using the paper copies as my guide. Working on new, blank word documents, I produced re-grouped data using the colour coded subthemes. Once completed, I began recrafting and rationalising the number of subthemes beginning to group them into themes with subthemes which were amalgamated or disaggregated according to the emerging patterns of similarity and difference. Under each block of re-grouped data, I began to write in prose my initial phase of data analysis. This meant that my initial analysis was always developed from close reading of the text extracted from interview transcripts, compiled in one word document, organised into subthemes, This process produced four sets of analysis, one for each data set as detailed above (see p.71)

Soon realising that this would be only my initial phase of analysis, I acknowledgded that there were simultaneously, areas of repetition as well as omissions of quite nuanced aspects of the same subtheme which was written about within one data set but not connected to the same theme in other data sets. Consequently, I commenced a second phase of analysis, analysing subthemes across data sets rather than within each respectively as I explain below. This served to improve further, the intensity and significance of some subthemes but also gave great specificity and clarity to others. Analysing this way meant that I started to observe in the data, moments of significance and interest to my research questions and my original problematic of teaching English literature without a theoretical compass and the impact this was having on pupil-readers.

I also chose to keep separate the data from the focus group because of the group method and context as well as timing of the data collection. Not recognising this difference would likely distort the analysis of the data captured whilst students were still on the programme as opposed to once it had concluded, which was the context of the focus group. I only decided upon this once the focus group had taken place and I was struck by the different character of the student teachers' attitudes and perspectives about their PGCE experiences.

Making the decision to compile subthemes drawn from data from Interview 1 and 2, field notes and subject mentor interviews, I felt that the data was liberated from the tyranny of my interview questions. This was because the data extracts compiled anew according to subthemes drawn from all data sets no longer pertained to the questions which typified one interview over another, etc. This phase of analysis required me to immerse myself again in the data, viewing it in a much more holistic way and allowed me to start grouping subthemes into broader themes. At this stage, feeling as though I had moved far away from the original interviews, I re-read the original interview transcripts to ensure that so many months of working on extracts which had been regrouped and reorganised twice had not misrepresented or distorted the data.

For this second phase of analysis, I initially used the original numerical identifiers for subthemes to mark up the documents containing each theme but this time across

four data sets (Appendix O). This eventually led to an amended set of subthemes. Regrouping data from four data sets into four themes led to some re-coding because the data presented me with different patterns of intensity and interest. At this stage, whilst the organisation of the data had become much more complex, I could at least see more patterning and intensity in the data and this was what led to the formation of broader themes which were tabulated to show a clear relationship between each, and the subthemes which constituted it. I was also able to identify how things sometimes contradicted each other, and this occasionally proved useful for spotting other moments of significance. I continued to add digital annotations to Word documents which reflected what ideas occurred to me when seeing the data reassembled in this way and such annotations proved useful for my writing up.
I once again read the compiled data in search of moments of intensity, and which would be important in telling the story of the data. I then set about writing about each subtheme within each theme. By now, my immersion was in subthemes which sat within four themes and the original data sets and the initial data analysis ceased to be a structural or organising principle for the writing. I continued to rationalise subthemes within themes to avoid repetition and to accommodate richer and more nuanced discussions of the data. Once more, I returned to the original transcripts to check that my analysis maintained *credibility* through *faithfulness* to the data.

In summary, I produced two versions of analysis, the earlier one was eventually archived but proved useful for the process of familiarising myself with the data for the second attempt at analysing the data across all data sets (not including the focus group). The second version also underwent two further versions, the first attempted to economise quotations from the data whilst the second version reinstated the students' words from original interviews.

3.10. Analysis: Reflexive Thematic Analysis as method

My method of analysis, Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), acknowledges the 'centrality of researcher subjectivity' (Braun and Clarke, 2019: 590) and enabled me to prioritise a reflexive relationship to my research and encourage qualitative

thinking (Mason, 2018). This seemed highly important given my personal and professional proximity to the focus of my study, namely the formation of my initial problematic due to my disappointment of observing English literature lessons which denied pupils the opportunity to be active and agentive readers.

In 2019, Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke published a paper which reflected on their previous presentations (2006, 2012; 2013) of their typologies of thematic analysis (TA) and reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) which they state was influenced by the earlier work of Mauthner and Doucet (2003). Braun and Clarke assert three important amendments to their previous work. Firstly that RTA should be used within a qualitative research paradigm which works according to a ‘Big Q’ approach (Braun and Clarke, 2022: 7); secondly that their approach to TA should now be known as RTA thereby emphasising the importance of researcher subjectivity and reflexivity, which they later refer to as the ‘primary tool’ of the method (ibid: 8), and thirdly, that RTA is an ‘analytic method’ (Braun and Clarke, 2019: 589) more than a methodology.

Having previously described TA as ‘a theoretically flexible method rather than a theoretically informed and constrained methodology’ (Braun and Clarke, 2019: 592) they latterly described it as ‘theoretically flexible only as a generic method’ (ibid). Such a revision is a response to what they perceive to be a constraint of assumptive paradigmatic and epistemological assumptions which do not locate researcher subjectivity as central and do not operate according to recursive, iterative and reflexive interaction with research data (ibid, 593).

Acknowledging the primary tool of RTA being reflexivity, it became an obvious choice of method for my analysis. Realising that my own personal, educational and professional experiences had driven my initial identification of a problem, to proceed with the research without situating the issue in my own experiences would be not only disingenuous, it would compromise the integrity of the findings and would not reflect my own ontological and epistemological position. Throughout the duration of conducting the empirical study for this thesis, I realised how necessary but very importantly, how interesting this made the study for me as a researcher because the students told me very many things I had not expected to hear, and this generated

findings which resulted from my own discovery of experiences, different to that which had kick-started the project in the very beginning.

Braun and Clarke's 2006 paper initially sought to address what they observed as 'mash-ups' of methodological approaches and what Byrne calls 'delineated methods' (Byrne, 2021: 1391) which Braun and Clarke suggest have continued despite their recommendations. Perhaps as an illustration of this, papers written by Byrne (2021) and Maguire and Delahunt (2017) present researchers with exemplar demonstrations of conducting TA and RTA because they suggest there is uncertainty regarding the 'how' (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017: 3351) of conducting RTA within different disciplines. Moreover, Hole (2023) asserts that the most significant reason for delineation from RTA as a purely qualitative method, is the researcher's failure to acknowledge the significance of their positionality on a reflexive, ontological and epistemological level. For me, I simply did not want to remove myself from the analysis (in fact, I am not sure this would have been possible) of my data because I had a desire to understand if my own positionality was a help or a hindrance to the analysis. Such a positionality had snowballed over many years but at the point of initiating the project, had been reinforced by my position as a teacher educator and fuelled by the fury of my encounters with discourses of raising attainment of the most disadvantaged children through DIKR (Claxton, 2021) approaches to teaching (see section 1.2.).

Ergo, Braun and Clarke advise 'TA methodologists' to make clear their approach (Braun and Clarke, 2019: 593) to address the problem of approaches which combine positivist assumptions and interpretivist analytics (ibid., 591). They provide an explanation of qualitative research as being about 'meaning-making' which is 'context-bound, positioned and situated.' (ibid.). Moreover, it is about 'telling "stories", about interpreting, and creating, not discovering and finding the "truth" that is either "out there" and findable from, or buried deep within, the data' (ibid.). Such a method presented me with a powerful parallel for the personal and professional belief I carried, that literary reading should operate in the same way. In such a parallel, the researcher becomes the reader and the data becomes the text. In such a dynamic as this, the reader is liberated to tell the story they can mould from

the text. The distinction between semantic and latent coding is also of significance here because it presents yet another parallelism between my method and the method of literary analysis which I refer to through methods of practical criticism and reader-response to be found in school classrooms. Byrne explains that 'latent coding goes beyond the descriptive level of the data and attempts to identify […] underlying assumptions, ideas or ideologies that may shape or inform the descriptive or semantic content of the data' (Byrne, 2021: 1397).

Realising that RTA allowed me to act as a researcher in exactly the way I advocate for children to act as readers in English literature lessons, I further understood that my analysis of the data should acknowledge my positionality as well as allow me to work with written language by attending to meaning which may be spread across a large body of text and which may be drawn together by the reader / researcher to present interpretative accounts of the writing which are infused with their experiences, preferences and perspectives. This is what Rosenblatt advocates for in her transactional analysis model of reader-response theory in *Reader, Text, World* (1978) and what Braun and Clarke (2019) are asserting as a primary tool and unique feature of RTA. Whilst their model was initiated in qualitative analysis of social science, Rosenblatt's was situated in literary studies. Recognising this, I sought to exploit my experience in the disciplinary method of literary analysis which I believe liberated myself as a scholar, whilst adhering to the principles of their qualitative model of analysis.

A key element of the method according to Braun and Clarke which emerges is data 'immersion' which is 'deep and prolonged' as well as 'active and generative' (ibid, 591). My method of analysis remained as a direct parallel for the very approach to classroom reading in literature lessons which instigated my research questions and problematic. A further element concerns the nature and generation of 'themes' and they are keen to challenge the method of presenting data summaries as a theme (ibid, 593) or which identify themes according to interview questions. Such an approach would clearly hinder the process of immersion and recursive reading which strengthens the researcher's ability to construct meanings which are a product of reading, coding and engaging reflexively with raw data. This is something I myself

had a number of false starts with because, in my case, interview questions gave me a false impression of what the data might yield. Such an assumption requires a rethink of the method and a return to one's interpretivist openness. In fact, realising this marked my first sincere engagement with RTA in that I came to experience fully, the agentive role I played in drawing together meaning from the data and presenting this according to the problematic I had identified at the very start of the project.

Braun and Clarke refer to the development of themes as an active process, a 'creative labour' of coding which develops through 'open, exploratory, flexible and iterative' (ibid) analysis which in turn, constitutes the reliability of the coding process and generation of themes. Partly, this also relates to the matter of meaningfulness because as Byrne (2021) suggests the generation of themes through coding cannot simply be a matter of frequency because 'what is common is not necessarily meaningful' (Byrne, 2021: 1395). He expounds this by suggesting that recurrence is important but so is meaningfulness for the researcher and the participant(s) (ibid). Such an approach would seek patterns (Terry et al, 2017) and assist in defining and naming themes which contribute to telling the story of the data. Furthermore, I found that my beginning problematic of how English was being taught to raise attainment for the most disadvantaged, meant that I was keen to locate my analysis in data related to this whilst developing my openness to what I would find in the data.

Both Byrne (2021) and Macguire and Delahunt (2017), in respectively modelling an example of RTA / TA, cite the six-stage analytic process as designed by Braun and Clarke (2017), as critical to the method's success:

1. Familiarisation with the data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Generating themes
4. Reviewing potential themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report.

(Byrne, 2021: 1398 – 1410).

In section 3.9. I provided an explanation of how my methods of analysis followed this process but in the section which follows, I include an example of how I used RTA to

generate codes and how my reflexive practice guided this as an acknowledged and deliberate strategy to tell a story from the data. As I have outlined, Braun and Clarke emphasise researcher positionality as a 'fundamental characteristic' (Braun and Clarke, 2022: 5) of reflexivity. Without this, the method can only be *thematic analysis* (TA) and fails to acknowledge the presence and influence the analyst has over what the data is *made* to tell us. Making a link to the ontological and epistemological stance of the researcher, they argue that this is a mainstay to all qualitative work.

During the second round of data analysis which I refer to in section 3.9., the process of familarisation with the data was as strong as I could have hoped. Having produced a version of the analysis according to the stages of collection, I had already transcribed and read multiple times the original interview transcripts. I returned to the data to approach it not according to the stages of collection but across all of the data, with the exception of the focus group data. As I have explained, by this stage, the coding bore more relationship to my positionality as an analyst than to the interview questions which I had initially, unwittingly relied upon as my guide.

Working with transcripts of each round of interviews, I commenced reading and making annotations on paper (Appendix J) in pencil. These annotations were initial responses which continued my deeper immersion in the data but started to record impressions of answers as I read. An additional analysis of the data included me adding to these annotations, in part due to having read each transcript in their entirety in addition to reading all of the interviews from that interview one. These annotations clearly demonstrate the interplay between the participants' transcribed answers and my own analysis which are characterised by my positionality and perspectives, working with latent meaning as well as, to a lesser extent, semantic meaning. For instance, my generation of the code that teacher subject knowledge and the way they teach plus the identity they exhibit to the class alongside their relationship to / passion for the subject are codes I generate at the level of latent meaning.

Furthermore, I began generating codes which brought together my responses. These were written in red and were repeated with variation and nuance as needed. Having repeated this across each interview within each data set, I tabulated the codes (Appendix K) in the left hand column but added refinements to these in the right

hand column. This process allowed me to capture all codes from all six initial interviews before repeating for Interview Two, field notes and interviews with subject mentors.

Appendix N contains text from transcripts which I had coded and grouped into subthemes whilst Appendix L shows how I continued to add annotations to an initial attempt at producing written analysis. At this stage, I was also using the numbering from the tabulated codes (Appendix K) to ensure that the analysis was being revisited and reviewed and subthemes were always being reconsidered to take account of a more significant narrative emerging across the data sets.

For the second attempt at analysis which sought to work with subthemes and themes across Interview One and Two, observation field notes and subject mentor interview, I once more returned to transcripts and using the numbering from my subtheme tables (Appendix K) and commenced revising and reviewing according to patterns of latent meaning which I identified and which were directed by my agenda I had set at the outset of the project.

Summary of methodology and methods

This chapter has outlined my research aims and design as well as my own researcher paradigm and positionality. In regard of this, it has explained how my view of English teaching gained from my role as an English teacher educator has conflicted my experience as a student of English when given the power of critical reading and literacy, an idea influenced by the work of Freire (1970). I have described how RTA was used as a method of iterative reading and analysis of interview, observation field notes and focus group data which allowed me to situate and utilise my own positionality to analyse interview data. Furthermore, I explain how I actioned my approach to RTA in a fashion which mirrored the kind of textual analysis used in the discipline of literary analysis to generate stable and substantial themes arising from my readerly and analytical work with the data to explore student teachers' methods of teaching literary texts.

Chapter Four: Analysis and Discussion

This chapter presents analysis of interviews conducted with six PGCE student English teachers, four school placement subject mentors and of field notes made during lesson observations of the student English teachers. All six student teachers participated in two separate interviews: one at the start of their second school experience placement and another following a lesson observation halfway through the same placement. The subject mentors of four of the student teachers participated in one interview each. Finally, five of the six student teachers took part in a focus group at the end of the PGCE programme. Analysis of the focus group is presented in Chapter Five.

Further details about methods, participants, access, setting and ethics can be found in Chapter Three (pp.53-62) as can methods of analysis using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (pp.63-65).

4.1. Theme one: Literary critical journeys from GCSE to undergraduate

Introduction

This section presents analysis which shows participants' experiences of reading as children and as school pupils throughout GCSE and A-level. Throughout, relationships to literature and literary study are characterised by a novel and unique learning experience of learning about the self, the world and the lives and experiences of others. These relationships are informed by the pedagogical methods of their teachers which demonstrate a commitment to the role of reader-response in interpreting and meaning-making as part of literary study.

Analysis in this section is presented as two subthemes:

1. Developing empathy and emotion through reading;
2. The Influence of English teachers and their pedagogy at GCSE and A-level.

4.1.1. Developing empathy and emotion through reading

The subtheme presented in this section shows the participants' recollections of their adolescent experiences of reading and being a student of literature. These experiences are characterised by empathic reading journeys of self-realisation which are influential and meaningful.

There was something about their reading experiences which spoke to the adolescent in all six student teachers and made them see themselves now, in a role of influence along the same lines, in the classroom. Indeed, vicarious encounters and experiences are evident in the way seven of the 10 participants talked of the opportunities texts afforded the reader, that is, themselves and their pupils, to learn more about themselves. Robert explains:

> I loved character and how character could reflect emotion and how emotion and character could sort of reflect on things I experienced in the world, which I didn't always understand or I struggled with. (Robert)

He continues to offer a recollection of his teacher's explanation of Edith Wharton's style as a vehicle for emotion too complex to convey or comprehend by any other means:

> So, I remember, like, a dance scene. It's like 7 years ago now, but I don't know, we studied this dance scene where all the lights were beautiful and it was golden and gorgeous, highlighting the moment before the fall where everything went wrong for Ethan Frome and that stuck with me and about her teaching it through that lens of imagery and linking that to the character. I can still remember a lot about that book. (Robert)

Learning about the self by learning about and from others is how most of the participants appear to view learning in the subject. Sadiya says that the diverse literature she studied 'shaped [her] views on life' and Christina says that her adventures with Chinese literature 'changed [her] life', whilst respectively *The Butcher's Wife, To Kill a Mockingbird, Wuthering Heights, Ethan Frome, Stuart: A Life Backwards*, and the poetry of Keats and Plath are all spoken of as portals into times,

lives, places far removed from the student teachers' own and yet which had a profound effect on them.

For Sadiya, there is the belief that everyone has a story and a duty to share it with others, so that they might become a more empathic person. My own relationship with Sadiya goes back some years. I was her A-level teacher around 14 years ago. As a shy 16-year-old, she sat in my classes and quietly committed to the text in front of her; she refers to one text we studied, *Stuart: A Life Backwards* (2005) by Alexander Masters:

> I remember when we were studying that, I, I thought I, I've never read about anyone having any kind of disability or ever really having experience of that and I just felt like, I don't know how I can relate to this, but by the end of it when we'd finished the text over the course of however many weeks, I realized how important it was for that text to be studied and have been read in class because again, going back to having that variation, and experiences with different people from different backgrounds, it was a man who was homeless, who was a drug addict and he had muscular dystrophy and they were things that were completely out of touch with my reality, but I remember that being quite a significant text when I studied it. I felt like it was far more important for me than when we did *Wuthering Heights*, for instance. For me, I didn't feel like that was something that I could relate to at all but *Stuart: A Life Backwards*, I felt like that was something that was very meaningful and significant for me by the end of it. (Sadiya)

Christina, talking about a book she is currently reading on the PGCE course about teaching Shakespeare, states that his plays teach us about anti-racism, antisemitism, anti-misogyny. Her most significant influences were her Taiwanese English teacher on an Access-to-HE course and studying *Jane Eyre* (1847) as an undergraduate, being introduced to the suggestion that the text was 'about' colonialism and racism. She values the introduction to lives different to her own because 'it just made me see things from a completely different perspective.' Relatedly, she sees the English classroom as a space unlike any other in the school because, apart from Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE), there is arguably no other curriculum time given to understanding one's own relationships with others in the world:

> And I think even though the kids always say, why do we need to learn this, it's irrelevant, but it's actually not because it covers literature, covers so much of what happens today, and it gives you different perspectives of the world. And I think that's really important. (Christina)
>
> I don't think they do that anywhere else in the curriculum? Not what I've seen. I think they used to when I did citizenship at school. Think it's PSHE that they did. They touched on it but not in as much depth. So, I think English is one of [those] subjects which doesn't just cover your […] writing, your comprehension, your reading skills. It covers so much more, it really does. (Christina)

Similarly, Robert, who later also makes a connection between English literature and PSHE lessons, describes his own attachment to literature as a vehicle for learning about one's relationship with the world:

> What I like about the subject of English, you don't get in things like hard science and physics and things like that is you've got the opportunity to talk about things like gender, sexuality, race, poverty and bring them in, in ways that can be relatable to the pupils and yourself and really get them to sort of understand the personal level through something that you can have a shared medium of, if you don't have a personal actual connection through your experiences. (Robert)

Robert's view is characterised by his egalitarian and person-centred view of English literature learning, through which he can 'often see [pupils] in future becoming what, in [his] opinion would be better people' because they have been encouraged to engage in discussion and learn about themselves from others. His own learning experiences are again called to mind when he compares the 'very didactic' approach of one English teacher whose approach was to 'go through it, [to] learn the key quotes [sic], and, "I'm gonna tell you this way is right and every week we do a practice essay, and then you do 12 practice essays over the module".' Importantly however, he says, 'I don't think I gained much from [this approach]' and then relates this both to his perception that his teacher lacked empathy and overlooked the value of pupils' empathy as readers, and the role this potentially played in not enjoying *Great Expectations* (1861). In contrast, the subject at its most profound

and personal provided him with a means of understanding his own 'reading' of the world around him:

> [S]o as per the nature I think of a grammar school, at least in this one, it was very didactic. There was a lot of sort of, here's what you need to know whereas the second teacher, the one who taught me *Ethan Frome*, did open more time for discussion and I remember discussion being more a part of that class, that could have been because we were KS5 and that was sort of more expected then. (Robert)

Furthermore, in a later interview, he describes how he would prefer to teach poetry in his lessons. He describes how this would involve:

> [G]iving a pupil a poem [...] working up to the point where I can put something in front of them and say 20 minutes just read it and we'll come back and decide what you think about it. Not to only give you the best answer, but just to see what happens and for them to go, I read it like this and I came up with this idea, the sort of thing you do at uni, I guess.' (Robert)

Such an approach shares elements of the reader-response method that his A-level literature teacher relied upon in her lessons and which made such a profound impression on his relationship with literature.

Frances also talks about the role that literature plays in the lives of its students and how it provides access to learning about themselves through the experiences of others. She does this more in the context of her recent placement school and indeed, more than she does her own educational history and learning experiences. Interestingly, the only text she can recall from her A-levels is *The Kite Runner* and it is seemingly memorable because it presented a different world to her own:

> [W]e did The Kite Runner and that was amazing. Like just books from sort of things that maybe aren't just like from where they are [from]. Especially because of the demographic of where I am at the minute- it's quite deprived. So, it's like quite nice for them to sort of see maybe other things that they don't [otherwise]. (Frances)

She explains that her placement school's texts 'are not very diverse' and that this is for her, problematic because pupils are not exposed to lives different to their own, but she also explains that *An Inspector Calls* (1945) and *A Christmas Carol* (1843) are

valuable for discussing class and economic inequality for her pupils' own benefit. Of *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (2006), a text she has recently taught to year eight, she says:

> I think that's quite good in sort of […] grounding them for like empathy and things like that, and sympathy. They're really sort of getting to grips with it now, […] they can't believe things like that [the holocaust] sort of happened. So, I think just think like, just for their development as people, it's important to sort of discuss things like that. (Frances)

Robert refers to his most recent placement and about wanting to open his pupils' minds to 'ideas and concepts they've never experienced before.' Robert's talk often touches on issues relating to gender and sexuality and this is something he feels his pupils should develop powers of empathy towards. His reference to 'hard learning' in reference to STEM subjects, again surfaces and he like Sadiya and Christina, gives his view that English literature is about the development of empathy. Whilst he suggests that this sounds 'wishy washy' he points to something important to him as a teacher, which is teaching his pupils about the world in which they live.

Robert's relationship with literature is sociological and political first and foremost. For instance, he talks of how it graduated his egalitarianism to feminism. Like Ali, the difference for him was the teacher's dialogic approach to teaching the text rather than describing to them what things are supposed to mean. At times however, he speaks of the subject as something potentially transformative for those pupils who are looking for such an experience but even if they are not, he appears determined to make that transformation happen, such is the power of his belief in it to change perspectives:

> You can get pupils to almost, force them, to be like, no, you need to sit down and develop sympathy for gay people now, sorry, and you're here for an hour. I'm gonna make you do it, and you can just make, you can sort of bring in that engagement in a space where they have that opportunity to discuss things with a bit of structure and I just, one of my favourite experiences of teaching since I've started doing it more, it's just watching like pupils grow and change going from the start of my placement, being maybe homophobic and at the end of them, hear them say like, uh,

> correct a pronoun or something like that, something very small. (Robert)

Stuart's account of his own relationship to English literature, a subject he found 'very difficult', is characterised once again by the connections literature provided him with the world outside, albeit with cultural texts he was already familiar with and interested in:

> I think, speaking from sort of like my own experience, I think it sort of, it really started to come alive when I realized that it wasn't just what was in the classroom that it applied to. (Stuart)

Stuart's recollections of A-level are focused on his less than fulfilling experience of studying Ian McEwan's *Atonement* (2001), a novel which 'was a very difficult one for me to read at that point', unlike Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing (1623)*. He doesn't say why he found modern prose fiction more challenging than Shakespeare but his comments about texts being dramatized, enacted or performed in contemporary contexts and with themes relevant to teenage readers, may have some significance:

> Relevant themes from things like Shakespeare and most 19th century texts and you can apply them to like Marvel movies like The Avengers and stuff. I think when you get that sort of link, I think that is when it becomes incredibly interesting. (Stuart)

Christina's subject mentor, Steve, refers to his younger self, before secondary school and describes how amidst a major personal upheaval, moving to a remote house in a location far away from the home in which he'd spent his earliest years, he was 'read to a lot as a young child.' This, he says, sets the foundations for him to become 'an avid reader.' Perhaps linked to a sense of dislocation arising from such a dramatic change in his young life, relocating to an unfamiliar place, he explains how he felt 'as if I was inside those stories, as if I inhabited the world of those stories.' His wonder at the effect stories had on him as a child is still evident when he recalls that it was this which made him want 'to share that […] enthusiasm and those insights and what it feels like to live inside a story […] with students, with children.' As if by pure serendipity, Christina herself was taught by Steve throughout her own secondary schooling, and she cites him along with her Access-to-HE course-tutor she

encountered after she left school, as inspirational and instrumental in making the subject transformational for her personally.

In two subject mentor accounts, reference is made to the way that reading literature, seemingly prose fiction, has a relationship with well-being and the development of the self: understanding the self and others. Robert's subject mentor Nat adds, 'I've always said this: I just think reading makes people better. […] in fact, me and [a colleague] used to say it quite a lot, like, we used to be able to talk to someone and you'd be able to tell within 5 minutes whether they were a reader or not.' Whilst Steve talks of inhabiting the world of a text (perhaps as an alternative to the reality of one's own), equally Nat refers to reading fiction in terms of an escape and allowing oneself to 'chill […] for ten, fifteen minutes, whatever it is, and then coming back out with, like, this new focus sometimes.'

Nat also talks about empathy and 'being able to understand different people.' She clearly values the benefits of the acquisition of skills and knowledge in English when she speaks of the development of 'creative ideas' and 'factual' aspects of the subject as well as 'improving one's 'reading age for [an] exam.' As an English teacher who loves language and words as well as stories, she asks with complete optimism, 'why wouldn't [pupils] want to know all this vocabulary?' However, her relationship with reading soon returns to its significance to her on 'a human level.' With absolute sincerity she tells me, 'I just think reading, it's just, […] in itself, it's what makes life, like you … you just get into that habit of like, escaping into it.'

4.1.2. Influences of English teachers and their pedagogy at GCSE and A-level

The analysis in this subtheme shows that the participants' adolescent experiences of reading literature, as presented in the previous section, permitted them opportunities to learn about themselves and provided access to worlds different to their own. In addition to the influence of their teachers showing passion and enthusiasm for the subject, participants also refer to their English teachers' pedagogical methods as having influence and impact on the quality and character of their learning in English literature.

The student teachers' accounts of their earlier relationships with literature and literary texts from GCSE and A-level refer to favourite stories both of their own and those they were introduced to by their teachers. The favourite stories of their own teachers are influential and impactful and students speak of their own teachers sharing their favourite stories, poems and plays as well as being 'passionate' and 'clever', whilst giving over class time to dialogic and democratic co-construction of what texts could mean:

> It was just like how passionate they were for the subject. Like he would just so… like you know when someone's behind you and they genuinely want you to do well and genuinely like, enjoy what they're teaching? I think that made all the difference. (Frances)

Similarly to student teachers Christina and Frances, subject mentor Tilly cites her two 'phenomenal' GCSE teachers and the 'passion they had' as the main influence over her decision to study English literature at university but the phase of A-level is a time within which the student teachers' relationship with literature is nurtured whilst the converse experience is occasionally spoken of when recalling GCSE literature lessons. GCSE experiences typically result in the student teachers claiming to have little regard or memory of the texts they studied.

Talking of her A-level studies, Ali describes the freedom embedded in the role her teacher allocates her as a reader and how she was invited to make meaning from her reading, explaining how she 'did start to learn more because it was my interpretation of things rather than having to follow someone else's interpretation of things.' Robert makes a similar claim when he contrasts his experiences of studying *Great Expectations* (1861*)* and *To Kill a Mockingbir*d (1960) at GCSE. The experience of studying *Great Expectations* is not profound for him at all and he sees this as being caused by the teacher's approach and not being given opportunity to empathise with Dickens' main protagonist, Pip:

> I don't think I gained much from reading it, Great Expectations, in that way, I don't as a person from […] what I said about the teacher's empathy and developing students' empathy. I have no

> empathy for Pip other than, "that sucks - he's poor and he had a tough life and then he didn't." (Robert)

As illustrated above, the difference at A-level for Robert was the teacher's dialogic approach to teaching the text rather than the teacher-reader describing or dictating to them what things are supposed to mean. Invitation to co-construct interpretation and criticism is referred to as having made a deeper impression on them and their understanding of the texts studied. Speaking more generally across GCSE and A-level, Frances agrees:

> I think it was that kind of like, interactive, like teaching that made it like without sounding cringe, like, the words come off the page and you really like felt like that kind of thing. So, she was really, I don't know, I think maybe just the way she presented herself was just quite animated and that kind of fit with the themes of the poems we were studying because they are […] like stories. […] So, I think maybe it was it was that kind of like interaction with us and the relationship you have with us as a class that maybe was why I probably enjoyed it? (Frances)

Sadiya recalls her GCSE literature classes in a similar way to Robert, as lacking dialogism and having little sense of each pupil being treated as a resource for developing interpretations:

> [W]hen we would have discussion-based activities in the classroom, whether it was debates or discussions or whatever it might be, I felt like they followed a particular pattern and the teacher would then kind of wrap up at the end and say, you know, thanks for your ideas, but this is, not correct but she would kind of sum up and tell you what she thinks the right answer would be. (Sadiya)

Sadiya's dissatisfaction with such a method of teaching literature is then picked up once more when she thinks about her PGCE placement school experience:

> I think going off my previous placement when I […] was kind of working with key stage four a bit more and then having a look at *A Christmas Carol* for instance and it would just be, Scrooge is this because he this, this, this, this. It wasn't anything to do with, how do you feel about Scrooge and where do you stand in relation to Scrooge as a character and what do you think about it? What are your informed opinions about him. That's what I

> mean by, it's very prescribed. It's, “Scrooge is a greedy selfish character and at the end of it he redeems himself. And that's, that's, what you're going to follow.” (Sadiya)

Despite her conviction here, Sadiya’s belief in the value of dialogism wavers when she momentarily thinks as a teacher and speculates on a ‘huge portion’ of lesson time dedicated to it. She states that for her, it is ‘really important for developing interest in what they’re reading’ but her thoughts switch to matters of classroom management, engagement, and motivation. Speaking as a teacher now, she thinks pupils will ‘become bored and disinterested’ if too much time is spent on a task. However, she also argues that pupils become bored if they are not consulted on their own relationship with what they are reading. She concedes that ‘a lot of [pupils] do have strong opinions and it’s important that we get those out of [them].’ Inviting pupils’ responses would ‘personalise their opinions’ and she affirms that this would be a good thing ultimately, but reservation remains for her about how this could be done when the priority must be coverage of content and skills, following the pattern of quotation explosion, annotations and writing up analysis in standardised, structured paragraphs.

Ali also refers to her move from being a GCSE to A-level pupil, as one characterised by reader-centred interpretation and how more than ever, she was invited to situate herself as ‘the reader’:

> I remember just my sheets would just be full of different colour blocks and everything. I remember cringing cause one of my teachers used it as an example to the class, but it just made me feel like I could express it in my own way. Whereas at GCSE it was like, we need to be looking for nouns, adverbs. We need to be looking for declarative sentences. Whereas at A-level it was more about meaning. Like everything was just meaning. And what the writer was saying. (Ali)

She talks of her experience of being empowered by her A-level teacher’s pedagogy, given permission to activate her reader responses, sharing them with and learning from her fellow readers:

> ‘There was so much discussion and interest in us and what we thought and it was just all about having these discussions and getting our perspective on certain things.’ (Ali)

Ali recalls her time as an A-level student with positivity. As late as year thirteen, she remembers the teacher asking them to complete 'a lot of poster work and […] discussions and debates.' She suspects that she connected with this kind of pedagogy - student-centred, discursive, collaborative - because 'I'm better at saying things than I am putting them on paper'. Whilst she 'didn't really think anything of it' at the time, she now reflects that her teacher's method was 'dialogic.' She then offers something of an explanation of how her learning functioned in literature lessons: 'I think that was helpful to me to be able to voice my opinion, get the approval and then put it on paper.' The reluctance to commit her interpretations to paper until she had 'the approval' is notable and whilst this does suggest a certain anxiety regarding the responsibility a pupil might feel in offering interpretations of typically established and canonical texts, it perhaps simultaneously attests to the contribution that individual students are capable of making alongside the importance of discussion as a precursor to writing down ideas, even on a poster or in notes.

Robert explains that he rejected his earlier plans to pursue a STEM academic pathway because he needed a subject 'with light' that talked about 'real world stuff' rather than architecture, which he says for him, had no 'real world impact'. He describes himself as someone who was always something of a 'contrarian' but found that studying literature helped him to see the potential in this to understand his political and philosophical positionality. Talking as a student teacher, he shows again, his view of the subject as one which should provide scope to challenge hegemony:

> I personally maybe think, this is a bit, it's gonna be a bit high horse here. I kind of find sometimes that a lot of the teaching I've witnessed kind of reinforces existing power structures and I find that quite uncomfortable. The only way, the only times I've seen that not reinforced as much is through racial lenses but even then, possibly, I think that current existing power structures are still reinforced just through more of a liberal lens than, I guess, like a conservative lens. I don't think, I guess, as a person I'd say, like identifying leftist, I think there's more that can be done to really push some of these boundaries and really break down ideas that are just kind of reinforced in a lot of teaching right now. (Robert)

Christina's recollections of learning in literature classes after GCSE are quite distinctive, not simply because she completed an A-level equivalent, Access-to-HE course, but because she undertook this at a slightly older age having faced challenges as a school pupil. She talks about her experiences of studying literature with a recurring focus on the ways it allows her to fill gaps in her knowledge of history and the history of ideas. She explains that her own school days were not 'plain sailing' and she missed much of school until year 10 because she 'had a lot of issues going on'. She implies her missed learning led to a deficit in knowledge. When I observe her teaching on placement, she seems very attached to the importance of teaching knowledge to her pupils. She explains how:

> when I'm teaching the kids, I find myself going off on a tangent sometimes about some of the history, about what I learned at university and they're [her pupils] quiet interested in it. I think because I say it from my perspective. And that's probably why. But that's I think that's what it is with literature. (Christina)

She appears to strongly identify with her pupils given that her first placement is in her own secondary school. She explains that her pupils 'come from working class backgrounds and some of the parents are like, some of them are in care, looked after children, so their whole experience is poverty'. In this regard, she appears to have adopted the notion that cultural capital and a heavy focus on historical context is important to their progress and potential, largely as a consequence of how English literature *after* GCSE provided her with knowledge that compensated for gaps created by her own disrupted schooling and how this seems to have been a motivation for studying literature at university.

Stuart (who has spoken of finding A-level literature difficult, just as Sadiya has), also provides a slightly different account of why he pursued literature and seems to have only recently recognised that the struggles he overcame in studying literature was a stronger driver of his career choice than he had at first realised. He indirectly refers to deficits in the teaching he received which meant that despite his enjoyment, English literature remained a challenging subject for him:

> It wasn't at first that I wanted to provide, you know pupils, my own pupils, so to speak with what I didn't get [at GCSE and A-

> level]. Well, at least I don't think it was, maybe unconsciously or subconsciously on some level. But it wasn't actually for that at all, until quite recently, I realized. (Stuart).

Discussion

It seems that for both student teachers and subject mentors the journey of studying English literature and, thereafter deciding to become a teacher of English, has been characterised by emotional relationships with reading, with stories, books and teachers. The analysis in this theme presents accounts which relate to the participants' adolescent experiences and recollections of being in classrooms in the company of English teachers whose passion as well as their knowledge was infectious and inspirational.

It seems that the student teachers refer to their GCSE and A-level experiences as being meaningful and rewarding because of their English teachers' invitation and encouragement of reader-response, conveyed in their descriptions of learning episodes and typical lessons. Where this is lacking, the consequences are negative. I am drawn to Robert's point about his GCSE teacher who neither showed empathy for the characters in the books he taught or elicited his students' empathic responses and how for Robert this led, remarkably, to indifference regarding Dickens' character of Pip in *Great Expectations*. Sadiya makes a similar comment about her GCSE teacher who would invite pupils' ideas only then to reframe the discussion with her own, teacher-reader response.

In the accounts offered by the student teachers it is the dialogic nature of classroom discussion of the texts being studied which nurtures their individual responses which in turn establishes the literature classroom as a space to explore complex matters of self and world during adolescence as well as understanding others (Perry, 2022). Moreover, it is these individual responses which appear to make the texts meaningful and memorable long after they have been studied. I recall Ali's comment that whilst she was able to formulate and articulate her own responses to what she read, it was only after she became engaged in discussion with her peers and her

English teacher that she felt she was able to legitimise her reader-response and use them as a basis for her writing, an experience in line with Hogue-Smith's (2012) theory of deferent reading.

The profoundly personal relationships which the participants describe in regard of their attachment to studying literature frequently show how their own identities, histories, perspectives, and contexts are inextricably and perhaps symbiotically connected to how they think and feel about the text they are studying, something which emerges in the work of Perry (2021); Hennessey et al (2018); Weaven and Clark (2013).

To learn that literature is viewed as a force for the development of compassion and empathy presents the subject as something far more personal, transactional and collaborative than just academic. The participants believe that literature has the power to make people, better people, by learning about the lives, the struggles and the triumphs of others. Literary studies, particularly at A-level, is spoken of, by the participants, as serving a moral purpose to transform and awaken the individual's relationships and connections to the world (Prezioso, 2023). However, there appears to be a simple caveat; which is for there to be a parallel of sorts between the world of the text and the reader's own milieu, suggesting again, the matter of relevance but also the possibility of text world interpretations (Cushing, 2018). Throughout all of these discussions, it is clear to see how English teaching as experienced by the student teachers was in fact informed by reader-response theory, as a coordinating principle, at work in the teacher's pedagogy.

The question is, what happens to the legacy of this lived experience once the student teachers begin the PGCE and dialogism in the English literature lesson is experienced and instantiated in very different terms, namely through the depositing of knowledge which is then used for assessment purposes rather than 'personal growth' (Cox, 1989). How do such encounters with reader-response influence their own views and practice as English teachers? Despite the accounts given by the student teachers in the first round of interviews, regarding the study of English literature, references to empathy change once teaching practice was once again

underway and the student teachers come to be greatly influenced by the practices and pedagogies of their new placement school.

The significance of this legacy not continuing is twofold: firstly, the emotional experiences that participants recall from their own A-level studies are harder to capture in classrooms where direct instruction of background knowledge and knowledge retrieval dominate because pupils themselves are not interpolated in making meaning, offering interpretations and expressing critical responses. Parts of the subject's theoretical and methodological grammar are shut down and students are not required to make meaning from what they read. The second significance of the erosion of dialogism as a basis for reader-response is that due to an over-emphasis on background and empirical knowledge in the literature lesson, there is a constant risk of marginalising a critical reading skill which activates the literature pupil's situatedness, their context and which permits and gives credence to the validity of their own opinion but also requires them to interact with literary language and forms. The number of petitions submitted to the House of Lords to either terminate the compulsory status of English literature GCSE, to scrap it, to remove poetry from the exam or make the subject open book to remove the burden of coverage provides another perspective on the troubled status the subject has acquired more recently.[23]

Justification for literature teaching which is characterised by a preponderance of empirical or background knowledge, based on a claim that such methods will singularly address academic underachievement amongst the economically disadvantaged simply does not at all seem to fit with the discipline's transactional DNA nor with the claims that the participants in this study make from their own learning experiences.

[23] View all petitions - Petitions (parliament.uk) (accessed 4/8/23)

4.2. Theme two: Uncertain conceptualisations and relationships with literary theory

Introduction

This section presents analysis which shows participants as having a range of experiences with literary theory as an element of their undergraduate degree course and to a lesser extent, their A-level studies. These experiences include encountering literary theory as unfamiliar and as difficult to grasp due to its conceptual and theoretical abstractions as well as it being a requisite for undergraduate literary analysis not covered as part of GCSE and A-level English Literature study. As a result, the analysis shows that participants struggle to 'use' theory to analyse prescribed course texts and moreover, how they came to negotiate relationships with theory within literary studies as a way of examining conceptual and philosophical ideas such as subjectivity, truth and power. Accordingly, participants talk of theory as epistemological content rather than an ontological compass for reading and analysis.

The main theme was divided into four sub themes reported in turn:

1. Difficulties recalling and conceptualising literary theory;
2. Experiences literary theory during and after A-level;
3. Literary theory as a lens for reading the self and the world;
4. Literary theoretical concepts at work in literature teaching.

4.2.1. Difficulties recalling and conceptualising utilising literary theory

This subtheme captures participants' recollections of past study of literary theory. Typically, this is a relationship filled with vagueness and uncertainty. This was also so for three of the four subject mentors, many of whom had been teaching English for several years, in one case, for over three decades. All student participants seemed to exhibit a nervousness about claiming to know or understand theory, as though it were an area of the subject which they felt they ought to have a degree of specialism in but lacked confidence in making any such claim. Whilst the student teachers had studied theory as a compulsory unit in their first year at university, none of them went on to choose elective units in theory but several were able to explain how theory was 'intertwined' with their study of literary texts, genres, and periods

throughout their three years of undergraduate study. As testament to this, all of them seemed to have utilised an aspect of theory to write a final year dissertation. However, the ways in which theory is conceptualised and defined by the student teachers varies somewhat, as does their respective evaluation of its role in their degree studies.

Prior to my interviews, there was no attempt to define what was meant by literary theory because I had requested volunteers to take part in the study who had read for an English literature degree which included some study of it and I was keen to see how they would present their understanding without my influence. In discussion about literary theory, the students referred to 'theory' (all) and occasionally 'critical theory' (Sadiya and Ali), 'critical and cultural theory' (Sadiya), 'critical dialogues' (Stuart), 'literary scholarship' (Christina) or 'political theory' (Robert) and it became clear that all were referring to what can be described as poststructuralist theory. Indeed, none of the students claimed to have substantive knowledge of textual theories and methods derived from Practical Criticism, liberal humanism, New Criticism, formalism or reader-response theory.

The student teachers were keen to acknowledge the passing of time as a factor in having rather sketchy or patchy recollections of their study of literary theory, even though they all graduated between 2018 and 2021. Ali remarks that it was 'ages ago' and hedges her references to certain theories with 'I think', whilst Sadiya frames her recall of learning literary theory as happening 'quite a while ago'. Christina describes how she studied 'a little bit, from what I remember' and Frances similarly frames her account with 'from what I can remember'. Frances and Ali both refer to theory as something which had to be used in relation to assessment on their degree courses. Frances recalls how, having chosen a postcolonialism module, she 'obviously had to use' it but then states, 'but I can't remember for the life of me' what it was about. Whilst Robert describes his encounters as 'wider scale [rather] than how to engage with literature specifically', Christina recalls using theory in her undergraduate dissertation from 2020 but is unclear about which:

> So for my dissertation because I did Korean literature and Chinese literature. I based my dissertation on two novels and in

> that I did something to do with, what was it? I can't remember the theorist's name. I'll have to have a look in a second because I've got it on my laptop (Christina)

In addition to hazy recollections of learning about theory as an undergraduate due to the passing of time, the student teachers' accounts suggest other reasons for not clearly recalling theory from their degree studies. Robert prefaces his account of studying literary theory by explaining that he experienced mental health issues at the time of studying that module so 'couldn't switch on to it' but appends this with a stated intention to return to it when he is a 'bit more ready to take it on', again, implying its status as something difficult to understand and which requires time and space to undertake learning of a large body of complex ideas.

Steve is Christina's subject mentor and is in his twenty-sixth year of teaching English and was in fact one of Christina's GCSE teachers at the same school. Steve does recall studying literary theory as part of his literature degree and refers to 'three or four' theories but explains, 'I'm struggling a bit to remember much more than that.' Sadiya's subject mentor, Tilly, claims not to have studied either literary theory, critical theory or textual theory during her undergraduate study of English literature. She seems hesitant and even embarrassed for not having done so. It seems unlikely that an English literature degree course would not include coverage of literary theory at all, even contextualised within another unit, but it does perhaps suggest Tilly's detachment from theory either as an undergraduate, or currently as a subject specialist, English teacher or as a PGCE English subject mentor. Robert's subject mentor, Nat, claims that theory was 'embedded into [her] study [and was] woven into it.' However, she cannot recall studying any structuralist literary theory or methods of criticism such as Practical Criticism, New Criticism, liberal humanism or reader-response theory, just as Steve and Tilly do not. Frances's Subject mentor, Roisin, studied Performing Arts so it is of little surprise to learn that such schools of theory and criticism are unknown to her. Despite this, she does recall studying feminism, Marxism and postcolonialism, just as her mentee, Frances does. However, she informs me that she has learnt more by studying for one of the Department for Education's (DfE) National Professional Qualifications (NPQs), which are not subject or discipline specific. She tells me that this 'contains a lot of literary theory' but when

I ask further about this, she is unable to explain with any more detail. She does tell me however that it is 'about leading teacher development' and it transpires that the NPQ is in fact about teaching and learning more generally rather than pertaining to any specific subject or discipline.

4.2.2. Experiences of being taught literary theory during and after A-level

This subtheme enlarges upon the issue of participants' difficulty in recalling knowledge and understanding of theory related to the ways in which literary theory is taught to them at undergraduate level. The analysis shows the participants' sense of a significant disconnect between the method of close reading of language, style and structure of texts (Snow and O'Connor; 2016) and the approach to analysis experienced as part of their degree courses as previously written about by Hodgson (2010), Snapper (2009; 2011).

Ali claims that the way theory was taught to her at university made it difficult for her to resolve her difficulties in understanding what theory meant and how to use it. She recalls how she 'hated' Barthes' 'Death of the Author' (1967) and how the difficulty of the text led to her becoming disinterested in theory generally. She explains that she 'couldn't connect' and identifies the disconnect between her pleasure of annotating texts from A-level (the very thing which led her towards studying English) with ideas and the application of theory to texts. Interestingly, Ali claims that it was only during her Master's degree that she began to understand some literary theory. That her Master's degree was oriented towards linguistics and TESOL teaching suggests that analysis was focused on the fine grain reading of stylistic and linguistic devices used in literary texts and which she claims to have enjoyed so much at A-level.

Frances' experience shares some similarities with Ali's. She describes her study of theory as 'heavy' and how, when she 'struggled', she didn't feel comfortable asking for help and that 'led to [her] not liking it.' Frances sees the way the subject was taught as being the most significant obstacle to her learning:

> I think maybe if I was taught it a little bit better at degree level then I'd probably enjoy it more. […] I think sometimes your degree, it's something that they, because they've been like teaching it for however many years, I think sometimes it's something that they like, just expect you to know. (Frances)

Of all the participants, Frances talks most and with greatest frustration about what she perceived to be an epistemological and methodological disconnect in English literature between these educational phases. She describes how, when she started her undergraduate studies she thought:

> What? What is this? I've never had to do this, ever. And then you're suddenly expected to just kind of, water off a duck's back, know what you're doing kind of thing. […] I don't think they were bothered about the analytical side of literature […] which was a bit confusing.' (Frances)

Her comment that her lecturers seemed unconcerned with textual analysis is striking, not only because the formalist close-reading method has been the essence of high attainment in the subject throughout GCSE and A-level but her understanding of studying literature as an undergraduate is that it no longer requires her to demonstrate critical reading based upon close textual analysis and a strong critical voice in her own writing.

Subject mentor Nat's comments are useful for locating a problem in the transition between A-level and degree level literary studies; something to which most of the student teachers refer. When describing the approach to literary analysis she was taught to use at A-level, it is evident that it shares much in common with structuralist textual analysis and stylistics. She describes how they focussed on 'individual words, individual meanings and how they link to […] overarching themes', explaining that 'a good [literature] essay was analysing language [because] that's the way I'd been taught throughout GCSE [and] throughout A level.'

As a further testament of the influence of A-level English literature, Sadiya explains that her decision to read for an English literature degree came about even though it was her worst performing subject by the end of her two year A-level course and that she found it 'the hardest' of her three subjects because of the 'jump' from GCSE to A-level but which she also 'absolutely loved' because it involved 'learning for the first

time about iambic pentameters.' She describes her decision to continue to study English literature at university 'bizarre' given how difficult she had found it but implies that this was simply due to the enjoyment of learning about literary genres, techniques and the licence given to her to develop reader-responses based upon close reading methods during her A-levels. Her comment that at GCSE, 'there really wasn't much room for your own opinion' further emphasises the positive experience she had of nurturing her own responses at A-level and how this led her to choose to study English at university.

Once again, as a point of similarity with Sadiya, Ali refers to her personal satisfaction and fulfilment in close reading and analysis, to understand how language and style affected a response in the reader. She refers to 'zooming in' on the text's language, structure and style in order to build 'a picture and interpretation or meaning.' In contrast, as an undergraduate, she felt the obligation to 'find a theorist' and then 'get the theory to fit', something which subject mentor Nat refers to also. Ali asserts that commencing her degree in English literature, she felt confident that she knew how to read analytically and to develop a critical response based upon the text's effect on her and others' but describes how this was quite suddenly subjugated by the need to utilise theory in her essays and examinations. Ali talks of her endeavours to 'get the theory to fit […] rather than the other way round.' She explains how when writing essays, she would start with the literary text and then 'find theories to support or go against your ideas.' Whilst the focus here remains the literary text, her experience has shifted from the pleasure of analysing and annotating, towards demonstrating her capability for utilising others' views and opinions, perhaps simply for the necessity of assessment, which Frances also refers to. Whilst unsatisfactory for her, she has able to retain her focus on the text, unlike Frances, who felt that her lecturers were 'not bothered about the analytical side of literature.'

Like Frances, Ali has much to say about the way in which she is unable to connect her knowledge of theory with textual analysis. She explains how, at university, she enjoyed the:

> Marxism and Freudian side of things that started to get brought
> in but it didn't mean I was necessarily good at connecting them,

> I just enjoyed reading about them and I enjoyed feminism, and I remember we did like something on modernism and that was like one of the critical theory things that we did but […] I enjoyed them, but I wasn't particularly good at connecting. But yeah, I wasn't very good at that for English literature, like I really struggled with that. (Ali)

Further confusion, this time for Robert, regarding the ways in which he is able to use or apply theory to read texts which predate the theory he is using. Referring to writing about the character of the wife of Bath in Chaucer's prologue to *The Wife of Bath's Tale* (1405-10), his notion of theory as a lens was challenged by his dissertation supervisor who accused him of being anachronistic in reading the character as a proto-feminist because his theoretical lens post-dated the text itself. According to him, his supervisor appears to view this as something of an academic liberty and he was advised to focus on the issue 'more in the time' of Chaucer's writing. In addition to his claim that he struggled with theory and that he saw the theory as 'political' rather than literary, he was left not feeling 'confident enough' to further apply theoretical lenses or perspectives to his reading. This perhaps explains why he talks about theory as something which raises (self) awareness about 'issues' such as sexuality, gender and ethnicity rather than something which is associated with textual analysis. Furthermore, his apparent conceptualisation of theory as socio-cultural rather than specifically literary even in his context of being an undergraduate or student teacher of English, leads him to describe much of the teaching he observes in school as a PGCE student as reinforcing 'existing power structures' and asserts that there is much that can be done to 'push some of these boundaries.'

Students' experiences of learning theory are not entirely negative however, even though uncertainty persists either related to their understanding of individual theories or bodies of theory, or its relationship to literary analysis alongside their own relationship to it as a reader / analyst / critic. Stuart's summary of theory as 'it's all sort of quite gothic', suggests that his concept of theory is characterised by the genre and form of literary texts he used theory *with*. He describes how Fin de Siècle gothic fiction was his favourite thing to study on his degree and where he discovered the possibilities of using psychoanalytical theory to interpret Victorian gothic novels.

Sadiya makes reference to studying ‘significant theorists’ and like Ali and Christina, cites Marx and Freud as such, but adds Lacan, Foucault and Barthes’ ‘Death of the Author’ (1967) to those studied and whose work went on to influence not just her study of literature but exploration of issues related to diversity and equality. Unlike Ali and her dislike of Barthes, Sadiya refers to how she enjoyed reading ‘Death of the Author’ but similarly to Ali and Stuart, seems to have experienced this as something in isolation and as quite separate from her study and analysis of literary texts. She refers to her introduction to theory, including ‘Death of the Author’, stating how it ‘felt like it was particularly ground-breaking for me and I don't use that word lightly’.

4.2.3. Literary theory as a lens for reading the self and the world

This subtheme captures how participants’ relationship to theory within literary studies develops as undergraduate students according to their own notions of selfhood, identity and personal interest and that it provides them with a way of discovering meanings which are otherwise concealed or implicated in everyday representations of reality and truth.

Sadiya and Christina’s appraisals of their adventures with theory suggest this was the case for them. Their experiences of theory are far more positive than Ali and Frances’. During her first interview with me, Sadiya states that ‘it was the most impactful part of the [undergraduate] course and recalls that the work of Franz Fanon and Edward Said proved to be nothing short of revelatory (‘ground-breaking’) for her in terms of race and racism. She explains that her dissertation was a study of the male gaze, using the work of Laura Mulvey to analyse film and advertising as well as literature. The profound impact of the theories she encountered have had a lasting effect on her as a reader in so far as matters related to hegemonic representations of ‘reality’ and ‘truth’:

> I think inevitably when I'm reading something or whatever and watching something, whatever it might be, those theories that you have read and discussed, inevitably you kind of start recognizing them. (Sadiya)

It provides ‘different perspectives on […] ordinary topics’ and she continues to recognise theory in what she reads now. It is indeed hard not to be moved by Sadiya’s profound experience of reading with theory as her weaponry to confront racism and her accounts suggest that theory confirmed her rightful suspicion that racial prejudice has been historically normalised.

Sadiya’s relationship to theory is as positive as Stuart’s but she sees things slightly differently to him in that theory certainly belongs with texts rather than separate from them but it seems that this is largely so that they might expand the reader’s view of the world. Such is the power of her encounters with theory that she feels secondary pupils should, when reading a text such as Animal Farm, be exposed to Marxism, so that they can develop alternative perspectives on reality, truth and power. Her comments imply that theory offers a more meaningful version of one’s experience and one which offers world views which challenge hegemony:

> I never realized how much of that there really is in in like stuff that you've been brought up with in your childhood or like things that you take for granted and I think once you've read it, you think oh, hang on a second, that's that happening again. (Sadiya)

Robert recalls a university seminar on his undergraduate course in which he situates himself as a ‘white man’ in a group of ‘women of colour’ whilst studying postcolonialism. He recalls being tasked with presenting to his peers, the work of bell hooks and how for him, his own race and gender somehow delegitimised the role he was given, suggesting that particular theories become (justifiably) inextricably linked to identity so that it plays an important role; used to read the world from a specific positionality, characterised by the reader’s identity.

As a further illustration of how theory is used or applied to the study of texts, the student teachers also make reference to it as a lens (Stuart, Frances, Christina, Robert) through which they read for meaning. This suggests that doing so yields possible interpretations which otherwise may not be visible to them as readers. The students make reference to theory as providing them with perspectives (Sadiya, Christina, Frances, Robert) on the world and making those ‘real life connections’

(Sadiya) and Robert describes his view of the theory he was taught as 'political theory' worked on a 'larger scale than how to engage with literature'.

Whilst Christina offers an account of how, when reading for pleasure, she reads through theoretical lenses so that she finds herself constructing feminist readings of narratives, she also offers an explanation of theory as a lens which serves a far greater purpose to her future career as a teacher, teaching pupils about world issues and social justice. Referring to Shakespeare's compulsory status in the curriculum, and one about which she claims pupils ask, 'why do we need to learn this?', she answers that that they need to learn it because of the way that issues are highlighted, 'like racism, anti-Semitism, feminism':

> And I think even though the kids always say, why do we need to learn this, it's irrelevant, but it's actually not because it covers literature, covers so much of what happens today, and it gives you different perspectives of the world. And I think that's really important. (Christina)

Clearly her perspective isn't limited to the Bard however but is to be found in 'literature as a whole' and ultimately provides 'different perspectives of the world', something Stuart also mentions in his reference to reading Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), using theory to 'uncover' issues relating to gender, sexuality, colonialism, and power.

The matter of disadvantage is a priority for Christina and she seems to identify theory as she has experienced it, as a means of introducing poverty and inequality into the lives of her pupils:

> So with *A Christmas Carol*, you learn about poverty and capitalism and the same with *An Inspector Calls*, and this idea of the social classes and the divide in the social classes and I think especially in the school I'm in, you can really kind of pound that into them and it's because a lot of them come from working class backgrounds and some of the parents are like, some of them are in care, looked after children, so their whole experience is poverty, does that make sense? So, I think they can relate to it themselves as well. If you teach it right. [Christina]

Similarly, Frances refers to her experience of theory making visible inequalities which are otherwise hidden:

> Where I am at the minute- it's quite deprived. So, it's like quite nice for them to sort of see maybe other things that they don't otherwise. (Frances)

Along similar lines, Robert talks of how theory has enabled him to read, to find 'big' issues and how this has altered his relationship with books he once loved, such as the Harry Potter books. He sticks with a 'big ideas' view of interpretation and talks of how he learned to develop alternative readings through discussions with strangers on social media such as Tumblr, YouTube and Twitter. Although he claims such discussions 'lack nuance' their impact and his enjoyment are evident. Such networks of discussion have, according to him, directly affected his approach to analysis. They have clearly shaped Robert's own conceptualisation of literary or critical theory where one reads typically as though in search of allegory, and the text's apparent meaning conceals another, more profound or relevant one, within it:

> [A]s somebody who plays Quidditch but also incredibly anti- like, JK Rowling's viewpoints, personally, and the way…and I would struggle to read those books nowadays because I know so much about, like, antisemitic tropes with the goblins and the construction of sort of the mockery of anti-slavery arguments and things like that[.] Yeah. Now I read books, sometimes even books I used to love, I'll come back and I'll go when I read the text again…I just…I just feel like it's a bit of a weird angle. (Robert)

Robert remains pre-occupied with 'real world discussions' and the deployment of lenses which are those coloured by his concerns with equality, specifically, 'class, race and gender.'

Stuart also describes how he came to enjoy theory more once he 'applied' it like a lens to texts other than typical literary texts and like Robert, cites Marvel and The Hunger Games films. He talks about the importance of texts chosen to be relevant to pupils and to introduce them to alternative ways of understanding the world. In fact, throughout the first interview with the student teachers, there were several occasions when the use of visual and digital 'texts' were referred to as being important in developing understanding, skills and quality of analysis and interpretation of literary texts. It seems that this is because of the idea that hidden

within mainstream, everyday narratives, hidden subtexts reside and these sub-texts speak of issues which co-exist with the reader's life, identity and perspectives.

Sadiya recalls her GCSE teacher using video clips to introduce challenging or unfamiliar settings or subjects. She uses the example of climate change and 'studying a nonfiction text about polar bears in the Arctic.' She sees this as an opportunity to introduce what she refers to as 'critical theory' because it encourages the reader to be part of making meaning, because they feel as though they have something to say due to the subject matter's closeness to their own lived experiences and personal contexts. When I ask Sadiya if the use of a visual co-text such as this, is something she herself would use in lessons, she says, 'not really, but I do want to.' She tells me about an article she read the day before which talked about Artificial Intelligence as something 'prevalent in […] everything and the world around us.' She claims that news and current affairs non-fiction should have a bigger part to play in teaching reading to develop critical literacy. Her reason for this is largely one related to relevance once again:

> I think it's just so important that when you come across texts or articles or, or pieces of news that you read its introduced into the classroom because students will so readily engage in it because it is so relevant to their own life and experiences, [whereas], when you're reading texts that are prescribed on a curriculum or a scheme of work, it's almost you feel like you have to do them. (Sadiya)

Here, Sadiya suggests the need to teach pupils in English lessons about their positionality as receivers of information knowledge and that this is utilising 'critical theory' to do so rather than perhaps simply activating pedagogies which create space and opportunity for reader-responses.

Stuart strongly suggests that 'you can look at English concepts and English theories [in relation] to like, The Hunger Games.' Whilst his response here is partially concerned with suggesting context should be a priority for helping students to understand texts, he is also making a case for developing skills of analysis, interpretation and criticism using contemporary film and other graphic texts to understand older, canonical texts:

> [It] blew my mind when I first realized that that was an actual thing or you could like look at, you know, really relevant themes from things like Shakespeare and most 19th century texts and you can apply them to like Marvel movies like The Avengers and stuff. I think when you get that sort of link, I think that is when it becomes incredibly interesting, at least from my experience. (Robert)

Along similar lines, Robert has made use of television to develop critical literacy and skills of analysis. He says that ‘very early in my placement A’ he planned and delivered ‘a small starter’ and tells me how he is ‘just so proud [that] I thought about it.’ Whilst ‘teaching Blood Brothers […] we were learning about sort of trying to get the idea of, like, being poor in Liverpool and we went through Benefits Street’ [Channel Four reality television show]. He talks of the ‘cast’ as though they were characters and refers to the way they are ‘framed’ by the show’s production. He asks them to think about the ‘shot of the bins on the street’ and the how the ‘narrator has this sort of tone in how he’s speaking.’ He concludes by repeating his earlier comment, ‘I need to do more of that.’ Like Sadiya earlier, he is seeking to teach his pupils about how they are receivers of information and knowledge through popular media and furthermore, how they might critically respond to it.

Having already seen that Sadiya, Robert and Stuart (and Christina in her observed lesson, see 4.3.1) use theory to not only locate ‘big’ issues in contemporary and popular films and books but also use structuralist textual theory to develop pupils’ analysis of textual form, structure and style it seems as though they revert to using A-level-style analysis on such popular and contemporary texts but not with the set literary texts themselves.

4.2.4. Structuralist and textual critico-theoretical concepts at work in literature teaching

This subtheme presents analysis which relates to aspects of structuralist textual theory and concepts related to the teaching of literature, which orientate how a text can be read and analysed, according to its relationship to the world, the author and the reader. Such concepts are once again adapted from M. H. Abrams’ (1953) ‘critical orientations of art criticism’ (Abrams, 1953: 6).

Christina and Robert both refer to reading I set for a PGCE session on the concept of reader-response in the GCSE and A-level specification assessment objectives and to consider how English teachers must teach pupils that the job of interpretation is theirs and everyone else's. Christina tells me that 'she had never thought of it like that' and Robert says he tries not to say '*the* reader' anymore because it implies that this is only one interpretation which is attributable to such an authoritative figure.

Robert and Stuart both speak of their belief in the value of reader-response since pupils will often, if allowed, contribute ideas which they as teachers had never thought of. Robert speaks of the 'really interesting stuff' which is precisely so because he 'didn't think of that' and Stuart similarly describes it as 'something that I myself couldn't have come up with and it's really important to encourage that' because 'there isn't just way one of seeing things.' However, there was little evidence in their observed lessons that this was something that was instantiated in their teaching. The same is true of Frances' lesson. Even though her lesson was unexpectedly a creative writing lesson, it begins with some analysis of conventions of a literary genre. The instrumentalist definitions of stylistic devices make little impact because the pupils are not interpolated in describing how certain devices work upon them as a reader.

Her subject mentor, Roisin, later tells me that she encourages her pupils to identify as the reader and to use the method of 'think, feel, imagine.' She describes how this has gradually empowered her pupils to trust their responses. This, alongside her clear understanding of reception theories of performance in the theatre, I had hoped to see make some impact on Frances' practice but when I discuss this with her, Frances can only tell me that the school's curriculum emphasises empirical knowledge as a means of empowering the school's many disadvantaged pupils and diverting from this is viewed unsympathetically. It leads her towards telling me that the scheme of learning in the school is 'too structured' from which to 'deviate' so that she might develop reader-responses.

Sadiya's subject mentor, Tilly, similarly says that she had 'just never thought about [who the reader is] explicitly' whilst explaining that pupils' individual contexts is important. Subject mentor Nat, whilst advocating the empowerment of the reader,

seems cautious to encourage pupils' attempts to stray further than teacher-set parameters. She gives an example of pupil readings of the character, Heathcliff, and it begins to sound like pupils may even have embarked upon criticism above and beyond interpretation which she refers to as 'extra […] razzle dazzle' and which she implies is to be discouraged for the purposes of the exam. Frances also seems to have developed the same view, despite the GCSE assessment objective (Edexcel, 2019) which rewards informed personal response, that 'you're not really allowed to do that at GCSE.'

Another concept which occurs in relation to structuralist approaches to textual analysis is that of author intention. Throughout my data analysis, I was to encounter the phrase often in the words of the participants and came to realise that it was used to mean slightly different things but mostly either to refer to the author's biography, the author's stated aim for the text to mean one thing over another or the author's literary style and techniques. Sometimes the distinction between each of these is unclear but typically it was used as knowledge to give to pupils as a means of imposing on the text an authoritative meaning which could be used in the exam.

Christina's lesson, despite her earlier comment that using the author was detrimental to the reader's role of interpreting ('it doesn't matter at all'), relies heavily on the author's biography. It is fair to say that her challenge to author intention as a de facto method of interpretation is characterised by the problem of not being able to say for sure what the author was thinking. In her lesson, Christina is teaching Imtiaz Dharker's poem 'Blessing' (1989). She shows a clip of Dharker talking about why she wrote the poem, what she intended it to mean and accompanies this with a sheet of biographical facts about Dharker as a woman and as a poet. She sees this as sharing with the pupils some context and some insight into Dharker's inspiration but does not initially seem to see that in the eyes of her pupils, the poem's meaning has been set by its writer and any challenge to this (which is not invited) would be unwise if not unwanted:

> a lot of the time who the poet is doesn't matter all of that much but the video explained what inspired her to write about it. I thought for the purpose of this lesson, it was important but I

> could have done without it. But in that moment, I thought it was significant to why she wrote the poem. (Christina)

In asking, 'are you ever really going to know what the author meant […] unless they tell you?', Frances views the concept of author intention and its value in literary analysis in a similar way to Christina ('doesn't matter all of that much'), Robert is unconvinced by my previous advice to be cautious about relying on author intention and author biography as a valuable way to teach interpretation, to teach critical reading skills or to activate pupils' thinking. He uses a hypothetical example of a poem written by a gay man in the 1950s before the legalisation of homosexuality in 1967. He feels that the poem must be infused with the author's context for the text itself to yield the meaning it was meant to yield. The discussion reveals that for Robert, conceptually within the discipline, the text is not free to mean what the reader interprets it to mean through close attention to language, style and structure.

Robert's lesson is a strong example of how the text's materiality and the reader's relationship to it is subjugated to the authority of background knowledge about the text's (Beatrice Garland's 'Kamikaze' (2013)) main theme, in this case, Japanese kamikaze pilots during World War Two. Christina does much the same thing, but her knowledge base is the poet herself. Robert gives me an example of how when teaching Seamus Heaney's poem 'Storm on the Island' (1966) he has to resist the urge to tell his year 10 pupils about The Troubles in Ireland and how the poem's title is a play on Stormont. His comment that that is what the poem 'is really about' reminds me that I studied this poem as part of my A-level studies and was never taught that that was what it was 'really about'. The advanced nature of the knowledge taught to pupils in English literature lessons is also mentioned as a positive by Stuart. He talks of 'big context' such as Thomas Malthus when teaching *A Christmas Carol.* He is impressed that this is the kind of knowledge that he would most likely have encountered only in the second year of A-level.

When asked about 'author intention' as a concept in his literature teaching, Stuart, like Ali, appears committed to the author as the source of reliable meaning for any text; something which gives them security that they are teaching the 'right' thing. He identifies the problematic with author intention in similar terms to Christina and

Frances, which is that the author may no longer be alive for us to seek their account of what their works were intended to mean. He explains, 'it's saying a similar thing with authorial intention, it's quite a hard one, because obviously, especially when they're not here anymore, you can't, you can't really say, well, let's go and ask them.' However, Stuart's observed lesson still includes significant focus on the playwright's intentions rather than the audience and their reception of it. Using *Romeo and Juliet*, one of the key stage three texts he is teaching on placement B, he describes how, rather than asking pupils, *what do you think this might mean?* he approaches it through a:

> lens of sort of like, what, what, is he [Shakespeare] trying to do with like Lord Capulet, for example, compared to Tybalt's masculinity. What is he trying to say there about that? Or what could you possibly think he's saying? It's that sort of discussion, I guess. (Stuart)

The subject mentors' views share similarities with those of the students in many instances but there is a lack of concord amongst them despite their shared subject specialism. Whilst Tilly describes how it is impossible to ignore the author and her context, citing William Blake's 'London' (1794) as an example. She claims that pupils 'can't understand if they don't know the intentions of the poet'. Nat, Steve and Roisin exhibit caution in referring to author intention as a basis for interpretation although Roisin does see value in sharing it as contextual knowledge and cites how teaching some details of the author's life is useful:

> I would bring out elements of [Dickens'] life like his father being a debtor or being in the workhouse but counterbalance that with parts of the novel which aren't based on Dickens. So, with An Inspector Calls, the kids always think the inspector is Priestley and it's about getting them to understand about the message he wants to bring through and that not every writer having a message that may not be personal. (Roisin, Frances' subject mentor)

The inclusion of and emphasis on author biography some of the time but not others, appears to do little to clear up pupils' existing confusion or misconception which she herself refers to, about how to analyse the text: how and from where is interpretation developed?

Nat's view is quite different. She tells me that she reminds her pupils often that just because she might write a poem about robbing a bank, it doesn't mean she is going to! Her explanation of author intention seems to relate to the author's craft as a writer who makes considered and deliberate decisions to use language to affect meaning and response. Her question to her pupils, 'what is it the author intends you to feel?' seems to direct attention to the writer's crafting of the text, the pupil-reader's response and the awareness of the text's affective properties, which is quite different to Stuart's approach.

A further source of establishing a text's meaning is context. Frances' subject mentor, Roisin, sees context as adding a 'deeper level of meaning' when studying literature but asserts that it would not be important when reading for pleasure, presumably because the reader should be free to enjoy the surface materiality of the text. Such an allusion to context as a means of advancing analysis arises in Stuart's reference to pupils needing context for stronger performance in the GCSE examinations. When I query if context is in fact one of the more heavily weighted assessment objectives on the Shakespeare question, he is unsure [it isn't] but also tells me that he emphasises its role in the 'majority' of his lessons. He has referred to how he and his mentor, who has a degree in sociology, 'love' teaching context and the school itself has built its curriculum around knowledge comprehension and retrieval. He explains that 'knowledge checks [are] something that I implement in every single one of my lessons' as a starting point for 'five cold-call questions' which 'turn into about ten, twelve, thirteen, fourteen'.

Sadiya's subject mentor similarly describes how context is 'necessary' and 'massively important' for students accessing what texts mean. She expects this to become 'part of the analysis of the text.' As already mentioned, this is a curious situation given that at GCSE, links between text and context are weighted at 7.5% whereas analysis of language form and structure is worth 15% and informed personal responses are also weighted at 15%.

Discussion

I had commenced this project with an assumption that all of the participants, given that they were English literature graduates, would have some knowledge of literary theory which can be broadly described as structuralist. I was to discover during my interviews with the student teachers and subject mentors that this was not the case. Whilst all but one participant confirmed that they had studied literary theory as part of their first-year undergraduate studies, none of them recognised the terms *practical criticism* and *reader-response theory*, or the methods attached to them, despite common agreement that both dominate the secondary English lesson (Dore, (2019); Davison and Dowson, (2003)). All student teachers talked about their experiences of A-level English literature in a way that suggested the use of close reading incorporating combinations of practical criticism and reader response.

I was surprised to discover theory occupied a dubious and uncertain place in the participants' knowledge and experience of studying literature to undergraduate level. Recollections of learning about theory and the utility of it as a literature undergraduate were vague but there were similarities amongst them with students and mentors appearing cautious and tentative about discussing this aspect of their subject with me. Many had difficulty recalling the exact content, nature and titles of theories and works of theories, even when used for significant pieces of assessed work such as third year dissertations. This suggested that their use of theory as a necessary appendage to their work had made it less meaningful, unless theory itself became the principal object of study, such as was the case with Sadiya's encounters with Fanon, Foucault, Barthes and Mulvey, Christina's with Foucault and Said and Stuart's with the work of bell hooks. In each case, the theory itself takes a central position in the English student's work and it seems more likely to be memorable and meaningful as a way of analysing a range of cultural phenomena. For Ali, Frances, and three of the four subject mentors, theory appears to have an unclear status in the relationship with reading and literary analysis. Moreover, theory colonises the text so that Orwell's *1984* (1949) and *Animal Farm* (1945) and Seamus Heaney's

poetry cannot be studied without explicit coverage of political theory and history, a point made also by Gordon (2018).

The recurrent mention of Barthes' essay on the tyranny of the authorship over interpretation is important because Barthes' work, whilst not exactly reader-response theory, does prioritise the role of the reader in actively making meaning. Whilst its priority seems to be the instability of language as a structural system and the recurrence and recycling of existing ideas, stories and meanings from outside of the text, Barthes' project, I would argue, is to activate the powers of the reader to be alert to the idea that language 'speaks' our reality for us at every turn and that meaning can neither be traced to the author's intentions or contained between the covers of the text. The humanism of reader-response theory is eschewed in favour of a recognition that language controls what we think we are capable of understanding and meaning-making from reading always involves more than the interpretation of semantically stable and transparent words printed on a page. Given the student teachers' citing his essay as an example of theory which they *can* recall and is the only title cited in any of my interviews, I had expected that there might be some connection to the lecture I gave on reader-response as part of the PGCE and, moreover, evident in the way the student teachers approached interpretation in their own classrooms but this was not really evident in the interviews or observations.

Who 'the reader is' surfaces as a prominent concept in literature lessons observed but it remains shrouded in confusion; surprising given the participants' own reasons for pursuing their study of English literature because of its relationship to developing empathy, understanding diversity in the world and their own status and relationships to it. All too often however, references to 'the reader' implies a mythical omniscient figure who holds all of the answers to the text's codes and mysteries, something viewed much more positively by Gordon (2015) and Hogue-Smith (2013). Or else, 'the reader' is the teacher, standing by the board, directing pupils towards moments of textual significance and inducting them into a guessing game of establishing meaning that she has already decided.

The transition from GCSE to A-level and then to undergraduate level for literature students has been well documented (Green, 2006; Hodgson, 2010; Snapper, 2009; 2010). The participants in this study also provide testimony of the difficult transition from A-level to undergraduate literature they experienced, largely as a consequence of the role which theory plays within the discipline (Peim, (1993; 2000); Leach (2000); (2010); Knights; (2017)). Theory is presented to students in the first year of undergraduate studies first and foremostly as content of the discipline and content which is in some capacity, already familiar to them but its utility is not something that is made clear or obvious to them. Viewing theory as an ontological guide for the making of meaning and for how they teach English is much less evident, and this appears to be significantly linked to their own experiences both of the kind of theory they are taught at university and also how theory is used to read analytically which is typically characterised as existing as separate to their reading and analysis, or is applied to, or overlaid on the text. The fact that none of the participants continued with their study of theory beyond the first year suggests it was either not enjoyable, not useful or not accessible to them as literature undergraduates. The fact that none of them recall encountering any kind of learning about textual and critical theory pertaining to 'structuralist' methods of interpretation and criticism is surprising but also significant that unknowingly at least tenets of structuralist analysis are still evident in their teaching, drawn perhaps from positive A-level experiences rather than any kind of open agreement with teaching colleagues or guidance written for 11-19 English teachers.

The participants talk of struggling to understand how to use theory concomitantly with literary texts and even after three years of degree-level study, they still appear uncertain of whether to compose an essay starting with the text itself or with the theory which promises to give meaning to it; either way, assessment appears to be a reason for necessary engagement with it, again, resonating with Hodgson's research (2010). Each participant who had studied literary theory as an undergraduate fails to talk about literary theory as a dimension of the subject which develops skills and powers of analysis and criticism. Rather, theory is talked of in terms of a series of 'isms' which overlay the text to illuminate issues within it. Theory,

depending upon its particular orientation, works to disrupt the text's surface meaning, that which it willingly yields, in order to locate trace elements of counter or unsaid narratives within.

Stuart's reference to the university lecturer on his degree who made the subject accessible through real world examples suggests how he found theory more difficult when 'applied to literature' as though he conceptualises theory as a focus for study in its own right and is somehow more straightforward when tackled alone, apart from any application to texts. The same issues arise for Ali and Nat, whilst for Robert and Christina, their relationship to theory appears to be more comfortable when the theory is enmeshed with the text they are studying. However, the two become inextricably linked and the text becomes the embodiment of the theory, such as in the case of their study of *Jane Eyre* (Christina) and *Dracula* (Stuart). Moreover, and much more typically, theory appears to be a means of reading culture, or in M.H. Abrams' model, the 'universe' (1953:6) and moreover the user's relationship to it.

In most cases, the students refer to the orientation of theories according to matters of identity and representation, and often, these acquire currency and relevance because of their proximity to the user's positionality and context. Throughout the analysis it often seems that the pleasures of theory relate to what it can reveal about personhood and subjectivity and notions of power, truth and social justice (Barnard, 2023). It is hard to detect in participants' accounts how this relates to the analysis of literary texts' formal and aesthetic properties as well as their effect on them as readers. In terms similar to Abrams' notion of mimesis, art holds up a mirror which reflects a version of the world which presents a vehicle for the exploration of issues and problems in the world. Such a method risks reducing scholarship in the subject to what Robert refers to as "political theory" from his participation with online communities on platforms such as You Tube and Tumblr, especially when contemporary cultural texts and contexts are the focus. Contemporary relevance appears to be a key criterion for theory's validity and currency in such a context.

To illustrate the ways in which the ambiguous status of theory manifests in the participants' practice, I wish to probe a little their presentations of the ways that they teach literature and the rationales provided. Roisin's explanation of how context

plays an important role in her teaching of *A Christmas Carol*, seems to be influenced by Young and Mullers' notion of 'powerful knowledge' (2013) and Hirsch's work on knowledge as critical to addressing attainment gaps and inequality of opportunity (2006; 2016). It is this which for Roisin, is the 'leveller' of inequality rather than the development of critical reading skills. For instance, are her pupils invited to offer dissenting views of Ebenezer Scrooge's charitable transformation? That perhaps his switch to generous benefactor is merely another example of his commitment to capitalism through a financial transaction which buys him salvation. Do they perhaps view his sudden turn to generosity and altruism as an unconvincing redemptive gesture and one which cannot so instantaneously atone for the years of unrelenting belligerence shown to his debtors? Whilst being taught about poverty 'out there' in an era well known for its structural inequalities, are her pupils asked to assess the extent to which a parable such as this can speak fairly for and to those whose 'whole experience is poverty'?

In Stuart and Ali's Shakespeare lessons, my perception is that the plays themselves are secondary to the issues they raise for the teacher. They are rarely spoken about as scripts written for performance before an audience in a theatre and the context is never oriented towards different productions and critical responses. Both student teachers are impressive in the classroom and both appear to deeply enjoy their teaching, but the treatment of the text is little more than a consideration of social and historical mores around masculinity and femininity which pupils are expected to learn through a process of comprehension, committal and retrieval of knowledge. Christina similarly describes context as 'important' so that pupils understand the text's origins and why it was written in the first place as though without it, the reader would be unable to engage in meaningful interpretation predicated upon their own responses to plot, character, action.

Interestingly, that the student teachers appear to demonstrate confidence in analysing visual and digital texts suggests that they have retained the knowledge and orientation of conducting textual analysis from A-level but which they feel unable to enact when teaching set, literary texts on the curriculum. Given that their lessons were characterised by didacticism and at best guided annotations of meaning arrived

at through reliance on socio-historical context and/or author biography and intentionality, it suggests that once again teaching informed by discipline-specific theory is eschewed in favour of generic models of pedagogy which marginalise the role and the voice of the reader. Meanwhile 'theory' as the participants have encountered it continues to be seen as a strand of the discipline which is utilised for the most intellectual and curious, despite their own accounts of personal growth and empathy.

It would seem logical to me to expect any future curriculum and specification design to embody a much clearer sense of what such concepts as 'contexts', 'informed personal response' and 'interpretations' (AQA, 2022) should mean and that this could be treated as an opportunity to reinvigorate the role which reader-response occupies for adolescent students of literature. In an informal conversation with an English subject officer from one of the four national examination boards, I was told that the assessment objectives for GCSE and A-level could be interpreted as having very different theoretical coordinates. In my opinion, they simply do not and the assessment objectives clearly exhibit an allegiance to close reading and reader-response above all else. Perhaps the time has come to address this as part of the return to the subject's curriculum beginnings (Roberts, 2019) a 'reorientation' of literature education (Prezioso, 2023) or revisiting the value of imagination in the subject (Thomas, 2019).

4.3. Theme three: Conceptualisations of teaching literature and teaching reading

Introduction

This section is focused on all participants' notions of themselves as teachers of reading and whether their English literature lessons across key stages three and four are considered as contributing to the development of pupils' reading skills. More specifically, whether the reading which is extant in literary analysis is viewed as developing pupils' critical literacy.

More broadly, the analysis shows that the teaching of reading throughout key stages three and four occupies a highly uncertain space within the experiences of PGCE English students' practice. A typical perception is that teaching reading is the responsibility of primary school teachers. This section also presents analysis which shows that teaching reading is often confused with coverage of literary texts for the purposes of the GCSE examination, presenting the key stage four curriculum as 'exam English' as opposed to 'real English' (Bleiman, 2021). Participants refer to concepts which act as drivers for the ways in which teaching literature happens in classrooms. Such concepts are derived from areas other than the discipline of literary studies but most appear to have much in common with structuralist methods of literary analysis, such as practical criticism, but are defined by the participants in ways which suggest a lack of understanding of such specific disciplinary knowledge.

The section is structured according to the following three subthemes:

1. Correctness, context and the role of teacher-reader-response
2. Not being a teacher of reading and the role of 'pupil-reader-response';
3. Perceived tensions which inhibit teaching literary analysis.

4.3.1. Correctness, context and 'teacher-reader response'

This subtheme presents the ways in which participants' English teaching as observed and / or discussed, is not clearly or consistently orientated by literary theoretical principles or concepts which inform how they teach the analytical reading of literary

texts in the classroom. The analysis suggests that theory is relegated to the status of an epistemological facet of literary studies rather than having an ontological bearing, which 'close reading' arguably does, on how teachers teach reading and literary analysis which may offer agency to pupils as analytical and critical readers.

For subject mentors Roisin and Nat, theory is something to dip in and out of according to annual chief examiner reports on GCSE performance and this seems to refer to developing pupils' analysis by applying theory such as postcolonialism or Marxism. Christina's subject mentor, Steve refers to the difficulty of guiding his pupils towards 'what we are looking for' but adds that 'really, I want [the pupils] to give it meaning.' Steve, as an experienced teacher and mentor does acknowledge that there is a delicate balance between teacher guidance and pupil freedom and that simply making up answers is not invited into his lessons. Robert's subject mentor, Nat, acknowledges that this represents a challenge for pupils but does not suggest it is a challenge for teachers also, perhaps because her own undergraduate experiences of literary theory have been informative and insightful for her own skills of analysis. She offers a pupil perspective on the matter:

> '[it] takes a bit of getting used to because [they are] used to subjects where it's like 100% right [or] it's 100% wrong and then they're coming to me and I'm like, "oh well what do you think?"'
> (Nat, Robert's subject mentor)

Ali boldly states 'I don't use [literary theory]' in her English teaching but it seems that she is referring to theories defined by '-isms' such as Marxism, feminism, and post-colonialism and which would be included as content in her lessons. Sadiya judges that certain texts (*Animal Farm, 1984*) are unsuitable because 'you can't avoid the theorist related' to them and theory is required as a 'baseline', for both. Christina doesn't mention specific theories but the way she talks about her reading of *Jane Eyre* is evidently influenced by the concept of 'othering' Bertha Mason as a Caribbean female and drawing on Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) although she cannot recall the theorist or theory by name. She indicates that she will as a teacher always read 'against' the grain of the text to identify fault lines which disrupt hegemonic interpretations and make this part of classroom discussion and in this regard her knowledge of theory does indeed inform her approach to teaching analysis.

Similarly, Stuart refers to the way in which a theoretical model influences his teaching. He refers to the 'iceberg model' to explore fictional characters' subconscious motives and actions and which seems clearly drawn from Freudian psychoanalysis. His use of theory starts to present itself here as part of an approach which teaches analysis *through* theory, rather than an appendage to the text, although he seems to talk of it still as something added to the analysis rather than driving the analytic method itself:

> I just sort of started to explain to them the […] iceberg theory you know, sort of like the idea about our sort of like conscious or subconscious and the unconscious that I just sort of like drew it on the board for them. […] I just sort of questioned, okay, so where could Lady Macbeth be at this point, sort of thing? And we looked at theory through that sort of way. And I said, okay, so how would we then turn that, for example, into a genuine piece of analysis about her as a character and her change as a character? (Stuart)

During our initial interview, Sadiya asks me how English teachers bring theory into lessons and tells me that at her placement school, 'no one really discusses critical theory', an assertion with which all concur, and something which Robert is puzzled by:

> I feel like I'm witnessing sort of uniformity in a lot of teaching that I've witnessed I've only been to two schools obviously, but from what I've witnessed in them, all the teachers teach similarly, and they have these set rules about like recall, literacy and all the things that are important but maybe don't get into the meat of what the possibilities of English are. (Robert)

Sadiya's question also appears to be informed by her view of theory as a series of -isms which seem unsuitable for school pupils, perhaps because of what she describes as the 'bleakness' of these theories' as well as the intellectual challenge associated with them. That said, Sadiya reveals a profound sense of discomfort with pupils being told what texts mean (although this is what happens in her observed lesson) and what they should write when in fact she feels that there is more to the subject than this, and that pupils need time to 'discuss what [the text] means and what we're supposed to take from it.' Frances shares Sadiya's view of the importance of providing students with opportunity to:

> get involved and […] give their own opinions [because] it solidifies their understanding when they're like, oh yeah, maybe like, I think this. (Frances)

In each of my observations of the student teachers, the pedagogy of the lessons was characterised by teacher-led and directed discussion of the text, either by guiding students towards specific features in the text (Sadiya, Robert, Stuart, Ali, Frances) or by focusing heavily on context (Ali, Stuart, Christina). Students' earlier assertions (presented in 4.1) of their own experiences of being encouraged to respond to their reading in a way that was personal and meaningful to them but arising from close reading of the words on the page does not transpire in their own teaching.

It became evident that lessons dedicated to reading and analysing passages of literary writing were planned around skills of comprehension of content; that is, what is happening in the text or what it is about. For Stuart, it 'is always his priority' so that he can develop skills of inference through his teacher-led questioning and whole class annotations under the visualiser. He reads 'six or seven lines' before 'annotating together', telling me that he and his subject mentor 'both love it'. He talks of how it is 'really important for kids to *make up* their own answers' [my italics] at the same time as describing the teacher's job of 'moulding that out of them'.

The issue of the 'right answer' (Eaglestone, 2000) in literary interpretation became a focal point of my post observation interviews with all student teachers. Previously my teaching on the PGCE course invited them to consider that whilst there was no such thing as a right answer (that is, a single, definitive interpretation), it was most certainly possible to get an interpretation 'wrong' and that that will often arise as a consequence of pupils ignoring the text and instead imposing overly personal or subjective readings of a text, irrespective of what is written on the page.

During our interviews, Sadiya suggests guidelines with 'structure, but not too much structure, to keep them on the point' and Frances talks again of 'justifying' interpretations, by providing textual quotations as evidence. Subject mentor Steve also uses questions to gently bring pupils back to the text and a similar method of returning to the text is referred to by all. Frances acknowledges that 'there's a

difference between totally missing the point [by] saying that [the text] is about unicorns or whatever when it is obviously not.'

She explains further:

> I think that for me one reason why I loved English is because you can't really be wrong, you know like, your interpretation. If you can justify why you feel that way as a reader then you can't. (Frances)

She refers to the reader's feelings and affords her a good deal of autonomy to construct a response which is very personal and affective, yet her own lesson was heavily focused on defining the job of a language device and its effect on 'the reader'. Ali gives the hypothetical example of a raven used as a symbol in an extract and talks me through her method, telling the pupils that:

> [T]he connotations of a raven are about death […], everyone write this down. So I've read it out to them, then they read it out to themselves and then this next bit, I'll point it out and then I ask a question that's associated with it and I'll ask, what does this mean, and then a kid will answer or I'll cold call and then I'll ask someone to add to it, and then I'll to add it and then we all add to it and then they do the rest by themselves. (Ali)

However, this mainly involves 'guiding them in the direction [she wants] them to go' and in addition, she encourages them to 'go back to their notes and kind of refresh their memories', as though the text's meaning is primarily and even solely derived from knowledge given to them about what things mean, or else, a standard effect of a particular literary or dramatic device. Moreover, the focus is less on reading and more so on forming written responses to the text.

Sadiya, Christina, Robert and Stuart, all teach their texts in a very similar way to Ali. The term 'quotation explosion' is used by most of the participants and this refers to when literary techniques and devices selected by the teacher are deconstructed as a whole class, teacher-led activity and given a meaning or effect. During Stuart's lesson on *Romeo and Juliet*, there is a change in pupils' responses when they are transitioned by him from answering teacher questions which are indeed focused on teasing out inferential meanings (but those he has already decided are preferable) toward annotating the text itself. The students audibly and collectively groan and the

lesson's atmosphere suffers a palpable change. He chides them for it and says, 'shoulda-woulda-coulda' when they protest that talking about ideas is preferable. He reminds them they have a job to do and need to 'get on with it'. In his post-lesson discussion, he tells me that the method of annotating is 'getting a bit brutal […] but we still have to get on every single lesson'. Furthermore, he believes pupils would know that he 'wished we didn't have to do it.' He says that he has no 'better way of doing it' even though we have spent time in our PGCE sessions looking at a variety of methods for teaching analysis. It seems that he has come to see the kind of discussion his pupils wanted to have about Macbeth's fatal flaw as 'fun' and how he wishes he could 'make it fun every lesson but sometimes, it's an extract that we need to look into and analyse.'

Whilst teaching Beatrice Garland's poem, 'Kamikaze' (2013), Robert's method is similar to Stuart, Christina and Sadiya's. He decides which aspects of the text to focus on (juxtaposition, metaphor and rhyme scheme in this instance) and leads annotation on the whiteboard for all pupils to copy onto their own hard copy of the text. He explains that,

> this was something I didn't do when I started planning and I thought I should do that because when it comes to their exam, it's best for them to write [reads mechanically]: 'this metaphor shows', or 'the writer uses a verb phrase.' […] It wasn't something I did naturally, it was because of feedback I received. (Robert)

However, his decision to focus on these literary devices is not anchored to assessment or learning objectives or outcomes, but according to him, driven by the feedback he is given:

> I wasn't thinking specifically about AOs as much, and I probably should've but I think the lesson ended up being pitched towards AO2 and AO4 – the meaning of words and techniques. Sort of saying, putting imagery beforehand, this verb means, D-D-D-D and giving them a general idea of what the poem is about so that they know what they can say about it. (Robert)

He does attempt subject mentor Nat's 'big picture' approach to the poem but does so by providing historical context about kamikaze pilots during World War Two but

fails to engage his year 10 pupils with the poem's persona, whose sympathy for her grandfather's failed kamikaze mission is silenced by the shame felt by her and her family within her township. He evaluates the pupils' response to the lesson as,

> Dull. They found it dull. I know they find it dull. They say they find it dull. They don't hold back. They say, 'can we have a break'. I find it hard and have said 'yeah I know' and was told off for that. It's not how I would approach it. I would read it and read it and read it and read it and take it apart in my own time. When I read poetry for myself, I like to read and read and read and come to this grander understanding and build on this mountain of ideas. (Robert)

Garland's affecting representation of nationalistic zeal as indicative of the corrupting influence on the human spirit, is nowhere addressed in the hour-long lesson, nor is any kind of discussion about killing for one's beliefs by flying a plane into a strategic target. His earlier interview indicates the value he puts by reader-response and his belief that a multiplicity of interpretations is to be encouraged in English lessons. Equally emotive and powerful, Sadiya's text looks at asylum seekers and the rising number of illegal immigrants navigating English seas with numerous tragic conclusions reported in the press. Her method of 'zooming' in on features of the text, followed by teacher-led 'quotation explosions' limits what pupils think and feel about the shocking and moving events described.

Subject mentors also conceptualise teaching literary analysis according to a range of methods and concepts which situate the pupil-reader as a receiver rather than a producer of knowledge. Tilly seems to suggest that pupils should be given the teacher's authoritative account of the poem's 'story' and 'what's happening' so that it 'makes more sense'. She explains the method used in her department:

> [S]o if in say, year seven, we're looking at a poem, although they're gonna approach it in a slightly different way at GCSE, we put it under the visualiser, and we'll talk through our thought process with it and then you've automatically come across, well, first thing we'll look at on the page, so how many stanzas are there on the page, so opportunity to talk about terminology so that's one of the key words in that unit so then by the time they get to year 10 and they're doing GCSE analysis, they're familiar with it, […] and it depends on the class but we use the same

> technique of looking at it on the visualiser and we start with the story of the poem, and then go through, stanza by stanza, do it under the visualiser, highlight it and then use questioning, so what would we say about this, how does it link to the story of the poem and then we model annotating it. (Tilly, Sadiya's subject mentor)

Moreover, students' copies of the GCSE anthology contain annotations of 'six 6 key quotations, analysed already. She explains how further discussion, 'if there is something else' to add, is then conducted during the annotation activity. The aim is still to generate discussion according to Tilly but discussion seems to be confined to 'do you agree with this annotation?' Tilly admits that she 'goes overboard with the annotating; notes everywhere!' and does not seem to acknowledge that this may well be a problematic for pupils' ability to understand what the poem might mean to them.

Conversely, Nat, who advocates strongly for providing a 'big idea' which appears to be similar to Tilly's 'story' concept, seems to try to avoid prefacing student interpretations with the teacher's authoritative narrative of the poem's meaning:

> [I]t's that whole idea of making students like aware of what's going on around them rather than them waiting for me to tell them something for them to, like, regurgitate. (Nat, Robert's subject mentor)

As she explains later, the 'big idea' concept is part of her method of reading the text closely and piecing together a story from the text's language, style and structure and eventually and gradually, socio-historical or author context. She has a clear notion that the 'big idea and an argument' leads to an understanding of everything' in the text without lapsing into 'technique spotting' which is a problem for her. She talks about her need to develop her pupils' appreciation of the text' so that they can 'build on these ideas.' For Nat, the problem with 'technique spotting [is that] it goes back into that, it's either right or it's wrong reaction' which she has spoken of previously.

Similarly, Frances' subject mentor, Roisin, describes her method of teaching poetry as:

> [W]e'd read it twice and I'd start a discussion about what they thought the literal meaning of the poem might be, why do they

think that and what quotations stand out to support that.' (Roisin, Frances' subject mentor)

Throughout her description of her TFI (think, feel, imagine) method, it would seem that Roisin is focused on developing pupils' responsibility and agency in determining what the text may mean, doing so through a combination of reading at text, stanza, technique and word level. Any attempt to lapse into purely subjective responses which are not closely linked to the text, provokes the question, 'how do you know that, what's in the text that makes you think that?' She does not refer to teaching students the poem's 'story' or its big idea through direct instruction of knowledge which pre-exists any interpretations that the pupils might conjure, even though context is something which she has explained will be gradually introduced at opportune and apposite moments and only after pupils have been given the task of reading for meaning, themselves.

Robert's subject mentor, Nat, describes a method which shares many similarities with Roisin's, above. Nat expresses her passion for teaching literature and how this 'always creates […] enthusiasm' in her lessons. Whilst teaching a Maya Angelou poem to her year seven class, she explains how they read the poem together before she asks, 'what do you think it's about?' She describes the pupils' response as 'obvious' but sees this, as did Steve ('the basics') and Roisin ('literal meaning'), as important to what comes next' as if the pupils must initially work hard at reading, paying attention to a narrative, a speaker or speakers and word choices used by the poet, to anchor the text in their thinking. However, Nat appears to see context as the next-step and she describes how she 'feed[s]' them this only to witness 'the light bulbs coming on.'

4.3.2. Not being a teacher of reading and the status of 'pupil-reader-response'

This subtheme captures participants' examinations of whether secondary English teachers are in fact teachers of reading and given the amount of time dedicated to reading in literature lessons, if this is viewed as development of reading skills and competence beyond and besides functional literacy.

The student English teachers expressed doubt about the extent to which they were in fact teachers of reading. Frances and Ali both view teaching reading in English as something which belongs to earlier stages of the curriculum:

> I think I always associate someone teaching you to read with primary school because it's something that in my head, like for me, my learning experience, I just kind of naturally…that's where I got taught to read. (Frances)
>
> To an extent, I think when they're in the classroom, yeah, but like, I can't be responsible for everything. I think whilst they're in my classroom, I will do everything in my power to, to encourage their reading style so that they understand different aspects of things. They understand the comprehension, they understand the way things have been written. But once they leave that classroom, that's kind of not my responsibility anymore if they don't know how to read, that's not on me. That should have been picked up in primary school. (Ali)

Ali's view is that any teaching related to functional literacy is the responsibility of key stage 1 and 2 teachers, and her role as a secondary English teacher is to ensure that pupils have familiarity with the texts being studied.

Robert, with characteristic interest explains that he recently read an article which suggested splitting English into literary studies and literacy and this led him to ask himself if he 'would be a teacher of literacy' to which he answers, 'no, probably not!'. He does however suggest that his notion of 'literacy' has been influenced by his experiences in two placement schools, where, he claims, pedagogy has centred around 'set rules about […] recall'. Drawing on his then current placement, he explores a link between lower levels of functional literacy (due to a high number of EAL pupils, plus low attainment due to disadvantage) and the scope that English teachers have to develop reader-responses. His ultimate assessment of his role is that yes, he is a teacher of reading and that it is more closely related to teaching functional literacy as well as comprehension and fluency but this seems to be school specific rather than role specific:

> [I]t feels more like teaching them how to be literate, read, how to decode. Yeah, yeah, how to decode and assign meanings to words and construct sentences et cetera because they struggle. (Robert)

The perceived impact of Covid-19 on Frances' placement school's pupils has made her re-think her role as a teacher of reading and her explanation presents the secondary English teacher as having responsibility for aspects hitherto considered as that of the primary teacher. She has spent time teaching reading intervention and explains how she has had 'to spend quite a lot of time sitting and actually going through sounds and just supporting with things like that.' She reflects that:

> I don't think I thought of myself as someone who'd be teaching kids to read simply because I was teaching in a secondary school. But actually, having done it, I feel like I do. I do actually have like a bit of a part to play in it. (Frances)

Subject mentors' views of themselves as teachers of reading shared some similarities with the student teachers. Sadiya's subject mentor Tilly explains that her 'answer this year is probably completely different than it would have been a year ago [because of a] massive push on reading as a whole school priority' and this is due to the senior management's focus on reading across key stages and across the curriculum. This includes all pupils reading for twenty minutes each morning with a view to reading whole novels over a period of time. However, similarly to Frances' explanation above, the impact of Covid means that she is now 'actually teaching [children] *how* to read' which she describes as 'more difficult' and she herself is 'doing some phonics training'. She tells me that due to school closures:

> we know as a department, that we need to do more because we are dealing with, especially post-Covid, […] we're trying to get them to read but actually we don't know if they're right at the beginning of learning to read and they've missed out on that fundamental phonics training. [That] they can't decode the words and they can't do the physical act of reading. (Tilly, Sadiya's subject mentor)

For Nat, Robert's subject mentor, her view of being a teacher of reading is powered by her own passion for reading literature and the responsibility she has for promoting reading for pleasure in her school:

> I think developing that love of reading […] if we're not promoting books and reading and like all these fantastic authors like, like, what are we doing basically? (Nat, Robert's subject mentor)

Christina's subject mentor, Steve, has views about being a teacher of reading which are perhaps more clearly realised in terms of his classroom practice and which seem to be closely related to the pupils' skills of comprehension, inference and to some extent, fluency. He has devised a method which draws upon his knowledge of psychology and neurology. He firstly aims to make his pupils cognisant of their wandering minds and secondly, aware of what they are or are not comprehending and inferring when they read. He refers to the 'primary school style' approach of tracing lines of text with a forefinger to 'train the monkey mind' and calls upon psychotherapy (rather than psychoanalytic literary theory) to read Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* as 'an extended metaphor for the therapeutic process of recovery.' Steve refers to his method as 'grounded reading' and his aim is to train his pupils to notice what is in the text, including punctuation and space and then to build responses on top of that.

A common perception amongst the student teachers was that reading within an English lesson referred to the time allocated to making progress through a text, the number of pages read, or the trajectory towards completion of the text. Sadiya, Robert, Christina and Stuart all refer to a method of whole-class reading which requires them to periodically halt reading to check comprehension:

> In my mind when you say a reading lesson, I imagine that to be, a lesson where you're reading the text and answering questions based on it whereas this one, it might include elements of reading [but] it was more about analysing how language was used in the text (Sadiya)
>
> I think today was down to the quantity that made it a reading lesson. I think it was down to that and translation and the constant stopping and then carrying on that made it a reading lesson (Robert)
>
> [A]fter we've read a passage [...] I'll stop at a certain place and say, what do you think is going on here? (Christina)

Stuart does not define a reading lesson simply according to the amount of text covered. It is, 'more about getting the plot down, which characters are doing what, what are they trying to do in the future, sort of thing' but also it also includes 'translation' of Early Modern English in *Romeo and Juliet* and elements of fluency as

well as inference. In this regard, he is the student teacher who shares a fuller concept of literary analysis as reading:

> [I]t's really important to sort of like take note of that and to understand that you're not only teaching them to sort of like to read and pronounce sort of like words correctly to learn the meanings of words correctly and then to sort of contextualize and infer on those words and what the bulk of the text or the play that you're reading is actually trying to say. (Stuart)

The student teachers also offered the following as characteristics of a reading lesson, all of which seem perfectly appropriate but taken as sole definitions of a reading lesson, are perhaps singular and highly specific:

> [In a] reading lesson students would usually be reading out loud (Ali)
>
> They [have] to read the images (Christina)
>
> I think sometimes it's nice [for pupils] just to actually sit and read someone else's work and get into someone else's head (Frances)

The matter of whether secondary English lessons are necessarily more focused on knowledge acquisition at the expense of reading skills such as those targeted by subject mentor Steve’s method of grounded reading is evident in the analysis. Ali, who says she would ‘never spend a whole lesson reading’ and Christina, who asserts that ‘they read all the time in English’, both emphasise how comprehension characterises their teaching of texts. Ali refers to ‘the main aspects of action, plot, character development’ as well as literary terminology. For her, as with all of the student teachers, the focus of the lesson is analysis but this is not how she ‘would describe a reading lesson.’ Similarly, Frances, mentions vocabulary and comprehension as aspects of teaching literary texts and analysis in her classroom but does not make a clear connection to this as teaching reading.

Throughout five of the six student teachers’ responses, there is no mention of encouraging reader-response or critical literacy and much of what the student teachers value relates to knowledge about the text and meanings that can be taught, whether terminology, elements of the text’s content or its language. Christina’s response is rather different in that she is the only student to state that

her lesson on the poem 'Blessing' *was* a reading lesson. Interestingly, she explains this not in terms of the poem itself, but through the series of images she displayed on her PowerPoint slides, of children in Mumbai standing by a water pump, which required pupils to work with comprehension and inference:

> I think with the images, they were making a lot of inferences, so for example, E mentioned that they were having a water fight when they actually weren't, they were just drinking the water but I think for the most part they were comprehending because they were reading what was there […] I think I wanted them to do both; read the images and then what they were telling them about what the people were feeling. What I was trying to do was relate it all back to the idea of water as a blessing. (Christina)

Here at least the focus appears to be directed at her pupils' reader-responses but this only serves to make her inclusion and eventual emphasis of author biography and intention more incongruous and unhelpful. Whilst Christina did not mention in her initial interview digital or visual resources as texts for developing reading, during her time on placement, she has evidently embraced them as a way to teach skills of comprehension and inference, as well as prediction. Whilst she does not approach the poem in the same way, and nor does she move away from prefacing the pupils' introduction to the poem with contextual information about the author's biography and stated intentions, she is clearly trialling teaching methods which engage pupils' skills of analysis and interpretation by focusing on form, such as the image being in black and white, the mise-en-scene of the photograph and it's 'characters'.

4.3.3. Perceived tensions which inhibit teaching literary analysis

The following subtheme presents participant accounts of teaching reading is being in tension with a number of factors which arise from the school placement and the PGCE course. The accounts raise issues of teacher autonomy and assimilation which are not simply related to the Core Content Framework (DfE, 2019), Teachers Standards (DfE, 2012) or National Curriculum (DfE, 2013).

All students appeared to view their teaching practice as a process which required them to assimilate during their placement. This is perhaps due to the prominence,

throughout the PGCE[24], of the ITT Core Content Framework, (DfE, 2019) and the Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2011), both of which taxonomize competencies and act to prescribe what progress toward qualification should comprise. The subtheme captures influences which drive their literature teaching away from some of the key concepts of reading and textual analysis.

Sadiya explained that even though she was a third of the way through her second and final practicum:

> I'm still trying to grapple with the course itself and making sure that I'm delivering the curriculum and it's kind of, it's more prescribed, I think, especially when you go onto your placements, things are supposed to be done in a specific way and there's less leeway and room to kind of bring your ideas in. (Sadiya)

She does in fact refer to both DfE documents that 'they have set out for us' and where there are 'specific things that need to be covered'. She also refers to the focus on skills at her placement school and how texts are chosen in order to facilitate the development of analysis and composition for GCSE examination performance. She becomes focused on prescription of content and how this limits creativity, suggesting that she would prefer to experiment more in her own practice. However, this seems to have more to do with Ofsted's most recent visit to the school, which led to the recommendation to teach a broad range of texts and to focus on skills. The English department responded by designing booklets which incorporate this and focus systematically on the skills required to perform well in the GCSE exams. Whilst Sadiya seems frustrated by the prescription, saying, 'everything is very specific, it's got focus [but] I feel like it doesn't allow enough room for creativity' she also adds, '[b]ut I also understand why that needs to be done' and later refers to the pressure teachers are under 'to hit a certain target'.

She acknowledges the need for teachers to follow a curriculum plan which at key stage four culminates in terminal examination. Interestingly she speaks of the curriculum in terms of a 'rigid mark scheme' as though assessment *is* the curriculum

[24] Assessment of student teachers on the PGCE programme at MMU is largely conducted through the Progression and Achievement Document (PAD) which uses the DfE (2019) Core Content framework's learning outcomes as its structure for regular 'reviews'. (See Appendix 2)

and seems accepting of the way that examination results are seen as an indicator of the quality of teacher performance rather than that of the pupil. However, her concern lies with the issue of English teacher autonomy:

> There's not any room for kind of, there's not any leeway to kind of branch out of that. It's very much: I've got this task to do, we're all going to get on with it, let's do it and hopefully by the end of it, you'll get good marks. (Sadiya)

Frances' responses are remarkably similar to Sadiya's, despite them being in very different schools. She says that 'from a time perspective' investing in pupils' reader-responses would be unlikely even though she says, 'I would love to' and asserts that pupils 'would benefit a bit more from that.' She refers to pupils' reader-responses in terms of 'deviation' and explains that the lessons are 'sequenced and everyone in the department has to be on the same page kind of thing.' She ponders the possibility of a change in her subject pedagogy 'maybe […] when I finish placement.'
She refers to an English department's scheme of work as a guide for how far she can go in exercising her subject knowledge. Comparing 'such different experience[s] with both placements' she refers to her first placement when she was 'free to sort of do whatever' but how this was in fact, intimidating. She describes how 'if I'd been teaching for year […] I'd have loved that' but in her current school, 'there is such a structure' and if she were to 'deviate [it] would put sequencing out of place.' She goes as far as to say that 'it's nice when you deviate from what you're doing […] and they get a bit more out of it', claiming that pupils 'benefit a bit more from that.'

Sadiya, Robert and Christina convey something of a dilemma they face between the virtues and values of teaching reading as part of literature classes on the one hand and the need to 'perform' to standards and targets on the other. Frances talks of how she has 'struggled' with this and explains that it is the 'structured' nature of GCSE which means that she as a teacher has developed the perspective of 'you [the pupil] have your own opinion but you're not really allowed to do that at GCSE.' Sadiya appears to have spent time also pondering this dilemma and refers to a 'specific set of instructions' that teachers must adhere to, which, she speculates, may derive from 'schemes of work or kind of, GCSE assessments' and her concern appears to be how

this is not simply about good planning, consistency or teacher workload but rather about a 'need to follow a certain pattern to hit a certain target.'

Robert also seems certain of the problem and the solution, albeit a slightly idealistic one. His mentors have, according to him, been critical of his planning where he has 'put too much in', presumably, referring to his desire to teach literature the way he thinks most appropriate, that is, to address (through 'discussion based' pedagogy) big ideas and socio-political issues such as the 'racial politics of 'Nothing's Changed'.' This has led to what he describes as 'one of the biggest clashes I have with teaching English' and then says,

> I wish we didn't have exams. I wish we didn't have to teach to the exam. I wish English could be a much more open space than what it is now. (Robert)

He says that this 'frustrates' and 'aggravates' him and he appears to resent having to 'go into juxtaposition' as an example. He identifies Personal and Social Health Education (PSHE) classes which he has had some experience of teaching, as much more satisfying and rewarding, both because it is often dialogic, discussion and debate oriented and because it is not assessed via examination.

A further tension which impacts on teaching analysis and pupils' critical responses is that what is typically referred to in the data by Stuart, Frances, Robert and subject mentor, Tilly, as 'ability'. As Stuart did in an earlier interview, Frances refers to Key Stage Four pupils in terms of 'lower' and 'upper GCSE'. As a subject specialist she asserts that telling pupils that a language feature or literary device means a certain thing is not really appropriate for 'upper GCSE' because 'those top grades are for people that can come up with unique individual interpretations.' She adds that even with 'upper GCSE' students she needs to ensure that pupils' ideas still strongly correlate with the text's content and avoid flights of fancy away from textual evidence.

Robert also draws a parallel between pupil 'ability' and how he teaches literature. For lower ability pupils, he opts for what he calls the 'I'm just going to tell you what this poem means' method:

> I don't know what teaching methods I would use to not do that, especially with a class of such low ability where a lot of the aim

> is to really understand what the poem is about because a lot of the time when I read a poem to them, they don't get it. (Robert)

His alignment of 'high ability' with permitting reader-response once again suggests that pupils' own interpretations are almost entirely tied to intellect rather than calling upon empathy, experience and opinions, which he himself so powerfully advocated in an earlier interview (see 4.1). He claims that in regard of the 'low ability' class I observe him teach he 'tried a bit more of getting things from them' but it 'kind of failed' despite them having some 'really good ideas'. He then mentions that he has received feedback from his subject mentor to address pace in his lessons which he views as somewhat at odds with his attempts to nurture reader-responses with 'low ability' classes. The change he makes shares similarities with Frances' method above and is targeted at making pupils exam-ready: he directs pupils towards literary techniques as a way of ensuring a basic standard of analysis:

> I thought I should do that because when it comes to their exam, it's best for them to write [reads mechanically]: 'this metaphor shows', or 'the writer uses a verb phrase' so that they can… it's less about 'this is a metaphor and this is significant' and more 'this is a metaphor' so that in the exam, you can say, 'this *metapho*r shows' rather than 'this *bit* shows'. That's why I included it. It wasn't something I did naturally, it was because of feedback I received. (Robert)

Moreover, his perspective seems to alter so that he has now come to sympathise with the agenda of ensuring GCSE outcomes which reflect well on teacher performance and school efficacy. Whilst he still addresses it as an 'issue' he also explains that he 'can see why *we* teach them like this' [my italics]. He says 'unfortunately' in relation to this, but also uses this as a context to explain the approach he takes in his observed lesson.

The analysis also presents an interesting tension between university teaching and placement experience with the former being viewed in terms akin to experimentation and the latter, prescription. The student teachers' experiences of placements are increasingly characterised by department-wide planning which all staff must deliver from pre-written PowerPoint presentations. Frances recalls a university PGCE session which promoted the use of immersive and expressive

methods of teaching key quotations from *The Tempest*. She refers to its influence and how it 'gave me ideas for what I could do' but explains that her classes had 'assessments coming up' so she 'couldn't really do a lot of that, but I wish that I could have.' She refers to this kind of teaching as being characterised by 'creativity' when in fact it sought to explore one of the GCSE assessment objectives (Pearson Edexcel, 2019).

A further illustration of the perceived tension between university teaching and placement experience occurs when Sadiya recalls another PGCE session in university in which we discussed the idea of valuing the positionality and context of each learner in relation to matters such as postcolonialism in literature and using this as a basis for empowering each pupil with a voice, to read and respond to the text in front of them. Conversely, she says that her experience has been one of, the teacher emphasising socio-historical context (which is presented as empirical and neutral and universal) as a means of understanding, analysing and interpreting the text.

During Ali's lesson, I observe that she is using an adapted version of an approach to scaffolding analysis of poetry which I showed to the PGCE English cohort earlier in the course, in her version the annotations are related to context and a limited number of literary stylistic features rather than those which focus on typical stylistic and structural facets of a poem, to help the reader on her analytic journey. Ali's version is aimed at expediting coverage and ensuring that pupils focus on aspects of the poem which can be used for modelling a written responses rather than scaffolding analytic reading:

> [The pupils have] got a handout printed with the words and phrases already colour coordinated, that I wanted them to focus on and then I annotated one under the visualiser and I do a whole "I do, you do, we do" thing. (Ali)

Frances and Robert also recall a lecture I gave at the start of the programme on reader-response in the GCSE and A-level specifications. For Frances, 'it really stuck in my mind' and then proceeds to explain its relationship to her current placement setting where teachers focus on inferential meanings which are commonly agreed and standardised ahead of teaching to a class. Like Sadiya, she links this this to GCSE assessment criteria but is confused by the reluctance to encourage individual

inferences and responses. She asks herself why previously she 'never thought about it like that.' She refers to how this could be an antidote to 'sort of teaching to the test' and refers to the kind of scenario described earlier on by Sadiya and Robert when recalling their own GCSE studies, summed up here by Frances as, 'oh, this is what you need to write and this will get you the mark.'

Analysis drawn from subject mentor interviews add further dimensions to the subtheme. In my interviews with Sadiya's subject mentor, Tilly, the matter of department uniformity is recurring. Tilly's explanations of her relationship to aspects of her practice, her teacher identity as well as her subject and pedagogic knowledge suggest changes which occur in tandem with departmental planning:

> What's springing to mind, erm, are kind of, internal CPD, erm, so for example, [X] who's on our SLT, she has given a lot CPD, cos this is her brainchild, using the visualiser and talking through. In terms of department CPD, it's completely revolutionised the way [we] teach. (Tilly, Sadiya's subject mentor)

Tilly also suggests that attainment or 'ability' is a tension at work in the literature lesson. She refers to 'our year 10 and year 11 bottom sets' whom she describes as 'really […] low ability and disadvantaged'. She tells me that these pupils have not previously 'done literature' because it was 'really over-facing' for them. She refers to these pupils doing literature up to year nine by looking at the 'beginning of texts' [for GCSE] but thereafter, the focus is on language. She recalls her 'bottom set' year nine who followed this stream of learning. Whilst year nine is, according to the National Curriculum (2013) the final year of key stage three, it talked of by Tilly as something akin to a pre-GCSE course (which Stuart and Ali also imply in their interviews with me) which may even reach back into years seven and eight. Indeed, Sadiya's observed lesson was focused on GCSE exam-style analytical reading and writing of non-fiction with a year eight class.

Tilly's department's use of booklets which include pre-annotated texts (fiction and non-fiction, literary and non-literary) is rationalised in terms of pupil ability, also. She tells me that it has the additional benefit of acting for 'the lower end' who 'can't recall what they did yesterday' to provide the chance to 'feel confident – kind of fake it to 'til you make it.' Tilly's perspective here seems to preclude reader-response as

an approach to interpretation and suggests that starting with pupils' own experiences, values and opinions is unlikely to yield any kind of interpretation or criticism of value, to develop reading skills of comprehending, inferring, predicting, criticising or having a personal viewpoint. Tilly does refer to a 'process' of interpretation that her school's method 'cuts out' but then modifies this to 'we don't spend too much time on the process' because 'it's more about what they do with what they've learned', referring to the method of direct-instruction of what the text means, followed by time spent on scaffolded tasking which develops pupils' ability to present ideas in an exam-style written response. In such a method, the 'reader' is the teacher and certainly the main determinant of the text's meaning.

Conversely, Steve, Christina's subject mentor, does not make reference to differentiating his method according to tensions such as pupil attainment, 'ability', disadvantage and the pedagogy of his literature teaching. He offers a very pupil-centred view of teaching reading and accompanying skills of interpretation and criticism. Moreover, the nexus of his 'grounded reading' method appears to be the relationship between the pupil's monkey mind and the text in front of her. The 'monkey mind' he claims, goes,

> [F]rom random idea to random idea […] it's how to manage that monkey mind really gently, and compassionately bringing your attention back to what you're doing again and again and just accepting that doing that, it's just what our minds do. (Steve, Christina's subject mentor)

Steve, sees this nexus as the site where a 'delicate balancing act' takes place,

> between telling them what you think they need to know and trying to encourage an independent interpretation of reading and response of the text and that the continual battle and that battle […], it's just something that you grapple with that that never really gets, it's never easy. (Steve, Christina's subject mentor)

He acknowledges that pupils can often 'get completely the wrong end of the stick' which means he starts 'with the basics' and questioning to guide pupils to developing a reading practice which is not simply expressive and subjective, but one which brings 'them back into the domain of reality through questioning' to probe 'their thought process [so] that they see the flaws in their argument.'

For Frances' subject mentor, Roisin, teaching analysis is also focused on the text's language, style and structure and whilst she guides them to these most of the time she also asks, 'does anything else stand out?' She also refers to pupil ability and attainment and tells me that her middle set year 11 groups 'struggle to hit the four' and 'get overwhelmed' by the text and 'don't know how to approach it.' Her approach is, similarly to Steve's, to 'chunk it down into small parts to make it manageable and call it the 5-step approach.' This involves reading the text twice and then asking questions such as 'what is it about, how do they know, does anything stand out and why?'

Discussion

The analysis in this chapter presents participants' perspectives on reading in English literature lessons and English lessons in general. As a core element of the National Curriculum (DfE, 2013), reading is given great focus but the key stage 3 programmes of study present reading as a skill already acquired and mastered and this appears to be mirrored in the views of the participants. The DfE's recent revision (July 2023) to The Reading Framework (DfE, 2021) includes greater emphasis placed on developing reading skills firstly by drawing upon Hoover and Gough's (1990) 'Simple View of Reading' model but emphasising fluency alongside decoding and comprehension for all teachers across all key stages.

Despite taught sessions delivered by me on the PGCE secondary English programme, most of the student teachers did not view themselves as teachers of reading. They often referred to analysis in literature lessons as an aspect of the subject which did not count as reading but rather as a process which produced written accounts of a text's meaning and often prefaced by a lesson where comprehension was the focus. Even when student teachers spoke of analysis in terms of interpretation using inferential meaning drawn from close reading methods, they still did not seem to view this as an example of teaching reading.

Subject mentors give responses to the notion of being a teacher of reading which range from acting as an enthusiastic and passionate advocate of reading for pleasure,

guiding pupils towards noticing what is on the page and metacognitively checking that they are noticing what the text is telling them or else providing intervention for pupils whose literacy development was delayed. However, the matter of developing pupils' own critical views and voices is less clear. Teaching reading is, it seems, only ever, either teaching functional literacy or coverage of content (Perry, 2022) and the imperative to perform to targets leads to didactic teaching of literature and defining of literary terminology and techniques as a means of safeguarding a certain level of examination performance for those pupils who are considered unable to offer responses to what they read. Aside from suggestions that the 'bleeding down' (Roberts, 2023) of GCSE texts into key stage three is off-putting for pupils and even deterring children's reading for pleasure (Lough, 2019), it might be said therefore, that assessment not only drives pedagogy, but *is* the pedagogy of the GCSE literature lesson. I have said many times in my role as a teacher educator, what passes as pedagogy is what I once did for revision in the final term of GCSE or A-level.

Whilst the renewed and improved focus on decoding, comprehension and fluency in the secondary English lesson is to be welcomed, there still appears to be a missed opportunity to explore the implications of how literary analysis, something which appears to consume a great deal of teachers' time according to the data, with clear understanding of critical coordinates and methods, could improve pupils' critical literacy, not simply to elevate them as literary critics which of course they are, but to encourage a more rewarding interaction with literature. To exploit fully the benefits of conducting analysis of literary texts in the secondary classroom it is necessary to expose the affects that a text's content, structure, style and form has on the reader herself; whose own contexts and positionality gives scope for the formation and expression of views and opinions in the most democratic of ways.

The analysis suggests that the pedagogy of the English literature lesson appears to be driven by teacher-reader-response. The teacher becomes the reader and guides pupils in the direction of their own interpretations which are typically informed by historical contexts and author intentionality. Didactic teaching dominates the learning (Prezioso, 2023) through visualisers and PowerPoint slides, sometimes

bought in and sometimes replete with conceptual and subject knowledge errors [25]. The pupils have to be 'on the same page' (Ali and Stuart) and the pace of learning and the pace of the lesson is slowed down in order to ensure 'the job' is done.

In Stuart's lesson for instance, his pupils' questions represented to me impressive depth of engagement and understanding about Shakespeare's characterisation. Furthermore, their questions were beginning to show an emergent (and unknowing) grasp of Shakespearean tragedy and elements of classical drama. They had started to grasp that whilst the audience of the day would invest in notions of fate and destiny, Shakespeare presents his audience with more humanist possibilities; that the play's tragedy is the consequence of human folly and error. Stuart, a student English teacher with a postgraduate degree in English literature, does not attend to this turn of events as he arguably ought because he is determined to produce collective annotations of almost every line of the text, under the visualiser.

Interestingly, subject mentor Tilly's opinion is that, although it is 'more challenging', her pupils 'definitely engage with [literature][26] more than the language that we do' because she suspects that it is 'the story itself, at its foundation, [that] they absolutely love.' She explains that 'the story' is a concept that has become much more central to their department's approach to teaching literature of all kinds. She explains, '[w]e've had a big push on this [because] everything comes down to the story.' Referring to the poetry element of the GCSE literature examination, she says that 'when we're doing year 10 poetry […] the first thing we do, whenever we do the poetry anthology, is we tell them the story of the poem.' She explains that she tells her year 10 class:

> "T]his is the story of the poem and this is what's happening" because anything else that they do, it makes more sense. They can link it to something, especially for lower ability and disadvantaged pupils.
>
> (Tilly, Sadiya's subject mentor)

[25] This refers to a recent visit I made to a very large multi-academy trust. I observed a lesson on dialect but which part way through used examples of accent not dialect. The student teacher and her subject mentor had reported the mistake but had been instructed to continue using them. The subject mentor resigned from the school at the end of the academic year 2022-23.
[26] In this instance, *Macbeth*

Whilst Roisin and Nat also refer to the importance of the story or the big idea of a text as providing a foothold for the pupil as well as sparking interest in the text, Tilly's view is unique because its inclusion is a foreword to instructing the pupils on what the text means rather than a precis to aid their own reading and analysis, much like Snapper's (2009) notion of certified reading and an approach viewed as partly responsible for the death of pupils' poetry reading habits (Creely, 2019).

Nat, Steve and Roisin are experienced teachers of English who now have significant influence over new teachers' practice. They all use aspects of reader-response in their literature teaching but none of them described it as such or had any knowledge from explicit learning of literary, textual or critical theory courses on their degree courses or through their own practice as qualified subject specialists; a situation which could be easily remedied through greater clarity, better training and professional development and crucially, teacher praxis which acknowledges the ontological implications of different critical orientations such as those illustrated by Abrams (1953).

The question of who will ensure this happens is a difficult one to answer. To argue it should be part of every literature degree is perhaps unfair as not every literature undergraduate will go on to become a teacher. Perhaps the teacher educator (Roberts, 2019)? However, the proliferation of ITE / ITT routes does not complement consistency and the CCF does not really address subject discipline concepts and principles but rather sees teaching expertise as developing across a wide-open space of outcomes or standards. Perhaps the placement school which accommodates the practicum element of the PGCE? In addition to the above issue extending to the practicum experience, the analysis suggests that student teachers are expected to assimilate with whole-school or, at best, whole-department pedagogies which are often used in every subject across the curriculum. The best hope is perhaps potential reform of the National Curriculum alongside greater fluency and cogency between key stage four content and GCSE and A-level examination specifications. Such a move could go a long way in ensuring that concepts which underpin the study of English literature are more clearly aligned so there is much clearer understanding and

transparency in regard of teachers' substantive knowledge, disciplinary autonomy and crucially, pupil experience.

4.4. Theme four: The development of practice and looking beyond the PGCE

Introduction

Analysis presented in this section shows more of the journey which students experience whilst completing the second and final assessed practicum on school placement whilst working closely with a subject mentor and in association with any number of English teachers from within the English department of their placement school. As subject specialists, the student teachers wrestle with what it means to teach English and come to adopt perspectives and values which appear to have developed directly as a result of being on placement. The theme also sees them propel themselves into the future as early career teachers, (ECTs) to speculate on how their English teaching may evolve once part of the world of English teaching beyond the PGCE.

The main theme is divided into three subthemes that guide the presentation of the analysis:

1. The influence of experienced placement teachers and subject mentors;
2. The influence of generic approaches to pedagogy;
3. Practice beyond the PGCE.

4.4.1. The influence of experienced placement teachers and subject mentors

Throughout the initial interviews, student teachers often spoke about their English teaching being shaped and influenced by placement schools' standardised practices as well as their observations of mentors and the guidance the subject mentor gives them. They also made frequent mention of the prominence of generic pedagogical methods which appear to compromise their disciplinary knowledge, their pedagogical beliefs and their own preferred methods for teaching English. Students seemed to have a good deal of awareness that in the meantime, they make compromises in their practice but also offer projections of it beyond the PGCE

programme, in a way that is more in tune with their own perspectives and preferences.

Referring to a 'specific set of instructions' that teachers are required to follow, Sadiya talks of her current placement's English department team meetings. She suggests that whilst national guidance, standards, and frameworks, not to mention an inspectorate, are all instrumental in directing the nature of English teaching, she is keen to stress that within the department, the direction of pedagogical travel is driven by key staff members in positions with authority to do so, such as the head of English. Teachers 'generally tend to follow' structures found in 'departmental policies.' She says:

> I've noticed that everyone in my department seems to follow the same kind of structure regardless of whatever year group they're teaching or whatever text they're doing. It's always followed in the same format. And then they have their fortnightly briefings and they all discuss what they've studied and what they've taught. But it's interesting in the meetings that I've sat in, they've never discussed adding new techniques that they might have deployed in their classroom that worked really well for them. It's always, "okay, so this is what we're gonna be doing this week. Can everyone just kind of take notes and follow through? This is what we're introducing." It's never an open discussion to talk about other ways and options to teach English. And I think for me, as a PGCE student as well, I feel like I've almost learned one method or mode of teaching English, and it's hard to break out of, and particularly when you're learning that there are other avenues and options. (Sadiya)

Having spent her first placement at a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), Sadiya appreciates, within such a setting, the need and rationale for having very structured and systematic pedagogical methods and, staff specialisms which do not lie in the depth and breadth of subject knowledge. She contrasts this with her current Placement B school which she describes as 'mainstream [and] much bigger and much larger' but adds a concern about the level of English teacher specialism and how it is a,

> real shame that no one kind of brings in their perspective or their point of view or any kind of cultural theory, but we've got staff who didn't do English at university. So, I think that, that impacts quite a lot as well. A lot of them did a conversion course or

> whatever it is. We've got one teacher who purely did sciences and then she ended up being an English teacher. (Sadiya)

For Sadiya, this is potentially one of the reasons why there is so little discussion or collaboration on English teaching within her department. She does suggest that an alternative approach would be ‘if everyone kind of went off, on their own, brought something back into the briefing that they had discussed or researched or something that they had implemented that worked really well’ but such an approach cannot address the problem related to the teacher’s specialism. In addition, she struggles with the rationale of ‘get[ting] through the text quicker’, because she claims, ‘that’s all they’re doing.’ She queries why,

> ‘[n]o one will stop and think: hang on a second, why don't we spend a substantial part of time on one text [and] actually discuss what it means and what we're supposed to take from it? It's about getting through rather than extracting meaning from the text, which is really sad’. (Sadiya)

Her subject expertise is evident in the way she is forming opinions and values based upon her experiences of learning how to interpret and critique texts in addition to her emergent strength of opinion about how literature and reading should be taught.

The analysis also suggests some interesting similarities in regard to the subject teachers’ accounts of subject mentor expertise and disciplinary knowledge. Whilst Sadiya tells me ‘[w]e've got one teacher who purely did sciences and then she ended up being an English teacher’, Frances explains how the head of English at her school did a ‘psychology degree or she used to be a psychology teacher or something’ and this means she has ‘a naturally [...] analytical brain.’ Frances mentions how this same teacher is ‘always bringing [...in] not academic books, but books about education sort of thing’ and advising Frances to ‘read this, it's really good.’ However, in relation to subject specific reading or CPD, ‘I think she has briefly mentioned it, but nothing… I don't think it's been anything that's like… nothing I can think of that stuck out in my mind.’

Similarly, Ali tells me that ‘quite a few of the teachers I am with at [school] didn't do an English lit degree. They did journalism or sociology and then the other one did do English, but two, two out of the three didn't do English.’ She is keen to tell me that

'[t]hey're good teachers to be fair; quite good teachers' but also gives me an account of how her own study of English to Master's level enabled her to be confident and expert. She describes how after completion of her MA, she felt that 'no one can come close to me for analysis now' as though she may have already recognised that at the level of substantive knowledge at least, she has a greater appreciation of specificity and complexity of subject knowledge perhaps in comparison to those assessing her own teaching.

She describes how the English teacher from her placement school who 'used to be a journalist' uses techniques for reading and analysing texts which involves 'zooming in on words, [or teaching] the creative writing side, or transactional writing' which have more in common with journalism. She explains that this same subject mentor 'tries to encourage [pupils] stepping out of their comfort zone' and she does so with the rationale that this demonstrates her unique perspective or approach to teaching English because 'she [previously] did something else' before becoming an English teacher. However, Ali's doubt cannot be concealed when she suggests that '[m]aybe there should be more talking about [literary theory] especially.'

Interestingly, Ali comments that at her placement school which is the same as Stuart's, 'the English teachers were the ones that love Rosenshine, so they just talk about him and Jenny Webb[27] a lot'. She continues to explain that one of the English teachers in the department, in fact, Stuart's subject mentor, 'absolutely loves Jenny Webb, and then later, mentions that 'she is obsessed with Jenny Webb'. As a result of the influences of Rosenshine and Webb, Ali tells me that 'they [the English department] more talk about the pedagogy rather than any type of literary theory'. As the conversation develops, it seems that Ali realises her own doubt regarding this situation. She says:

> Maybe there should be more talking about it especially, if you get in students like us because we have been exposed to a bit

[27] Jennifer Webb's (2019) *How to teach English Literature: Overcoming Cultural Poverty,* advocates for teaching literature with a strong emphasis on knowledge to provide pupils with a knowledge base which otherwise is likely to be overlooked due to disadvantage. Her book aims to 'make every student a literary scholar and critic, regardless of their economic or social class and background' and to do so by drawing upon the principles of cognitive science. Webb went on to write *The Metacognition Handbook* (2021).

> more think, and otherwise you're kind of shaped into what that school wants you to be. (Ali)

By the time I interview Ali at the end of the PGCE as the focus group analysis shows (see Chapter Five) her doubt has re-doubled and she is far less positive about the way her practice was shaped by the preferences of the department, the mentors and the school. Whilst Ali still seems to view literary theory as epistemological content, she does view its possibilities for coordinating subject English pedagogy. This is perhaps a result of her own substantive subject knowledge, particularly when set against the guidance of those less knowledgeable than herself and whose practice is dominated by pedagogical principles such as background knowledge, direct instruction and cognitive science.

My observation and post-lesson discussion with Robert presented a student teacher who was showing signs of feeling at odds with his placement school's pedagogy and mentoring, when it bears upon the way he not only teaches poetry but also the internal features of a poem which pertain to its form, as opposed to its grammar and syntax:

> I was told in my feedback at both my placements, [the pupils] need that for their exam. I find it grating as a teacher and I don't feel confident teaching that way because I don't think or write like that, it's hard for me to then think very specifically about what, like, they want from it. Sometimes I struggle to convey what exactly other than identifying 'it's a noun phrase', 'it's a verb phrase', whereas I'm much more thinking about themes and character and presentations and overarching ideas. (Robert)

> The issue I've found, and I can see why we teach them like this, unfortunately the focus is on getting a pass at GCSE and I've thought about how I can teach a class. And this lesson today, when I planned it was a bit 'I'm going to tell you what this poem means but also, I don't know what teaching methods I would use to not do that […] But I've never seen a school where you don't default to annotating a poem one by one, line by line. (Robert)

Sadiya's subject mentor, Tilly talks about her current practice in the classroom with clarity and confidence, but she does so always using first person plurals, *we* and *our*.

This presents her teaching and her pedagogical choices as something which has been formed agreed and endorsed collectively. Equally, the same is true when she speaks of the pupils annotating texts together in synchronicity and simultaneity. The use of the pre-annotated versions of the poetry they study in class supports this. She explains that this approach was decided by those more senior within the English department:

> I mean I can talk through what the curriculum leaders talk through with us but I don't know the ins and outs of it. (Tilly, Sadiya's subject mentor)

In contrast with Tilly, subject mentor Nat speaks about her literature teaching in a way that is driven by her own perspectives and preferences and these are at work in her pedagogy. From her strong advocacy of the 'big idea' approach to interpretation which avoids technique and feature spotting alongside how she demands her pupils acknowledge that the poet writes as a persona with a voice in a poem ('you've got to distinguish that the text is separate from the author, but you've got to recognize that influence between both'). From her 'slowly feed[ing] them the context' to teaching them that English literature learning is not about being '100% right [or] 100% wrong.' She does not talk about this as departmental policy or an agreed approach between herself and a group of colleagues; simply, this is Nat teaching her subject according to the school's preferred pedagogical methods, but with a strong compass to navigate her pupils' experiences of studying literature, and of the learning which potentially does or does not take place. When she tells me, 'I don't ever want teaching to be just like […], that regurgitation of facts', there is, as there is with Steve, a sense that Nat rejects a current 'trend' or at least makes judicious amendments to it in accordance with her own subject knowledge and experience.

4.4.2. The influence of generic approaches to Pedagogy

This subtheme develops the previous one by presenting more of the dimensions of influence at work in student teachers' placement school experiences, particularly the

professional development which takes place in school and in which they are expected to participate.

Closely allied to the student teachers' conceptions of the influence of mentors and other teachers in their placement school, the matter of continuing professional development (CPD) is recurring in the data, both in terms of that which subject mentors engage with and that which is delivered in and by the placement school, directly to the student teachers. Aside from the recommendations of reading matter the student teachers also recall being included in school-based CPD on placement.

Ali recalls 'a CPD' on behaviour but gives a reminder that the school is 'all Rosenshine' so 'it wasn't literary or anything like that.' The behaviour session appears to have been very relevant to tackling pupil behaviour in the school and she reveals how it:

> really helped me because I was really struggling with how on earth to deal with the behaviour of year eight. So, the CPD that the school offered, for me, really helped. That was more just generalized. It was nothing subject specific. (Ali)

Rosenshine has also influenced Christina's teaching of literature as a result of whole school CPD sessions and this is something which she appears to have willingly adopted. In both of her placement schools, there has been a whole-staff training focus on Rosenshine but as far as her knowledge and understanding of teaching pupils how to read and analyse texts she says, 'it will mostly be uni sessions rather than CPD within the school.'

Stuart and Ali, on placement in the same school which has a school-wide pedagogical method for all teachers in all subjects, both accept the value of direct instruction and methods derived from cognitive load theory. Stuart says that most of his development has occurred through 'conversations with my mentor about questioning.' He explains how this had been a target for him throughout placement A and continued into his current placement B:

> it's something that I really want to try and master because I think questioning is a very, very important way of not only assessing but just engaging, making sure pupils are actually enjoying and are active in a classroom. (Stuart)

Here, and elsewhere, Stuart shows a tendency to speak about his English teaching in general and practical terms.

It is interesting that enjoyment and activity are developed not by bestowing responsibility and autonomy on his pupil-readers, but through the direct instruction strategy of teacher-led questioning. His commitment to developing pupils' literary analysis skills through questioning is 'quite a big one actually' and that, 'it's what my [Subject Pedagogy Assignment[28]] essay's gonna be on so you'll read about this.' The school's focus on questioning as a form of knowledge check is due to the adoption of Rosenshine alongside his subject mentor's engagement with the work of consultants such as Jennifer Webb. Such influences appear to have steered Stuart's practice in the direction of the specific pedagogical model of direct instruction.

Throughout her Placement B experience, Ali is reasonably comfortable with her department's adherence to a particular pedagogical method, even though she appears to find the lack of choice and autonomy something of an issue for her personally. The school does seem to permit some autonomy, but from within a range of methods pertaining to that broader pedagogical approach:

> the fact that they shove Rosenshine down my throat has influenced the way I teach because I do actually quite like some aspects of it and like we always have to do a starter, which is some kind of memory recall, but you can do it however you want to do it. So, I do it in all sorts of different ways. Sometimes I do dual coding and put pictures up and be like, 'what do these represent?' And it'll be vocab that we've learned last week or something. (Ali)

What is clear is that her practice has been shaped by her placement school's commitment to direct instruction and cognitive load theory but that she is resistant to having to teach this way because the school has a blanket expectation for all teachers to comply. So emphatic is this that she is subject to monitoring and

[28] PGCE students are currently required to complete an assignment which invites them to trial and critically evaluate an approach to subject pedagogy and assessment. The assignment is completed towards the end of the second and final school placement, in May.

surveillance in ways that are not part of the PGCE, its structures, objectives or assessment frameworks:

> [T]he school [has] CPD meetings all the time and it's mainly about Rosenshine and we have like a Rosenshine book that we have to like complete the booklet and sometimes I'll get picked up on that. I've not used the visualizer to live model something but then at the same time I'm like, but it's not relevant, like, I don't because they obviously want scaffolding and live modelling all the time. But if I just live model it to them all the time, the second I'm not there, they're not gonna have a clue. And so, I've been picked up on [this] a couple of times, on not using Rosenshine which, until they literally make me do it, I'm probably gonna continue to, but it’s in my observations that I didn't do a lot of modelling, but then to me, the kids still do all the work. They produce a good piece of work. (Ali)

Just as Sadiya refers to her awareness of ‘other avenues and options’, Stuart to Rosenshine as a ‘springboard’ for other approaches to teaching, Ali tells me she is ‘just testing the waters’ and therefore recognises that this is just one way to teach, and one which perhaps does not necessarily suit her style or her conceptualisation of disciplinary knowledge in the subject itself. However, within the school and despite her status as a learning teacher, tasked with a PGCE Master’s level assignment to complete, there is an expectation that she will conform. The assignment she must complete at this stage of the course requires students, drawing upon Shulman’s (1986) model of Pedagogical Content Knowledge, to investigate, trial and evaluate the relationship between subject knowledge and subject pedagogy. She tells me that in relation to the school’s commitment to Rosenshine: ‘I basically had to beg to see if I could *not* do it for my SPA. And then I had to do it for my subject assignment anyway, so...’ Stuart on the other hand has already explained without any note of objection or dissent, that his SPA also focuses on direct instruction and questioning.

Stuart does wish he ‘had a little bit more scope with it, but you know, so does everyone’. However, unlike Ali, he does not express much reservation about the school’s apparent faith in Rosenshine and refers to ‘all this data that people have done over decades, it's there for a reason.’ It is clear that his thinking about

classroom teaching methods is driven by a mostly positivist view of pedagogical methods ('if it's not backed up by data, we don't do it') which 'obviously work' and which prove approaches 'must work'. He tells me that his placement school is 'heavily, heavily, focused on Rosenshine's principles and it doesn't, it never, never, shies away from that.' Whilst he sees the benefits of engaging with a method which appears simple, accessible and impactful, he also views it as potentially 'quite restrictive in what someone can do and like, I think, that can be a quite a bad thing', although he does not show dissent or scholarly criticality in his SPA throughout the placement, preferring to assimilate with the school and his mentor as much as he can. However, an earlier comment indicates that this arises from two factors. He is the only student teacher to say they had always wanted to be an English teacher and that he had had to work hard to achieve his goal:

> I like worked my arse off to get a GCSE in [English] because I was like predicted an E I think or something horrendous like that. So, I was the one that sort of did that and […] I just knew at that point even when I wasn't doing so well that I wanted to teach. […] I just knew, so that really did develop my ideas that I wanted to carry on with English specifically and […] then further on into teaching like I just knew that that was my path and if I didn't do that then…? (Stuart)

Whilst Sadiya, Christina, Ali and Stuart talk extensively about their respective placement schools' commitment to and advocacy of Rosenshine's principles of direct instruction, Robert tells me how his placement school gave him a copy of Allison and Tharby's (2015) book, *Making Every Lesson Count*[29] when he first arrived and how subsequent CPD within the school was based almost exclusively on this. Tharby, a practising English teacher, also published *Making Every English Lesson Count* in 2017 but Robert has not heard of this. He tells me that the book covers:

> the five [sic] pillars[30]: your questioning, challenging modelling, practice, feedback, etcetera and all the CPD was going through it in that sense. And because it was a multi department CPD, I've

[29] Allison and Tharby's 2015 book claims to be an evidence-based guide for teachers at every stage of their career, from neophytes to veterans. They make the claim that what characterises effective are the six core principles of challenge, explanation, modelling, practice, feedback and questioning. The book won the ERA Educational Book of The Year Award in 2016. Tharby's 2017 text, *Making Every English Lesson Count*, draws upon 'the most useful evidence from cognitive science'.
[30] There are in fact *six* pillars according to Allison and Tharby (2015)

> never had like English-specific CPD […] I never had anything like, ‘let's discuss how we teach literature. (Robert)

Subject mentor Tilly refers to the ‘internal CPD she has undertaken, which is the ‘brainchild’ of a member of the English department who is also on the senior leadership team. This CPD has ‘completely revolutionised the way we teach’ and by this, she refers explicitly to ‘using the visualiser and talking through [the annotations].’ In addition, she refers to aspects of mastery learning in her teaching, the value and efficacy of which she cannot evaluate because ‘it’s not had impact yet’:

> If we’re talking about key vocab, I won’t let them move on to look at what words mean, unless we can all say it and we talk though it, cos they can’t use it, especially in the modern world where a lot of language is verbal. (Tilly, Sadiya’s subject mentor)

Christina’s subject mentor Steve’s experiences of CPD more recently have been focused on behaviour management and he speaks about this briefly before stating that his CPD has not been subject specific and related only to behaviour, direct instruction and retrieval practice, including Tom Sherrington’s books which all teaching staff across the curriculum are encouraged to read and engage with. Steve shares the benefit of hindsight and reflection from a teaching career which spans three decades. He refers to ‘trends’ in teaching but associates this with ‘career progression’, suggesting that teachers must observe and adhere to such trends if they intend to progress in the school. He indicates that autonomy has reduced somewhat from when his career started in the early 1990s:

> I mean, you could pretty much do what you liked […] the parameters were woolly, and they were wide and you could do the things you wanted to do.’ (Steve, Christina’s subject mentor)

He does not view this phase of his career with a halcyon hue and he does identify the subsequent phase with improvements in teaching and learning. However, this ‘woolly’ and ‘wide’ field of practice was a ‘very personal experience’ for which he ‘had a high level of enthusiasm and [gained] a high level of expertise too.’ The subsequent phase is the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) by New Labour in 1998 and marked the start in his career of a ’more and more prescriptive’

culture in teaching and schooling. Steve generally does not talk cynically or negatively about initiatives intended to enhance teaching and learning despite witnessing several significant sea-changes in policy and practice across three decades. He describes the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy and the shifts it brought in content knowledge and pedagogy as a 'fascinating experience' and appears incredulous that the NLS is 'almost a dirty word now'. In his opinion, 'never […] has so much been done to improve national literacy as it was during those 10 years' and its abandonment was a 'tragedy' even though he argues that 'it was a bit overdone' because it sought to turn English into a 'building block subject, like maths.' Its proliferation of grids and stratified objectives for formative assessment, to monitor and measure progress in very quantifiable terms, in addition to the then Key Stage Three SATS examinations was for him, a clear indication of this.

Steve is the only subject mentor to ask me what I think about current 'trends' in English teaching. His interest in and passion for English teaching is evident in his interview with me and his curiosity to know what my views are, are perhaps a marker of confidence and curiosity resulting from the longevity of his career. He prefaces his question to me by stating, 'we've got Rosenshine now and […] Tom Sherrington […] this information retrieval culture, which, you know, I think is interesting' but he reveals a little of his doubtfulness about the suitability of knowledge-based curricula, instructive teaching and retrieval drills, telling me he thinks 'it's gone far enough now.'

Roisin, Frances' subject mentor, whose background is in performing arts rather than English, tells me that some of her CPD has been informal, arising from conversations with the head of faculty, and from which came her use of sentence starters for writing and the 'think, feel, imagine, method which has become an important part of her literature lessons, aimed at improving reader-responses. Other than this, she tells me that she 'did a session and it was through Lit Drive' on context in *An Inspector Calls* 'on gender and roles of women […] for an exam spec.' She talks about her National Professional Qualification (NPQ) in terms of career progression and for which, as a university-led PGCE graduate, she apologises to me as university teacher educator, because the alternative would have been turning her PGCE into a full Master's

degree. She explains that the NPQ is funded (and therefore affordable) and is recognised for promotion[31]. Interestingly, the NPQ she is studying is not related to either her performing arts background nor her current English teaching specialism.

Somewhat in contrast to the more typical acceptance of general approaches to her own practice and furthering her career progression, Robert's mentor, Nat, describes how she has rewritten 'the whole key stage three curriculum' as a platform for her passionate belief in and commitment to reading and introducing 'a broad range of texts [pupils] might never have heard of.' As part of her recent appointment to key stage three lead, she has already led 'a lot of CPD within the department [on] key stage three changes and why I'm doing [them].'As earlier, her confidence is clear when she speaks about reading and literature as a means of nurturing reading for pleasure and enjoyment of both language and stories. As she reminds me, she is 'very passionate when it comes to teaching literature.'

Whilst she has been afforded the opportunity to do this through a promotion in school, it is clear that Nat's passion for reading and her belief in its manifold benefits for young people has driven her work, it is also clear that key stage three is utilised to prepare pupils for the demands of GCSE examinations, particularly the English literature examinations. She is quick to tell me that 'it's not about teaching to the test at all. [Rather], it's just about being a little more conscious [of] end points that […] you're always kind of going towards', but she remains committed to the notion that books which are relevant and interesting are key to nurturing personal responses.

4.4.3. Practice beyond the PGCE

In this subtheme, the student teachers' views present a consistent intention to return to methods of teaching English literature which reflects both their substantive

[31] The Ambition Institute was granted a contract to deliver the NPQs for the DfE. The website refers to the NPQ as providing its students with a 'common language' and a 'golden thread' which runs through their career development, all based upon 'evidence informed research.' NPQ in Headship (NPQH) Training Course | Ambition Institute, accessed 30/4/23.

knowledge from their own educational history as well as their university-led PGCE subject pedagogy sessions. However, their projections of how this might look, and indeed when in the future, differ.

Frances moots the possibility of a change in her subject pedagogy 'maybe […] when I finish placement', particularly in relation to inviting pupils' reader responses. Her plans show similarities to Sadiya's, despite them being in very different schools. She acknowledges that 'from a time perspective' investing in pupils' reader-responses would be unlikely even though she says, 'I would love to' and asserts that pupils 'would benefit a bit more from that.'

Sadiya talks of conforming to the school's expectations during the PGCE but sees herself in the future, 'when I become a bit more comfortable [with] my own practice' making choices about her own subject pedagogy. She qualifies this vision of herself in the future with some nuanced considerations of pupil attainment and topics within English. She still speaks of literary theory as epistemological content, and content which is best suited to the highest attaining pupils. She sees herself getting 'a little bit lost in the structure of the school and the English department itself and the way in which they teach English.' Her own difficult assimilation into her placement school's practices seem to have given her this idea but remains troubled by pedagogies driven by targets to improve pupils' exam performance as well as a lack of autonomy for individual teachers:

> I feel like it is quite rigid from what I've seen and I think only when you've been kind of comfortable, you've been there quite a few years that you can start having your own stamp on things a little bit more and say actually why don't we take this angle and explore this rather than dictating to the students what they should be doing in order to hit their AOs. And so yeah, I honestly wish I could sit here and say that I would [demonstrate autonomy], but I think realistically speaking, it would be how I get on with my department. (Sadiya)

She refers to how in the future she would like to choose texts which have greater relevance to pupils' lives and their own futures and in so doing, she really appears to value reader-response as a crucial aspect of developing reading skills and critical

literacy, even though she does not seem to view this as English teaching informed by literary theory because that is content.

Ali is resolute that in the future, once qualified and employed, she will not compromise on her knowledge and understanding of how literature teaching should work even if she was required to teach in a way that required her to compromise on disciplinary expertise:

> No, not when I'm qualified. Now, I'd be like, 'okay, yeah, of course'. But not when I'm qualified, like, no. If I don't agree with it, then I'm not gonna do it. And obviously […] I'm not just gonna, like, cause a riot, but I feel like you can still incorporate little things. So even now, even though the school loves Rosenshine, they do let me, like, incorporate my own little thing. So, there's no reason that I wouldn't do that when I got to a real a real job, when I'm qualified. (Ali)

Stuart also believes that subject specialist knowledge and pedagogy 'is just too important to ignore' and like Ali, says he would refuse to compromise if asked to teach his subject in a manner which undermined its principles, purposes and values. Christina too, is very clear that post-PGCE she intends to teach according to her own subject knowledge. She states, 'I would never do anything to fit in. That's just not me. I just can't do that […] but I think I will do it in my own way.' She hints at how she might execute this by 'explain[ing] to the kids that you know, this is what it says but this is really what it means and maybe do it that way.'

Similarly to Stuart and Christina, Robert doesn't think he 'could stop [him]self at least mentioning something I wouldn't agree with, that I feel very uncomfortable with' but does not offer any suggestions for how to teach according to the school's regimen at the same time as being aware in one's teaching, how the principles of the subject were always at work. However, Robert's response is much more equivocal in comparison to the others. He seems to be fearful of the repercussions of not conforming to his school's preferred methods of teaching. He imagines that he would 'feel pressured' but explains that he would not be able to 'stop myself in a lesson [from] saying this is only one way of looking at it [the text].' He talks of 'buck[ing] against the trend' by teaching according to his own understanding of how the subject operates in relation to critical reading and analysis and sees this as

something which might even lead to losing his job or receiving a bad reference or acquiring a bad reputation. Equally, it concerns him that a different school may be committed to a completely different whole-school pedagogy and this in itself places him in a precarious position. He again refers to 'capitalistic pressure [to] conform' and how as a member of a school community 'you wanna make sure you're doing like a whole school approach' without 'going rogue.'

Discussion

The focus of this discussion must start with the context of Stuart and Ali's placement B experience. Both PGCE students are literature graduates and both completed a Master's degree in English: Stuart in literature, Ali in TESOL and linguistics. Ali explains how her own study of English to Master's level enabled her to be confident and expert. She describes how after completion of her MA, she felt that 'no one [could] come close to me for analysis now' and how her postgraduate specialism provided her with essential substantive knowledge:

> I don't think I would have come on to do a PGCE if I'd not done my Master's. I don't think I would have tried to be a teacher without that because I don't think I understood the English language and all its features very well just from doing an English literature degree. (Ali)

The relationship Ali has established between her English literature teaching and her Master's in linguistics may well be born of her tendency towards orderliness and organisation (because linguistic and stylistic analysis is more formalist) but it is striking to learn that she feels her undergraduate literature degree alone would not sufficiently equip her with knowledge to teach English, especially given that she is being mentored by a teacher, much less knowledgeable about the subject than she.

Placed in the same school, Stuart and Ali were mentored respectively by teachers of English who did not have degrees in the subject, but rather, one in Sociology, the other in Journalism. That neither mentor consented to taking part in this study is perhaps not surprising as it perhaps seemed to them an ill-suited match; non-English graduates and a doctoral project on the use of an aspect of specialist substantive

knowledge as a coordinating influence on disciplinary knowledge. That said, there would have been great value for me in learning about how they work with aspects of the subject which, as I have argued, carry traces of concepts from literary studies from key stages three and four, just as it was for my interview with Frances' mentor, Roisin. As a performing arts graduate and a Drama PGCE graduate, Roisin was able to explain how she taught English with accompanying concepts from English literature, such as analysis, reader, author intention, context which were influenced by her study of texts and performance. For instance, her insight into reception theory in relation to audience shared similar characteristics with reception theories and reader-response theories in literary studies.

For Ali and Stuart to be mentored by mentors less qualified and knowledgeable in substantive knowledge of English is problematic and whilst this may be seen as the more pronounced iteration of a problem, there are associated problematics evident in student-mentor relationships which appear to derive from the whole-school, cross-curricular foregrounding of generic models of pedagogy such as direct instruction. The analysis in this section suggest that English teacher specialism is eroded by prescribed methods (Barnard, 2023; Perry, 2021; Thomas, 2019; Gordon 2018)) to teaching and utilisation of planning and resources which are written by department seniors or else bought in, for example, from the Oak National Academy curriculum quango.

In such contexts the theoretical foundations of a subject can be replaced with others, (such as seems to be the case with Ali's mentor who according to Ali, sees her knowledge of journalism as a means of refreshing approaches to teaching English) borrowed from another discipline or a generic approach to teaching. The analysis also indicates that student teachers' substantive and disciplinary knowledge does not develop beyond learning one method and data from mentor interviews also show a concerted commitment to whole-school pedagogical methods. Clearly, the data suggest that Ali, Sadiya, and Robert find direct instruction problematic for the development and diversity of their English disciplinary knowledge. Later, in the focus group discussion (see Chapter Five) all student teachers present classroom practice

based exclusively on Rosenshine's (2010) model of direct instruction to be restrictive and limiting for their English teaching.

This suggests a much larger problem regarding initial teacher education (ITE) in England. The Department for Education have pushed an agenda to situate the bulk of learning in the context of school-based training. Additionally, moves which introduce a curriculum for ITE (or ITT as the DfE would have it) in the form of the Core Content Framework (CCF) (DfE, 2022), a series of Ofsted research reviews (including one for English in 2022) which must be mapped and evidenced in ITE providers' programme design and which is a principal focus of Ofsted inspections. The net appears to be closing in on providers who encourage student teachers to engage with ideas and methods which do not fit with agendas made clear by the DfE and Ofsted reforms, guidance and regimens.

That Frances, Stuart, Ali and Robert have been repeatedly advised to read books written by Jennifer Webb (2019), Tom Sherrington (2019, 2020), Andy Tharby (2017) and Doug Lemov (2014) most certainly suggests that schools and mentors take a dim view of the role of HEI-led ITE. Rather, they are guided towards a small number of 'experts' whose advice adheres to the principles of a triumvirate of knowledge rich content, didactic pedagogy and cognitive psychology, often in the name of raising attainment for the most economically and culturally disadvantaged. The analysis in this thesis suggests that this is a dominant approach in and across schools. Subject mentor Steve attests to the positive impact in his own school in an economically diverse suburb of North Manchester, but he remains frustrated by the influence of ideology on what and how English teachers, teach.

Steve himself clearly identifies potential for methods such as direct instruction but it would appear to me that their potential, in Steve's view, lies in challenging a previous set of trends which Steve describes as 'gimmicky' and which made teachers feel as though they 'had to be entertaining all of the time.' He seems to spy an element of traditional pedagogy in direct instruction and cognitive psychology because, perhaps again drawing upon his interest in and knowledge of the mind it is an 'essential and necessary part of the learning process' However he also states that 'it's gone far

enough' as though its influence over how English literature is taught and learnt could be problematic if it was to override his own disciplinary expertise and judgment.

The problem is potentially even more concerning when the student teachers' knowledge, understanding and interpretation of important conceptual principles which derive from literary, critical and textual theories are so unclear. The student teachers maintain a relationship to literary theory according to their undergraduate studies, what I have previously referred to as a series of '-isms' or 'method wars' as Guillory (2023) puts it. Such a notion of literary theory views it as typically social and cultural rather than specifically literary and the students describe how they have used theory as a lens to make visible ruptures in the hegemonic. Opportunities for using such theories and in a manner such as this are presented as advisable for the most able without much in the way of reasons why. The only exception to this in the data is Nat whose literature degree, had theory 'woven in' in the years after she studied a compulsory module on literary theory. Her explanations also indicate that any clarity she has achieved in regard of how to use theory, has arisen from her own thinking and deliberations about how to write undergraduate essays and succeeding by returning to a version of her A-level essay writing.

The need for a literary theoretical compass is, I suggest, vital for English teachers recognising the potential for generic pedagogies to eschew principles of a discipline which orientate the teacher and the pupil towards better outcomes. If the recent phenomenon of non-English graduates qualifying as teachers of English continues, such knowledge could faithfully galvanise their development as subject specialists.

4.5. Summary of discussions

In providing a summary of the preceding discussion of themes, I wish to focus on four key areas which are connected to one another.

Firstly, whilst the student teachers do not claim to have any explicit knowledge of structuralist literary theories, the profound and personal experiences of studying literature at A-level[i] alongside the continued reliance on aspects of practical criticism

and reader-response in the secondary English classroom, means that structuralist theory still appears to orientate the student teachers practice as literature teachers, even if not consistently, clearly or consciously.

Secondly, the analysis suggests that the students clearly demonstrate an awareness of expectations to comply with school or department-wide pedagogical practice, and that largely, even when it is clear that it presents certain compromises and conflicts with the subject and disciplinary knowledge they have acquired throughout their academic careers. Generic, school or department-wide approaches to pedagogy dominate their school placement experience and both student teachers and subject mentors talk of the pedagogical methods as plausible and acceptable ways of ensuring, as a minimum, a basic level of pupil attainment, or, as a way of ensuring that all teachers in the English department teach the same thing at the same time. In this regard, it could be suggested that performativity drives pedagogy, and the consequence is a widespread adoption of teaching English referred to previously as 'exam English' (Bleiman, 2019).

Thirdly, it is not insignificant that the student teachers later on in the focus group (see Chapter Five) appear to refer to aspects of teacher performance and accountability as a context to partly explain their adoption of generic pedagogical choices and methods, in-line with department expectations, such as direct instruction and knowledge retrieval. Moreover, they explain factors such as coverage of the curriculum within specific time frames as pressures which the student teachers themselves claim to feel the burden of and for which they are expected to take responsibility.

Finally, all of the above issues reveal much about initial teacher training and education (ITTE) in England. In particular the status and purpose of HEI-led ITTE can be estimated from the accounts the student teachers give of their time on placement, particularly in the recollections of on-going professional development, guidance, advice from placement teachers, in addition to official mentoring they receive and which is collated and audited. Such accounts show the student teachers directed towards sources of information and professional and practical development

which ignores the university's input and influence. Such information and advice relies on 'closed' or 'complete' frameworks for practice, such as that contained in a manual such as Doug Lemov's *Teach Like a Champion* (2015) or else towards specialists who have adopted generic pedagogical methods. Perhaps most significant, is the influence of in-service practitioners, less qualified than themselves, whose own subject and knowledge is less comprehensive and expert than the student teachers themselves. Indeed, three of the six student teachers state that they gained no subject knowledge development as a consequence of the subject mentoring they received.

Chapter Five: Focus Group Analysis and Discussion

Introduction

The following section presents analysis of a focus group discussion held with five[32] of the six student teacher participants and covers the students' discussions of how their pedagogical methods for teaching literature were determined by broader institutional and managerial expectations and with which their subject mentors were assimilated. Such expectations were embedded in standardised lesson planning and scheduled and synchronous teaching across all teachers in the English department. In addition, the students show awareness of appraisals of teacher performance.

Ali, Frances, Robert, Sadiya and Stuart joined me in a classroom of the university building in which we had held our PGCE sessions over the previous nine months. The PGCE course had officially ended the day before and at the start of the week each student had attended a final review with their PGCE personal tutor in which their pass status was confirmed and all documentation 'signed off'. School placements had concluded the previous week and none of the student teachers had taken up a first post teacher of English position in their Placement B school. As such I perceived in the student teachers a much freer way of reflecting upon their PGCE experiences, especially when reflecting on their school placements and the mentoring they had received.

Analysis is presented according to four themes:

1. Emerging conceptualisations of literary theory, theoretical lenses and pedagogical conformity;
2. The influence of professional compliance, personal responsibility, and 'going rogue';
3. Reflections on the pressures of time, accountability and assimilation;
4. Reflections and requests for more university time on the PGCE.

[32] Christina was unable to join the discussion because it coincided with her induction at her first appointment school as a teacher of English.

5.1. Emerging conceptualisations of literary theory and pedagogical conformity

This theme covers the student teachers' emergent conceptualisations of literary theory in the school English lesson and its relationship to pedagogical methods they were expected to deploy in their classrooms.

Literary theory is once again referred to in terms of lenses through which the self and the world can be read and analysed. Robert talks of this in relation to his self-identity as a white, bisexual man and how this aligns with his positionality as a reader. His interpretations of texts occur 'because of who I am' and that gender and sexuality typically influences his reading, Ali as a dual-heritage woman asserts that race is her lens and Sadiya as a British Asian woman concurs with this. In relation to Robert's assertion that this version of theory is 'at work' in all English teachers' practice but is not openly discussed, Ali is less certain but does concur that 'it wouldn't be brought up in a department meeting.' Both Frances and Ali claim that theory is in fact something which is part of English teachers' awareness even if it is not discussed as part of their classroom practice. Ali explains that she and another teacher, 'a Pakistani woman who wore a hijab' were consulted about 'cultural texts' by a white teacher who wanted to make the texts they taught 'more culturally diverse'. She sums this situation up as 'theory might not be discussed and we might not think of that as theory but I guess it is. She wanted to look at texts through a racial lens' before suggesting that 'literary theory is talked about [and] we're more aware of [it] and we need to include more of [it] when we teach these kids.'

Frances offers a slightly different notion of theory which seems to have more to do with socio-historical contexts related to identity as an instrument of analysis. Referring to her teaching of *An Inspector Calls* and Shakespeare she describes how:

> the kids were always trying to make links between what they were reading and today and how it's different and I think that's good. To make sense of it. That's kind of theory isn't it, lenses and stuff. And that sense of canonical texts aren't necessarily representative of literature [...] and a lot of the kids were not from white-British backgrounds so it was good for them to see that. (Frances)

Ali has reservations about contemporary contexts being introduced into classroom analysis, however. Her school used Baz Luhrman's film adaptation of Romeo and Juliet but she argues that,

> showing them a film where Mercutio is black and gay gave them absolutely no context. They were just stuck on, "oh he's a drag queen" and they actually were like, "he's the black one with the gun" and I was like, "one: not black; two: not gay; three: not a drag queen; four: no guns".' (Ali)

However, rather than objecting to its use because it is not faithful to Shakespeare's socio-historical context, her discomfort lies with the pupils being allowed to think that this is the play rather than an interpretation of it; something she evidently feels the school failed to adequately make clear:

> So, the teacher for year eight had made the whole thing about masculinity and femininity, about gender, and we were exploring Mercutio as a feminine character and they would say that Mercutio was feminine because he was gay and we would say, 'is that because his language is different', but no, they would just go on face value from the film. (Ali)

Stuart, who typically waits for others to speak and has been something of a reserved and slightly nervous participant is the first to say something here. He talks about teaching Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) but found that 'they [teachers on placement A] only wanted to focus on the obvious that Blanche is going insane and that it's a patriarchal society and women are nothing, men everything.' His frustration at not exploring the full scope of the Williams' play is evident. He explains that he was told, 'that won't even remotely help them with the exam.' With uncharacteristic candour and confidence he says it 'is quite constricting when you teach literature because it's so open to interpretation.' He explains:

> I think you're just restricting their interpretation of things, how they can view things, how they can express their opinion and justify things, cos, for me, literature was always, if you can justify with evidence and explain your point, then you couldn't be wrong.'

He placement A students however:

> would've been wrong 'cos they wouldn't have answered the [exam] question at all. I think that the only time they will be able to do that is if they studied it in their own time or went on to do English as a degree.

Ultimately, Stuart returns to his acceptance of the situation, something I have witnessed many times in my conversations and interviews with him, where he demonstrates his ability to assimilate and cooperate. He quickly returns to an acceptance of such a constraint because, 'at the end of the day they do have to sit an exam.'

Robert suggests that his 'Kamikaze' lesson which I observed was 'just about understanding' the poem and that this was a consequence of the school's expectations. Characteristically for him, he enacts a conversation with a member of staff from his placement school, in which he presents a counter argument to this objective. He says that he 'wanted to ask, "aren't we better off teaching them how to think about the texts, how to study the text?"' He returns to the matter of time and how this prevents him from treating literature in the way he prefers, spending time discussing ideas:

> [M]ost people who have lit degrees [and become a teacher] have been taught […] analytical skill [but] they've also had to conform and narrow themselves down because they understand, at the end of the day, there are targets you have to hit and you wanna make sure the students do the best that they can, because you care about their future and if they don't get a five, or four, or three then they're not getting a pass. (Robert)

The issue of subject mentors is one which ignites much commentary and even frustration. Ali remarks that on her second placement, she 'learned sweet eff-all' because her subject mentor was in fact a sociology graduate. She also states that had this been her initial placement experience, 'I don't know what I'd have done'. The mentoring she received was 'all about Rosenshine or implementing behaviour strategies but nothing actually English.'

Sadiya also comments on the difference between the mentoring on her first and second placements. She focuses on her placement A mentor giving her 'freedom' to

develop, ‘in contrast to my placement B who […] always seemed like a very, by-the-book, this-is-what-we-do-here [teacher].’ She describes the relationship and the experience as ‘a bit suffocating’ but she concluded, ‘I thought, this is what I have to do to pass the course, but there wasn’t much freedom.’ She attributes this to the way the department uniformly taught English using booklets with a priority focus on examination skills. She describes this as:

> very structured in the sense that you do a retrieval task, read it to them, they do some comprehension and they do a close reading activity but the skills you teach them in the post-reading activity are related to the three skills that they are going to be studying for the text, and then you move on, and that was it. (Sadiya)

Like Sadiya, Robert reflects on his placement experience and describes his learning to teach English through tasks of ‘comprehension, recall, which was school policy.’ He describes his mentoring as ‘more pragmatic’ and explains that he did not,

> sit down and talk about the poems with [anyone] and have almost, an intellectual conversation about it. You know, why are we teaching it this way, from this angle?

Stuart had a mentor who qualified to teach through Teach First and did not have a degree in English. Like Ali’s subject mentor, she declined all invitations to arrange an interview date further to returning the consent form for the project. He says that he is ‘not sure’ what he learned about English teaching in particular but this did not represent a problem for him:

> It was more the pedagogy and how to handle behaviour. She was incredible. I learned such a lot about pedagogy and behaviour but it wasn’t about teaching English specifically. Because I’ve always I’ve really focused on content, on subject knowledge, I think I was just alright with it, I was fine. It was the behaviour of the class sometimes [and] other things like pastoral things. (Stuart)

The influence of mentoring on Frances is also complex. She had a positive relationship with her mentor who was herself an alumnus of the same university’s PGCE programme but as a Drama specialist rather than English. Frances recalls how ahead of my visit to her school to observe her, her mentor had a copy of Teach Like

a Champion (Lemov, 2014) on her desk and Frances said, 'put that in the drawer – Joe's coming in!' to which all of the students in the focus group let out peals of laughter. What struck me was not the students' acknowledgement of my dislike of certain approaches but that qualified teachers in school are entrusting their subject pedagogy to generic models of teaching. Frances is able to explain how her mentor's background in performing arts 'really helped' her because she utilised methods from drama teaching such as hot-seating because when studying John Boyne's *The Boy in The Striped Pyjamas* (2006), they 'wanted the kids to get [inside] the head of the character of [the] mother to try to understand how she was feeling', suggesting that reader-response was important to studying the novel and developing reader-responses.

5.2. The influence of professional compliance, personal responsibility, and 'going rogue' on pedagogy

The theme presented in this section covers issues related to the student teachers' sense that conformity and compliance drove their practice as English teachers but how they were also aware of other ways of teaching literature, perhaps more in keeping with their subject specialism as well as preference.

Returning once more to using film to teach literary texts, Robert makes the claim that schools seem to use filmic adaptations of Shakespeare plays for purposes of comprehension:

> If they show them Romeo and Juliet and the kids can say this happened and then this happened, we don't have to focus on the text as much with "what's happening there?" and they respond with "dunno, sir" and then that's like 10 minutes wasted. (Robert)

He continues to describe his experience of teaching, especially at GCSE as 'all knowledge recall' which led him to ask, 'why am I doing this?' because 'there was no opportunity to discuss'. Rather, he talks as though he is reliving the situation he is describing:

> it was like, we've got to get through this, context today, annotations tomorrow, tell them what they want, dadadada, do I get to ask them what they think? No! (Robert)

Sadiya once again returns to her placement B school's reliance on booklets for every year group and for every lesson. This issue has been a recurring problem for her throughout the placement and for the benefit of the whole group, she explains why:

> I was teaching years seven, eight and nine and we had these massive booklets and they were units that we did, one per term, and it must have had about thirty extracts in and every week there was a new extract that we had to teach them. It felt as though we were just churning out material and it was "read it, comprehension exercise, post-reading exercise and then move on." […] they didn't have any time to reflect on where they stood in relation to the text. It was just about getting through all these texts and that was it. I felt really bored about it if I'm being honest, it was the same structure. (Sadiya)

She describes how she felt that 'something wasn't right' and describes the English department's approach as 'very robotic.' She appears to have three concerns, firstly, how this limited her own development as a practitioner, once she had left the school, secondly, that this was the pupils' sole experience of English throughout three years of key stage three and thirdly, that the classroom became a place characterised by repetition and predictability.

Moreover, Sadiya talks of her concerns that this meant that the English department, in teaching through these booklets, were focused on teaching 'low-level skills' such as 'identifying' or comprehending what had been read. She feels that 'we never pushed past that' and in department meetings dedicated to moderating students' work, it was clear to her that pupils were not able to 'derive meaning from what they'd read.' She recalls asking herself, although crucially did not ask aloud to her colleagues, 'are they learning to be critical and analytical and evaluative – I don't think so.' She then recalls the year eight reading assessment that she was involved in teaching and assessing whilst on placement. She describes how the pupils were given a poem already taught by her:

> they had to identify how the Windrush generation felt about moving to England and they had to select a quotation or define

> what patois was and that was their reading assessment for that term. (Sadiya)

In relation to teaching skills of analysis in order to develop powers of interpretation and criticism, Ali cannot recall on Placement A, ever teaching skills of analysis. She says that her A-level pupils already knew what to do when analysing literary texts, which started with locating quotations. She explains that she always followed this with lots of questioning to probe students thinking 'so it wasn't just a knowledge recall.' It suggests that whilst she doesn't necessarily view her teaching as being directed towards the development of skills of reading and analysing, her emphasis on questioning achieved, albeit indirectly, the same aims, which was to get pupils to think about how they made meaning from the quotations they had chosen rather than simply checking comprehension and recall of knowledge, which came to characterise her experience on placement B.

In the midst of offering an explanation of why knowledge is a focus for many teachers, Robert asks a question of the group. He asks, 'do any of us know how we came to read a text well?' to which the whole group answers, 'no' in unison. He also asks, 'how do you get a child to get something from a text' and appears to view this as a mystery, or something impossible. He suggests that 'if you *give* them a reading then at least they have got a reading for when they come to the exam.' Frances makes a similar comment when she describes how she was 'very nervous' when teaching GCSE because 'if they don't remember this bit of poetry that I'm teaching them then that's my fault.' Both comments refer to students' ability to recall which is of course essential for most examinations but it is clear that they have conceived their teaching as principally exam preparation.

Ali concurs that her and Stuart's experience 'was very similar' but then goes on to use a phrase they both repeat throughout the discussion. She confesses that 'we did go a bit rogue' because faced with teaching lessons 'that were all the same: knowledge recall, read a bit of Macbeth, annotate it, do a reflection.' The need to *go rogue* and invest her subject specialism in lessons was intended to explore how pupils could learn to respond to Macbeth or any Shakespeare play with thought, feeling and opinion that was embodied and personal. In university, in one of my

earlier classes, I had introduced students to my concept of Physical English (one borne of my limitations as an English teacher too inhibited and introverted to consider myself capable of teaching drama). Ali refers to using the method in her explanation of 'going rogue':

> I did a physical Shakespeare lesson and got them to act parts out and they remembered it and I remember one of my ADHD pupils was absolutely wild, lying on the floor screaming, 'unsex me here!' and she's never going to forget that quote and she told me that I was the only teacher that would ever get her to do that! I was like, 'you're welcome! (Ali)

Frances adds that she did something similar, admitting that 'I spent two lessons on it [a Roald Dahl story which she chose because she felt strongly students would enjoy it], which I probably shouldn't have done.' The rest of the students laugh at this point in the discussion, in recognition of the fact that this represents an act of transgression. She continues by asserting her own insights and judgement of how the learning benefitted because she explains, 'the discussion was really good. They were getting something out of it. It started making sense to them.'

All of the students concur with Ali when she states that any attempt to be creative, or to 'go rogue' was almost always followed up with 'boring, sit and do comprehension' lessons 'because they're behind' as a result of being what she self-mockingly refers to as 'our creative selves!'

Robert reveals something of his own worries about the concept of 'going rogue' in his teaching because of the looming tyranny of assessment and implies that assessment drives all of his teaching because the school's priority is to ensure that GCSE results are maximal:

> I'm not saying it's the right way to think about it but if I teach them a new way of looking at Romeo and Juliet – what if they get to their assessment and I've messed it up? (Robert)

Both Frances and Ali also talk of the responsibility they feel for teaching exam classes and neither do so with optimism:

> I thought it would be a reflection of me if the kids the weren't progressing the way that they should be.' (Frances)

> I think the pressure side…on placement A, I got put in the year thirteen English lit class and I was like, "what, I'm responsible for this?!"' (Ali)

Robert concurs that he experienced pressure because a year 10 pupil asked him:

> [H]ow do I get to a nine, how do I get to a nine, and I genuinely wasn't knowledgeable enough as a teacher or confident enough to say, "I don't know what constitutes a nine overall in terms of grading." When I was teaching, I felt that pressure to not let that year 10 girl down but not say, 'I don't know, why don't you ask miss?'. I felt like a bit of a failure. (Robert)

Robert speaks of his anxiety early in the course when he was 'still trying to settle in around, sort of October, November time, when I was 3 or 4 weeks into teaching.' As early as this he was concerned with 'how am I gonna get them from a five to a six, how am I gonna get them from a four to a five?' In spite of this, he is also keen to share how he feels about the focus on grades as a proxy of learning when he says that seeing that the quality of pupils' work based on his teaching is 'what would give [him] more satisfaction.'

In terms of satisfaction, Frances speculates that hers would most likely arise from knowing that pupils enjoyed her lessons and were stimulated by her selection of texts and materials. She draws upon her recent choice of Roald Dahl's 'The Landlady' from the *Tales of the Unexpected* (1979) collection. She recalls with glee how the story 'freaked them out' and as they left the room, told her, 'that was really good.' Frances is in no doubt that her choice of text, based on her knowledge and expertise as a literature specialist alongside her 'Physical English' activities learned in university, made this possible.

Sadiya, like Robert, seems less attracted to pupil grades as a proxy of the quality and impact of her teaching. She has a different perspective on this due to being on placement, earlier on the PGCE course, at a Pupil Referral Unit where 'expectation was very low for them anyway' and the focus was less on examination performance and more on ensuring they '[got] to the end of the lesson.' Her classes had mock exams for English but clearly the pressure was different to that felt by Frances, Ali and Robert. She says that she didn't know 'what the results were to be honest' and

then laughs as though she is either embarrassed that she did feel responsible or that she simply had not fulfilled her duties as a teacher.

Sadiya is the student who is less convinced that the focus on assessment driven pedagogy is the best way to teach literature. Her language is almost entirely negative (‘churning out’, ‘really bored’, ‘move on to the next’, ‘no time to reflect’, ‘very robotic’, ‘something wasn’t right’) but she also seems unsure of how else to teach because having been on placement at a PRU where it was about ‘[getting] them to the end of the lesson’, she was then exposed to what appears to be teaching which focused almost entirely on skills needed for examination performance.

5.3. Pressures of time, accountability and assimilation

This theme covers the student teachers’ perceptions that their subject teaching was subject to expectations and restraints arising from the pressures of time, accountability for student progress and outcomes and the expectation to assimilate themselves with departmental practice and pedagogy.

The student teachers showed a strong concern for time and the weight of this upon what they did, or had capacity to do, in their literature lessons. Like Robert’s earlier ‘at the end of the day’ comment, and Stuart’s earlier ‘just get on with it’ comment to his pupils, Ali returns to the matter of time pressure and sets her previous comments about going rogue in a more pragmatic context by claiming that ‘realistically, they don’t have time which is why they set it up the way they do.’ Frances adds another consideration to the defence of those schools which focus on direct instruction of textual content. She thinks that teachers’ additional roles and responsibilities are a factor:

> [I]n my department... I mean three out of five are curriculum leads in other subjects so they like they genuinely, they want to put on the show and do the big spiel but like they just don’t have the resources and the time. (Frances)

Ali concurs, that teachers are ‘stretched too thin’ and recalls that in her school:

> [S]ome of mine were assistant heads and SLT and literacy lead plus had exams to think about – they just don't have time. So, like where we were, one teacher would plan for the whole of year ten. They wouldn't even look at a lesson, they'd just put it on and read off it, cos they just don't have the time. (Ali)

Frances and Robert both agree with her in absolute sympathy for these teachers. Frances returns to my observation visit, three months earlier. She reminds me that I had set a target not to teach from PowerPoint slides all the time. She describes the experience as 'misleading' because the targets from her mentor appeared to reinforce her reliance on teaching from the front and from the content of PowerPoint slides. Moreover, her own mentor set weekly targets around pace, adaptive teaching, behaviour and motivation, but at the same time, always work with the pre-written PowerPoint presentations and prescribed structure of the department.

Robert adds that this is because they are so concerned with 'hitting targets' but these do not appear to be the student teachers' own targets for their own development according to the CCF or their own individual areas for improvement, which is what I was anticipating. Rather, he returns to the matter of carrying the responsibility for the pupils' assessment targets:

> [W]e know what works here is to do lessons that are formulaic and if we do twelve of those they'll get to where they need to be. Why would I do anything different and mess it up? I'm not saying it's the right way to think about it but if I teach them a new way of looking at Romeo and Juliet – what if they get to their assessment and I've messed it up. I've 'wasted' a lesson because I haven't led them to the assessment point and being able to hit the assessment objectives – arghhh – sorry! (Robert)

I was surprised to hear Ali add to Robert's comment, 'yeah, and then you might get SLT on your case' as though this is something that a student teacher would themselves encounter. In my eight years as a teacher educator, I have never known a student teacher be held accountable for pupil outcomes in any kind of formal summative assessment. It does however suggest to me that mentors themselves share their own worries with the student teacher who then takes them on, on the mentor's behalf, and because perhaps this feels like the professional thing to do; to

carry total responsibility for student outcomes at all times so that pedagogy is always driven by it.

Sadiya has never shouldered the weight of this nor accepted it as a justification for what she appears to see a deficit method of teaching. At the beginning of her placement, there was in fact tension between her and her mentor who involved the head of English and professional mentor (the senior teacher who typically leads on ITE and staff CPD). I recall a conversation I had with her when she tells me she really doesn't think teaching is for her and I have to convince her that the situation is temporary and that not all schools are the same. Her recollection of the main problem, in hindsight, was that 'everyone went along with the lead practitioners or head department – whatever they said […] whether they liked it or not' and asserts that ECTs 'were being trained specifically to fit into that department.' Furthermore, she describes the situation as 'very totalitarian.'

Frances adds to this, describing how a new member of staff in her placement B school who has 'been teaching about 40 years and he's amazing'. She describes an incident when:

> the head of department walked in his lesson, and it was like totally off the… and because everything is planned on PowerPoint and usually everyone is at the same point but like he had the kids working on paper and gone off on this tangent. They were all working and she had a really stern word with him about how we all do it the same. We need to follow the same structure and do things at the same time. (Frances)

It seems that most of the student teachers are familiar with similar scenarios. Whilst they understand the need for consistency and recognise time pressures and additional responsibilities outside of the classroom, they appear alert to the possibility that they will kickstart their own careers in schools were allow little to no flexibility for qualified, subject specialist teachers and what and how they teach English. Ali says that on interview for her first teaching post, she asked directly, 'have you got a strict approach to teaching' because she says, 'I don't think I could do Rosenshine again.'

Ali's experience is not an isolated one. Frances has referred to her mentor, qualified with a PGCE with QTS, but who recommended she read Doug Lemov's *Teach Like a Champion* (2014) manual. Robert's placement school also encouraged its teachers to read it and he recalls here how he told a teacher on placement that I advised the PGCE students against wholesale adoption of any simplified version of classroom learning, such as that which could be compiled in a manual. The response his comment received was 'you're not in uni anymore' and that 'this stuff works'. He says that he 'got that at least three times' when he was advised to fill gaps in his practice based on observations of his teaching.

The students offer more insights into the impact of all teachers following uniform systems of teaching and models of practice but this time, on pupils rather than teachers. Ali refers to the way in which the pupils in school struggled if the lesson structure altered. She recalls taking one class to the library for a library lesson:

> I'd say […] "it's a nice day, let's sit outside" and they'd say, "what do you mean, sit outside, I thought we were going to the library?" […] If you break away from the structure and routine, it's like all hell has broken loose. (Ali).

She has her own views that:

> it's good to disrupt them. It teaches them that life doesn't just go the way you expect it to go. If you can teach them in year eight that today something different is gonna happen and it's not the end of the world. It teaches them bigger lessons, I think. Everyone likes structure but if it goes awry, it's okay. (Ali)

Stuart, having shared the same placement B experience as Ali, adds that in his judgement,

> the teachers seemed to need it more. If they didn't have that time at the beginning [for a knowledge recall task], they didn't know what to do […] I felt it was as much for the teachers just as it was for the kids. If anyone [teachers] went off course, it was like, what've you done?! (Stuart)

Robert relates this to his own experience of lesson planning on placement. Bound by the compulsory inclusion of a recall task to start the lesson, he describes how he 'could honestly, spend a good 15 minutes of planning a lesson, looking at the knowledge recall slide, going, 'what am I gonna put in this one?' as though the

inclusion of the task was more important than its relevance or value to the learning itself.

5.4. Requests for more university time on the PGCE

The theme presented in this section covers the student teachers' review of their experiences of the university-led PGCE programme and the English sessions taught to them by university lecturers, between and during time on school placement.

Towards the end of the group discussion Ali asks me a question about the university-led part of the PGCE which she refers to as a 'whirlwind' and Frances as 'rushed'. Her questions suggests that she is under the impression that the university is free to adjust times spent on placement and in university so that the latter might be increased. It seems in response to earlier comments that some of the student teachers were unclear about how to teach reading, she requests that:

> 'PGCEs have more time in future to look at how we teach reading because the session we had at the beginning of the course, I'm not gonna lie, I can't even remember them and whether they've influenced my teaching, I couldn't actually tell you. I'm sure they have in a way but if we'd had a session on how to teach English in an English classroom, we probably wouldn't have ended up focusing on context and history.' (Ali)

From Frances' perspective, taught university input also comes at the wrong time. She says that 'all that theory' had little to no impact on what she did in school once her placement commenced a matter of weeks after the 3-week autumn teaching block was completed because she 'had no idea what any of that meant.' Her solution is to have more time between placement A and B in January – February because 'we only had a couple of weeks […] and then we were back off on placement again.' After this, Ali says, 'it was all just essay focused.' By way of an illustration, Frances recalls a session I taught on how to prepare poetry for teaching. The session was a reaction to a round of school observations I had recently completed during which I had witnessed poetry teaching which either focused on socio-historical context or relied upon technique spotting. As a marker of its usefulness and its currency, Frances says

that having taken my model back to her placement B school, ‘the teachers were like, oh that’s really good, we should look at doing that.’

Discussion

Further to analysing the data, it is hard not to reach a point of questioning the status and impact of generic pedagogy, such as direct instruction in schools. I should stress here that I view direct instruction as comprised of many sensible and advisable strategies and techniques to aid learning. My reservations, as it should be clear by now, are that its complete application to all aspects of certain subject disciplines, such as English literature, lead to a significant compromise of the subject’s nature, purpose, not to mention the benefits and pleasures experienced by the pupil of literature.

Whilst there are undoubtedly many, just like Steve, whose motivations lie in improving the attainment of young people from educationally and economically disadvantaged contexts, it seems prudent to give space to the possibility that whole-school, cross-curricular pedagogies which are focused on knowledge acquisition and retrieval do not permit changes to teacher expertise and specialism at the level of subject disciplinarity, just as Ali, Stuart and Sadiya’s do not. Moreover, they also appear to undermine the status of teacher education, especially that which has historically been located in universities and the recurring recommendations for student teachers enrolled on a university-led PGCE to read ‘how to’ guides suggest a distrust of HEI-led ITE as well as, more broadly a professional insecurity amongst teachers about how to carry out their roles so that they are compliant and demonstrably capable.

As the analysis suggests, Ali and Stuart as two student teachers with Master’s degrees in English, display the strongest opinions and keenest objections to being expected to teach English according to the maxims of Rosenshine’s (2010) principles of direct instruction. The focus group discussion shows the deeper objection they have formed by the end of the placement because they are able to talk about their

shared experiences in the same school, but also, especially in Stuart's case, there is evident, a candour and criticality in his contributions which he has not shown at any other time, especially when he suggests that the only time pupils can be free to interpret is during their degree studies. His pragmatism as a teacher who has been immersed in a school where pedagogical compliance has been monitored otherwise remains largely intact. The implication is that GCSE and A-level, those phases which are spoken of by the other participants as being so personally and academically significant, are educational phases which must be given over to school performance and proof of teacher efficacy, rather than pupil development or social justice (Bernard, 2023)

Ali's assertions regarding the impact of routine and predictability on pupils is remarkable, especially for one so new to the profession. Ali, Stuart and Robert talk freely about the way in which teachers themselves, in a bid to remain faithful to particular methods and structures of lesson delivery ('every lesson must start with recall'), waste time creating content for a phase of the lesson which may not be required for that day but which must be included according to the school's schema. This seems slightly at odd with the otherwise constant concern about utilising time so that none is wasted, although this concern only ever seems to relate to covering knowledge and content of texts. The possibility that the emphasis on teaching knowledge about texts may be the likeliest cause of this is not raised because the student teachers do in fact see knowledge about texts (that is, socio historical context, author intention or teacher-reader responses all of which are presented as authoritative) as being genetic to studying literature. I wish to once again draw attention to Tilly's explanation of providing students with already annotated versions of poems. It seems to assume that pupils are incapable of forming interpretations and opinions of what texts can mean. When she explains the rationale for giving pre-annotated texts as, 'fake it 'til you make it', it suggests that this phase of a pupil's education can be recaptured at a later date when they may possess capability to read for meaning and be capable of forming an opinion.

Experiences of studying literary theory, especially here, in the case of subject mentor Tilly, have done very little to challenge this but the tendency to predetermine what

pupils are capable of without giving fair opportunity to demonstrate for themselves is a phenomenon (Mazenod, et al, 2019) which is dubious in any subject discipline and yet it is highly evident in the data, particularly in the words of Frances, Christina and Robert. However, whilst the student teachers' experiences of literary theory do not appear to have a direct impact on theoretical concepts germane to the subject, there is, without any doubt, a strong commitment to the potentiality of pupils once interpolated into co-construction with their classmates to produce 'deferent' readings (Hogue-Smith, 2015).

The student teachers' discussion about the use of film in teaching Shakespeare is interesting because it exhibits how they make certain judgements about what is an effective way to teach literature. The same appears to be true of Frances' selection of macabre stories for her pupils because she knew they would be hooked by the story's unexpected and sinister denouement. This is not to suggest that the student teachers felt free to make judicious decisions about teaching literature by drawing upon their knowledge, methods or tastes and they often like to give a reminder that 'at the end of the day, they do have to sit an exam' (Ali). Robert agrees when he explains that most English teachers have 'to conform and narrow themselves down because they understand, at the end of the day, there are targets you have to hit and you wanna make sure the students do the best that they can.'

The analysis also suggests some further, interesting tensions relating to the student teachers' relationships to university PGCE sessions. They do indeed perceive a tension between school placement experiences and taught university content. Frances' telling her subject mentor to put her copy of *Teach Like a Champion* (2015) away so that I didn't see it and Robert advising a teacher in his school that I had advised PGCE students to remain critical and questioning of any 'silver bullets', are all conveyed with warmth and humour. This also suggests that university does impact the student teachers' engagement with discourses regarding 'how to?' teach and who has the best answers to such questions. Furthermore, the analysis presents the idea that university teaching would have greater impact if delivered at times of the year to be more optimal and influential. However, this is very much at odds with the need for students to reach a certain percentage of contact time in the classroom by

the end of the PGCE, so that they are prepared for teaching a 90 percent timetable in their first ECT year.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1. Conclusions: addressing the research questions.

The main research question which guided the project was, *what substantive knowledge do student English teachers have of literary theory and how does this change throughout the PGCE?* This was further addressed through three research questions which guided the study. I will address each of these three research questions before returning to the above main research question in section 5.2 which will also outline the study's contribution to knowledge in the field of subject English teacher education.

The initial formation of my research question began at a very early stage of my role as a teacher educator, charged with making multiple school visits to observe student English teachers on teaching practice and to jointly observe and assess their practice with subject mentors. Throughout these observations, I had struggled to understand how key concepts of literary studies were used in ways which did not reflect a clear and informed understanding of them within the discipline.

6.1.1. Research question 1:
What concepts from literary theory do PGCE English student teachers bring to their teacher education course?

It was an unexpected surprise to learn from all participants in the study that their knowledge and experience of literary theory, pre-PGCE, was limited to theory broadly described as Poststructuralist.[33] Whilst I had expected the nine (of ten) participants who had graduated from English Literature degree courses to have studied some quantity of theory broadly described as structuralist, this appears to

[33] Poststructuralism establishes as a starting point, the idea that concepts of reality, identity, truth are constituted in and constructed by language. Language is viewed as a system which operates according to relational semantics beyond or beneath which, nothing exists except that which can be linguistically and grammatically signified.

have arisen from my long-standing assumption that such content was a staple of English literature undergraduate courses, as it was on mine. I realise now, that despite the Halcrow Group's (2003) report that literary and critical theory was the most widely studied module on English literature degrees in the UK and QAA (2023) requirements for its inclusion, coverage as described by participants, pertained to particular 'types' of theory, often perhaps, guided by the interests of academics (Guillory, 2023).

Concepts such as reader, author, meaning, analysis, interpretation, and criticism are, as the analysis shows, genetic to literary studies. Furthermore, I conclude that structuralist literary analysis (which I have represented by using M.H. Abrams' (1953) diagram of coordinates of art criticism – see page 13) inscribed in the assessment objectives of GCSE and A-level examination board specifications, is still dominant in secondary school textual study (Dixon et al, 1979; Davison and Dowson, 2003; Dore, 2018). Although nine out of 10 participants had read English literature at university and all 10 participants were pre- or in-service English teachers in secondary schools, involved in planning, teaching and assessing GCSE English Literature, there was no familiarity with the explicit methods and principles of practical criticism and reader-response theory, even when their own A-level studies appeared to have been oriented by them (see 4.1.2). Moreover, given that the GCSE lessons I observed for this study were characterised by 'exam English' (Bleiman, 2018), which prioritised making pupils 'exam ready', it is not unreasonable to expect teachers' working so closely with examination assessment objectives, to have explicit awareness of such critico-theoretical orientations in their own practice, but this did not appear to be the case.

The student teachers frequently relied upon the concepts referred to in Abrams's model in their literature teaching but there was a lack of clarity and consistency regarding their meaning and purpose in the classroom (see 4.2.4). Often, the student teachers and subject mentors stated that they had not really thought about key concepts such as 'the reader' beyond what they recalled from university. Such knowledge was largely derived from studying Roland Barthes' 'Death of the Author'

(1967) and its presentation of the concepts of reader and author.[34] Many of the students were familiar with the recommendation not to rely on the author's biography or stated intentions, to determine a text's possible meanings but at the same time, confusion remained regarding what author intention meant as well as the potential role of 'the reader' both in Barthes' essay, and in literary studies in general. 'The reader' was a role the student teachers had occupied and enjoyed, as school pupils and university students but it seemed to remain largely unexamined, suggesting an unacknowledged acceptance of reader neutrality (Gibbons, 2016).

It should also be noted that the student teachers did not make a connection with Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional and humanist model of reader-response theory taught to them earlier on the PGCE course.[35] Further confusion arose in relation to 'right answers' in literary analysis (see 4.3.1). At several points, participants suggested that all interpretations are always right' providing textual evidence is given. For this, student teachers typically drew upon their own A-level studies to illustrate how their agentive readings and development of critical responses were first realised, suggesting that whilst none were familiar with the term or practice of 'reader-response' beyond what I had taught them earlier on the PGCE, they had in fact come to value it as a learner themselves, even though the rejection of 'wrong answers' appeared to be a legacy of it.

6.1.2. Research question 2:
Is it possible to detect concepts from literary theory in student teachers' PGCE progress?

With the exception of two lessons[36], all of the lessons I observed as part of this study were focused on poetry or Shakespeare plays. However, all lessons relied upon the

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[34] Barthes' essay is typically viewed as a seminal example of poststructuralist theory in literary studies.
[35] Something I chose to include on my PGCE English course a number of years back, precisely because so many teachers seem to conduct textual analysis using it at the same time as undermining its potential, largely by not really valuing pupil-readers' responses.
[36] Sadiya's lesson focused on a Guardian article on asylum seekers written by Germaine Greer. Frances' lesson was unexpectedly a writing lesson but which involved pupils learning about how stylistic choices fulfil genre characteristics and target a particular readership. Ergo, it took concepts of 'reader' 'author' 'meaning', 'effect', 'impact', as central to its objectives and intended outcome.

concept of interpretation shaped by comprehension and inference. The latter appeared to be most important for developing responses to literary writing. Despite this, the student teachers did not conceptualise their lessons as reading lessons or as developing pupils' reading skills. Rather, they viewed pupils' reading as analysis and which was required for GCSE examinations, even when teaching key stage 3 classes.

The focus on inference frequently presented a text's meaning as being concealed within the text, as though it was fully formed but hidden behind the words or between the lines. Such an approach requires pupils to be complicit in uncovering or making explicit what is apparently implicit in individual words or literary techniques, both of which strongly resemble the practical criticism method. However, the prominent role played by knowledge of author-intention and historical context meant that it became a more confused / confusing method in which the text's form acted as a portal to establishing knowledge about either or both rather than being the principal focus of interpretation and criticism.

The phrase 'the reader' was used as if to refer to a reader that isn't the pupil herself. Rather, 'the reader' presented pupils with yet another impression that meaning was already established by a more knowledgeable, knowing, sensitive and critical other. The student teachers did conclude that this was something that was not intentional and that they would give more thought to as they stated that their pupils considering themselves and each other as *a reader*, was of great value and import to them (see 4.3.1).

Author intention and 'the author', as per Abrams' (1953) model (see page 13) as a coordinating concept for interpretation was used often in lessons but this time, there was significant differences in how it was used. Whilst some of the student teachers explained later that they had used it to refer to parallels between the text's content and the author's life, others combined it with the author's stated intentions for the text to mean a certain thing over another. Where this was the case, students saw this as a useful means of establishing an interpretation which was robust, much like socio-historical context was. However, it was most common for students to combine the two principles above with the idea of author intention referring to the author's

use of literary techniques, choice of form and aspects of style; the latter clearly having relevance to the GCSE assessment objectives.[37] There was a greater tendency to talk about author intention in relation to teaching poetry as though the poem's voice could always be assumed to be that of the poet / author's and their context inextricable from the work of 'expressive' poets such as Sylvia Plath and Imtiaz Dharker (p.100) or the philosophical and political work of Seamus Heaney (p.101) and William Blake (p.102). This was not the case with *Macbeth* or *Romeo and Juliet* when the play was typically approached as a construct and its action as fictive.

By far the concept most instantiated in lessons was context. Typically, context was treated to mean historical context and as something was required for making meaning from reading the text. The student teachers and subject mentors in various ways explained the importance of context for teaching literature but did not seem to have considered that it marginalised the role of pupil-reader response in making meanings from reading the text. Moreover, given that the GCSE examination was frequently presented as the context and framework for reading and for learning, the emphasis placed on knowledge of contexts made little sense in the context of the specifications' relative weighting of marks[38] and the 5% allocated to AO3[39]

In conclusion, it would seem that the student teachers' instantiation of concepts such as those discussed above have been significantly influenced by their placement experiences. Whilst knowledge of each concept as core tenets of structuralist theory was inchoate to begin with, it seems that they are very open to the influence of those who are already teaching in schools. The most significant indicator is the prioritisation of contextual knowledge in the classroom; something which subject mentors explain is critical to improving outcomes for all and for addressing an attainment gap for cohorts of lower attaining pupils.

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[37] AO2: 'Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects using relevant subject terminology where appropriate.' OCR GCSE (9–1) in English Literature (J352) Specification, accessed 31/8/23.

[38] AO1- 20%; AO2 – 22.5%; AO3 – 5%; AO4 – 2.5% OCR GCSE (9–1) in English Literature (J352) Specification, accessed 31/8/23.

[39] AO3: 'Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written' OCR GCSE (9–1) in English Literature (J352) Specification, accessed 31/8/23.

6.1.3. Research question 3:

What does the use (or not) of concepts from literary theory in PGCE performance, progress and assessment tell us about English literature pedagogy and teacher specialism and autonomy in secondary schools?

Enacted in the classroom, the concepts, interpreted as they are by the student teachers, appeared to be partly directed by pedagogical methods which were standardised across a whole school or whole department (see 4.4.1). Most commonly observed was didactic pedagogy which placed the teacher at the front of the room with pupils seated in serried rows and columns to facilitate amongst other things, individual learning. Collaborative learning was not an element of pedagogy I observed aside from in some whole class discussion led by the teacher-reader and this was dialogic only in the limited number of exchanges between the teacher and one pupil at a time.

Textual annotation was a default activity which occurred simultaneously with reading the text and everything proceeded with absolute simultaneity. The student teachers led the annotations by writing on a copy of the text / extract placed under a visualiser or projected onto an interactive whiteboard and dedicated the bulk of lesson time to posing questions about particular words, phrases, lines and literary techniques which had been identified by them before the lesson. The questions sought little in the way of pupil-reader response but required much knowledge retrieval or application to explain how a literary device functioned. Once agreed, this 'certificated reading' (Snapper, 2009) was recorded on the board for all to note down. Often, the annotations, viewed as a whole, suffered from an absence of pupil-response and also struggled to present much in the way of a 'big story' reading of the text.

Both student teachers and subject mentors accepted pre-written lessons delivered through PowerPoint and spoke of this in terms of ensuring consistency as well as managing time and fulfilling outcomes for all teachers. The notion of digressing from the materials or the method was not permitted and the notion of 'going rogue' came to mean making decisions about lesson content and pedagogy which still seemed to be done *only* with some permission from subject mentors. Even when there was

some encouragement to experiment, all the student teachers appeared to carry the responsibility for such a deviation from the agreed way and the need to somehow correct this once the pedagogical experiment was concluded. All the student teachers seemed to relinquish authority and autonomy related to subject knowledge in part because they were learning about pedagogical knowledge from qualified teachers who also had responsibility for assessing their progress, and progress seemed to align with compliance and assimilation. In other words, teaching methods they were expected to use, forced a narrowing of conceptual knowledge they either already possessed or needed to develop as practitioners. All seemed to see the need for this longer term if they were to 'fit in' or avoid acquiring a reputation for being difficult (see 4.4.3).

Moreover, student teachers spoke about the influence of their subject mentors, heads of English departments and other teachers whose classes they taught and who provided unsolicited and unofficial feedback (see 4.4.1). The issue of such personnel not having degrees in the subject they teach or being less qualified is a problem (p.100; pp.135-6). Moreover, the preference for professional development (see 4.3.3. and 4.4.2) which is always general within the department or across the school points to a problem with school based ITTE if the subject mentor is not a subject specialist and does not mentor as such to develop not just general pedagogical knowledge but disciplinary knowledge of which concepts belonging to the subject are given space for consideration and exploration.

6.2. Contribution to knowledge

This research seeks to create space for a discussion about the role that literary theory, still a dominant influence in 11-19 English curricula, plays in the secondary school English literature lesson. At a time when the qualifications and entry requirements to teach English do not necessitate having a degree in the subject, this seems more important than ever. Consider that accompanying this is a diversification of routes through which graduates achieve qualified teacher status and the expectation for English literature to retain a meaningful orientation towards

understanding certain concepts which are core to its infrastructure must be reinforced and reiterated by subject specialists themselves, particularly, those outside of the school itself.

Whilst theory has been written about many times as something which should orientate the teaching of literary reading (Griffith (1987); Appleman (2000); Leach (2000); Peim (2000); Wandor (2008); Knights (2017)), theory is typically characterised in terms of Poststructuralism. By this, I mean the English student's encounters with theory as an undergraduate or as a sub-topic of the subject at GCSE and A-level. However, there is greater need to acknowledge the ways in which the dominant approach of practical criticism can work with the current prioritisation of background or contextual knowledge as Gordon (2018) suggests, as well as the role which the pupil-reader plays in making meaning and developing critical literacy which instils competence and confidence for critical engagement beyond the classroom.

The explicit acknowledgement that examination syllabi have theoretical coordinates which are very simply, structuralist could mean that English teachers would be given opportunity to understand the way in which the subject ought to be taught and the ways in which pupil readers should be guided towards the development of both critical literacy as well as an understanding of the ways in which texts of many kinds are, through literary language and stylistics, artfully and aesthetically crafted and constructed.

6.3. Implications for practice / praxis

This study examines the way in which, through an understanding of structuralist literary theory, English teachers can through the language and concepts of literature teaching ensure that the subject retains its disciplinary DNA so that English teacher specialism can continue to develop according to theory. Such theory has developed across many schools of thought over many years. This has potential for the development of literacy besides and beyond phonics, comprehension and fluency

and could equip all English teachers with the disciplinary knowledge to orientate their pedagogy to develop critically aware and articulate young people.

It is suggested that teacher education should ensure a clear focus on PGCE English students, many of whom do not have degrees in English or subjects closely related to literary studies, on conceptual knowledge which derives from Abrams' (1953) critical orientations. Alongside this, the creation of space and time for student teachers to experience reading through practical criticism (Richards, 1929) as well as the methods of aesthetic reading (Rosenblatt, 1978) and deferent reading (Hogue-Smith, 2012) should be a priority. The realities in school that such students face are dominated by centralised and standardised requirements to use pedagogical methods which can easily undermine the subject's conceptual and disciplinary heart and soul. What is at stake is an opportunity for all pupils to consider their own situatedness and responses to the literate world around them, from the classroom to the workplace and from digital media to the ballot box. Put plainly, it ought to be an intention for teacher educators to ensure that as long as the language of the literature lesson relies upon references to 'reader, author', 'analysis' and such like, teachers will, through their praxis, present each one with a critical appreciation of how they might either ignore pupil-readers' agentive role in interpreting or else activate empowered and aware readers of texts, language and culture all around them.

It is important for heads of English in schools to assert the need for their teachers to have access to professional development which is subject-specific but which also acknowledges the limitations and pressures they face in their practice, in terms of accountability, performativity, consistency and time. By addressing English teachers' conceptual knowledge of English literature, none of these would have to be compromised because such concepts feature frequently, albeit haphazardly. Any focus on 'Exam English' (Bleiman, 2020) could still meaningfully and rightfully situate conceptual knowledge where it needed to be and be used effectively to liberate and empower pupil-readers.

6.4. Future research

Looking ahead, there is much more to be learned from working with other teacher educators to establish how the findings of this research might be received. I have been surprised that many times when sharing or discussing my research within subject associations, I have not encountered much in the way of enthusiastic agreement or sympathy with my views. That does not mean however, that I have encountered any kind of opposition or objection, merely quiet agreement and acquiescence greet my ideas regarding the disjunct between disciplinary knowledge of English Literature examination syllabi and generic pedagogies which claim to address attainment gaps. There have been a number of times when I have tentatively tested the knowledge of experts in literary studies in quite public arenas but no objections have ever been raised, suggesting to me once again a unique combination of factors which has alerted me to a problematic which warrants further consideration. By this I am referring to, what I now consider to be rather particular (and fortunate) experiences of being taught as an undergraduate, literary theory of the last one hundred years or so, working as an English teacher and A-level examiner and now a teacher educator who has access to many different English classrooms and teachers every year. Such experiences have afforded me appreciation of the value of being 'the reader' amongst other readers as well as observing how many, pupils are currently deprived of the same.

At an early stage of the research I spoke to two academics, both of whom taught on undergraduate literature degrees. They explained that theory was not a heavy focus on their programme and that this was due to student feedback, given at the end of an academic year, about what they had enjoyed studying. Theory did not appear to be a popular subject for Bachelors' students, but my own analysis suggests that this may be related to the way in which theory itself is taught. Whilst there is scope to learn more about undergraduates' views of theory, I am keen to know about the status of literary theory as an epistemological component of a literature degree, especially as I found it impossible to locate any similar information more recent than that published by the Halcrow Group in 2003. Moreover, it would be important to

discover more about how academics themselves view the role and importance of theory, particularly that which I have referred to throughout as Poststructuralist, when there are imperatives to enhance progression and employability statistics beyond undergraduate programmes at a time when the value of an English degree appears to be lower than in previous years (see p.43).

Further, research is required with practising English teachers who use the programmes of study, assessment objectives and learning outcomes of the National Curriculum as well as GCSE and A-level specifications to find out more about their understanding and interpretation of the critico-theorical orientations they foster. This research argues that such documents and frameworks consistently rely upon the same or similar concepts from literary studies and which are typically driven by the critical orientations of structuralist theory. It is possible that this is the site where change might be conceived and affected.

6.5. Limitations of the study

The study has limitations arising from drawing conclusions from lengthy and detailed semi-structured interviews. Whilst this meant that my data was 'rich' and did enable me to use RTA, which was my preference, other types of data, for instance, gained from brief answers gained through a questionnaire and researching across my own English teacher educator networks might have shone more light on some of the darker or vaguer corners of my data, such as why there is a disconnect between the critico-theoretical orientations of the exam syllabus, teacher pedagogy and praxis and the frequent allusion to teaching to ensure examination outcomes. Interviewing subject mentors created a data set which was large and full of nuanced but sometimes vaguer conceptions. Moreover, subject mentors, as qualified subject specialists, appeared wary of talking about theory, as an aspect of the subject considered to be difficult (see p.88). This was perhaps due to the way the study was presented to them and may have created hesitancy about revealing a lack of disciplinary knowledge. Indeed, that two subject mentors declined to be interviewed meant that looking for parts of the data which glowed in similar hues across students

and mentors' accounts, was harder than it may have been if I had used methods other than interviews, perhaps offering up perspectives by the use of less intimidating methods than interviews. In hindsight, I think that presenting to all participants literary theory as the focus of the study may have been intimidating, leading them to feel initial nerves about a subject, I was to realise, with which they had a less than confident or consistent relationship.

It is possible that my own relationship to the subject might have skewed how I interpreted the data. It often felt as though the professional and the personal were so deeply graven on one another that it required me to frequently alert myself to occasions when I was beginning to interpret the data judgementally. I mention in the introduction (pp.9-10) that my positionality as a school pupil who underachieved, having the chance to study English literature at university at the age of 24 after eight years of full-time work was life-changing. My introduction to theory in the first year was as Sadiya says earlier, 'ground-breaking' in giving me a chance to realise what I was capable of thinking, feeling and articulating. That experience has brought me here and it is inscribed in everything I write. This could be read as a strength as I passionately believe in liberatory force that studying literature can bring. Such positionality arising from personal experience may begin to explain the lack of concurrence from peers I mention in section 6.4.

6.6. My research journey

My EdD journey commenced seven years ago. I began eagerly and with confidence, replete with an idea of researching non-linguists' knowledge development of grammar whilst on the English PGCE. During phase A of the EdD, I had become interested in post-humanist theory and saw it as a welcome break from the kind of semi-nihilistic, poststructuralist theory I had experimented with throughout my Batchelor and Master's degrees in English Literature. However, much like the student teachers I interview for this study, I struggled to marry the topic with the Deleuzean concept of 'becoming' which had recently captured my attention. With my characteristic zeal and impatience, my fascination with the notion's lineage from

Spinoza to Nietzsche, overtook the empirical focus on how student English teachers acquire knowledge of something they are fearful of, have little to no knowledge of, and yet which is core to the National Curriculum's view of English language teaching. With another characteristic facet of my personality, I impulsively and with some ire, abandoned both, realising that I had always had a research topic which really felt like mine and which frequently troubled my regular school visits and observations as a PGCE English tutor. In this way, I commenced an on-going tussle with theory in my own work and in the work of English teachers. This became even more clear once I reminded myself that I had registered for a professional doctorate rather than a PhD.

Over time, during my school visits and observations of student teachers, I realised that I was having the same conversations with different English teachers and subject mentors, usually centred around their belief that my advice to consider the implications of their specialist knowledge of literary reading had no bearing on how they taught poetry and what their pupils' role was as readers and critics. I recall a conversation in which I found myself stating, that pupils were the teachers' greatest resource when undertaking literary reading in search of meanings. In hindsight, this conversation became a crucible for so many of my experiences as a student, teacher, reader, teacher educator and would-be researcher.

Throughout, I had simply not considered that the kind of theory I was referring to in these conversations with students and mentors may not have been a part of their study of literature as an undergraduate. At this stage I was firmly of the belief that they had evidently not seen the relevance and useability of poststructuralist and postmodernist theory which was apparently *de rigeur* on undergraduate programmes but had little to no bearing on teaching literature in schools.

With typical alacrity, I returned to Foucault, with whose work I was already familiar, realising that my conception of the problem was constructed around discourses of 'how to' teach and the grid-like network of performativity, power-charged by teachers, managers and experts. Propelled by the views of teachers on Twitter who both sought and promoted the work of consultants who were keen to position themselves as experts, I became curious and furious in equal measure at how active

they were in undermining the principles of their own subject. Faced with this, my ire turned to fury.

Fury has always been a driving force for much of my academic and intellectual thinking, and I can confirm that it is not viewed with sympathy or support by most, especially in the twenty-first century. As a novice researcher, it was my polestar and an indicator that something both mattered and also, had mileage beyond a phase A assignment. Whilst Deleuze and Guattari seemed to offer something more hopeful than the indeterminacy and inescapability of Derrida's linguistic jailhouse, I simply did not feel the urge to kick against injustice of self-teaching grammar. I should say that I am still interested in this but I know now, it could never have been the focus of my doctorate.

Now, in my seventh and final year as a doctoral candidate, I am pleased that my fury both directed and propelled my work and that it led me to Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and the beginning of dialogic exchange with myself and others about education as social justice, and the role English literature and literary theory played in directing my fury to something altogether more hopeful and quietly subversive. It is indeed my hope that my work can forge a praxis, informed by critico-theoretical principles, which harbours sedition in plain sight.

6.7. Ethics

Throughout the duration of this project and further to completing all necessary research ethics training, I have maintained a clear, consistent and sustained awareness of the ethical requirements and implications of the study and adhered to the detailed arrangements for conducting the research as contained within my ethics application. There were no unforeseen ethical problems and no compromises made to approved arrangements.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Participant information sheet for student teachers

Appendix B: Participant information sheet for subject mentors

Appendix C: Participant consent form for student teachers

Appendix D: Participant consent form for subject mentors

Appendix E: Interview 1 questions for student teachers and subject mentors

Appendix F: Post-lesson observation questions (interview 2)

Appendix G: Focus group questions

Appendix H: Sadiya's UVT report form

Appendix I: Frances' UVT report form

Appendix J: Annotations and initial coding of Interview 1 with Christina

Appendix K: Initial tabulation of codes and grouping into subthemes

Appendix L: Initial analysis of interview 1 data set with additional responses and links across interviews using coding table (see Appendix K.)

Appendix M: Initial coding of focus group transcript

Appendix N: initial organisation of coded data into themes and subthemes

Appendix O: second round of coding further to deciding to analyse data across data sets

Appendix P: Excerpt of transcript of interview 1 with Christina's subject mentor, Steve

Appendix A – Participant information sheet for student teachers

Participant Information Sheet – student teacher

Research Project Title:

The Theory Gap: exploring the role of literary theory knowledge in the development of PGCE English student teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogy.

Invitation to research

My name is Joe Barber. I am senior lecturer in education in the Faculty of Health and Education at Manchester Metropolitan University. I am in my 4th year of my Doctor of Education and this is being funded by my employer, Manchester Metropolitan University.

My doctorate is intended to inform my specialism of teacher education of student English teachers on MMU's PGCE course.

Why have I been invited?

You have been invited to volunteer to be part of my study into the ways in which literary theory informs English teachers' pedagogy and practice in English literature lessons. As a student English teacher, you are in a position to be able to participate in a study which examines what aspects of theory are instantiated in your practice.

Do I have to take part?

Participation is entirely voluntary and dependent on whether you have studied literary theory as an undergraduate / postgraduate, prior to commencing your PGCE. Your participation will have no bearing on the assessment of your progress which will take place in formal contexts against set criteria. It may be that I visit you in school as your University Visiting Tutor on the PGCE in order to moderate your placement B school's assessment of your progress, which is a standard process in the PGCE's assessment cycle. If you agree to participate in my project, I will also act as an EdD researcher from MMU but the two roles are entirely separate.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to meet with me for an interview (which can be online or face to face) which seeks to establish your knowledge, experience and interests in literary theory and your thoughts and ideas about its relationship to your English teaching. This will be the first of two interviews. A second interview will take place when I visit you on placement B. During this visit I will interview your subject mentor about their own relationship with literary theory, their own literature teaching and their mentoring role. All interviews will be recorded and transcribed for analysis at a later stage. I am also requesting permission to access your TEF to access your subject knowledge audit, subject pedagogy portfolio, lesson plans, lesson observation reports and your SPA. Finally, I will ask you to produce a short piece of writing which outlines your approach to teaching literature and what influences have informed your pedagogy and practice as an ECT. You will be able to withdraw from the project up to two weeks after you have produced the piece of reflective writing. All data will be destroyed after you have produced the piece of reflective writing.

Are there any risks if I participate?

There are no risks to you posed by participation. My research is carried out by me as an MMU postgraduate research student and not as an MMU employee. Assessment of your progress will be made using a set framework for assessment and against national criteria (the MMU lesson observation form, the Core Content Framework, The Teachers' Standards and the MMU ITE curriculum). Moderation processes are also in place to ensure transparency and consistency of assessment. The university also operates an appeals system for concerns about the accuracy and fairness of decisions regarding student outcomes.

Are there any advantages if I participate?

The main advantages for you would lie in having a better understanding of the ways in which you conceptualise and execute the teaching of reading and your facilitation and development of interpretation in your literature lessons. In addition, your prior knowledge of literary theory, an aspect of 11-19 English teaching which is rarely discussed as a foundational element of a literature teacher's pedagogy, can be considered in the context of teaching so that you understand its potential uses. This has implications for both subject knowledge and subject pedagogy.

Informed consent

I will make audio recordings of interviews which will be transcribed by myself. Audio recordings will initially be stored on memory cards and video recordings will initially be stored on Microsoft Teams before being transferred to a dedicated and password protected One Drive account to which only I have access, as the study's principal investigator. Original recordings will then be destroyed. Transcripts of recordings will be stored on One Drive and all other copies, destroyed. Quotations from transcripts may be used in my thesis and in further research and scholarship contexts but all participants and contexts will be pseudonymised.

I will ask you to read and sign a consent form which you can return to me in person should you agree to participate in the study.

What information about me will you collect and why?

Data collection will take place on 5 occasions in 3 separate stages of data collection across the 'Ambition Phase' of your PGCE.

1. An initial 1:1 interview with myself as principal investigator. The interview is likely to be held via Microsoft TEAMS and video and audio will be recorded as well as automatic transcription enabled. I will conduct full and accurate transcription of the interview for use in my analysis;
2. A second interview will take place face to face and in school at the same time I carry out your Placement B UVT visit. Your Subject Mentor will also be invited to attend an interview with me about their own knowledge, experience and use of literary theory in their mentoring and teaching;
3. I will access your TEF on One Drive and particular documents contained within which pertain to subject knowledge, subject pedagogy and classroom practice. These are likely to include planning documents, lesson evaluations, subject mentor observation reports, your subject knowledge audit and your subject pedagogy portfolio;
4. I will access your SPA once it has been marked, moderated and the grade returned to you. I will access your SPA through Turnitin via Moodle and will download in word (docx) format so that I can pseudonymise your work;
5. A brief piece of writing which outlines your position as an ECT, as a literature teacher. The piece will invite you to refer to and evaluate sources of influence and implications for your future practice as a literature teacher.

All data will allow me to explore the relationship between your knowledge, understanding and interests in regard of literary theory on the one hand, and the ways in which your literature teaching evolves towards your completion of the PGCE.

How will my information be stored and how will you look after it?

All data will be pseudonymised. Audio recordings will initially be stored on memory cards and video recordings will initially be stored on Microsoft Teams before being transferred to a dedicated and password protected One Drive account to which only I have access, as the study's principal investigator. Original recordings will then be destroyed. Transcripts of recordings will be stored on One Drive and all other copies, destroyed. Transcripts will be uploaded to One Drive and all other copies thereafter destroyed. Once the study is completed, data can be stored securely for 10 years minimum by my doctoral supervisor.

How will you use my information?

Data will be analysed and discussed in my written EdD thesis. Transcripts may be excerpted or quoted in the analysis and conclusion chapters. Transcripts may be used in further research or scholarship, but participants and contexts will remain pseudonymised. No participants or settings will be identifiable in the data, either when published in the thesis or in subsequent publications or presentations related to the project.

Will my data be sent anywhere else, or shared with other people or organisations?

I do not intend to share the data, export it from the UK to another country outside of the EU. I will conduct all transcription myself. Data will be stored on One Drive which will be password protected and accessed only by me as the study's principal investigator.

When will you destroy my information?

Recordings of interviews and observations will be destroyed immediately after upload to One Drive.

All investigators will comply with the UK's Data Protection Act 2018 and EU's General Data Protection Regulation 2016 with regards to the collection, storage, transfer, processing and disclosure of personal information and will uphold the law's core principles. All data stored will be pseudonymised and preserved securely on a unique and password protected One Drive account to which I as principal investigator and my supervisor(s) will have access. Throughout the project, participants' personal information will be collected, kept secure, and maintained in the following ways:

- The creation of coded, de-personalised data where a participant's identifying information is replaced by an unrelated sequence of characters or pseudonym (qualitative data);
- Video and audio recordings will be transcribed, stored, backed up and original local copies on portable devices will be removed;
- Storage will entail using encrypted digital files within password protected storage media on a unique and password protected One Drive account;
- Consent forms will be destroyed at the end of the project.

All other data sets (transcriptions, on word docx files, visual data) will be transferred from One Drive and kept with my doctoral supervisor as data custodian for a minimum of 10 years.

Data Protection Law

Data protection legislation requires that we state the 'legal basis' for processing information about you. In the case of research, this is 'a task in the public interest.' If we use more sensitive information

about you, such as information about your health, religion, or ethnicity (called 'special category' information), our basis lies in research in the public interest. Manchester Metropolitan is the Controller for this information and is responsible for looking after your data and using it in line with the requirements of the data protection legislation applicable in the UK.

You have the right to make choices about your information under the data protection legislation, such as the right of access and the right to object, although in some circumstances these rights are not absolute. If you have any questions, or would like to exercise these rights, please contact the researcher or the University Data Protection Officer using the details below.

You can stop being a part of the study at any time, without giving a reason up to two weeks after the submission of the final piece of data, the piece of reflective writing. You can ask us to delete your data at any time, but it might not always be possible. If you ask us to delete information once transcription of recorded interviews is completed in September 2022, we

might not be able to. If your data is anonymised, we will not be able to withdraw it, because we will not know which data is yours.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

Results from the study will be published in my EdD thesis and may be used for related publications or presentations.

Who has reviewed this research project?

Research Ethics and Governance

Manchester Metropolitan University

Faculty of Health and Education

Email Contact: FOHE-Ethics@mmu.ac.uk

RKE Manager: Andrew Jones andrew.jones@mmu.ac.uk

Who do I contact if I have concerns about this study?

Mr Joe Barber, EdD researcher, j.barber@mmu.ac.uk, 01612472329

Professor Gabrielle Ivinson, project 1st supervisor, g.ivinson@mmu.ac.uk, 01612472293

Dr Joanna Dennis, project second supervisor, j.dennis@mmu.ac.uk, 01612471995

Ms Karen Meanwell, researcher's line manager, k.meanwell@mmu.ac.uk, 01612472037

Who do I contact if I need to complain about this study?

Dr Claire Fox, Faculty Head of Research Ethics and Governance, **FOHE-ethics@mmu.ac.uk**, 01612472179

Manchester Metropolitan Data Protection Officer dataprotection@mmu.ac.uk
Tel: 0161 247 3331 Legal Services, All Saints Building, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, M15 6BH

UK Information Commissioner's Office

You have the right to complain directly to the Information Commissioner's Office if you would like to complain about how we process your personal data:
https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/

THANK YOU FOR CONSIDERING PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROJECT

Appendix B – Participant information sheet for subject mentors

Participant Information Sheet – subject mentor

Research Project Title:

The Theory Gap: exploring the role of literary theory knowledge in the development of PGCE English student teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogy.

Invitation to research

My name is Joe Barber. I am senior lecturer in education in the Faculty of Health and Education at Manchester Metropolitan University. I am in my 4th year of my Doctor of Education and this is being funded by my employer, Manchester Metropolitan University.

My doctorate is intended to inform my specialism of teacher education of student English teachers on MMU's PGCE course.

Why have I been invited?

You have been invited to volunteer to be part of my study into the ways in which literary theory informs English teachers' pedagogy and practice in English literature lessons. As a subject mentor of a student English teacher, you are in a position to be able to participate in a study which examines what aspects of theory are instantiated in classroom practice.

Do I have to take part?

Participation is entirely voluntary.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to allow me to interview you (online or face to face) about your teaching of literature, your use of literary theory, your mentoring of English PGCE students and your own professional development. All interviews will be recorded and transcribed for analysis at a later stage.

Are there any risks if I participate?

There are no risks to you posed by participation. My research is carried out by me as an MMU postgraduate research student and not as an MMU employee. Assessment of student teacher progress will be made using a set framework for assessment and against national criteria (the MMU lesson observation form, the Core Content Framework, The Teachers' Standards and the MMU ITE curriculum). Moderation processes are also in place to ensure transparency and consistency of assessment. The university also operates an appeals system for concerns about the accuracy and fairness of decisions regarding student outcomes.

Are there any advantages if I participate?

The main advantages for you would lie in having a better understanding of the ways in which you conceptualise and execute the teaching of reading and your facilitation and development of interpretation in your literature lessons. In addition, your prior knowledge of literary

theory, an aspect of 11-19 English teaching which is rarely discussed as a foundational element of a literature teacher's pedagogy, can be considered in the context of teaching so that you understand its potential uses. This has implications for both subject knowledge and subject pedagogy.

Informed consent

Interviews will take place on the same date as my placement B UVT visit to your school. I will ask you to read and sign a consent form which you can return to me in person should you agree to participate in the study.

I will make audio recordings of interviews which will be transcribed by myself. Audio recordings will initially be stored on memory cards and video recordings will initially be stored on Microsoft Teams before being transferred to a dedicated and password protected One Drive account to which my supervisor(s) and I have access, as the study's principal investigator. Original recordings will then be destroyed. Transcripts of recordings will be stored on One Drive and all other copies, destroyed. Quotations from transcripts may be used in my thesis and in further research and scholarship contexts but all participants and contexts will be pseudonymised.

What information about me will you collect and why?

By interviewing you as part of a multiple case study, for which a 'case' is defined as a single student teacher, I will ask questions about your knowledge, experience and use of literary theory in your mentoring and teaching. This will be used alongside a number of other pieces of data to explore the ways in which student teacher knowledge and pedagogy develops over the course of the PGCE.

I will also request access to copies of your department programme of study and planning for anonymised use in the case study.

How will my information be stored and how will you look after it?

All data will be pseudonymised. Recordings will be made on memory cards and transferred to a dedicated and password protected One Drive account. Transcripts will be uploaded to One Drive and all other copies thereafter destroyed. Once the study is completed, data can be stored securely for 10 years minimum by doctoral supervisor.

How will you use my information?

Data will be analysed and discussed in my written EdD thesis. Transcripts may be excerpted or quoted in the analysis and conclusion chapters. Transcripts may be used in further research or scholarship, but participants and contexts will remain pseudonymised. No participants or

settings will be identifiable in the data, either when published in the thesis or in subsequent publications or presentations related to the project.

Will my data be sent anywhere else, or shared with other people or organisations?

I do not intend to share the data, export it from the UK to another country outside of the EU. I will conduct all transcription myself. Data will be stored on One Drive which will be password

protected and accessed only by my supervisor(s) and myself as the study's principal investigator.

When will you destroy my information?

Recordings of interviews and observations will be destroyed once the analysis stage of the study is completed.

All investigators will comply with the UK's Data Protection Act 2018 and EU's General Data Protection Regulation 2016 with regards to the collection, storage, transfer, processing and disclosure of personal information and will uphold the law's core principles. All data stored will be pseudonymised and preserved securely on a unique and password protected One Drive account to which my supervisor(s) and I, as principal investigator, will have access. Throughout the project, participants' personal information will be collected, kept secure, and maintained in the following ways:

- The creation of coded, de-personalised data where a participant's identifying information is replaced by an unrelated sequence of characters or pseudonym (qualitative data);
- Audio recordings and audio recordings will be transcribed, stored, backed up and original local copies on portable devices will be removed;
- Storage will entail using encrypted digital files within password protected storage media on a unique and password protected One Drive account;
- Consent forms will be destroyed at the end of the project.

All other data sets (transcriptions, on word docx files, visual data) will be transferred from One Drive and kept with my doctoral supervisor as data custodian for a minimum of 10 years.

Data Protection Law

Data protection legislation requires that we state the 'legal basis' for processing information about you. In the case of research, this is 'a task in the public interest.' If we use more sensitive information about you, such as information about your health, religion, or ethnicity (called 'special category' information), our basis lies in research in the public interest. Manchester Metropolitan is the Controller for this information and is responsible for looking after your data and using it in line with the requirements of the data protection legislation applicable in the UK.

You have the right to make choices about your information under the data protection legislation, such as the right of access and the right to object, although in some circumstances these rights are not absolute. If you have any questions, or would like to exercise these rights, please contact the researcher or the University Data Protection Officer using the details below.

You can stop being a part of the study at any time, without giving a reason. You can ask us to delete your data at any time, but it might not always be possible. If you ask us to delete information once transcription of recorded interviews is completed in September 2022, we

might not be able to. If your data is anonymised, we will not be able to withdraw it, because we will not know which data is yours.

What will happen to the results of the research study?
Results from the study will be published in my EdD thesis and may be used for related publications or presentations.

Who has reviewed this research project?
Research Ethics and Governance

Manchester Metropolitan University

Faculty of Health and Education

Email Contact: FOHE-Ethics@mmu.ac.uk

RKE Manager: Andrew Jones **andrew.jones@mmu.ac.uk**

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Dr Claire Fox, Faculty Head of Research Ethics and Governance, **FOHE-ethics@mmu.ac.uk**, 01612472179

Manchester Metropolitan Data Protection Officer **dataprotection@mmu.ac.uk**
Tel: 0161 247 3331 Legal Services, All Saints Building, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, M15 6BH
UK Information Commissioner's Office
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https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/

THANK YOU FOR CONSIDERING PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROJECT

Appendix C: Participant consent form for student teachers

CONSENT FORM – student teacher

Study title:

The Theory Gap: exploring the role of literary theory knowledge in the development of PGCE English student teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogy.

Participant Identifier:

	Please tick your chosen answer	YES	NO
1.	I confirm that I have read the participant information sheet version .... , date .... for the above study.	☐	☐
2	I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	☐	☐
3	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw 2 weeks after the reflective writing activity (the final contribution required).	☐	☐
4	I agree to participate in the project to the extent of the activities described to me in the above participant information sheet.	☐	☐
5	I agree to my participation being video recorded (online interviews on TEAMS) and audio recorded for analysis. No audio clips will be published without my express consent (additional media release form).	☐	☐
6	I agree to my TEF and its contents being used as a source of data as described in the participant information sheet.	☐	☐
7	I agree to information from my subject pedagogy assignment being used as data as described in the participant information sheet	☐	☐
8	I agree for any artefacts I create during participation to remain in the possession of the researcher. Identifiable artefacts will not be used in research outputs.	☐	☐
9	I understand and agree that my words may be quoted anonymously in research outputs.	☐	☐
10	I wish to be informed of the outcomes of this research. I can be contacted at: ____	☐	☐
11	I give permission for the researchers named in the participant information sheet to contact me in the future about this research or other research opportunities.	☐	☐

_____________________ _____________________ _____________________

Name of participant Date Signature

_____________________ _____________________ _____________________

Name of person taking consent Date Signature

IF YOUR INTERVIEW IS IN-PERSON, YOUR INTERVIEWER WILL BRING HARD COPIES OF THE CONSENT FORM TO COMPLETE ON THE DAY, ONE FOR YOU TO KEEP, AND ONE OF THEM TO TAKE AWAY.

IF YOUR INTERVIEW IS ONLINE:

IF YOU HAVE ACCESS TO A PRINTER, PLEASE PRINT OFF THIS FORM, SIGN IT, SCAN IT, AND EMAIL IT BACK TO THE RESEARCHER. KEEP A COPY FOR YOUR OWN RECORDS.

IF NOT, PLEASE COMPLETE THE SIGNATURE SECTION USING BLOCK CAPITALS (OR AN E-SIGNATURE) AND SIMPLY EMAIL IT BACK TO THE RESEARCHER. KEEP A COPY FOR YOUR OWN RECORDS.

Appendix D: Participant consent form for subject mentors

CONSENT FORM – subject mentor

Study title:

The Theory Gap: exploring the role of literary theory knowledge in the development of PGCE English student teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogy.

Participant Identifier:

	Please tick your chosen answer	YES	NO
1.	I confirm that I have read the participant information sheet version …….. , date ……………………… for the above study.	☐	☐
2	I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	☐	☐
3	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw up until the stage where my interview is transcribed (2 weeks after the interview).	☐	☐
4	I agree to participate in the project to the extent of the activities described to me in the above participant information sheet.	☐	☐
5	I agree to my participation being video recorded (online interviews on TEAMS) or audio recorded for analysis. No audio clips will be published without my express consent (additional media release form).	☐	☐
6	I agree to examples of my planning (if available) to be used as a source of data as described in the Participant Information sheet.	☐	☐
7	I understand and agree that my words may be quoted anonymously in research outputs.	☐	☐
8	I wish to be informed of the outcomes of this research. I can be contacted at: ____	☐	☐
9	I give permission for the researchers named in the participant information sheet to contact me in the future about this research or other research opportunities.	☐	☐

____________________	____________________	____________________
Name of participant	Date	Signature
____________________	____________________	____________________
Name of person taking consent	Date	Signature

IF YOUR INTERVIEW IS IN-PERSON, YOUR INTERVIEWER WILL BRING HARD COPIES OF THE CONSENT FORM TO COMPLETE ON THE DAY, ONE FOR YOU TO KEEP, AND ONE OF THEM TO TAKE AWAY.

IF YOUR INTERVIEW IS ONLINE:
IF YOU HAVE ACCESS TO A PRINTER, PLEASE PRINT OFF THIS FORM, SIGN IT, SCAN IT, AND EMAIL IT BACK TO THE RESEARCHER. KEEP A COPY FOR YOUR OWN RECORDS.
IF NOT, PLEASE COMPLETE THE SIGNATURE SECTION USING BLOCK CAPITALS (OR AN E-SIGNATURE) AND SIMPLY EMAIL IT BACK TO THE RESEARCHER. KEEP A COPY FOR YOUR OWN RECORDS.

Student teacher		Participant number / code		School number / code	
Subject mentor		Date		How long teaching?	
Degree title		PG lit?		LT / CT unit?	
YOGrad					

Appendix E: Interview 1 questions for student teachers and subject mentors

1.	What led to you deciding to study Eng Lit at university?	Y
2.	How did this influence your decision to teach English?	Y
3.	What do you think children's experiences should be of studying literature at school and college – what should they learn and experience?	Y
4.	What learning experiences were significant for you *personally* in your English education?	Y
5.	Did the way the texts were presented, discussed, approached pedagogically have any influence over this?	Y
6.	What experience did you have of LT / CT whilst at university?	y
7.	Did you study LT which covered Practical Criticism, New Criticism, reader-response? If not, do you know what they are? First time encountered was on PGCE.	y
8.	Which theories did you develop interest in - which did you 'put to work' during your studies?	y
9.	Would you say that you came to adopt a critical stance or reading practice / method influenced by theory? Has this changed? Would you say that it still influences the way you approach teaching literary texts? Interesting that discursive development of int, meaning, criticism, occurred outside of school – each participant was agential and democratic - - understanding the importance. Discussion is still very much part of pedagogy – this is a source of tension with SM and in school.	y
10	Are there any other links between the way you teach English literature and literary theory?	Answered above
11	Does theory have any influence over the way you conceptualise 'reader' 'author' & 'author intention', 'meaning', 'interpretation', 'criticism'? MENTAL MODELS? **OR** **When you use terms such as a) reader, b) author, c) author intention, d) interpretation, what do you mean?**	Y
12	Do you think English teachers you work with consider literary theory when approaching the teaching of literature? Should they? Is it ever discussed or referred to not as a subject but as a thing which influences how they teach?	Y
13	Would you ignore a concept that you understood from LT to follow a dept or shared approach? Partly problematic Q because the Q assumes that student grasps LT as being a certain thing, e.g. reader, author intention.	Would feel pressured but would dodge it! Pressures of assessment limit what he'd do to challenge that.
14	Have you had any CPD in recent years that has had an impact on your practice, specifically, teaching literature? (Does this have any theoretical grounding?)	Y
15		

1(	Do you consider yourself a teacher of reading? If so, what does that involve, knowledge, skills, practice? What should sec English teachers teach where reading is concerned?	Y
1	Anything else you'd like to tell me about your knowledge, interests, in relation to literary theory and its relationship to your literature teaching?	

Revised SM Questions:

1	What led to you becoming an English teacher? How long? Lit degree?	
2	Have you studied Literary Theory? Do you have any attachment to particular theory?	
3	Do you consider yourself a teacher of reading; teaching children to read?	
4	What do you think children's experiences should be of studying literature at school and college – what should they learn and experience?	
5	Pedagogy: Would you say that your approach to teaching English is characterised by particular methods and approaches? Has that changed over time?	
6	Do you make use of frameworks for studying literary texts (for instance, an unseen poem) or for writing about them? – can you explain what they are and what their purpose / objective is?	
7	What approach do you tend to use for interpreting a text in class, i.e., annotation, teacher-guided, teacher input, student co-construction – what drives this?	
8	How do you interpret and fulfil 'informed personal response' (AO1) from the GCSE spec, in your teaching?	
9	When you teach a text, where does its meaning come from? How do you manage the potential for 'wrong' answers in interpreting literary texts? What stops them saying that Macbeth is a product of a deprived childhood, etc?	
10	What CPD has had the biggest effect on the way you teach literature and that you may pass on to others?	

Appendix F: Post-lesson observation questions (interview 2)

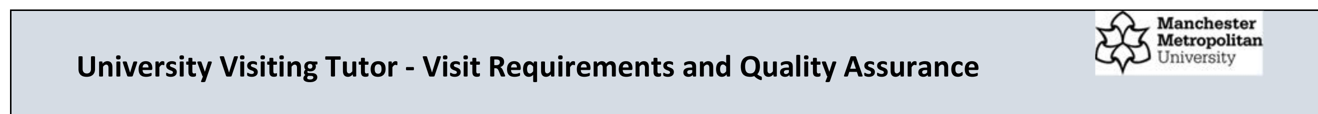
Student teacher		Participant number / code		School number / code	
Subject mentor		Date		Time	

18	Tell me about your approach to teaching literature today? What pedagogy did you use?	
19	What role did PowerPoint play in your pedagogy?	
20	What has influenced you to approach literature teaching that way?	
21	Does it work for you, personally?	
22	Were you aiming to develop reading skills today – interpretations; close reading / evidence; critical reading / criticism / opinion; creativity; independence; stylistics / terminology.	
23	How do you think you conceptualised and presented elements such as reader / author / context / meaning / interpretation	
24	Why did you conceptualise and present them the way you did?	
25	Would you say your approach was informed by any of your literary theory knowledge?	
26	Anything else you'd like to tell me about how your approach to teaching lit is or will develop?	

Appendix G: Focus group questions

1. Has your teaching of English literature and reading been what you thought it would be?
2. What constraints have you encountered whilst teaching English literature and / or reading?
3. How often have you called on your literary theory sessions/undergraduate studies/knowledge for teaching reading?
4. Was your mentor's specialist subject knowledge helpful to you [in teaching literature / reading]?
5. Were you ever unclear about, or at odds with, your mentor's subject-specific advice when teaching literature / reading?
6. How far did you feel able / have the capacity to apply your specialist subject knowledge for secondary reading?
7. What reading skills do secondary teachers give to pupils in the 11-19 age range?
8. Were you able/did you have the capacity to give pupils an understanding of literary theory/theories behind reading?
9. What is *your* theoretical stance on teaching literature?
10. Do you think pupils are taught to read literature in English lessons?
11. Many teachers talk about their lit teaching in terms of exam prep instead of 'reading'. Do you identify with this and do you recognise the exam prep. work as 'reading'?

Appendix H: Sadiya's UVT report form



University Visiting Tutor - Visit Requirements and Quality Assurance

Name of student teacher: SADIYA	Specialism: English	School: REDACTED
Name of subject mentor **TILLY**	**Email of subject mentor**	**Name of professional mentor** **REDACTED**
Name of University Visiting Tutor (UVT): **J Barber**		**Date: 17/5/22**

Discussion with the student teacher about progress towards the learning outcomes for the relevant phase of the MMU Curriculum	
You <u>may</u> wish to use some of these questions as prompts: *The discussion about overall progress should be based on the details set out in the PAD.* At this point in your teaching experience which learning outcomes do you feel you are making progress in; and how do you know this? What are your current targets and how are you tackling these? Are there any learning outcomes that you require further support with and if so which? Are there particular aspects of your subject or curriculum knowledge that you are trying to develop, and can you explain how you are doing this? Can you give me an example of an 'expert' colleague who you have observed/had a discussion with and explain what you learnt from this. Can you share an example of the positive impact your teaching is having on the learners. What contributions have you made to the wider life of your class, or the school. Can you talk me through a lesson that you felt was successful and explain what made it a success. What	The discussion focused principally on the observed lesson and SADIYA's progress against the CCF outcomes. She has made strong progress and aspects of her planning are now to be fine tuned to demonstrate the kind of expertise of which she is clearly capable. She is clear about her areas for further development and also how to approach them. She is keen to learn from colleagues and responds well to feedback in addition to demonstrating sound capacity to reflect upon her teaching and its constituent elements. Very well done, SADIYA – keep going!

would you do differently if you were going to teach the lesson again?	
Discussion with the subject /professional mentor	
Overall progress in relation to the student teachers progress towards the learning outcomes for the relevant phase of the MMU Curriculum. Overall progress is strong. **What progress is the student teacher making in relation to their subject knowledge?** This is evidently progressing well and SADIYA continues to develop subject specialist knowledge in the context of preparation and planning. In her lessons, her SK is very secure and sets a high level of opportunity for learning and challenge for pupils. **SADIYA, I cannot see your completed SK audit or your Subject Pedagogy Portfolio in your TEF. Also, your PAD is still not set to edit / comment mode (read only atm) so your PADs can't be signed.**	
Lesson observation	
Part of lesson observed (30 Minutes)	Yes
Discussion with SM/PM and UVT about the type of feedback they will be giving and agree on the following: *Please reference the Core Content Framework.* **Areas of strength:** Very prompt and orderly start to the lesson: students asked to stand whilst register called and entry task displayed. You have good presence and you appear very organised and focused. Expectations are clear and embedded in your tasking and delivery. Subject knowledge is secure (although check 'countable nouns'!) and you started to give the impression that you cared about your subject matter. You also started to give praise which was good. Do let them see that you think they're great – give them a little more enthusiasm in response to their ideas and answers. Think about the impact this has on extrinsic motivation. For task 1, students were given a number and you checked that all students understood. You also modelled how the group would work. This was managed efficiently. Planning was thorough and clear. Do consider your objectives more carefully however – you were doing much more in your lesson than your LO belied but equally you could have achieved other things as well if you had set much clearer and precise objectives. One way is to break down your main LO into 3 bullets. The same is true of the SKR section – this is your opportunity to develop your subject knowledge in the context of preparation and planning by identifying which features are most important and for you to understand you check your knowledge and understanding. The materials were clear and stimulating. However, the task was quite challenging and I think they may have benefitted from some additional time to allow ideas to grow. You ran ahead of time a few times when the discussions sounded as though a little more time might have benefitted the development of ideas – they were very promising as it was and pupils were clearly building upon knowledge from their previous lesson. Directed questioning used following the task. Questioning was effective of Cara(?), moving from what to how. You then moved to volunteered responses - why was this? If you are going to use hands up, be clear about why you are doing this and consider the issues with this method – lots of research casts doubt on the efficacy of hands up for a number of reasons. You respond well to answers, posing guided questions and pushing pupils to develop their answers ('who is 'they'') – do this more and encourage them to use the lesson's ambitious vocab in their answers. Some of the vocabulary was quite challenging – did some require some explication, i.e. immigrant, bias, etymology. If not (pupils seemed comfortable with using it, do allow them to see the written form as well as hearing it).	

Some of your questioning phases lasted quite a long time. Try to manage pace a little more here – using directed questioning, using the board and asking all to write down key vocab and ideas to use later on. This also acts as a visual confirmation that all are engaged. This point is not completely disconnected from the fact that there was a lot of paper in your lesson today. If they had done more book work, might this have reduced some of it?
Phase transitions were very good and helped to reinforce expectation and authority. Do ask hinge questions after your task exposition to check that understanding is really secure for all. You did do this later but asked in a way that was for the whole task rather than details and which might include conditions of working, where to write, objectives, outcomes, roles in a group, etc.
Scaffolding and modelling used to support the next task. Have a think about using shared writing on the board and make it a little more dynamic and engaging for all, especially if combined with direct questioning and live drafting and editing – this can improve pace also.

Targets:

- Consider the amount of teacher talk during feedback. For instance, during the retrieval task, you could have asked them to use the mini whiteboards to flip answers about each image – this also gives you a chance to assess understanding.
- Some of your tasking is quite challenging. For instance the imagery task. Could you have given them key examples so that the task became about meaning and developing confidence and skill in handling complex language which manipulates the reader's responses. Remember, give more, expect more back! This point is also related to the above point about teacher talk and pace.
- Think about how you can allow meaning, interpretation and personal response in to something so emotive and challenging as the material they focused on today – they did remarkably well with it and deserved lots of praise. They would, I'm sure have been very willing and perhaps challenged to really think about how they responded to something so difficult and distressing. Recall my point about think / feel / imagine and the role it might play here.

Subject mentor/student and UVT; note any concluding thoughts of the meeting and support received to date from MMU.

Alongside her own hard work, SADIYA has responded well to excellent support and advice and it would appear this has really paid dividends as her planning and teaching evidence.

Mentor Training

Have you accessed the online Mentor Briefing for the placement?

Is there any further support that Manchester Met. can provide?
UVT to follow up any Mentors who have not attended online briefing/training.

Student Teacher Entitlement from Subject/Professional Mentor	Yes
Teaching Experience File	
There is evidence that mentors regularly engage with and review the **Teaching Experience File**	Y
Mentors regularly engage with the **Progression and Achievement Document (PAD).**	Y

The school is providing support to enable the student to meet the learning outcomes for the relevant phase of the MMU curriculum.	Y
Weekly lesson observation	
Weekly formal lesson observations are taking place and recorded on the LO feedback form	Y
The LO feedback form identifies **strengths** and **areas for development** that relate to the Core Content Framework.	Y
A formal **lesson observation** has been completed/is scheduled to be undertaken by the Professional Mentor (PM)	
Weekly Mentor meeting	
Weekly Mentor Meetings are taking place and are recorded on the Mentor Meeting proforma	Y
Weekly Targets are set which support student teacher progress to meet the learning outcomes for the relevant phase of the MMU Curriculum	Y
Other Professional Development	
The student teacher is engaging in a **school based Professional development programme in school each week**	**Y**
The student teacher is encouraged to reflect on the impact of professional issues sessions on their own practice	**I CANNOT SEE REFLECTIONS ON YOUR LESSON PLANS! Please ensure these are completed for each lesson!**
The student teacher undertakes observation of /have discussions with **expert colleagues** both within and beyond their subject specialism every week.	
The student teacher is engaging in appropriate **professional development** and is also contributing to the wider life of the school (e.g. contributing to a club)	

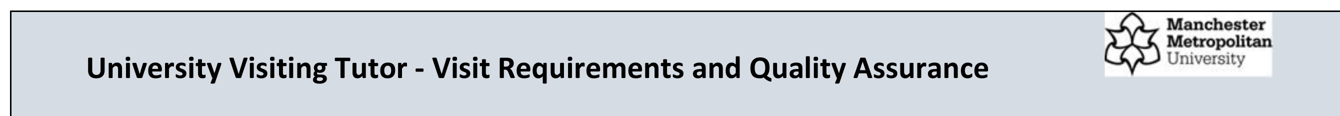
Overall Confirmation of Student Teacher's Progress at the Visit stage	
The student teacher is making progress in line with the learning outcomes for the relevant phase of the MMU Curriculum.	Yes
If the student teacher is not making expected progress an Intervention Support Plan is required	N/A
Partnership action take (office use only)	

University Visiting Tutor – please share copies of this form to the student, the SM and PM within 5 days of the visit taking place.

Student Concerns - the UVT immediately reports any concerns about the student to the personal tutor.
Mentor Concerns – the UVT reports any areas for development to the Partnership Coordinator responsible for the placement.

Quality Assurance form saved centrally in share point within 5 days of visit in relevant year file e.g. 2022

Appendix I: Frances' UVT report form



Name of student teacher: **FRANCES**	**Specialism:** **English**	**School:** **REDACTED**
Name of subject mentor **ROISIN**	**Email of subject mentor**	**Name of professional mentor** **REDACTED**
Name of University Visiting Tutor (UVT): **Joe Barber**		**Date:** **6/5/22**

Discussion with the student teacher about progress towards the learning outcomes for the relevant phase of the MMU Curriculum	
You <u>may</u> wish to use some of these questions as prompts: *The discussion about overall progress should be based on the details set out in the PAD.* At this point in your teaching experience which learning outcomes do you feel you are making progress in; and how do you know this? What are your current targets and how are you tackling these? Are there any learning outcomes that you require further support with and if so which? Are there particular aspects of your subject or curriculum knowledge that you are trying to develop, and can you explain how you are doing this? Can you give me an example of an 'expert' colleague who you have observed/had a discussion with and explain what you learnt from this. Can you share an example of the positive impact your teaching is having on the learners. What contributions have you made to the wider life of your class, or the school. Can you talk me through a lesson that you felt was successful and explain what made it a success. What would you do differently if you were going to teach the lesson again?	Discussion covered progress against the CCF and targets to work towards throughout the remainder of the placement. FRANCES has established herself well in the department and is a valued member of the team, demonstrating interest and commitment in its work as well as the wider life of the school and its pupils. Her lesson demonstrated developing skill in planning learning and methods of assessment as well as adaptive teaching. She shows a confidence and ability in working with pupils which is impressive.

Discussion with the subject /professional mentor	
Overall progress in relation to the student teachers progress towards the learning outcomes for the relevant phase of the MMU Curriculum. Progress against the MMU curriculum is very good – secure and consistent. **What progress is the student teacher making in relation to their subject knowledge?** Word classes – knowledge sound (do be careful accepting misleading responses, i.e. imperative). Also, remember our session on grammar which considered the relationship between form and function in grammar, i.e. that some words can have multiple functions depending on where they are used (form). Consider the work we did on teaching grammar in context – it is more meaningful, supported and really helps to develop reading skills and confidence. Subject knowledge strong when you were discussing work with pupils.	
Lesson observation	
Part of lesson observed (30 Minutes)	Yes
Discussion with SM/PM and UVT about the type of feedback they will be giving and agree on the following: *Please reference the Core Content Framework.* **Areas of strength:** Entry task on board, class settled quickly. Register called. The task had lots of challenge! Directed questions for quick Q&A. Pace was good at the start and you had your timings right (even though there were none on your plan or on the board – how do you monitor your timings, out of interest?!). What happened to pace once the writing task started and towards the end of the lesson? Think about how you might build in breaks for review / to release parts of the task in stages. Relationships are positive; you dealt with the pupil at the front really well. You remain calm and reassuring even when pupils enter and exit the room at different times – you remain calm and focused. This was the same when dealing with pupils who appear to be reluctant to engage. You use choice well when getting pupils to follow your instructions and meet your expectations but you are also firm and clear about what consequences they may be faced with and then you follow through on this – very good. High expectations evident in many aspects of what you say and do but do be clearer about conditions of working – i.e. collaboration and for the word classes, tell them that there are 8 – aim for 8! Also, instead of 'are you struggling' ask them some guided questions such as, 'tell me what you've decided to do about X' or 'what ideas have you had about the setting', etc. When you set them off on a task, give them some time to make a start and observe who is doing what. Give the whole class a narrative of what is going well, what work is being done, good ideas, that some people need to hurry up as others are already ahead. Also, when you circulate around the room as they work, consider two things: 1. Why you are circulating (to support, motivate, assess?) 2. Where you position yourself in the room as you visit tables and pupils (you want to be able to see the majority of students at all times – survey the room all of the time). Related to this, avoid asking, 'any questions' to check understanding. Instead, use hinge questions and ask specifics about the task – how long do you have / how many examples do I want / who are you working with / where are you writing your answers. Students were given some chance to review (what about drafting?) their work and each others' thinking about their intended reader and also the author's intentions. These are useful concepts but perhaps consider what this actually means to / for them. My target below, would embed this below in a lesson with similar objectives. You shared one student's example with the class which was great but could everyone hear and might it have been better for you to read and commentate on what aspects of it were so successful so they could develop more understanding of what went well and even better if – give examples and explain this.	

Overall a very good lesson with lots of strengths and signs that progress is strong. Your organisation, presence, relationships, classroom management and subject knowledge are all superb.

Targets:

1. When teaching grammar for writing, I would strongly recommend that rather than teaching it as something which is inserted into a piece of writing, you look at three short pieces and explore how grammar is part of style, driven by genre, type, form and reader and purpose? Start with a really clear idea about what stylistic devices you want them to learn about / understand / appreciate and then choose texts that rely on them or utilise them a lot to achieve effect, generic conventions, purpose, etc. You could also produce some shared writing to model making choices about style based on knowledge of genre characteristics. You would make use of their knowledge and awareness of genre, readership, purpose and how style works directly with this. If this goes against 'free writing' (which is a fantastic thing to do by the way) then simply ask them to write the opening to a genre story (horror is one they are likely to have awareness of) and then return to craft it with features from the models you give them. The labelling of the grammar then really becomes useful, but it would make an appearance after they have started with an understanding of text, before sentence, phrase and word level work.

2. Consider conditions of working, hinge questions, classroom circulation – these can all be described as PHASES which require more attention – they are the mortar to the bricks (tasks) of your lesson. Transition phases are often the 'glue' to your lesson and really help you consider pace, behaviour, assessment, questioning.

3. Consider modelling and shared writing to develop skill and understanding of writing for a reader, with a purpose and how form and genre are important.

Subject mentor/student and UVT; note any concluding thoughts of the meeting and support received to date from MMU.

FRANCES is continuing to make reflective and evaluative judgements on her lessons to inform meetings and discussions moving forward. SHE is growing in confidence and has begun to begin working with and communicating with students' parents both positively and constructively; this is then used to build relationships with students and encourage them to perform successfully in lessons.

Mentor receives weekly updates from MMU to inform weekly meeting discussions and foci. These are used, alongside HER lesson evaluations, to direct the path of conservations during weekly meetings and inform actions relating both to HER and mentor's responsibilities.

Mentor Training

Have you accessed the online Mentor Briefing for the placement?
No, unfortunately I wasn't able to access and could not find a recording online. I did however read the handbook/information online and the weekly newsletters.

Is there any further support that Manchester Met. can provide? It would be beneficial if there was a recording of any twilight mentor training available online for staff to view outside of their working day. A concise checklist/schedule to ensure that all areas of the course can be covered in detail and nothing left as an after thought would also ensure appropriate use of staff time and would mean that staff are not being sent lengthy

emails out of work hours. ITT has also commented that she has found information very hard to find/understand. UVT to follow up any Mentors who have not attended online briefing/training.

Student Teacher Entitlement from Subject/Professional Mentor	Yes/No
Teaching Experience File	
There is evidence that mentors regularly engage with and review the **Teaching Experience File**	Y
Mentors regularly engage with the **Progression and Achievement Document (PAD).**	Y
The school is providing support to enable the student to meet the learning outcomes for the relevant phase of the MMU curriculum.	Y
Weekly lesson observation	
Weekly formal lesson observations are taking place and recorded on the LO feedback form	Y
The LO feedback form identifies **strengths** and **areas for development** that relate to the Core Content Framework.	Y
A formal **lesson observation** has been completed/is scheduled to be undertaken by the Professional Mentor (PM)	Y
Weekly Mentor meeting	
Weekly Mentor Meetings are taking place and are recorded on the Mentor Meeting proforma	Y
Weekly Targets are set which support student teacher progress to meet the learning outcomes for the relevant phase of the MMU Curriculum	Y
Other Professional Development	
The student teacher is engaging in a **school based Professional development programme in school each week**	**Y**
The student teacher is encouraged to reflect on the impact of professional issues sessions on their own practice	**Y**
The student teacher undertakes observation of /have discussions with **expert colleagues** both within and beyond their subject specialism every week.	**Y**
The student teacher is engaging in appropriate **professional development** and is also contributing to the wider life of the school (e.g. contributing to a club)	y

Overall Confirmation of Student Teacher's Progress at the Visit stage	
The student teacher is making progress in line with the learning outcomes for the relevant phase of the MMU Curriculum.	Yes
If the student teacher is not making expected progress an Intervention Support Plan is required	N/A
Partnership action take (office use only)	

University Visiting Tutor – please share copies of this form to the student, the SM and PM within 5 days of the visit taking place.

Student Concerns - the UVT immediately reports any concerns about the student to the personal tutor.
Mentor Concerns – the UVT reports any areas for development to the Partnership Coordinator responsible for the placement.

Quality Assurance form saved centrally in share point within 5 days of visit in relevant year file e.g. 2022

Appendix J: Annotations and initial coding of Interview 1 with Christina

J: What was the title of your degree?

C: English Literature and Creative Writing.

J: And did you do any postgrad study before you PGCE?

H: No, I didn't.

J: Did you study any units on literary theory or critical theory?

C: So, we did a unit called literary scholarship, I think it was scholarship, and we did, we did a little, we touched on critical theory a little bit from what I remember.

J: Thank you. And what year did you graduate?

C: I think it was 2020 or 2021.

J: Great. OK. And what was it that led to you study in English at uni? What helped you decide to study English?

C: So I did English and Media for an access course. And I think out of all the subjects at school, English was probably the only one that I really enjoyed it because it was, I did performing arts at school as well and I enjoyed that, but I enjoyed English, probably because my English teacher was just ace and he's my subject mentor now. It's dead weird. Yeah, but honestly, it's literally, it's I don't mean this in an undermining way - It probably does come across when I say it, he should be a lecturer at uni, you know, that's how he is. That's what he reminds me of. Like, do you know when you go to uni and it's so different to how it was at college or at school and when I sit in his classroom now, even watching him he, that's what he reminds me of. I feel like I'm in like a lecture, but he doesn't do it in a lecture style. But that's how he teaches. It's just, yeah, but he's probably the reason why I enjoyed it so much. And then at college, my tutor was amazing. He's probably one of the smartest people I've ever met.

J: At sixth form you mean, before you went to uni?

C: I went and did an access course when I was 19 and then that's when I did English and media. I loved it. I think it was because, I think it just helps when you've got a really good tutor cause he was unreal. He was honestly, it just made me see things from a completely different perspective. He was really quirky. He was from Taiwan and he used to like tell us all these stories from when he was in Taiwan. And then he introduced me to like Chinese literature and I read The Butcher's Wife, and it just changed my life!

J: Oh, that's amazing. Alright, well, I'll ask you a bit more about that as we go along so did that influence your decision to become an English teacher? Made you go to university, then made you want to be an English teacher? And if so, why and how?

C: Yeah. I think because, so, umm, my experience at school, I didn't have a bad experience or anything like that. I had a really good experience and however it wasn't plain sailing when I was at school, I had a lot of issues going on. My attendance was terrible because I just didn't go to school until I got into about end of year 10 and then I just got my head down because they had really good teachers, I passed everything. And I did, I did OK, but then, when I got to college, I was kind of thinking, I knew that I wanted to go into teaching, but I didn't know if I wanted to do primary, so I went and did some experience at primary school and I hated it. Really did. It just wasn't for me at all. I didn't like it. I just sat there and I thought, I can't, I can't deal with these little children. And so then.

J: So, what was it about, what was it about your experiences of studying English literature at school and when you did your access course that made you want to be a teacher, what was it about what they did?

H: Oh okay so I think I just seen a completely different side to literature. So, for example with Shakespeare when we did *The Taming of the Shrew* especially that was, that's my favourite, I think. I think that's my favourite one. I think it's because we learned so much about the history of the era and it you know it's very, it was so in depth that you feel like you learn so much, and I think I just kind of learnt to love it, if that makes sense and I just became really kind of passionate about it and I just was really interested in that era. So now when I read Shakespeare, all of these memories come flooding back. And when I'm teaching the kids, I find myself going off on a tangent sometimes about some of the history, about what I learned at university and they're quiet interested in it. I think because I say it from my perspective. And that's probably why. But that's I think that's what it is with literature.

J: OK, great. So, I'm asking you kind of similar questions but from different perspectives really! What do you think children's experiences should be when they study literature at school and college? What should they experience in a lesson and what should they learn in an English lesson?

C: I think with literature it covers. It covers so much, so it covers, and I read this, I read I was doing some research about teaching Shakespeare and came across this book yesterday about teaching Shakespeare and some of the issues it covers, like racism, anti-Semitism, feminism, and they get all these different kind of aspects. But that's not just in Shakespeare. That's in literature as a whole. So, for example, in *Jane Eyre* you learn about kind of colonialism and racism. And I think even though the kids always say, why do we need to learn this, it's irrelevant, but it's actually not because it covers literature, covers so much of what happens today, and it gives you different perspectives of the world. And I think that's really important and so yeah.

J: Yeah, so in that regard, when a child is sitting in an English lesson, is it simply learning about the world out there, or is it also about themselves or their relationship to it? What is it about in your perspective?

C: I think it depends on what you teach. So I think with for example, I'm just trying to think of what you actually teach at school. So with *A Christmas Carol*, you learn about poverty and capitalism and the same with *An Inspector Calls*, and this idea of the social classes and the divide in the social classes and I think especially in the school I'm in, you can really kind of pound that into them and it's because a lot of them come from working class backgrounds and some of the parents are like, some of them are in care, looked after children, so their whole experience is poverty, does that make sense? So, I think they can relate to it themselves as well. If you teach it right so.

J: Yeah, yeah.

C: But that's why I think I don't think context is the be all and end all because it's not, but I think it is important to kind of touch on what's happening in them times for the reason why these novels were written in the 1st place? Does that make sense?

J: Yeah. What you said a second ago about, you know, context isn't the be all and end all, but it is about what they what they learn about themselves and the world they live.

C: Yeah.

Appendix K: Initial tabulation of codes and grouping into subthemes

Instructions for DA round 2, writing up themes across 4 data sets - 15/6/23

1. Read / annotate themes across 4 data sets to produce 4 chapters – by theme
2. Number sub-themes on table
3. Track where themes could be merged
4. C&P numbered sections on draft of each, cross-sets, theme
5. Write up each theme with sub-theme headings

THEME 1, all data sets

SubT No.	Knowledge of literary theory SubT Description	New SubT
1.	Reticent to claim knowledge of LT as an UG	
2.	Difficulty recalling knowledge of LT as an UG – challenging, time	
3.	How LT taught to them as UGs & its relationship to reading, analysis	
	Lecturers assumptions re knowledge of LT and moving between educational phases	
5.	LT more accessible when linked to material reality as an UG	
6.	LT as compulsory at university	
7.	Use of LT in final year dissertation	
8.	Recollections and conceptualisations of LT at uni	
	Using LT for literary analysis as an UG	
	Textual Theory or Critical Theory?	~~Could this be combined with AI / RRT (number 23 below)~~
	Theorists over theory	Specific theories / theorists
	Barthes' Death of the Author	
	LT and personal relevance – empathy & horizons	
	LT and personal identity, own experiences & contexts	
15.	Theory as a lens for 'uncovering' othering and 'issues' conceptualisation of LT	Perceived uses of literary theory
15b	Theory as epistemology rather than ontology	
16.	English teachers' use of LT in the secondary classroom (&visualisers)	This doesn't quite capture! LT instantiated in practice? Also, overlaps with 3;9 and 4; 2
17.	LT as an influence on pedagogy of the literature lesson	
18.	LT instantiation & English lit teaching outside of the secondary English classroom	

Appendix L: Initial analysis of interview 1 data set with additional responses and links across interviews using coding table (see Appendix K.)

Theme 1 -7/3/23 – v1.2

3.1. Quotation: Student teachers' knowledge of literary theory

Introduction

Explain headings to set context of discussion

'Particularly ground-breaking': Experiences of studying undergraduate literary theory

The matter of past study of literary theory presented itself as a thorny one for most of the student teachers. This included subject mentors also, many of whom had been teaching English for a matter of years, in one case, decades. Nevertheless, there was a nervousness about claiming to know or understand theory. In the first instance, the student teachers were keen to acknowledge the passing of time as a factor in having a rather sketchy or patchy recollection of their study of literary theory. Ali remarks that it was 'ages ago' and hedges her references to certain theories with 'I think', Sadiya, 'quite a while ago', whereas Christina answers that she studied 'a little bit, from what I remember' and Frances similarly frames her account with 'from what I can remember'. Robert prefaces his account of studying literary theory by explaining that he experienced mental health issues at the time of studying that module so 'couldn't switch on to it'. He appends this with the intention to return to the subject when he is a 'bit more ready to take it on.'

Robert's comment implies that the subject matter of literary theory was one which required full mental capacity, concentration and engagement. He refers to necropolitics as 'one I got' amidst a long list of theorists whose names he can recall but whose works, and more importantly, ideas and their relevance to literary study, he cannot. He recalls Butler, Spivak, Kristeva, hooks, Derrida as well as postcolonial feminist theory but his account remains descriptive.

The issue of difficulty surfaces elsewhere. Ali refers to the manner in which theory was taught so that misunderstanding was difficult to resolve. She mentions how she 'hated' Barthes' 'Death of the Author' and how the difficulty of the text led to her becoming disinterested in theory generally. She explains that she 'couldn't connect' and identifies the disconnect between her pleasure of annotating texts from A-level (the very thing which led her towards studying English) with ideas and the application of theory to texts was very different. Frances' experience shares some similarities with Ali's. She describes her study of theory as 'heavy' and how when she 'struggled', she didn't feel comfortable asking her help and that 'led to [her] not liking it.' She sees the way the subject was taught as being the most significant obstacle to her learning:

> I think maybe if I was taught it a little bit better at degree level then I'd probably enjoy it more. But I think because I just didn't really enjoy it that much...I think sometimes your degree, it's something that they, because they've been like teaching it for however many years, I think sometimes it's something that they like, just expect you to know, and it's like, I'm like 18. I've just moved to a new city. Like, I don't. I don't even know my way around. Never mind like, the insides and outs of an English, like, literary theory book.

Similarly, Stuart describes how he 'spent a long time getting [his] head round it' but goes on to offer an account of how he did eventually settle on an area of theory which he enjoyed, which he attributes to his lecturer who, he explains, made everything come to life', with examples of theory applied to familiar texts and contexts. Nevertheless, his conception of the role which theory plays in literary studies suffers from a lack of clarity as I explore further on.

theory is characterised by the literary texts he used theory with, citing that Fin de Siecle gothic fiction was his favourite thing to study on his degree. Stuart, whose lecturer made the subject accessible through real world examples, found theory more difficult when 'applied to literature' as though he somehow can see theory itself is a focus for study in its own right on an English literature degree.

3

(15) Theory as a lens + ways of seeing/ perspectives + in issues + liberate the other 2+11

What did studying literary theory enable students to do?

In addition to referring to theory as something to be 'used' or 'applied', students also make reference to it as a lens (Stuart, Frances, Christina, Robert) through which they read texts. This suggests that doing so yields possible interpretations which otherwise may not be visible. The students make reference to reading as providing them with perspectives (Sadiya, Christina, Frances, Robert) on the world and making those 'real life connections' (Sadiya) and Robert describes his view of the theory he was taught as 'political theory' that worked on a 'larger scale than how to engage with literature.' There are similarities here with Stuart's view that theory was somehow more straightforward when tackled alone, apart from any application to texts. Sadiya sees things slightly differently in that theory belongs with texts but largely so that they might expand the reader's view of the world. She remarks that when reading a text such as *Animal Farm*, school pupils being exposed to Marxism is a good thing, so that they can develop a view of the world. Her comments imply that theory itself is real, and perhaps even offers a more truthful version of reality. The impact of Michael Foucault and Edward Said is for her, 'ground-breaking' for challenging a version of reality which was set from childhood.

15

Whilst Frances offers an account of how theory is something she reads [views] texts through [– i.e. a lens.] when reading for pleasure and which usually relates to feminist readings of narratives, Christina offers an explanation of theory as a lens which is much closer allied to her interest in literature and to her future career as a teacher. Using Shakespeare as a set text in the curriculum, and one about which she claims pupils ask, 'why do we need to learn this?', she answers that because of the way that issues are highlighted, such as racism, anti-Semitism and feminism. This isn't limited to the Bard however, but to be found in 'literature as a whole' and ultimately provides 'different perspectives of the world.' I am drawn to the statement she makes about how studying texts such as *A Christmas Carol* or *An Inspector Calls*, all very popular choices for GCSE study, her pupils, many of whom come from 'working class' families whose 'whole experience is poverty', learning about the inequality of wealth and opportunity acts as an edifying force to make such pupils more aware of their own economic circumstances. In talking about her experience of studying *The Taming of the Shrew*, Christina recalls how learning about context of the Elizabethan theatre and gender roles was transformational for her.

Mention this being about knowledge – her belief that kids in poverty.

15

Stuart's favoured theories of Freudian psychoanalysis permits him to view the 'psychology of a character' and how this alongside post-colonialism gave him a way to read *Dracula* that interrogated aspects of the text that otherwise may be not seen or simply accepted at face value, such as male and female sexuality, gender and race.

15

(may move this to 1.6) In Robert's experience, in writing about the character of wife of Bath [the Wife of Bath.] in Chaucer's Prologue to *The Wife of Bath's Tale,* his notion of theory of a lens was challenged by his dissertation supervisor who accused him of being anachronistic in reading the character as a proto-feminist because his theoretical lens post-dated the text itself. According to him, his supervisor appears to view this as something of a liberty and he was advised to focus on the issue 'more in the time' of Chaucer's writing. In addition to his claim that he struggled with theory and that he saw the theory as 'political' rather than literary, he was left not feeling 'confident enough' to further apply theoretical lenses or perspectives to his reading. This perhaps explains why he talks about theory as something which raises (self) awareness about 'issues' such as sexuality, gender and ethnicity. He sees

Surely this is one of LT's great liberating powers? To liberate the oppressed.

Appendix M: Initial coding of focus group transcript

I already knew that the lessons would be already planned out, I knew annotation was a huge part of a literature lesson, especially with Shakespeare and sort of like that reading would be part of it and [unclear] writing would be a part of every single lesson but I think it changes from classes, personally, classes and sets really. I think it takes a different turn, like I had the exact same, like you said you had a top set year ten, they were absolutely insane in the way that some of them would write at like college level already, compared to bottom set year eights who were really struggling with Shakespeare. They were both doing Shakespeare and that was hard to get your head around. But yeah, in terms of what you did in literature, they way you analysed, annotated, scaffolded, I would say it was quite similar to what I imagined.

J: Hm, what about the rest of you?

F: I think I enjoyed placement B so mucg because it was so similar to the secondary school I went to, even the way the lessons were structured and the way they teach. I think that plus having a literature background, made it easier for me to go in and teach and I think, when we were talking about satisfaction of your job, for me it was more like, if they came out of the lesson and they were like, that was really good. Like, I did a lesson on The Landlady [RD short story]with year eight and showed them the last 10 minutes of this Tales of the Unexpected clip and it freaked them out

All: [laughter]

F: And the next day they were like, watch the rest of that miss, it was really good. Little things like that.

J: So you traumatised them?!

F: I literally traumatised all of year eight! They were alright!

J: Can anyone else add to that – [Stuart], it was interesting what you were saying about it being what you were expecting but you actually talked more about pedagogy than content. I'm wondering if the sort of stuff you talked about in English lit, you know the subject matter, if you did poetry for instance, did you talk about aspects poetry you expected to talk about, or did it end up being different?

St: Ermmmm, yyyeah, I think it depends how much time you have to spend on something. I mean our placement B, they were supposed to be doing Romeo and Juliet and it was supposed to be five weeks long but a week of it was wasted watching a film. So, it was very difficult -in terms of you know, what are we actually teaching them?

A: You couldn't actually teach them literature during that time

St: It was just summaries, quick summaries, and that's why I decided to, I went a bit rogue, I'll be honest [laughs]

A: I didn't go rogue. I wasn't allowed to. Mine [subject mentor] wouldn't let me

J: Why do you think they did that with the film?

A: They wanted to give the kids some kind of context but actually showing them a film where Mercutio is black and gay gave them absolutely no context. They were just stuck on, 'oh he's a drag queen' and they actually were like, 'he's the black one with the gun and I was like, one: not black; two: not gay; three: not a drag queen; four: no guns.

All: [laughs]

Handwritten annotations:

annotation as huge part of lessons.

Similarity to own exp — check this against F's #1

This isn't about grades but about making an impression.

Autonomy + SK.

TIME

Week wasted watching film of R+J.

SK + autonomy

authority [illegible]

Not seen as a 'text'

So plot familiarisation.

AND Context

So here, Ali seems to reveal a very LTD notion of Context — that is, = historical + this has a knowledge base, which needs to be learned.

PINK SHOULD BE ORANGE HERE

So, doesn't this relate completely to AO2 / Interpretation (?) and audience / director / interpretation.

> This is supposed to be a major point of appeal of Shakespeare...

Appendix N: initial organisation of coded data into themes and subthemes

1 Knowledge of literary Theory – GREEN

[from Robert#1] J: No, it's really, it's really interesting and that's actually, it's something that's emerging from the uh, something that I didn't anticipate emerging in, in the research that I'm doing is, ages ago I'd written some stuff about the disconnect between English degrees and what people teach in schools, and actually when, from talking to you guys, it's becoming much more of a focus of my thesis

Joe Barber
Sig for showing how interview responses shaped the thesis' focus
@mention or reply

a. Experiences of literary theory	A: Yeah. Ohh God. Honestly, I'm not even that old and it feels like years ago. Yeah, it was. I think it was literary theory and we had, like, a blue book that was like, full of all different literary theorists. A: God, so, I hated Roland Barthes and I found that, but only because I found it so difficult to understand. I think I didn't really start understanding critical theory until my masters like I've really struggled, especially with literature, because I thought, probably naively, that when I got to uni because I loved annotating and then I got there and I was like, Oh my God! I quite enjoyed Marxism and Freudian side of things that started to get brought in but It didn't mean I was necessarily good at connecting them, I just enjoyed reading about him and I enjoyed feminism, and I remember we did like something on modernism and that was like one of the critical theory things that we did but Just I enjoyed them, but I wasn't particularly good at connecting. But yeah, I wasn't very good at that for English literature, like I really struggled with that and that. A: Yeah, that was the hardest thing for me, but I absolutely hated Roland Barthes. So whenever you mentioned him in lecture I'm like, no!Yeah, I can't remember why, but I just know I hated him. J: Do you know what I think? Actually, the idea is quite simple but like but with a lot of those French theorists. The way it's written is not accessible. And when you factor in as well that it's already translated from French into English, that probably makes it even more difficult to access. A: It just made no sense to me, and then I'd just become disinterested in it because the teachers obviously didn't, you don't have that much contact time and then they didn't have the time to sit and explain it to you. So you just have to do it in your own time. And then I just gave up. A: Yeah, I used to do that. I used to annotate and find a bit I wanted to talk about and then find a theorist rather than find a theory and then find I would always get the theory to fit with what I was picking out rather than the other way around. I still do that. I think even if it's to disagree with it. J: You always start with the text then.	

22315 words English (United Kingdom) Accessibility: Good to go

4 Becoming an English Teacher ORANGE No Label • Last Modified: 17/06/2023

4 Becoming an English Teacher - ORANGE

a. Pedagogical orthodoxies on placement	A: I think from my second placement, though not to do with like undergrad or postgrad, I think from my second placement, the fact that they shove Rosenshine down my throat has influenced the way I teach because I do actually quite like some aspects of it and like we always have to do a starter, which is some kind of memory recall, but you can do it however you want to do it. So I do it in all sorts of different ways. Sometimes I do dual coding and put pictures up and be like what do these represent? And it'll be vocab that we've learned last week or something. So I think that side of it I have and then obviously the analysis side I have, but I don't know. I feel like I'm still just testing the waters, I don't really know. A: No, but mainly that's because again, the school I'm at most the English teachers were the ones that love Rosenshine, so they just talk about him and Jenny Webb a lot, so... J: Ah... A: Uh, it's one of the teachers. She absolutely loves Jenny Webb, so they love that. So they're more talk about the pedagogy rather than any type of literary theory? A: Yeah, well, when you come to observe [Stuart], his mentor is [name] and she is obsessed with Jenny Webb. so just maybe don't say that to her. A: Maybe there should be more talking about it especially, if you get in students like us because we have been exposed to a bit morel think, and otherwise you kind of shaped into what that school wants you to be. J: And, have you had any CPD whilst you've been on the PGCE that's influenced your lit teaching - the way that you do things. A: Yeah, I think I had one, well again, this one's all Rosenshine and but we had a CPD on behavior which was really interesting, but it wasn't, it wasn't literary or anything like that, but we had a behaviour one a few weeks ago. I found really interesting and I feel like that helped me because the school, I don't know, well, I know you know, whatever, ut the kids are... chaos is how I would describe them. Yeah, they are The behaviour is not great. So we had a CPD on behaviour and I found that that was really interesting. That was all SENCO and but it was like I don't know that they must have some partnership with something else. It was someone else's presentation that they had been sent to them, but that CPD really helped me because I was really struggling with how on earth to deal with the behaviour of year eight. So the CPD that the school offered, for me, really helped. That was more just generalized. It was nothing subject specific. J: So right, would you say the Rosenshine has affected the way you teach lit? A: Yeah. J: Can you say what? How? A: So Rosenshine because they, the school have CPD meetings all the time and it's mainly about Rosenshine and we have like a Rosenshine book that we have to like complete the booklet and sometimes I'll get picked up on that. I've not used the visualizer to live model something but then at the same time I'm like, but it's not relevant like I don't because they obviously want scaffolding and live modelling all the time. But if I just live model it to them all the time, the second I'm not there, they're not gonna have a clue. And so, I've been picked up on a couple of times and not using Rosenshine which, until they literally make me do it, I'm probably gonna continue to, but it's in my observations that I didn't do a lot of modelling, but then to me, the kids still do all the work. They produce a good piece of work. Every task that I've asked them to do some a bit like well, I'm just testing the waters. A: Yeah. So it's an interesting. It's interesting. It's an interesting school. The behaviour is really bad. They just pretend it's not, but they pretend it's not. They pretend it's not, and then we have a meeting and they're like, oh my God, the behaviour is awful. And I'm like,	

	yeah. But they are so heavy on Rosenshine and when they do their own observations with, like teachers across each other, it's all about seeing whether they're using it. A: It is quite, it is quite a lot on that, it's very embedded. Very, very much so and I basically had to beg to see if I could not do it for my SPA [PGCE assignment]. And then I had to do it for my subject assignment anyway so. S: I'd say at this point, less so because I'm still trying to grapple with the course itself and making sure that I'm delivering the curriculum	

Appendix O: second round of coding further to deciding to analyse data across data sets

Instructions for DA round 2, writing up themes across 4 data sets - 15/6/23

1. Read / annotate themes across 4 data sets to produce 4 chapters – by theme
2. Number sub-themes on table
3. Track where themes could be merged
4. C&P numbered sections on draft of each, cross-sets, theme
5. Write up each theme with sub-theme headings

THEME 1, all data sets

SubT No.	Uncertain relationships with Literary Theory CODES	SubT.
1.	Reticent to claim knowledge of LT as an UG	Studying literary theory as an undergraduate: hard to recall, hard to understand.
2.	Difficulty recalling knowledge of LT as an UG – challenging, time	
3.	How LT taught to them as UGs & its relationship to reading, analysis	
4.	Lecturers assumptions re knowledge of LT and moving between educational phases	~~Status and utility of literary theory as an undergraduate~~ ~~Learning about~~ conceptualising and using literary theory as an undergraduate
5.	LT more accessible when linked to material reality as an UG	
6.	LT as compulsory at university	
7.	Use of LT in final year dissertation	
8.	Recollections and conceptualisations of LT at uni	
9.	Using LT for literary analysis as an UG	
10.	Textual Theory or Critical Theory?	Could this be combined with AI / RRT (number 23 below)
11.	Theorists over theory	Specific theories / theorists
12.	Barthes' Death of the Author	
13.	LT and personal relevance – empathy & horizons	Literary theory as a means of reading the self and the world ~~realities out there~~ Literary theory and the self
14.	LT and personal identity, own experiences & contexts	
15. a	Theory as a lens for 'uncovering' othering and 'issues' conceptualisation of LT	Perceived uses of literary theory

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THEME 1, all data sets

SubT No.	Codes	SubT.
15b	Theory as epistemology rather than ontology	
16.	English teachers' use of LT in the secondary classroom (&visualisers)	The irrelevance of literary theory in the secondary school English lesson. This doesn't quite capture! LT instantiated in ~~practice?~~ Also, overlaps with 3;9 and 4; 2
17.	LT as an influence on pedagogy of the literature lesson	
18.	LT instantiation & English lit teaching outside of the secondary English classroom	
19.	Teacher-response theory and transmission theory (questioning &	

Appendix P: Excerpt of transcript of interview 1 with Christina's subject mentor, Steve

S: No, that that's a good question. And I was thinking about that because I did look at your, your, your, information before. The answer is maybe I did a little bit. And I I became a little bit preoccupied with, obsessed, really, I think with modernism and, you know, the kind of existential nihilism that goes with modernism, Fin de Siècle and all this idea about the beast within and all that stuff came a little.

J: Yeah, yeah, I did my dissertation on that, yeah, yeah, yeah.

S: Did you? Yeah. I became a little bit obsessed with that and that definitely coloured my, my, reading and also how I read it. Definitely. That's not quite with your own theory talking, but it is a filter, isn't it, I suppose.

J: Yeah, definitely, most certainly.

S: And, and, to some extent, I think it, I probably still do, but in more recent years, I've I'm also a, a, qualified mindfulness teacher. And yeah, I became interested in that probably about five years ago and went on to do the qualification as a teacher and so on so forth. And you know, you pick up quite a lot of theory of the mind with that. And so I've started, you know, I think steering towards psychoanalytical theory through, through, my involvement with mindfulness therapy. To be honest, you know, in the classic case in point of that is, is, *A Christmas Carol* you know which it really is, I tend to teach as an extended metaphor for the therapeutical therapeutic process of recovery.

J: That's fascinating. So I was actually just gonna say to you, so your, your knowledge and expertise in that area which, which is obviously a sort of theoretical model. It's got a theoretical basis to it; does that actually does inform the way you encourage pupils to think about ideas and what an author might be trying to tell them as readers possibly?

S: I think where, where, a text resonates with that knowledge, definitely. Yeah, you get that resonation [sic} it instantly and with *A Christmas Carol* definitely and also to some extent with the psychology of Macbeth as well. Yeah, yeah.

J: That's, that's, really interesting. And I'm gonna, just gonna go off piste a little bit with the question. So if so and because this is really, really, really great if then, as a teacher in 2022, you've got to teach - I know, I know, a lot of schools kind of take a fairly standard and uniform approach to delivering lessons and things like that. So you've got this expertise and knowledge around Psychology and the mind and value the importance of the individual mind. Do you ever find that there is any kind of conflict between the way that you teach or you feel you have to teach and your own kind of perspectives and feelings about the individual?

S: Could, could, you rephrase the question?

J: Yeah! Yeah, so, when I was listening to you talk and I was thinking, well, mindfulness is obviously about the individual's sense of awareness, I suppose. And the way in which we can respond to the world around us. So, if that's something that you yourself are knowledgeable about and you have a commitment to, when you teach English is it possible for that to come into the way you teach texts, particularly when we're talking about how we make meaning possible when we read? So, if we say what is *A Christmas Carol* about and we say that to a student, to a pupil or group of pupils, is it possible for you to bring that knowledge that you have about mindfulness and the mind into your teaching or do you have to kind of leave it at the door and say, no, I've got to do something different?

R: Yeah, I know. I bring it in. I bring it into my teaching, and I mean I bring it into not just decoding of text, but how to read in the exam and how to manage their mind in the exam? You know I do something with them that I call 'grounded reading' so they're actually, they're actually literally, primary school style following-the-text-with-their finger and sounding the words out inside their head and every

time they lose their concentration taking a breath and going back. And you know because in the exam when you've got that fight or flight thing going on, your mind spinning off to 1000 different other silly ideas that are completely unhelpful and irrelevant to what you're trying to do and you know, you're looking at the girl over there that's already started writing and what, why is she writing so much? What is she writing about? I've not even read the text, you know, and all of that stuff going on in your head - how to manage themselves in that situation. So, I use mindfulness and…