

The English Teacher's Handbook

A to Z

edited by

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CONTENTS

Introduction	1
A to Z	3
Appendices	
Notes on the Editors and Contributors	310
Film and Visual Media Terms	313
Professional Associations	319

Introduction

This book represents an attempt to capture a sense of the profound richness, scope and depth of English in education. It is not our intention to provide an exhaustive list of pedagogical strategies or literary terms, nor to cover in extensive detail the expansive range of theoretical principles and conceptual frameworks that have contributed to the evolution and development of English in education. Rather, the book offers teachers an accessible compilation of the major concepts, research, ideas, pedagogical approaches, historical movements, theories and debates that have informed and continue to inform teaching and learning in subject English. The entries selected are not intended to advocate any one particular point of view, theory, model or position. It is anticipated that the entries in this book will act as a springboard for teachers to investigate specific areas of interest more fully.

This book is being published at a time when English, as an academic discipline and as a school-based subject, is once again the focus of public scrutiny: the work of teachers and the experiences of students are regularly misrepresented or partially reported in the public domain. It is not uncommon, for example, for English to be reduced to a set of basic literacy skills or knowledge about a canon of literature. We believe it is therefore important to re-emphasise the intellectual, pedagogical and historical underpinnings and scope of the subject, and to identify the corpus of knowledge, concepts, processes and practices which will not only be helpful to pre-service and practising teachers, but will also reassert what is central to the subject and to teaching and learning in the subject in the 21st century.

We have deliberately included entries on the historical influences on the development of English in education. This is based on our firm belief that all practising teachers need to know and understand the roots of their professionalism and the accumulated wisdom that continues to shape their craft. As Reid observes, “Ours is a forgetful era, often oblivious to ways in which past cultural practices have shaped the foundations of much that we think and do.” (Reid, 2004: ix)

It is not enough to be ‘up to date’ with the latest classroom pedagogical strategy or the latest commercially produced resource. It is vital, as a profession, to understand where the ‘latest trend’ or school of thought is situated in the evolution of the subject. It is our belief that effective practice relies on a deep knowledge of the history of English in education; an ability to identify and articulate clearly the beliefs about English teaching which underpin classroom practice; an understanding of how learning occurs in diverse classrooms and other settings; and how these beliefs reflect (or do not reflect) the major principles and theories of the subject.

Subject English draws theoretically and pedagogically on other disciplines such as, for example, drama, visual art, music, film and media studies. Thus, a number of the entries and practical strategies highlight the continuities between English and these other fields. We believe that English is the “palace for thinking, imagining, creating, feeling, knowing and expressing” (de Bono, 1996:44). At its core is the commitment to students’ affective, creative, imaginative, intellectual, social and embodied learning and development. As teachers, we seek to begin where students are at, moving them forward to explore new horizons that are made possible and understood through authentic engagement with, enjoyment of and critical attention to language, literature and other texts. We believe that students are not merely ‘spectators’ but also ‘participants’ (Britton, 1975): actively ‘making and doing’; creating and critiquing; discovering and synthesising; and weighing up and evaluating the experience of others, and representations of this experience, in the light of students’ own growing and deepening understanding of themselves and the increasingly complex world they inhabit.

English is far more than a set of skills that can be transmitted or a body of knowledge that can be packaged and delivered in a one-size-fits-all model of curriculum. English does not merely educate students about the ‘what’ of knowledge, understanding, values and skills. Importantly, it strives to equip students with the ‘how’ of thinking and knowing, the ability to use language accurately and appropriately in a range of contexts and to reflect on and critique this language use. Such holistic

teaching and learning cannot be atomised into discrete elements, for every encounter with language – our own and others’ – draws on the senses, the intellect, the emotions and the spirit. Such endeavours support, inform and encourage students’ curiosity and their thirst for and right to meaningful learning. Such endeavours aim to develop in all students the desire and ability to engage with and understand the ways language works to shape the personal, imaginative, creative, intellectual, ethical, social, cultural and critical dimensions of human experience. It is through sustained immersion in language, literature and other texts that English attends to the greater questions of values, meaning and purpose in human experience. Through enlightened teaching, English education, as “the meeting point of experience, language and society” (Dixon, 1967) may build resilience, empathy, increased social awareness and a sense that attention to the inner life is at least as compelling and primal as attention to the outer life.

As with other well-established subjects, the specialised discourse/s of English in education reflects its complexity, uniqueness and intellectual, scholarly depth, as well as its ability to shift with corresponding developments in theory, research and pedagogy. This complexity and uniqueness can partially account for why English, as a discipline and school-based subject, is often misunderstood by the wider community and non-specialist commentators. Developments in the pedagogical practices of English teachers reflect advances in research and our understanding of how optimal learning occurs. But these developments may also at times reinforce the distance between what we do as educators and what the community understands about our work.

In publishing this book, we have drawn on the expertise, knowledge and scholarship of English teachers, researchers, other educators and specialists in the fields of drama, film and media. The entries contributed by these experts are identified throughout the book by way of initials at the end of the entry.

It is impossible to complete a publication such as this without reference to and recognition of seminal works with a similar purpose: in particular, Wayne Sawyer, Ken Watson and Anthony Adams’ *English Teaching from A to Z* (1989); JA Cuddon’s *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (1991); MH Abram’s *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (5th edn, 1985); C Hugh Holman’s *A Handbook to Literature* (1976); and Wayne Sawyer and Eva Gold’s *Re-viewing English in the 21st century* (2004). We are indebted to the scholarship evident in these books and acknowledge their importance in the development of this publication.

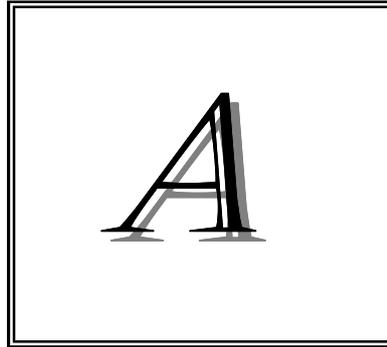
As editors, we have aimed for an informed eclecticism in the decisions about what to include and to omit in terms of theory and pedagogy. These decisions have been partly pragmatic due to the limitations of space, and partly based on the recognition from research evidence that this informed eclecticism distinguishes effective teaching and learning in English. For this reason, the range of practical strategies included here should be considered contextually, as part of the integrated approach to teaching, learning and progression in English 7-12 that is advocated in this book. We have sought to reflect the integrated nature of the subject by indicating related entries and further reading where appropriate. It should also be noted that the length of an individual entry is not intended to indicate the importance of that entry in relation to other entries.

Our purpose in publishing this book is to contribute to the continued professional development of teachers. It can be utilised as a reference; a resource; a stimulus for further reading and research; and a useful companion in day-to-day teaching.

It is almost inevitable, given the contested nature of English education, that aspects of this book may fuel further debate about what constitutes teaching and learning in secondary English. As editors, we welcome such informed, collegial debates and consider them as the lifeblood of informed professionalism.

Jacqueline Manuel and Don Carter
April, 2009

References: de Bono, E. (1996) *Serious Creativity*, NY: Harper Collins Publishers.
Dixon, J. (1967) *Growth Through English*, Huddersfield: OUP and NATE.
Reid, I. (2004) *Wordsworth and the formation of English Studies*, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing.



Abridgement (abridged version)

Refers to an adapted work that has been reduced and/or condensed from its original form. Novels are often abridged for production as audio texts. Novels written for an adult audience are regularly abridged for children and young adults. *Mao's Last Dancer* by Li Cunxin (2005), for instance, has been abridged for younger readers under the title *The Peasant Prince* (2007). William Shakespeare's (1564-1616) plays are abridged in a great range of other forms from comic strips to narratives. *Tales from Shakespeare* by Charles and Mary Lamb, illustrated by George Soper (London: Tiger Books, 1990) is an example of an abridged version of a number of Shakespeare's plays. JM

PRACTICAL STRATEGY

Utilise abridged versions of texts as a pre-reading or pre-viewing engagement activity. For example, use the graphic novel, *Macbeth* (Classical Comics, 2008). Remove the dialogue and/or speech bubbles from the visual text. Students work in small groups or pairs to interpret the graphic sequences and provide a succinct overview in prose of the storyline and descriptions of the main characters and key events. And/or, have students add brief captions and speech bubbles to the visual text. Comic versions of *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, are available with speech bubble text or no text (downloadable for classroom use at: www.classicalcomics.com/education/N_RJ_2009.pdf See sample page below, reproduced with permission). After sharing responses, provide the original images/comic strips to compare with students' versions. This is a pre-viewing/pre-reading activity that can clarify the plot and dialogue to enable access to the full Shakespearean text



Abstract

A succinct overview of a longer piece of writing (e.g. a thesis, article, or conference presentation). An abstract usually precedes the full text of a paper. Its purpose is to provide the reader with a succinct overview of the key focus, methodology and findings which are detailed in the full text. An abstract may typically range between 100 and 500 words and is used to index articles for research databases such as, for example ERIC (Education Resources Information Centre). Abstract (as an adjective) is also used to refer to language, experiences, ideas and concepts: for example, love, death, joy, sorrow, compassion and empathy. See also **Language**. JM

Accent

The stress placed on a syllable within a word or a word within a phrase. Stress patterns contribute to the rhythm of a text, particularly the rhythm of poetry and the sound of spoken language. Reading out aloud is the most effective way of building an awareness of the stress patterns in a text. Accent is also used to refer to the distinctive varieties of pronunciation that have developed over time according to geographical location, social conditions and contexts. Most places where English is spoken, for example, have accents that are particular to that country or geographical location (e.g. Australia, America, New Zealand, Ireland, England, Scotland). Within these broad country-based categories, there can be many variations on the 'standard' accent.

In the simplest sense, all speakers have an accent when their spoken language is compared to that of someone from another context or place. For example, an English accent can be further defined according to the district or region: Cockney (East London); Geordie (North Eastern England); Liverpudlian (Liverpool); or Mancunian (Manchester). Accents are not only associated with geographical regions: accents may also be associated with hierarchical judgements about socio-economic status, education, class, ethnicity and identity. Variations in accent can also be attributed to the speaker's conscious (or otherwise) adaptation to the context in which they are communicating.

When an accent operates in conjunction with distinctive grammatical patterns, sayings and word choice, it is referred to as a dialect. See also **Dialect, Metre, Register, Rhythm, Stress**. JM

PRACTICAL STRATEGY

Students can learn about stress, rhythm and sound, and the ways these operate in language to create mood, tone and meaning, by engaging in drama and oral performance. Select a poem or song that has a strong rhythm (for example, folk ballads, rap music). Students use their bodies and voices (feet, hands, clapping, pitch and loudness of voice etc) and if appropriate, musical instruments, to read/perform the poem/song with a focus on making the stress and rhythm prominent. Students may also transpose the original text into prose form, comparing the prose version with the original version. This activity can lead to an analysis of the effect of stress patterns on the meaning of a text.

Students work in pairs to collate a data bank of common acronyms used in digital and online communication (e.g. SMS, email, MSN), analysing when, where, how, why and by whom such acronyms are employed. JW

Acronym

An abbreviation made up of the first letters of a group of words. For example: ACT (Australian Capital Territory) and *STELLA* (*Standards for Teachers of English Language and Literacy*). Acronyms are employed for the purposes of brevity in written and oral language. In specialist disciplines and other contexts, such as, for example, science, education, business, technology and medicine, acronyms are part of the discourse. Understanding and using these acronyms require the specialist knowledge of the discipline or context and can therefore function as both an aid and an impediment to effective communication.

Acronyms are increasingly common in popular culture and everyday communication through media and digital technologies. Corporate advertising, for example, often relies on the use of an acronym in conjunction with a logo to 'brand' their products (for example, 'KFC'/Kentucky Fried Chicken; 'IGA'/Independent Grocers Alliance). Digital communication abounds with acronyms that are both adopted and created by users. The language of Short Message Service (SMS), email, and other online communications heavily depends on and is shaped by an abundance of acronyms. This enables users to communicate effectively with brevity and also enables groups of users to create and shape their own particular language. JM

Acrostic poem

A poem that is structured by using successive letters of a word to begin successive lines of a poem. The poem does not have to rhyme. An interactive tool which provides students with guided activities to compose and learn about acrostic poetry is available at:

<<http://www.readwritethink.org/MATERIALS/ACROSTIC/>>. JM

Act

A structural unit within a play. Within an act, there may be further divisions into scenes. An act usually contains action that is distinctive and thereby structured as a unit within the play, through the thematic focus, time sequences or character development. Scenes and acts are often marked by the exits and entrances of characters, changes in the set, lighting and mood, or the use of a device for closure such as a curtain. Some dramatists during the Elizabethan period adopted the five-act structure of the classical Greeks and Romans. From the 20th century on, experiments with form and structure have seen the conventional five-act play give way to three-act plays and plays that do not necessarily adhere to traditional divisions into acts and scenes. JH, JM

PRACTICAL STRATEGY

Students develop an understanding of the structure of a play by engaging in the following activities:

- ~ Complete a character grid that indicates when each character is present. The grid should contain spaces for each act and scene. Different coloured pens/pencils can be used for each character. This enables students to readily see which characters dominate particular acts and scenes.
- ~ Applying Freytag's pyramid, students can diagrammatically map the action of the play, deciding on which acts and scenes are the climactic points, and so on.

Example of a Character Grid for *Hamlet*

Character	Act 1	Act 2	Act 3	Act 4	Act 5
	Scenes	Scenes	Scenes	Scenes	Scenes
Hamlet					
Ophelia					
Gertrude					
Claudius					
Polonius					
Rosencrantz					
Guiltenstern					
The Ghost					
Laertes					
Horatio					
Marcellus					
Barnado					
Francisco					

Action and Adventure

A genre of fiction, film and computer gaming that includes a range of subgenres: for example, disaster, espionage, crime, thriller, survival, superhero, adventure comedy, swashbuckler, and military. In action and adventure texts, there is an emphasis on plot with fast-paced, continuously unfolding action. With the rise of the novel in the 19th century, adventure fiction became increasingly popular, and drew on the genre of the Medieval Romance. Typically, the story is set in a realistic environment with the action taking place across a number of locations.

The characters are often strong male heroes with exceptional physical, intellectual or other abilities that equip them to overcome adversity and confront life-threatening situations. The hero frequently meets a woman and there is a turn in the plot that separates them. The remainder of the adventure involves a movement towards their eventual reunion. There is often an emphasis on plot over intense character development in both action and adventure. These texts frequently include violence (sometimes graphic violence); intrigue; suspense; female love interests; cars; weapons; high technology devices; and military apparatus. Action and adventure films are extremely common and enduring in their popularity: many blockbuster Hollywood films of recent decades attest to the continuing appeal of this genre. Computer games and interactive fiction regularly draw on the conventions of action and adventure. See also **Fiction, Film, Genre**. JM

PRACTICAL
STRATEGY

Visit the Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com). Students survey the movies in the "Top Movies" list, identifying how many of these are action and adventure films. Compare the popularity of these films with films in other genres. Students select one or more action and adventure films that they are familiar with. In small groups, students write and submit a review to the IMDB site, using the models of online reviews provided on the site.

Action research

Research that is initiated and conducted by a teacher/s that focuses on improving pedagogy and educational outcomes for students. It is a powerful tool for self-evaluation and is an important component of reflective practice. It enables teachers to engage in problem-solving through identifying an issue and undertaking research within the classroom setting. Action research relies on a cyclical model of identifying a problem or issue to be researched, hypothesising, moment-to-moment data gathering, usually in a classroom or group of classrooms, interpretation of data, theorising and the application of findings in 'active curriculum' contexts. While the results of this method of research are not generalisable, the outcomes may significantly contribute to improved teaching practice and learning outcomes for students. Since action research is a teacher-driven activity, it is regarded as an effective professional development tool and problem-solving strategy. JM

Active and passive voice

When the *subject* of a sentence controls or performs the action identified by the *verb*, this is the *active voice*. For example:

At the conference Professor Smith will present her research on climate change.

The subject (Professor Smith), performs the action identified by the verb (will present). The subject is *active*.

When the passive voice is employed, the subject is acted upon. For example:

Research on climate change will be presented at the conference.

The active voice is the more naturalised mode for oral language and is promoted in writing that seeks to persuade, entertain and engage an audience through the use of a distinctive voice. In scientific writing, the passive voice is more common: the removal of active subjects (I, we, they) from the writing is designed to convey the impression that the information or conclusions presented are 'objective' rather than based on personal beliefs, attitudes or bias. The passive voice may also be adopted for rhetorical and persuasive purposes, where the composer deliberately seeks to understate or neutralise a subjective point of view for the purpose of making generalisable (and thereby apparently more authoritative) statements. Conversely, the passive voice may also be used to camouflage the import of a statement.

A writer can decide to use the passive voice in order to evade identifying specifically who or what should carry out the action. This can occur in, for example, bureaucratic and legal texts such as reports, policies and legislation. Language written and spoken in the active voice is generally more engaging and often more concise than that written in the passive voice. PB, JM

Film and Visual Media Terms

Term	Definition
Aerial shot	Camera shots of the ground area, landscape or earth filmed from any elevated position to show location or perspective: for example, shots from a helicopter, aeroplane, balloon, hang-glider or model aircraft. Cameras can be used hand-held or mounted to the airborne structure and operated by hand, activated automatically, or by a remote control device. KH
Camera angles	Refers to the position of the camera in relation to the subject being filmed. The angle from which the camera takes the shot has an important effect on what the viewers see and on the impact of the shot. The camera angle, or where the camera is placed, is important as it indicates point of view: ie from whose perspective we are seeing the action, such as the character, audience or director. The five basic camera angles are overhead, high angle, eye-level (or eye-line), low angle and undershot. KS
Camera movement	Used to help define and create meaning in shots. As the camera moves the way things appear in the shot changes and so different meanings can be created and different responses can be elicited from the audience. The main camera movements are zooming (in and out), tracking, panning and tilting. KS
Camera speed	The speed of the camera's movement can be used to create special effects, emphasise particular actions and enhance meaning. Slow or fast motion and the use of freeze-frames (a still image created by stopping the film in the middle of the action) are common variations on normal camera speed. KS
Close-up	A camera shot when only a part of an object or person is seen on screen or in the frame; usually a head, or head and shoulders only, shot. KS
Compositing	A term used to describe a variety of methods of digitally combining and layering multiple images and text to form a composite shot, which appears as a single image and gives the illusion that all the different elements used are in fact part of the same frame. Compositing is used extensively in film title sequences to create a complex visual shot where multiple images and written text coexist. KS
Composition	Composition is the control and placement of all the visual elements in a single frame of film. It refers to the deliberate arrangement and relationship of all the visual elements within a frame. Whereas the mise-en-scene of a shot encompasses all elements that are placed in the frame, the composition refers specifically to how they are placed: ie. the way the elements are positioned within the frame is the composition of the shot. The composition is also dependent upon the choice of lens and includes the camera angle and movement. KS
Crosscutting	An editing technique that allows the film to alternate between two different actions or scenes that are occurring at the same time but in different spaces. See also 'intercutting' and 'parallel editing'. KS
Cut	The basic device of editing film is a cut, which is the splicing together of two shots. It is the most direct and immediate editing device for introducing new screen information. One shot is followed immediately by a straight cut to another shot. A cut can be used to insert other relevant material into the film flow or maintain continuity of action. Between scenes or larger narrative units, called sequences, the cut can also mark a rapid transition between one time and space and another. A cut has both utilitarian and aesthetic value in film editing. A cut allows the use of different types of shots without disrupting the action. The use of cuts as transitions, rather than dissolves, fades or wipes, can affect the pace of the film. Some other common types of cuts are crosscuts, cutaways, jump cuts and J and L-cuts. KS
Cutaway	As the name implies, a shot that does not focus on some detail of the shot before or after it but cuts away from the action at hand. It is a single shot inserted into a sequence of shots that momentarily interrupts the flow of action, usually introducing a pertinent detail. It is the interruption of a continuously filmed action by inserting a view of something else. It is usually followed by a cutback to the first shot. The most effective cutaways are those that have some logic to them, are related directly to the scene. It may be, for example, a shot of an object that generally informs or reminds the audience of something it needs to know such as the clock ticking down on the bomb hidden beneath a car or the train that is rapidly approaching the station. KS
Deep focus	A style of cinematography that uses both wide angle and small lens apertures to keep objects in the extreme background and foreground simultaneously focused. KS
Depth of field	Refers to the amount of space in front of and behind a subject that is in focus in the shot. With a shallow depth of field the subject is on a blurry background. A long depth of field allows for many subjects at different distances to be in focus. KS