**Assessment 1**

**Introduction**

The subject of English has evolved a lot over the decades with our understandings of how students learn best, the content they should be taught and the most effective teaching pedagogies developing with both societal and technological advancements (Macken-Horarik, 2014 & Sturk & Lindgren, 2019). Older approaches to teaching have been adapted to be more dynamic whilst new methods now co-exist alongside and expand on them (Lowien, 2022). The development of a national curriculum in Australia organising English into three strands of; language, literature and literacy has provided opportunity for more robust discussion on how the subject can be taught in a way that is most beneficial to students both inside and outside of the classroom (Macken-Horarik, 2014 & Jones & Chen, 2016). This essay discusses how there is not one perfect approach to teaching all strands of English and that teachers need to draw from a repertoire of pedagogical approaches to navigate the subject and inform their practice (Lowien, 2022). With a focus on how these fit into the Year 5/6 Australian curriculum the main pedagogies discussed are known as didactic, authentic, functional and critical (Lowien, 2022).

**English Curriculum**

In recent decades, fast technological and societal changes have changed the way we communicate created the need for a more dynamic and multiliterate approach to educational practices (Mård & Hilli, 2022 & Daffern & Mackenzie, 2020). An abundance of information and the complex problems within the global world requires schools to educate their students with a broad set of knowledge and skills in order to become an active participant and navigate it (Mård & Hilli, 2022). The English curriculum today is inclusive of a variety of fields and disciplines, including culture, media, communication, linguistics, visuality as well as literary studies (Dixon, 2012). Upper primary years within the Australian Curriculum builds on and consolidates concepts, skills and understandings developed in the early years (Lowien, 2022). Together, the strands focus on developing students’ knowledge, understanding and skills in listening, reading, viewing, speaking, writing and creating (ACARA, 2022). In these later primary years teachers are required to provide purposeful instruction in how modality can influence meaning making in texts (Woods, Comber & Iyer, 2015). No single method of literacy instruction will meet the needs of all children all the time meaning teachers need to be able to draw on a range of pedagogy to modify their practice (Lowien, 2022). An effective literacy program should use the combination of both teacher-directed instruction and student-centred activities taking a holistic approach across multiple pedagogies (Frey et al, 2005 & Lowien, 2022).

**Didactic**

Didactic instruction is one of the oldest pedagogies, used as one of the beginning methods of teaching large groups English when it first became compulsory. This involves ‘teacher led’ instruction where the teacher is central to the class to achieving a specific outcome or understanding (Daffern & Mackenzie, 2020). This approach has developed and changed a lot over time to become more dynamic and referred more often as explicit instruction in classrooms today (Aljanahi & Alsheikh, 2020). This approach has faced a lot of criticism for being too rigid, unengaging or focusing too much on rules therefore not creating independent, critically thinking learners which may be the case for some traditional methods of didactic instruction (Didau, 2014 & Alenezi, 2019). In the best examples of didactic instruction, the lesson is an interactive, two-way process that involves modelling, questioning and actively engages the pupils in learning (Didau, 2014). Teacher-centred, whole class lessons can set the student up for success in their reading or writing tasks but do rely heavily on the teacher’s subject matter and pedagogic knowledge for effectiveness (Jones & Chen, 2012). The curriculum indicates a conscious and well-articulated understanding about language will influence a student’s English competences (Jones & Chen, 2012). Explicit teaching is an important part of setting students up for success in making intentions transparent, giving demonstration and feedback followed by guidance and checking for understanding so they can go on to apply the skills (Didau, 2014). Didactic teaching should introduce new concepts giving the student clear, memorable and relevant information followed by scaffolding the skills to allow the students to work towards independent practice (Brevik, 2019 & Didau, 2014). An example of the Year 5/6 Australian curriculum where this style of teaching becomes best applicable is in grammatical knowledge such as understanding the use of phonics, pronunciation, and spelling in less familiar words (ACARA, 2022). Students will better understand concepts of grammar to enhancing meaning making and writing improving their literacy development overall (Jones & Chen, 2012). To develop proficiency, students need effective explicit instruction and modelling followed by support (Daffern & Mackenzie, 2020).

**Authentic**

Authentic literacy pedagogy focuses less on the formalities, rules and conventions of English and instead centred around the learner and understanding how the social, cultural and historical backgrounds influence them and their understanding (Aljanahi & Alsheikh, 2020). This provides space for self-expression and the development of connections between school and the outside world (Barnes & Coffey, 2021). Authentic pedagogy is based on theories that children will construct knowledge best through real-life meaningful interactions and therefore learning should be authentic, manageable, and rewarding for them (Lennox, 2012 & Budd, 2019). This student-centred approach allows students to make connections between their experiences and those of others by sharing information about the similarities and differences (Budd, 2019). A diverse lens on literacy allows learners to leverage off their own interests, abilities and creative tendencies (Aljanahi & Alsheikh, 2020). The teacher’s role is to ensure the pathways are purposeful and provide instruction and support, so learners make and recognise significant achievements (Lennox, 2012 & Budd, 2019). The teacher has the opportunity to notice and respond to particular children needing extra help, extend the learning of those who need it and make useful judgments against curriculum outcomes (Lennox, 2012). In the curriculum for year 5/6 students are required to write various texts and create characters and settings from their own experience (ACARA, 2018). By allowing students to have agency in choosing their own topics or readings the literacy activities to become more meaningful and relevant to actual lived experiences, getting students thinking on a deeper level and exploring their own actions and beliefs (Morley & Jamil, 2021). This approach is less about a static set of skills and instead fuelling creativity, initiative and innovation for a purpose or audience beyond the classroom (Aljanahi & Alsheikh, 2020 & Barnes & Coffey, 2021). Students will view their intended audiences differently but should be encouraged to write as much as possible without demanding precision or finality (Barnes & Coffey, 2021 & Daffern & Mackenzie, 2020).

**Functional**

Functional pedagogy focuses on the genre of different texts and teaching the structures and organising forces of these rather than isolated vocabulary (Brisk, 2020). Students focus on understanding language text patterns, when they are appropriate for different contexts and what messages they convey in order to make meaning (Fenwick & Herrington, 2022). The Australian Curriculum is conducive to this pedagogy with a selection of relevant genres or text types in the preface each year (Derewianka, 2012). In years 5/6 students must understand how texts vary in purpose, structure and topic as well as the organisation of specific texts in order to interpret and create them (ACARA, 2022). The approach is teacher centred with explicit instruction used to first deconstruct the model of the target genre, explaining purpose and drawing attention to the linguistic features (Lo & Jeong, 2018). Discussion around these language features, showing samples and giving context sets the student up to be able to first co-create a model text with the teacher’s assistance before individually constructing their own (Fenwick & Herrington, 2022 & Dixon, 2012). Understanding these patterns of vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure and discourse can help students to communicate in a variety of different ways with various meanings (Martin, 2009). The key learnings help with other cross-curriculum areas such as understanding the reports and procedural texts in Science (Brisk, 2020 & Daffern & Mackenzie, 2020). As students move into the upper primary school years and beyond, the content knowledge demands of each discipline increase meaning knowledge of particular text types can be beneficial across all areas of learning (Daffern & Mackenzie, 2020).

**Critical Literacies**

Critical pedagogy is one of the most modern styles of teaching English that has emerged from the idea that schools are a hegemonic institution that can help shape students understanding of their place in the world (Whatley et al, 2020 & Hurst, 2013). Students are taught to be able to critically evaluate texts and respond with an understanding of the nuances in power and social structures (Whatley et al, 2020). Within the year 5/6 curriculum students are required to be able to examine literature to recognise different viewpoints and how those effect interpretations and responses (ACARA, 2018). Students are also required to be able to convey understandings of social, cultural and historical contexts within texts which is a major part of teaching in a critical way (ACARA, 2018). As teachers aim to meet all of the Australian Curriculum demands there is, however, a practical challenge in implementing these lessons that are truly reflective of histories, cultures and experiences as intended (Lowe & Galstaun, 2020). Critical pedagogy should support reading, understanding and interpreting events and issues in contexts beyond school and draw attention to the stories or perspectives that have historically been untold or silenced (Whatley et al, 2020 & Hurst, 2013 & Hurst, 2013). As well as the heavy curriculum content load to get through, a lack of resources amongst overcrowded classrooms and the sensitive nature of some topics can be a challenge for teachers (Quintero & Molina, 2021 & Morley & Jamil, 2021). The concept of accountability in classrooms through various mass testing regimes such as NAPLAN and PISA, teaching to the test can take priority of nuanced discussions about social justices and human rights (Reynolds, R., Macqueen, S. & Ferguson-Patrick, 2020). Despite the challenges of applying this approach to teaching English it is imperative primary school students can be active participants in their world and can critically assess the information they consume (Reynolds, R., Macqueen, S. & Ferguson-Patrick, 2020). Being enabled to think critically allows students to influence their own motives and biases understanding the broader world context and their place within it (Whatley et al, 2020 & Morley & Jamil, 2021). Texts can have multiple meanings and language can be used to serve unequal distributions of power across societies (Daffern & Mackenzie, 2020 & Whatley et al, 2020). Students are required to discuss whose voices and viewpoints are included in certain texts and how this might change when told from a different perspective (Hurst, 2013). This awareness is important in developing an understanding of minority and dominant ways of using language, images and text and implications of how our thoughts and practices are influenced by societal systems (Hurst, 2013 & (Woods, Comber & Iyer, 2015). This approach can be applied across the curriculum with holistic academic skills that extend beyond school as students become democratic citizens of society (Whatley et al, 2020 & Reynolds, R., Macqueen, S. & Ferguson-Patrick, 2020).

**Conclusion**

English is not a static never-changing construct based singly around books and print (Carroll, 2013 & Daffern & Mackenzie, 2020). In effective teaching of English, teachers should be constantly reviewing ways of thinking and pedagogical practice to keep up with an evolving world (Waugh & Jolliffe, 2013). Having a broad selection of teaching and organisational approaches helps to get the most out of students when teaching content in the different strands of the English curriculum (Waugh & Jolliffe, 2013). A dynamic approach in lessons will produce better educational outcomes cater for more individual differences in students (Daffern & Mackenzie, 2020). Recognising that drawing strengths from the four different pedagogies’ above for promoting certain curriculum content outcomes will enrich learning outcomes (Waugh & Jolliffe, 2013 & Macken-Horarik, 2014). There will be times where a more teacher-centred directive style approach is appropriate in scaffolding skills and developing understanding whilst student-centred approaches can engage a deeper level of engagement and critical thinking skills promoting autonomy (Waugh & Jolliffe, 2013).

**References:**