Ways of Seeing*:
The positioning of the visual in subject English curricula, 2000 – 2017

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*Ways of Seeing is a 1972 television series co-created and presented by John Berger. It was adapted into a book of the same name.
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ABSTRACT

The proliferation of visual texts in the lives of young people since the turn of the twenty-first century has created new opportunities and demands for curriculum developers. Since 2000, subject English curricula in Australia have acknowledged the importance of students’ engagement with visual texts, yet systematic approaches to the positioning of viewing and the visual in curriculum documents are not always evident. With the inclusion of less traditional texts such as graphic novels in the senior English text lists in recent years (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2014), the explicit addressing of the visual from the early to the final years of compulsory schooling has become crucial. This thesis presents analyses of four mandated curriculum iterations in the Australian state of Victoria from 2000 to 2017 focusing on the positioning of the visual in subject English. In revealing these positionings, some of the understandings about what subject English in the twenty-first century is, and should do, are interrogated. Aspects of Gee’s Building Tasks of Language (2010, 2011, 2014) have been drawn on to frame this analysis. Theoretical frameworks linked to subject English and literacy pedagogy have also been used to identify and analyse the positioning of the visual in subject English, and in turn, to posit aspects of what constitutes ‘English’ in the selected curricula.
Declaration

This is to certify that:

i. this thesis comprises only my original work except where indicated;

ii. due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used;

iii. this thesis is less than the maximum word limit in length, exclusive of tables, figures, the reference list and appendices.

Catherine Reid
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List of Abbreviations

AATE  Australian Association for the Teaching of English
ACARA  Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority
AIM  Achievement Improvement Monitor
AusVELS  Australian Curriculum – Victorian Essential Learning Standards
CDA  Critical Discourse Analysis
CSF  Curriculum and Standards Framework
CSF II  Curriculum and Standards Framework II
DEEWR  Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DEST  Department of Education and Training
F – 10  Foundation Level to Level 10
KLAs  Key Learning Areas
LA  Language strand code in the AusVELS and The Victorian Curriculum
LT  Literature strand code in the AusVELS and The Victorian Curriculum
LY  Literacy strand code in the AusVELS and The Victorian Curriculum
MCEETYA  Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
NAPLAN  National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
NGV  National Gallery of Victoria (Australia
P – 12  Preparatory (prep) to Year 12
PISA  Program for International Student Assessment
SFL  Systemic Functional Linguistics
VATE  Victorian Association for the Teaching of English
VBoS  Victorian Board of Studies
VCAA  Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
VCE  Victorian Certificate of Education
VELS  Victorian Essential Learning Standards
CHAPTER ONE
FRAMING THE RESEARCH

Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognises before it can speak. But there is another sense in which seeing comes before words. It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world (Berger, 1972, p.7).

Introduction

The quotation from John Berger encapsulates some of the concepts important to this research, particularly in relation to the opportunities that engagement with viewing and the visual can provide. My own experience of viewing and the visual has played a large role in establishing my personal and professional worlds.

This thesis has evolved from a lifelong interest in encountering, appreciating, interpreting and analysing visual texts. As an educator in the field of English, my research endeavours to uncover the ways in which encounters with the visual are positioned within recent iterations of Australian curricula, specifically for subject English, with a view to proposing that they are crucial aspects of learning: for developing visual literacy and critical evaluation skills; for building knowledge about the range of contexts in which the texts were produced; and importantly, for providing opportunities for students to respond to and value the texts personally and aesthetically. Furthermore, as the research is focused on the positioning of the visual in English curricula in the twenty-first century, it also touches on questions about the purpose of subject English, what it should comprise, and how contemporary definitions of ‘text’, ‘literacies’, ‘language’, and literature’ incorporate the visual and multimodal.

My own experience as an educator has obviously influenced my choice of research focus. As an Arts graduate with a major in Art History, integrating visual texts into my teaching of both English and History has been natural; however, it is in my role as a teacher educator working with experienced and pre-service teachers that I have seen the need for professional
development, resources and systematic curriculum guidelines in relation to the visual. I view this research as contributing to this development firstly through the identification of the representation and positioning of the visual in English curricula, and secondly, by drawing on my analysis to make conclusions and recommendations relevant to future curriculum design, professional development for teachers and research.

**Background**

*The Bayeux Tapestry* (Figure 1) provided the basis for one of my first lessons as a secondary teacher. This lesson juxtaposed interests I had fostered since a young age: the study of the distant past; a fascination with visual representation; and the interplay between visual and verbal communication modes. Particular aspects of the tapestry draw me in: it is an extraordinary primary source providing rich details about Norman and British naval, military and regal life a millennium ago, but probably even more than this, my response to this work was and is strongly aesthetic. I love its depiction of angular figures and their suits of chain mail, its borders of birds and beasts, and the almost cinematic chronology of scenes. Significantly, the use of this rich visual resource with junior secondary students provided them with a door into a remote historical context.

![Figure 1: Panel from *The Bayeux Tapestry*. 11th century. Bayeux Museum, Normandy, France. Embroidered wool on linen cloth. 70 m x 50 m.](image)

A decade after my classroom encounters with *The Bayeux Tapestry*, I undertook study of the sixteenth-century witch-hunts in Germany. One particular image from this context had an immediate and profound impact on me. This was *The Witches’ Sabbath* (Figure 2) by Hans Baldung Grien (1510). Subsequently, I have used this image many times in my tertiary teaching: as a primary source within a study of propaganda; as a stimulus for pre-service
teachers to consider the different definitions and layers of literacy; and to encourage critical literacy skills by comparing the image with other representations of women and witches in more contemporary contexts. The *Witches’ Sabbath* is a complex image and many of its components are not fully identifiable by twenty-first century post-graduate students, despite their finely honed ‘traditional’ literacy skills and wide-ranging knowledge, expertise and experience. Given the context of the image’s original production and dissemination, my students sometimes marvel at how visually literate the intended audience, illiterate (in the traditional sense) villagers in sixteenth century Germany, must have been.

![Image of The Witches' Sabbath](image)

*Figure 2: The Witches' Sabbath, Hans Bauldung Grien, 1510. Woodcut with tone block, 379 x 260 mm Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg*

Many years prior to my teaching experiences, I was provided with opportunities to engage with the visual from the ‘surrounding world’ and worlds beyond my own. Our Sunday afternoon family excursions included semi-regular visits to the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV). One artefact stood out for me as a child: that of the *Avalokiteshvara* (Figure 3). While I didn’t know the work’s title and wouldn’t have been able to pronounce it if I had, my emotional response to this gilt-bronze statue of the many armed goddess has had a
A profound effect on me every time I have viewed it. My initial response was a mixture of fascination, curiosity and fear.

Figure 3: Avalokiteshvara 17th century-18th century (Tibeto-Chinese)
Gilt-bronze, semi-precious stone, pigment. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia.

More recently, I revisited the Avalokiteshvara in preparation for a gallery-based seminar I ran for pre-service teachers and secondary school students. I had not seen the piece for several years in person, but on being asked to select a particular exhibit from the NGV on which to focus for a cross-disciplinary visual literacy session, I had no hesitation in choosing it. Part of this may have been my curiosity as to how others (both children and adults) would respond to it on first viewing. During my preparation visit, a gallery education officer was conducting a discussion session with young children who looked to be about Year 1 students - six to seven years old. Their observations about the Avalokiteshvara’s singular appearance were sophisticated, and through these responses the educator was able to introduce the young students to terms such as ‘symmetry’. Clearly, the artefact and the students’ responses to it were the foundation of their initiation into discourse and concepts across a number of disciplines.
My own session the following day commenced with asking both the secondary students and their pre-service teacher partners to give immediate responses to the room in which the Avalokiteshvara is located, and to contrast these responses with the reactions they felt in other NGV spaces. The participants were then asked to note down their initial responses to the work. One notable response from a student was ‘It’s scary!’ In adult-student pairs, participants then noted all the details they could see in the work, to try to make meaning from these aspects, and then devise a ‘reading’ of the work to share with other participants. The group represented a number of disciplines across the curriculum; hence responses ranged from the mathematical to the historical to the philosophical and the creative, just as I had hoped. The purpose of the excursion was to foster the use of artworks to encourage literacy practices, but also, as in the session I had observed the day before, to demonstrate how visual encounters can be utilised across the curriculum. Another important focus was how immediate and personal response provides the foundation for a range of learning activities and levels of thinking.

Acknowledging the visual in curricula and subject English

Images have provided resources for teaching and learning since pre-history. Indigenous Australian cave and rock paintings have told stories of creation, use of the land, and cultural beliefs for tens of thousands of years. In medieval and early modern societies, prior to the widespread dissemination of print texts, the didactic power of the image, and the ability to interpret religious iconography and other visual representations, were crucial (Millum, 2009, p.37), especially within communities in which most of the population was ‘illiterate’. Parallels can be drawn between these examples and the significance of the visual in the twenty-first century, as visual texts in the lives of learners again proliferate.

This proliferation has stimulated some research into how these texts and students’ engagement with them may be incorporated effectively into the curriculum. A globalised world in which communications are increasingly cross-cultural and multimodal has resulted in the broadening of traditional definitions of literacy and the conceptualisation of multiliteracies since the end of the twentieth century (New London Group, 1996). A subsequent need has arisen for curriculum and pedagogy that provide students with
support and skill development in their negotiation and interpretation of visual and multimodal texts (Cazden, Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Kress, 2003; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996). Advocates of the inclusion of visual and multimodal texts in the curriculum have also argued that engagement with these text types fosters students’ discernment and ability to critique (New London Group, 1996) and provides access to the ‘layering of information in the real world’, while engagement with and subsequent creation of visual texts allow students to read, respond, analyse, organise, and represent their learning through the development of literal comprehension, identification and spatial skills (Seglem & Witte, 2009, p.217). Furthermore, for most children, involvement with and development of multimodal textual practices commences prior to school age (Unsworth, 2001), so their engagement with these practices should be acknowledged and supported through the primary and into the secondary school years.

Research into the inclusion of visual literacy practice has developed significantly since the mid-1990s, following the development of multimodalities theory (New London Group, 1996). More recent studies have examined visual literacy across school subjects, with a growth in research concerning the particular ‘literacies’ linked to digital technologies (Spalter & van Dam, 2008; Unsworth, 2001). These studies emphasise the skills of critical evaluation and the development of abilities to create visual communications in relation to digital materials including 3D, 2D, static and moving images (Spalter & van Dam, 2008, p. 94). Many of the abovementioned studies focus on the notion of ‘visual grammar’ (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996), and do not fully address the affective domain and the fostering of students’ aesthetic responses to visual texts (Benoit, 2016). My research acknowledges the positionings of the visual within curricula, but also aims to reveal the omissions and inconsistencies evident in the positioning of the visual in subject English.

The curriculum documents selected for this research span the first seventeen years of the twenty-first century. This period is significant to subject English, as it is during this timespan that texts comprising visual elements have been explicitly included in mandated curricula and text lists; one non-print text (usually a film) is mandatory in each year of the secondary curriculum in most Australian states. The recent inclusion of the graphic novel, The Complete Maus (Spiegelman, 2003) on the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE)
English text list (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), 2014) ratifies the importance and credibility of visual and multimodal texts and literacies as literary texts, but they require different kinds of reading compared with more traditional texts (Beavis, 2013). Furthermore, in the past several years, the final written examination in VCE English has required students to ‘analyse [the] ways in which language and visual features are used to present a point of view’ in a range of presented texts (VCAA, 2010). The VCE Examiners’ Report on the 2012 examination advises that students are required to ‘analyse visuals instead of simply describing them’ (VCAA, 2012), thus calling on both students and teachers to develop specific skills related to viewing and visual texts. One of the aims of this research is the investigation into whether the English curriculum (particularly prior to VCE) provides opportunities and support for students and teachers to develop the ‘different kinds of reading’ Beavis suggests.

Despite these developments in subject English, some conservative educators, politicians and commentators have labelled recent iterations of English curricula in Australia as ‘dumbed down’, ‘leftist’, and lacking rigour due to the inclusion of non-canonical texts in text lists and the ‘critical literacy’ approach evident in curriculum iterations in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Donnelly, 2017), thus prolonging the ‘literacy wars’ (Lobascher, 2011; Masters, 2009; Mills, 2008; Snyder, 2008). Furthermore, high-stakes testing in Australia, such as the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) first implemented in 2008, has positioned traditional reading, writing and spelling as the ‘valued’ literacy practices (Fehring & Nyland, 2012, p. 10), in effect marginalising other ‘newer’ literacy practices. In turn, developments such as these have impact on the production and enactment of English curriculum, the danger being that the curriculum becomes ‘narrowed’ as it aligns with the content being tested (Lobascher, 2011, p.12) and fails to address valuable opportunities for learning, such as those afforded by engagement with the visual.

As should be apparent by now, I welcome the inclusion of a range of texts and approaches in English and across the curriculum. If the visual and multimodal are to be represented in English curricula, their inclusions need to be more than tokenistic. The overarching purpose of my research has been to evaluate the extent to which the positioning of the visual in mandated subject English curricula in the Australian state of Victoria from 2000 to 2017 is
systematic, deliberate and meaningful and linked to specific learning and teaching objectives and practices. It has also sought to reveal the extent to which curriculum structures provide specific support and guidance for teachers (and students) outside the Arts domain, and thus not likely to be trained in the visual field. The conclusions drawn and recommendations arising from this research provide impetus for the revisiting of curriculum structures and content, the facilitation of professional development, and the reviewing of pedagogy and curriculum enactment.

**Research questions**

The overarching question this research investigates is:

- How is the visual positioned in Australian curriculum documents in subject English?

In researching this question, the following sub-questions have been addressed:

- Are there gaps and inconsistencies in the ways in which the visual is represented?
- Is curriculum associated with the visual structured cumulatively?
- Is a pedagogical or theoretical model evident in the positioning of the visual in the selected curricula?
- How have representations of the visual evolved in curriculum iterations?
- What are the implications of the findings from the above questions, for visual learning, and for subject English?

This research draws on Gee’s *Building Tasks of Language* (2010, 2011, 2014) which are explored more fully in Chapter Three. In order to address the research questions, I have appropriated Gee’s *Building Tasks*, particularly *significance, activities (or practices), identities, connections and sign systems and knowledge* in order to reveal the ways in which visual learning is construed, specifically within the field of subject English. Gee discusses *discourse* as a ‘characteristic way of using language in a particular context’ (Gee, 2010, p. 47) and ‘embedded in social institutions’ (p.52). Curriculum documents represent a particular type of discourse, with their own conventions and *situated identities*, and thus their meaning is constructed in particular ways by their users. In the case of this research, the intended users
of the documents selected for this research are teachers of English, a discourse community connoting particular types of practices and identities.

In addition to drawing on Gee’s *Building Tasks of Language* (2010, 2011, 2014), I have analysed the selected curriculum documents with reference to aspects of significant literacy theoretical and pedagogical models of the past two decades. These include various iterations of Luke and Freebody’s *Four Resources Model* (1999), and the theory and pedagogy derived from the *Multiliteracies* manifesto (New London Group, 1996). Analysis of the sequencing of references to the visual in the selected curricula’s levels has been influenced by models including *Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy* (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

Mapping across curriculum iterations has enabled evaluation of the extent to which conceptualisations of visual learning have evolved in the past two decades. Based on these findings, recommendations are presented that advocate the implementation of specific pedagogical practices and curriculum guidelines linked to the visual.

**Nomenclature and visual learning**

It is worth differentiating between terms used in educational research, policy and settings when describing the ‘visual’ as a means to position my own research. *Visual literacy* is understood to have been originally conceptualised by Debes (1969) as the development of vision competencies that integrate with other sensory experiences to interpret and communicate through actions, objects and symbols. Debe’s *The Loom of Visual Literacy* (1970) drew on the work of Turbayne (1969, 1970) that explored the ‘syntax of visual language’ (1970, p. 24), thus aligning visual and verbal languages. Turbayne’s work also argued that ‘seeing’ can be taught (1970, p.125), thus providing a rationale for explicit pedagogy for the use of visual texts. Later work by Hortin (1982) emphasised the eclectic nature of the visual literacy field that encompasses linguistics, art, psychology and philosophy, with each discipline using different definitions of the term. Hortin’s interest was primarily associated with ‘visual thinking’, and Braden and Hortin defined visual literacy as the ability to understand, use and express oneself in terms of images (Braden & Hortin, 1982, p.169), suggesting a broader scope than the visual sequencing, syntax and grammar suggested by Debe and Turbayne. The work of Clark Baca also highlighted limitations in earlier
definitions that failed to address fields of design, creativity and aesthetics as they relate to the visual (Clark Baca, 1990, p.65). The New London Group, including Luke, Gee and Kress, conceptualised visual literacy as one of the multiliteracies required to interpret and understand the diverse range of texts in the globalised contemporary society. In this context ‘visual literacy’ implies integration and interconnection between verbal literacies and meaning-making from visual and multimodal representations (New London Group, 1996). Also at the end of the twentieth century, Avgerinou and Ericson discussed the communication ‘purposes’ of visual literacy such as thinking, learning and constructing meaning, and like Clark Baca, they highlighted the importance of ‘creative expression [and] aesthetic enjoyment’ (Avgerinou & Ericson, 1997, p. 284). This thesis draws on elements of all of these conceptualisations; however, the limitation of transplanting (or imposing) verbal and linguistic frameworks and pedagogical approaches on students’ (and teachers’) engagement with the visual has become a significant thread in this research.

An attempt to create new terminology that both advocates the importance of visual education and positions it as distinct from verbal ‘literacy’ is seen in First We See: The National Review of Visual Education (Davis, 2008). More than a decade after the conceptualisation of multiliteracies, this report was jointly released by the Australia Council for the Arts and the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), and resulted from a two-year review of Australia’s visual education. The review examined existing programs and good practice from across the education system and recommended a framework for the future of visual education. The report coined the term visuacy, defined as ‘the ability to create, process, critique and appreciate the spectrum of visual phenomena in the individual’s external and internal environment’ (Davis, 2008, p.11), and recommended the development of a visual education curriculum for the compulsory years of schooling with educational outcomes complementary to literacy and numeracy outcomes; hence the term visuacy. Davis argued that prior attempts to position the visual within Australian curricula relied too heavily on verbal and linguistic terminology and frameworks, and that the focus on deconstructing the ‘grammar’ of visual texts is limiting and does not acknowledge the importance of the aesthetic response.
While visual literacy is a term that is generally well-accepted and understood, it does have limitations and relies on an appropriation of linguistic schema that does not fully encompass its potential as an area for learning. Acknowledging these limitations, the terms ‘visual learning’ and ‘visual education’ are also used in this thesis.

**Parameters of the research**

Until the development of an Australian national curriculum in 2011 (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2011) curriculum documents in Australia were developed, generated and implemented at state level (Yates, Collins & O’Connor, 2011). Despite the development of the national curriculum, each state remains the constitutional source of action on schooling curriculum frameworks. My research investigates the positioning of the visual in official curriculum documents published and disseminated in the Australian state of Victoria since 2000. These documents are: the *Curriculum and Standards Framework II (CSF II)* (Victorian Board of Studies (VBoS), 2000); the *Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS)* (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), 2006, 2007, 2008) the *AusVELS* (VCAA, 2013, 2015, 2016), a hybrid of the VELS and the national *Australian Curriculum* (ACARA, 2011); and *The Victorian Curriculum* (VCAA, 2017). The focus of this research is the analysis of curricula for subject English, comprising both primary and secondary school curricula.

This research acknowledges that most curriculum documents provide ‘teachers with information about what to teach but not how to teach’ (Moni, 2012, p. 15), and is based on the premise that the selected curricula are not intended as full syllabi but as overarching and reasonably detailed frameworks. The documents analysed are not posited as the entirety of what teachers draw on, nor of everything that occurs in the classroom, but that they indicate what is prioritised as important for the teaching in these areas, and they alert teachers and schools as to what needs to be taken into account in planning, teaching and assessment and reporting.
Structure of the thesis

Chapter One has provided the rationale for and background to this research into the positioning of the visual in subject English in the twenty-first century. Given that this thesis is based on curriculum research, Chapter Two initially explores definitions of curriculum at a broad level in relevant research literature and scholarship. The chapter then moves to examining arguments associated with the place of the visual in curricula and teaching and learning across the disciplines, and in relation to conceptualisations of subject English and ‘literacies’ that have emerged in the past two decades, thus locating my research within the field. The methodological approaches to the research are discussed in Chapter Three. Most significant of these is the framing of the research analysis by Gee’s *Building Tasks of Language* (2010, 2011, 2014). Chapters Four, Five and Six present the results of the analyses of the selected curricula: the *Curriculum and Standards Framework II (CSFII)* (VBoS, 2000); the *Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS)* (VCAA, 2006, 2007, 2008) the *AusVELS* (VCAA, 2013, 2015, 2016); and *The Victorian Curriculum* (VCAA, 2017). Chapter Seven synthesises the findings from the analysis with explicit reference to the research questions. Drawing on the analysis, Chapter Eight presents recommendations for the development of curriculum materials and pedagogical approaches in relation to the visual in subject English.
Old logics of literacy and teaching are profoundly challenged by this new media environment. They are bound to fall short, not only disappointing young people whose expectations of engagement are greater, but also for failing to direct their energies to the developing of the kinds of persons required for the new domains of work, citizenship and personality (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p.173).

Chapter introduction

This chapter presents an examination of literature relevant to my research. Research and scholarship into visual learning have developed significantly since the mid-1990s. This follows the development and revisiting of Multiliteracies theory (New London Group, 1996), and in various Australian curriculum jurisdictions, the explicit inclusion of visual texts across disciplines including English. A significant proportion of this scholarship has examined the inclusion of the visual and multimodal across school subjects, with particular emphasis on the ‘literacies’ linked to digital technologies (Durrant & Green, 2000; Spalter & van Dam, 2008; Unsworth, 2001), and the notion of ‘visual grammar’ (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Unworth & Macken-Horarik, 2015). Much of this scholarship and research is relevant to this thesis; however, does not fully address the opportunities offered by the visual, both in subject English and across the curriculum. Very little mapping of the positioning of the visual and multimodal in curriculum documents outside Arts-based subjects has been
undertaken (Unsworth & Macken-Horarik, 2015 published after this thesis was commenced). The aim of this thesis is to commence the addressing of these gaps.

This thesis is situated within the field of curriculum research, so to provide context for the analysis of the selected curriculum documents, this chapter initially explores statements about what official curriculum is, does, and should do. The chapter then examines research and scholarship that discuss the visual as an entity in education, and specifically in relation to official curricula, thus serving to position my own research within the field. As my research focuses on subject English curricula, the subsequent stages of this chapter discuss how scholarship positions the visual in relation to contemporary theoretical and practical conceptualisations of English and curriculum. The structure of the chapter is presented in Figure 4.

*Figure 4. Structure of Chapter 2*

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**Curriculum**

Derived from the Latin *currere*, meaning ‘to run the course’, mandated curriculum (such as that analysed in this research) has been described as ‘a text of power’ (da Silva, 1999, pp.28-29), or in Pinar’s words, manifesting ‘what the older generation chooses to tell the younger generation’ (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1995, pp.847-848). What is selected for inclusion in official curricula and how these selections are represented, sequenced and formatted are crucial indicators of what is valued and valuable, as ‘…since we obviously
cannot get the whole world into the school, we have to select which forms of life to represent in the school’ (Osberg & Biesta, 2008, pp.86). Contemporary definitions see curriculum as: encompassing overall policy through which educational content, structures and assessment programs are disseminated; specific syllabi or teaching and learning frameworks; and what is actually enacted in schools (O’Connor & Yates, 2010). While my research does not address how curriculum is enacted, it is concerned with representations and positioning of the visual in the selected curricula, and in turn, how this positioning provides guidance for curriculum users. Associated with this is the way in which the selected curricula indicate the ways in which the visual is acknowledged, understood and valued in policy and by curriculum authorities.

The ways in which curriculum levels are organised are central to revealing how aspects of learning are valued and understood by curriculum producers. Recent Australian curriculum iterations, including those selected for analysis in this research, have focused on skill development rather than the acquisition of content knowledge (Gilbert, 2011; Watt, 2008; Yates & Collins, 2010), and in such structures, curriculum standards are organised progressively and cumulatively so that students accrue higher level skills from one level to the next, with ‘abstract propositions at higher levels integrating lower levels’ (Chen & Derewianka, 2009, p. 226). The question of whether standards-based curriculum is preferable to other designs is not the focus of my research; rather, my analysis of the selected curricula examines whether the positioning of the visual in subject English adheres to standards-based structures in which past learning and skills are built on and integrated at each level to facilitate ‘cumulative learning’ (Maton, 2009, p.43).

**The visual and curriculum**

Parallels can be drawn between the significance of images in the twenty-first century, and the importance of the visual in pre-literate societies in which the ability to interpret religious iconography, amongst other visual representations, was crucial (Millum, 2009, p. 37). Literature advocating the explicit addressing of the visual in curricula stresses that despite the importance of the visual in both contexts, the written word had greater ‘cultural dominance’ in pre-modern societies, and greater status is ‘still given to verbal literacy today’
(Millum, 2009, p. 37). The systematic inclusion of the visual across curriculum disciplines is a means to connect in- and out-of-school literacies, and foster students’ abilities to make meaning from complex images in a range of ‘mediums, materials and modalities...that have animation, texture and dimensionality’ (Rowsell, McLean & Hamilton, 2012, p. 444).

There is a paucity of analysis of the discourse of curricula associated with the visual (Belluigi, 2009). Most of the scholarship relevant to this thesis is empirical research that is case-study based, or practically-based pedagogy advice. A document that includes elements of both is First We See: The National Review of Visual Education (Davis, 2008), commissioned by the Australia Council with the then Australian Department of Education and Training (DEST). The Review was commissioned as a step towards ‘a stronger visual education for Australian children’, and in recognition of ‘the dominance of visual thinking and visual forms in contemporary society’ (2008, p.vi). The commissioning of this review by the official federal education body indicates a strong acknowledgement of the importance of visual learning in schools, and support for everyone in the community to develop skills to read (or view), interpret and produce ideas associated with the visual. Davis, the author of The National Review, argues that the affordances of the visual need to be ‘exploited’ across the curriculum (2008, p. 39), and she calls for ‘a serious approach to visual education’ in both the discipline-based and interdisciplinary senses (p. 83). International literature also advocates visual education ‘as an interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and multidimensional area of knowledge that encompasses influences and concepts from a range of academic disciplines and perspectives’ (Avgerinou & Pettersson 2011, p.7) and that fosters transferable skills (Cappello & Walker, 2016; Eilam & Ben-Peretz, 2010).

While the Review is largely a response to inconsistencies in the implementation of Visual Arts subjects, it also advocates a reconceptualised visual education that stands alongside numeracy and literacy in curriculum priorities. It emphasises the importance of visual skills and knowledge within any profession and argues that ‘visual education is essential to creating a society in which people can think and work creatively in all fields (Davis, 2008, p.117). In the Review’s Preface, then Australian Federal Minister, Brendan Nelson, is cited as extolling the ‘intrinsic value of the cognitive, aesthetic and experiential skills’ associated
with ‘visual thinking’ as vital for all human beings, and as fundamental as reading and writing (cited in Davis, 2008, p.vi). Aligned with this position is the Review’s coining of the term visuacy as ‘the ability to create, process and critique visual phenomena’. Visuacy is intended as an ‘overarching term to encapsulate this skill set in the way that the terms numeracy and literacy have come to be understood and accepted as umbrella skills developed as fundamental through specialist teaching and learning but with specific and targeted applications across the curriculum’ (Davis, 2008, p.9). The Review argues that the ‘triumvirate of visuacy, literacy and numeracy has the potential to provide the basis for Australia’s developmental trajectory into the future’ (Davis, 2008, p.11). Problematic to this suggestion are the admissions that visual education in schools has been ‘for too long [an] area [that] has suffered from neglect and uneven standards’ (p.vii), and that often children’s experience of visual education, including that in Arts-based subjects, is erratic, illogical and lacking sequential and progressive learning, thus rendering it ‘as a form of recreation’ for students (Davis, p.2008, p.72). Similarly, questions have been raised about whether visual education frameworks provide teachers with sufficient content, continuity, development or achievement outcomes (Lee, 2009, 2010), the inference being that if these structures are not evident in Arts curriculum, they are certainly not priorities in other subject domains in which visual texts are used.

While the integration of visual modes across the curriculum must be the pedagogical responsibility of relevant discipline-based educators, it seems logical that ‘systematic visual education’ and leadership in this area is initiated by Arts-trained educators (Davis, 2008, p.83), as they possess the ‘skill set that creates an opportunity to be leaders in the area of visual literacy across the disciplines’ (Rockenbach & Fabian, 2008, p. 29). Pantaleo concurs with these sentiments and argues for specific allocation of time and resources within the curriculum and school schedule for the development of teachers’ own understandings of visual and multimodal elements in print and digital texts (Pantaleo, 2013).

The Review stimulated critique, notably from those arguing that ‘to a considerable extent our visual capacities develop with maturation…they do so in ways that are rarely the object of formal lessons’ (Lee, 2010, p. 27). In his response to the Review, Lee argues that explicit
teaching of visual education skills, unlike that associated with literacy and numeracy, is not crucial as such skills develop early in infancy and do so independently from formal education (Lee, 2010, p.27). Conversely, other academics have stressed the importance of explicit instruction in visual education (Avgerinou & Pettersson, 2011; Cappello & Walker, 2016; Pantaleo, 2013; Rautiainen & Jäppinen, 2017; Rockenbach & Fabian, 2008; Spalter & van Dam, 2008), and argue that despite the assumption that we learn how to see with no apparent effort, directed looking and viewing are specifically fostered. Some of these arguments draw on discoveries in vision science that highlight the processes that enable us to make sense of ‘the jumbled, noisy, moving visual stimuli that reach the retina’s photoreceptors’, and call for the provision of ‘explicit guidelines’ based on ‘scientific knowledge of the visual system, rather than on vague rules that change from instructor to instructor’ (Spalter & van Dam, 2008, p.96). Rockenbach and Fabian argue that the importance of a systematic approach to classroom approaches to the visual are even more pertinent than ever as ‘our age calls for a …mode of visual analysis that acknowledges the ubiquity and importance of images in [current] society’ (Rockenbach & Fabian, 2008, p. 27). These arguments support the notion of ‘viewing’ being positioning alongside cognition-associated practices such as ‘reading’ and ‘writing’, and curriculum approaches to the visual being systematically developed and implemented.

The language of the visual

The lack of ‘widely accepted definitions’, cohesive theory and systematic approaches to integrating the visual into curricula may be in part attributed to debate around what visual learning actually encompasses, especially considering existing discipline-specific visual codes and meanings (Avgerinou & Pettersson, 2011; Lee, 2010; Rockenbach & Fabian, 2008). Varying definitions have been used ever since Debes coined the term visual literacy in 1969, characterising it as vision competencies humans develop by seeing, while simultaneously integrating other sensory experiences (Debes, 1969). The appropriation of linguistic metalanguage such as ‘syntax’ when discussing the visual (Turbayne, 1969, 1970) has continued through the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries with research and scholarship in the field giving emphasis to ‘visual grammar’ (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Unsworth, 2001; Unsworth & Macken-Horarik, 2015), with Unsworth’s work in particular
employing a Hallidayan systemic functional linguistics framework (Halliday, 1978) to explore visual texts across the curriculum (Unsworth, 2001, 2013). Cope and Kalantzis describe this as ‘parallelism’ or ‘synaesthesia’, in that visual ‘grammar’ can explain the ways in which images work like language. They illustrate this idea by comparing action expressed by verbs with vectors in images, and comparatives in language with sizing and placement in images (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 179).

Somewhat problematic in these approaches is the assumption that verbal and linguistic theoretical frameworks are sufficient to address the learning opportunities afforded by visual texts (Seels, 1994). While these approaches are useful in relation to uncovering the composition and organisation of visual texts, they do not fully address, for example, the affective domain and the fostering of students’ aesthetic responses to visual texts across the curriculum (Benoit, 2016; Callow, 2008). Furthermore, there are arguments that unlike verbal language which has ‘relatively fixed and agreed meanings from which composite symbols and new meaning can be composed…a visual image does not comprise elements [or units such as words] which have individual meanings’ (Millum, 2009, p. 38), so in other words, there is a lack of common understanding about and definitions associated with the ‘language of vision’. Indeed, in the source cited earlier, Cope and Kalantzis acknowledge that ‘meaning expressed in one mode cannot be directly and completely translated into another, and that ‘parallelism [may allow] the same thing to be depicted in different modes, but the meaning is never quite the same’ (2009, p.180).

Concerns raised about visual and multiliteracies terminology and its intrinsic links to verbal metalanguage (Archer, 2006; Parsons, 1994) include questioning of the use of the term ‘text’ which ‘has assumed prominence as an overarching concept for all manner of works, such as novels, picture books, advertisements, electronic media, film, artworks and even theatrical performance’ (Callow, 2005, p. 7). In fact, Kress himself indicated a shift from the conceptualisation of visual ‘grammar’ and has argued that linguistic metaphors and frameworks are probably insufficient for other representational forms (Kress, 2003, pp.23-25). My analysis of the representation and positioning of the visual in the selected curriculum documents uncovers the extent to which practices and resources associated with the visual are treated as entities with specific terminology and affordances or are
supplementary to verbal and linguistic entities, and whether linguistic tools can be simply extrapolated to the visual.

While some may scoff at the term, the Review’s conceptualisation of visuacy (Davis, 2008) suggests a broadening of visual education beyond visual literacy and linguistic and verbal reference points. The Review argues that visuacy is less ‘misleading’ than the appropriation of ‘literacy’ ‘with its intrinsic association with the verbal’ (Davis, 2008, p.9), and the term is more relevant to application across school disciplines and curricula. Other voices that call for the inclusion of the visual across the curriculum also question whether the applications of verbal and linguistic metalanguage and pedagogy are sufficient for dealing with the visual. In the late 1990s, arts-based academics, Emery and Flood argued that a visual representation ‘cannot be read like a novel’ (Emery & Flood, 1998, p. 70). The concerns that there is a ‘tendency to analyse pictures as if they were linguistic texts’ (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2004, p. 61) have continued into the twenty-first century. The proliferation of visual, multimodal and digital texts in the past decade has rendered crucial the development of new approaches to curriculum and pedagogy, as unlike most verbal texts, there can be no assumption of linearity in visual and multimodal representations (Flood, 2004; Millum, 2009), thus students’ abilities to read, respond and interpret in linear [or verbal] fashion are no longer sufficient (Seglem & Witte, 2009, p. 217).

The visual and curriculum structure

Despite the ‘accumulated use’ of visual representations in recent curriculum iterations, there has been very little revisiting of curriculum frames, concepts and theories to accommodate and support these inclusions (Eilam & Ben-Peretz, 2010, p. 753). Even given Lee’s aforementioned-critique of the National Review of Visual Education, he concedes that approaches to the visual across the curriculum are unsystematic, and lack continuity and specific content for teachers to follow (Lee, 2009, p.224). Literature from Australia (Anstey & Bull, 2006) and beyond (Eilam & Ben-Peretz, 2010) argues that the inclusion of visual representations across the curriculum should not be merely tokenistic, and must be deliberately managed by curriculum designers, so that the ‘curriculum potential’ of the visual is utilised to full advantage.
These accusations of tokenism and unsystematic approaches to the visual have led to calls for expert visual education ‘curriculum makers’ to initiate both curriculum writing and implementation at school level (Davis, 2008; Eilam & Ben-Peretz, 2010) in much the same way that literacy and numeracy experts take the lead in their respective fields. There has been some advocacy for the application of consistent frames and pedagogies across the curriculum in relation to the visual, so that teachers of different subjects can collaborate in the design of cohesive curriculum at each level (Callow, 2005; Eilam & Ben-Peretz, 2010).

In their curriculum inquiry, Eilam and Ben-Peretz, writing from an Israeli perspective, argue that there is an ‘urgency’ for curriculum frameworks to be revisited ‘in order to profoundly integrate these new [visual] perspectives into curricular thinking’ (Eilam & Ben-Peretz, 2010, p. 757), as they are ‘a core part of [each discipline’s] knowledge domain’ (2010, p. 762). Eilam and Ben-Peretz advocate the restructuring of primary and secondary school curricula so that engagement with visual texts is ‘carefully distributed across the school years according to children’s evolving spatial abilities, thus constituting a spiral curriculum for learning’ (p.764), and so foundations established in the primary levels are built upon in complexity across the school years. Associated with this idea is international scholarship that suggests that curricula draw upon a ‘hierarchy’ or ‘continuum’ of visual representations (Davis, 2008; Pantaleo, 2013; Rockenbach & Fabian, 2008). Those calling for this kind of continuum suggest that static images and realistic representations should be aligned with lower levels of thinking, while ‘the most aesthetically complex and challenging images’ (Davis, 2008, p.79) such as abstract representations, digital resources or animated graphics should be more aligned to higher curriculum levels or ways of thinking (Callow, 2005; Davis, 2008; Eilam & Ben-Peretz, 2010). In relation to practices, working with visual texts might commence with ‘visual encounters’ that ‘make it possible for learners to discover the multiple meanings of images on their own’ starting with a ‘discovery process’ based on students’ initial reactions formed from their existing ‘frames of visual reference’ moving through to critical literacy skill development that pushes students ‘beyond their known boundaries’ (Rockenbach & Fabian, 2008). Some of these arguments are problematic however, as they suggest that static images are less complex than moving or abstract images, and thus should be aligned only to lower curriculum levels, while more complex and sophisticated responses to visual texts should be linked to the moving image or digital text.
Intrinsically linked to the ways in which the visual and multimodal are positioned and structured in curriculum documents are assessment practices (Adsanatham, 2012; Anstey & Bull, 2000; Callow, 2005, 2008; Jacobs, 2013; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996; Pantaleo, 2013; Unsworth, 2001; Wyatt-Smith & Kimber, 2009). The lack of ‘clear, rigorous and equitable’ processes that are transparent across the curriculum in relation to visual texts and associated practices (Callow, 2008, pp. 616-624), and the need for specific assessment criteria to assess students’ response to, and creation of, visual and multimodal texts, may result in teachers being ‘unlikely to accept them…to be judged equally with verbal texts’ (Pantaleo, 2013, p. 372). In other words, unsystematic inclusions in official curricula imply that working with visual texts is not worthy of specific pedagogy or assessment practices. This relates back to the continued over-emphasis of the written form to demonstrate academic literacy in learning environments (Archer, 2006).

The visual and English curricula

Rather dramatically pressing her point about the need for visuacy across the curriculum, Davis questions how ‘a nation allows the under-educated to lead in the area of visual education, especially in a global context where visuacy is a central and marketable skill in the new creative knowledge economy’ (Davis, 2008, p.180). Piscitelli, in the Preface to Davis’ National Review of Visual Education (cited in Davis, 2008, p.ix) laments that ‘current provisions for visual education appear not to match the direction of education, economic and social policy’ and that staffing, facilities, materials and time allocation associated with visual education are inconsistent across school sectors. These comments are interesting in light of the rhetoric in recent Victorian curriculum iterations, notably introductory statements for English curriculum, that make strong claims about the links between English, literacy and ‘nation-building’ in that [the study of English] ‘helps create… informed citizens…who will take responsibility for Australia’s future’, ‘nation-building’ and ‘internationalisation’ (VCAA, 2017, p.2).

In relation to English curricula specifically, Australian academics have highlighted the cumulative nature of recent curriculum developments, especially in the domain of language
learning (Macken-Horarik, 2009, pp. 204-25), yet this is not necessarily evident in learning associated with the visual and multimodal. In order to foster systematic inclusions and enactment of curricula, a ‘view across time’ is required (Freebody, 2007, p. 8), whereby students and teachers are aware of and utilise what has been learned at previous curriculum levels. Somewhat at odds to this, is the sense of subject English’s ‘segmental knowledge structure’ (Maton, 2009), and the different models of English that have developed over the last several decades.

Since the late twentieth century, in Australian iterations of English curricula, there has been a disjuncture between increasing reference to the visual and multimodal, and the ‘deeply entrenched nature of traditionalist discourse’ (McDougall, 2007, p. 37). Inclusions (albeit sometimes unsystematic) of the visual in English curricula suggest that late twentieth and early twenty-first century conceptualisations of subject English, text and literacy have moved beyond learning to read and write in ‘page-bound official, standard forms of language’ (New London Group, 1996, p.61), yet debates about what constitutes language and literacy education, and in turn, subject English, are still current in Australia and elsewhere (Chen & Derewianka, 2009; Edwards & Potts, 2008). Contemporary society is ‘overwhelmingly visual in character’ yet ‘schools persist in privileging the written word above all other forms of communication’ (Cappello & Walker, 2016, p. 317). The ongoing privileging of traditional verbal and linguistic communication in curriculum and school discourse is at the expense of ‘new literacies’ (Carrington & Luke, 1997; Davis, 2008; McDougall, 2007), and questions raised two decades ago about ‘in whose interests particular literate practices and texts operate’ (Carrington & Luke, 1997, p.109) still apply. Some of the aforementioned-debates can be linked to the (re-)emergence of literacy as a dominant measure of ‘success’, and a ‘valued economic commodity’ (Chen & Dewerianka, 2009, p.231), such that the ‘neoliberal discourse of literacy as human capital fram[es]’ recent curriculum initiatives (Fehring & Nyland, 2012; Lobascher, 2011; Reid, 2009). This climate, in which high stakes test results are seen as measurements of the status of a society, has resulted in concepts of literacy shifting from those associated with ‘pluralism and diversity to ordered fundamental skills [of reading, writing and spelling] …which can be measured, quantified, analysed and compared’ (Fehring & Nyland, 2012, p.10). Globalisation and increased use of technologies
have resulted in international literacy concerns becoming more prominent in Australia 
(Edwards & Potts, 2008, p. 125), with such foci being highlighted in recent curriculum 
rhetoric (VCAA, 2017). While these factors may be seen to align with broadened definitions 
of literacy, including those associated with the visual, some have suggested that in fact, 
‘narrowed’ curricula (and enactment of curriculum) in subject English have resulted 
(Fehring & Nyland, 2012; Lobascher, 2011).

Almost thirty years after Debe’s The Loom of Visual Literacy (1970), the publication of 
multiliteracies pedagogy (New London Group, 1996), positioned visual literacy as one of the 
skills required by students at the turn of the millennium in an ever-increasing globalised 
world. The New London Group, comprising literacy academics and scholars including Gee, 
Cope, Kalantzis and Kress, argued that the dynamic and many-faceted components of 
multiliteracies could offer students opportunities to access a broad range of communications 
and resources while supplementing traditional notions of literacy (Cope & Kalantzis, 1995). 
The original conceptualisation of multiliteracies acknowledged cultural and linguistic 
diversity, a ‘multiplicity of communication channels and media’ (New London Group, 1996, 
p.63), contemporary ‘hybrid cross-cultural discourses’ (p.1) and the ‘multiple lifeworlds’, 
communities and identities of students (p.12), and emphasised the importance of meaning-
making via a range of ‘contemporary forms, increasingly multimodal, with linguistic, visual, 
audio, gestural and spatial modes of meaning becoming increasingly integrated in everyday 
media and cultural practices’ (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 166). Cope and Kalantzis describe 
this as the ‘what’ of multiliteracies (2009, p. 166). In revisiting the pedagogy, or the ‘how’ of 
multiliteracies more than a decade later, Cope and Kalantzis emphasise that ‘a literacy 
pedagogy that promotes a culture of flexibility, creativity, innovation and initiative’ has 
even more pertinence in 2009 than it did in 1996.

Even more clearly than was the case in the mid-1990s, the old literacy and its underlying 
moral economy are no longer adequate on their own…Literacy needs much more than the 
traditional basics of reading and writing the national language (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 
170).
Cope and Kalantzis emphasise the political and ‘moral’ importance of shifting from the previous ‘top-down’ approaches to civics, schooling and pedagogy to ‘new schooling’ that promotes ‘an active bottom-up citizenship in which people can take a self-governing role in the many divergent communities of their lives’ (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 172). They link this concept to argue that ‘the old literacy is no longer adequate’ and that ‘the [revisited] multiliteracies approach suggests a pedagogy for active citizenship, centred on learners as agents in their own knowledge processes’ (p. 172). The revisited pedagogy requires that the role of ‘agency in the meaning-making process be recognised’ in order to create a ‘more productive, relevant, innovative, creative, and even perhaps emancipatory, pedagogy’, and that literacy teaching no longer be about skills and competence but about ‘creating…active designer[s] of meaning’ (p.175). This view of literacy pedagogy as creative, dynamic, contextual and transformative is at odds with the current significance given to standardised high-stakes literacy testing in which schools and education systems undertake ‘the process of social sifting and sorting against a singular and supposedly universal measure of basic skills and knowledge’ (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 183).

The notion of evolving communication modes and the semiotic shift from verbal to visual, multimodal and digital modes of communication have even more resonance now in the second decade of the twenty-first century with its sophisticated virtual worlds and extensive social media networks (Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018) but also in the context of multicultural and globalised Australia. My analysis of the positioning of the visual in English curricula is a means of determining the ‘kinds of literacies’ that curriculum producers value and, to reveal the extent to which the visual is positioned as merely supplementary to the verbal and linguistic, or whether the distinct affordances, practices and terminology associated with the visual are fully acknowledged in their own right. The results of this research serve to ascertain whether the selected curriculum documents acknowledge that there is not ‘one homogeneous literacy, a unified and universal set of skills, competencies and features of literate practices’ (Carrington & Luke, 1997, p.101) and that English curricula need to address the need for expanded definitions of ‘text’ (Anstey & Bull, 2006; Archer, 2006; Callow, 2008; New London Group, 1996).
The notion of the ‘evolving textual landscape’ (Callow, 2008, p.616) and the shift from only print-based to multimodal and digital texts (Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Green, 2006) has reignited the perennial controversy surrounding text selection in subject English in the Australian context. Conservative commentators continue to bemoan the ‘dumbing down’ of English and the selection of non-traditional text types (Donnelly, 2017), while others advocate for texts such as graphic novels that include significant visual elements that create rich and complex narratives requiring transformed reading practices (Beavis, 2013; Millum, 2009). Teaching students to engage with a broad range of text types, specifically visual and multimodal texts, gives them access to the ‘layering of information in the real world’, and the engagement and subsequent creation of visual texts allow students to read, respond, analyse, organize, and represent their learning through the development of literal comprehension, identification and spatial skills (Seglem & Witte, 2009, p.217). Furthermore, the skills developed through this new form of ‘reading’ foster students’ acquisition of skills to create and communicate across a range of contexts in the twenty-first century (Davis, 2008, p.117).

Despite these arguments, some suggest that the inclusion of the visual in English has almost been by default, and that the study of visual images (outside the Visual Arts and Media Studies areas) ‘seems [largely] to have fallen to teachers of English’ (my italics) (Millum, 2009, p.37) who as Davis argues in The National Review, have been ‘forced to embrace the totality of their domain through texts other than those from the so called great tradition of English Literature’ (Davis, 2008, p. 79). Other arguments suggest that subject English has ‘appropriated’ visual texts, despite the fact that many English teachers are untrained in visual education (Grushka, 2004, p. 36). Compounding this issue is the fact that at the time of the Review’s publication, neither the Australian Association for the teaching of English (AATE), nor the Victorian Association for the Teaching of English (VATE) had explicit visual literacy policies, even though the Australian (and Victorian) education systems were using ‘expansive interpretation[s]’ of ‘text’ (Davis, 2008, p. 80), and ‘viewing’ was referred to explicitly in contemporary English curricula in Australia (VCAA, 2008). These examples represent instances of ‘curriculum drift’ (Kelly, 2004) in English, meaning that concepts are introduced without explicit consideration of how they will be represented and positioned.
This approach aligns with arguments from Australian literacy theorists that call for a ‘a coherent body of knowledge which builds cumulatively across the years of schooling…lending verticality and informing other elements of the curriculum’ (Chen & Derewianka, 2009, p. 241), and an internally coherent, organised structure that ‘allows for progression up the years of schooling (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2007, p.157). While many of these arguments focus on linguistic and verbal literacies, it should follow that if multimodality and multiliteracies are acknowledged in the selected curricula, then similar cumulative and coherent structures should be applied to the visual.

The affective domain

A further consideration in relation to the visual in English curricula is the affective domain. The rhetoric of recent English curricula overviews in Australia includes references to aesthetic responses to texts (VCAA, 2017); however, specific curriculum standards, assessment practices and professional development for teachers often neglect the aesthetic in relation to both verbal and visual texts (Avgerinou & Pettersson, 2011; Benoit, 2016; Callow, 2005, 2008; Rautiainen & Jäppinen, 2017; Sameshima, 2008; Wren & Haig, 2006), resulting in a dearth of opportunities for such responses. Aesthetic engagement, involving deep thought and higher order thinking, is evident in very young students, but as schooling progresses, opportunities of this kind become less frequent in later curriculum levels (Wren & Haig, 2006, p. 95).

Calls for English curricula, and text study specifically, to foster emotional as well as intellectual engagement have been present for decades (Cox, 1991; Misson & Morgan, 2006). These calls often focus on ‘all’ the opportunities that text study offers in relation to students’ aesthetic as well as analytical responses. Extending this line of argument, Misson and Morgan view aesthetic and critical responses as complementary rather than binary and argue that spontaneous and emotional initial engagement with a text often leads to empathy, appraisal and evaluation (Misson & Morgan, 2006, p. 4). Misson and Morgan argue that students’ aesthetic engagement with texts is far too important to be neglected and that ‘the teaching of many texts in the English classroom has an effect that seems closer to anaesthesia than aesthetic’ with dominance given to analysis and ideology rather than prolonged aesthetic experience and emotional response (Misson & Morgan, 2006, pp. 131-
While the work of Misson and Morgan focuses on aesthetic responses to print and literary texts in the English discipline, their sentiments are equally relevant and pertinent to visual texts given the increased inclusions of non-verbal and multimodal texts in English and across the subject areas.

Callow presents a similar point, specifically focusing on the visual. He promotes the ways in which visual texts can stimulate aesthetic response (Callow, 2005, 2008). In a case study, young children were introduced to artworks and invited to use their five senses to imagine themselves within the depicted works. As there were no right or wrong interpretations, a safe learning environment was created, and the children became more confident in discussing their responses, moving from affective interpretations to compositional aspects of the artworks (Callow, 2005, p. 16). Similar approaches are appropriate and worthwhile for both primary and secondary learners.

While acknowledging the importance of assessing students’ knowledge of compositional elements of images (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996; Unsworth, 2001), and their skills in critically analysing images in relation to how they embody ideology and position viewers (Anstey & Bull, 2000), Callow also advocates the assessment of affective response. It appears that curriculum and assessment designers have viewed the assessment of the affective domain as too challenging or intangible, especially in jurisdictions where high-stakes testing is mandatory. Callow argues that aesthetic response can be measured and assessed through observation of students’ engagement during encounters with visual texts, their personal interpretations, and the ways their experiences inform aesthetic preferences (Callow, 2005, 2008).

While students now have access to a range of visual and multimodal texts, the use of artworks to foster aesthetic and personal responses in English should not be underestimated. Several case studies have examined the links between the visual arts and the development of language and literacy skills across the levels of schooling (Callow, 2005; Davis, 2008; Isaacson, 2003; Serafini, 2015). In Davis’ National Review, she cites a case study involving pre-school age children in an early learning centre in inner Melbourne, Australia, as demonstrating the young children’s ‘significant prior experience with art’ as both ‘a tool for documenting experience and also as a creative vehicle for generating real and imagined
ideas and stories’ (Davis, 2008, p. 124). Pantaleo comments that students, ‘regardless of their age, academic ability, or cultural or linguistic background, have articulated insightful interpretations of the artwork [in resources such as] picture books’ (Pantaleo, 2013, p. 354).

Research involving Year 9 students in the United States focused on the use of artworks to stimulate students’ use of oral language and highlighted the ‘interdisciplinary relationship of art and speech’ and the promotion of ‘exploiting the potential of an image’ (Isaacson, 2003, p. 31). Students chose fine arts images that supported a theme on which to base a speech; the images provided focal points and served as prompts for key points, while freeing students from over-reliance on notes (Isaacson, 2003, p. 33). The results of the study included the ‘textured impact’ of the speeches for listeners, as the presenters assembled a bank of descriptive words to ‘capture details, texture, scale, mood and action of the artwork’ prior to presenting speeches. The use of the images also assisted students with body language, as it gave them props to focus on and engaged the attention of the audience (Isaacson, 2003, p. 35).

These examples highlight possibilities for the development of a range of language and literacy skills via students’ engagement with artworks (Green, 2006). Furthermore, art (including static images) provides teachers who lack confidence with digital media a basis on which to develop their own visual literacy skills and pedagogy (Wren & Haig, 2006).

**Conceptualising and enacting the visual in English curricula**

As discussed earlier, the ways in which scholars and educators in different disciplines have appropriated components associated with the visual do not translate into the ‘formation of a solid, coherent theory’ (Avgerinou & Pettersson, 2011, p. 2). As the range of definitions suggests, there is no one theory or framework related to the way in which visual learning should be taught. This impacts on the ways in which the visual is conceptualised and positioned in curriculum documents, and the lack of commonly accepted approaches may have thwarted teacher professional development in this area (Avgerinou & Pettersson, 2011). Some advocate the development of a continuum of skills associated with the visual, addressed incrementally across the years of schooling (Avgerinou & Pettersson, 2011; Eilam & Ben-Peretz, 2010; Rockenbach & Fabian, 2008). One such approach positions ‘visual
thinking’, ‘visual learning’ and ‘visual communication’ as three theoretical constructs forming a continuum (Avgerinou & Pettersson, 2011), thus addressing cognitive, receptive and productive skills. Another focuses on meaning-making of visual texts and suggests that the hierarchy of practices associated with visual learning starts with ‘understanding’ and ‘moves to an end goal of critical literacy skills’ (Rockenbach & Fabian, 2008 p. 26). Well before these suggestions, Vygotsky devised his theory of sign acquisition in which the development of skills is a continuum according to the following phases: Phase 1, the acquisition of semiotic means and meanings in a child’s early years; Phase 2, in which meaning-makers acquire visual signs in relation to physical and psychological tools of meaning making; Phase 3, when meaning-makers overtly employ signs and their systems to solve problems and establish ‘core visual language’; and Phase 4, during which the meaning maker develops a ‘visual narrative’ (Vygotsky, cited in Connery, John-Steiner & Marjanovic-Shane, 2010). The Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) also draws on Vygotsky’s work and is aligned socio-cultural theory. This approach is a ‘student-centred, interactive, interpretive method’ of visual learning that ‘requires active participation’ and through which ‘learners create knowledge as they build from and on their personal and social backgrounds’ (Cappello & Walker, 2016, p. 318). This approach is based on a sequenced questioning ‘protocol’ that allows participants to develop close observational and analytical skills while resisting judgements (Cappello & Walker, 2016).

Other theoretical frameworks do not present the practices associated with the visual as explicitly hierarchical, but as comprising a number of aspects, each of which contributes to engaging with the visual. Messaris and Abraham (2001) describe four levels of ‘visual framing’: visuals as ‘denotative systems’ such as objects, elements and themes that are depicted; visuals as semiotic systems that are positioned and composed in particular ways; visuals as connotative systems that represent concepts that may be iconic, culture-specific, symbolic and metaphorical; and visuals as representative of ideology with dominant views, ways of positioning the viewer (Messaris, 1993, 1994; Messaris & Abraham, 2001, p. 57). This framework appears to draw on Luke and Freebody’s (original) Four Resources Model (1999) which advocates the interrelated and interdependent dimensions of literacy. According to this model, all learners need to be proficient in four interrelated and interdependent dimensions of language use. The Four Resources Model describes the resources needed to be
literate: code breaking resources, text participating resources, text using resources and text analysing resources. Significant to this research is the relatively recent inclusion of online resources that are intended to support The Victorian Curriculum: English (VCAA, 2017) and draw on the Four Resources Model. Curiously, the use of the model in relation to the Reading and Viewing mode of the curriculum pays scant reference to the visual (VCAA, 2018, February 19). The corresponding advice for the Writing mode is far more comprehensive in its addressing of the visual (VCAA, 2018, February 5), and specifically refers to visual texts and resources in the descriptions of the four roles. By doing so, this curriculum support material presents the productive mode as more than simply ‘writing’, so it should be assumed that the curriculum itself will explicitly acknowledge the role of the visual in the creation of texts in English.

Since the original Four Resources Model, Luke and Freebody themselves and others have revisited the framework to address broadening definitions of ‘literacy’ since the 1990s (Luke & Freebody, 1999, 2003; Serafini, 2012). Serafini reconceptualises the Four Resources Model for reading and viewing multimodal texts to include the practices of navigation, interpretation, design and interrogation (Serafini, 2012). McDougall also identifies different aspects of visual engagement: the structural, involving how texts are constructed in terms of visual and design elements and principles, communication elements and languages; the generic, in terms of the sociocultural meanings ascribed to particular text types and elements; and the cognitive, focused on the relationship between visual skills and cognitive /psychological processes (McDougall, 2007, pp. 27-28).

Also drawing on a pre-existing literacy model is Pantaleo (2013) who appropriates Green’s 3–D literacy model (Green, 2002) for application to visual texts. This model comprises the ‘operational’ (how language/image components function), the ‘cultural’ (contextual and cultural acknowledgement and understanding) and the ‘critical’ (awareness of power relations and ideology in the ways texts are created and distributed). Unsworth, focusing on the importance of developing metalanguage to define and describe the intersection of language and images in multimodal texts, draws on the principles of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), and argues that ‘all texts, visual and verbal, separately and in
combination’, always simultaneously entail ideational or circumstantial, interpersonal, and textual/compositional meanings (Unsworth, 2006, p. 71).

Cope and Kalantzis’ 2009 revisiting of multiliteracies pedagogy poses ‘open-ended questions about meaning’ in relation to: the ‘representational’ (To what do the meanings refer?); the ‘social’ (How do the meanings connect the persons involved?); the ‘structural’ (How are meanings organised?); the ‘intertextual’ (How do the meanings fit into the larger world of meaning?); and the ‘ideological’ (Whose interests are the meanings positioned to serve?). Somewhat at odds with the advocacy of specific approaches to the visual included earlier in this chapter and in the original multiliteracies manifesto (New London Group, 1996), these questions are designed for application to the range of meaning-making systems.

The abovementioned models contain some common elements, yet they do not specifically address the affective domain. An exception, referred to earlier, is Callow’s model (2005) that acknowledges the importance of the operational or ‘compositional’, but also comprises the affective. The compositional dimension is concerned with contextual factors, and how images are arranged and structured through the organisation of stylistic and design elements and semiotic systems. The critical dimension, according to Callow, acknowledges the importance of critique to an understanding of the ‘ideology’ of visual texts (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 12), in which ‘particular discourses are privileged, while others are downplayed or even silenced’ (Callow, 2005, p.13). The affective dimension ‘values and acknowledges the individual’s role when interacting with images’ including immediate, sensual and aesthetic responses. Callow emphasises the role of individual’s meaning-making in each of the three dimensions (Callow, 2005, pp. 13 -14). While not addressing the affective domain explicitly, Cope and Kalantzis’ revisited pedagogical vision does emphasise the roles of ‘subjectivity and agency’ and the ‘cultural and situational’ as key to educational design that enables learners to develop strategies for reading the new and unfamiliar (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). In recent literature, more attention has been given to the importance of aesthetics and the affective domain, and how engagement with the visual is an important vehicle in the fostering of students’ aesthetic response (Benoit, 2016; Rautiainen & Jäppinen, 2017).
The importance of pedagogy enabling personal and aesthetic response to the visual (and other textual forms) has been explored earlier in this chapter. While there are references to aesthetic response in mandated English curricula (VCAA, 2017), how this is addressed and assessed in classroom contexts requires development at the curriculum production level.

While the concepts of visual and multimodal literacies have been named or at least alluded to in the most recent Victorian curriculum iterations for subject English, research from 2007 has found that practising teachers, interviewed about the significance of the visual in their own teaching, were ‘only vaguely aware of visual literacy’ and were mostly unable to articulate how their own teaching practice was linked to the visual mode (McDougall, 2007, pp.34-35). On this point, Davis cites Eisner, who observed that ‘we are expecting teachers to teach what they do not know and often do not love’ (Eisner, 1999, p.17, cited in Davis, 2008, p.179). Despite being somewhat critical of Davis’ National Review of Visual Education Lee agrees that more teacher training in visual education is needed (Lee, 2009, p.219). Admittedly, these sentiments and research findings pre-date the most recent Victorian curriculum documents, and more work is needed in the exploration of the ways in which the visual is incorporated into classroom teaching and learning.

Chapter conclusion
This chapter has endeavoured to position my research by reviewing literature and scholarship that discuss the merits of including visual learning in mandated curricula, and English curricula specifically. A focus of this review (and my research) concerns critique of the dearth of systematic approaches to the visual in current curricula. Given the central position of subject English in compulsory schooling in Australia, and the conceptualisations of twenty-first century ‘literacies’ including visual literacy, it follows that the visual be addressed cumulatively from Foundation to upper secondary levels in English curricula. Definitions of ‘text’ in the context of subject English have broadened significantly over the past two decades to encompass the visual and multimodal, yet this broadening has not been accompanied by curriculum inclusions that sufficiently recognise and capitalise on these developments. Furthermore, the ways in which the visual is positioned in English curricula contribute to an understanding of contemporary conceptualisations of subject English. First We See: the National Review of Visual Education (Davis, 2008), presented key recommendations.
for the provision of visual education. These included: the centrality of *visuacy* as a core area for all Australian students in the compulsory years of schooling, and beyond Arts-based offerings; sufficient professional development for pre-service and practising teachers in visual education across the curriculum; and the development of a visual education research agenda in Australia. A decade on, these recommendations retain currency, and have particular resonance with the development of subject English curricula and its enactment.
CHAPTER THREE
DEFINING THE
RESEARCH METHODS

Curriculum is itself a representation: not only a site in which signs that are produced in other places circulate, but also a place of production of signs in its own right. Moreover, this is never innocent, always a matter of power, of struggle and contestation (da Silva, 1999, p. 28).

Chapter introduction

As discussed in Chapter One, the origins of this research are situated in my interests in the interplay between the visual, the verbal, the literary, the historical and the artistic. As an English teacher and teacher-educator, my interest in curriculum change and innovation has prompted me to evaluate the evolution of subject English, and specifically in this research, the extent to which curriculum iterations from 2000 to 2017 construe the subject, and position practices and textual resources associated with the visual. This chapter revisits the aims and questions at the core of this research and identifies and justifies the overarching methodology and theoretical constructs used to frame my analysis.

Chapter Two explored scholarship that discusses the specificity of visual learning and the implications of this in relation to curriculum development, pedagogy and classroom practices. My research aims to ascertain the extent to which such specificity is evident in the curriculum frameworks that are the focus of this thesis. More specifically, my research aims to reveal the extent to which the positioning of the visual in recent Australian curricula is addressed systematically and cumulatively in subject English, and what this suggests about conceptualisations of subject English in the twenty-first century.
As presented in Chapter One, the overarching research question is:

*How is the visual positioned in Australian curriculum documents in subject English?*

and the sub-questions are:

*Are there gaps and inconsistencies in the ways in which the visual is represented?*

*Is curriculum associated with the visual structured cumulatively?*

*Is a pedagogical or theoretical model evident in the positioning of the visual in the selected curricula?*

*How have representations of the visual evolved in curriculum iterations?*

*What are the implications of the findings from the above questions, for visual learning, and for subject English?*

**The dimensions and parameters of the research**

My research includes the analysis of a particular set of texts: formal curriculum policy documents related to curricula in the Australian state of Victoria from 2000 to 2017. Policy texts, such as those used as the basis of this research, represent the ‘official voice of the state’ and embody ‘discourses that articulate ideas, beliefs, values and practices’ of particular social and historical contexts, and represent ‘what the government considers should (or must) be taught’ (Rossi, Tinning, McCuaig, Sirna & Hunter, 2009, pp. 75 -76). To some extent, the anonymity of the authors of curricula may give these documents the ‘aura of handed down truth’ (Criddle, Vidovich & O’Neill, 2004, p.29; Gill & Reid, 2000, p. 65).

Curriculum is both a resource to be used by schools and teachers, and a ‘vehicle’ for the official recontextualisation of public policy into classroom practice’ (Taylor, 2008, p. 309). It is recognised that curriculum policy and documentation do not necessarily translate ‘neatly into practice’ (Farrelly, O’Brien & Frain, 2007, p. 64), and that curriculum as text ‘will be
interpreted by teachers in ways that might be influenced more by their biographic heterogeneity and the social context in which they teach than by the principles on which the syllabus is based’ (Rossi et al, 2009, p.87). I recognise that these texts are transformed or brought to life at ‘consumption’ and through teachers’ ‘interpretation and enact[ment] of the curriculum in their classrooms and communities’ (Doecke, Parr & Sawyer, 2011; Fairclough, 1989, 1992, 2003; Moni, 2012, p.14), and that there may be a lack of alignment between the original intentions of curriculum writers and government bodies who commission them, and the meaning constructed by users of the documents: school leaders, teachers and students. Therefore, only ‘meaning potential’ can be assured (Rossi et al, 2009, pp. 77-78).

The parameters of my research do not extend to the ways in which the selected curricula are ‘transformed’ by the abovementioned text users; however, this research does address aspects that may influence users’ interpretations and applications including: the assumptions the curricula make; the ‘urgency’ provided by curriculum standards and student learning outcomes (Taylor, 2008, p. 309); and the extent to which education policy makes key values, concepts, and approaches to teaching explicit (Farrelly et al, 2007, p. 76). In this sense, the curriculum documents selected for analysis are significant because of what they represent, that is, the official voice of public education policy, and because they have impact on what is taken up in classroom practice.

**Selection of Curriculum Documents**


The selection of these successive curriculum iterations spans the twenty-first century thus far; therefore, this research provides insight into the ways in which visual learning, English and ‘literacies’ are conceptualised in the age of mass multimedia. The selection also draws on the premise of *heteroglossia* (Bakhtin, 1994) or intertextuality, ‘whereby no text starts from a clean page, but emerges in dialogue with other previous or concurrent texts...such as
previous state curricula’ (Doherty, 2014, pp.179 -180). This point is significant in relation to the established ‘discourse’ of subject English, and my research, which examines the ways in which a ‘newer’ curriculum component, the visual, has been integrated into the curricula selected. As Gee suggests, ‘often new practices are variants of old ones…new practices start by people borrowing elements of their other older practices’ (Gee, 2010, p.18). A focus of my research is the extent to which ‘new [and specific] practices’ associated with the visual in English are identifiable in the selected curricula, or whether the visual is simply aligned to ‘older practices’ originally conceptualised for traditional and ‘established’ forms of English and literacy. In this sense, my research acknowledges the notion that discourse should be studied ‘historically and dynamically in terms of shifting configurations of discourse types’ to show how ‘such shifts reflect and constitute wider processes of social change’ (Fairclough, 1989, pp.35 -36) and enables evaluation of the ways in which the curriculum discourses are connected or disconnected, ‘retained’, ‘valued’, ‘imported’ or ‘reconstituted’ (Fairclough, 1989, pp. 59 -60; Locke, 2004, pp. 29- 30).

The focus on subject English curricula

This thesis, while focusing on the positioning of the visual in the selected curricula, to some degree also addresses the question ‘What is English in the twenty-first century?’, as the mandated curriculum documents selected for analysis can be read as formal statements of priorities.

English curriculum is a ‘contested field’ (Moni, 2012, p.14), and aspects such as text selection and associated practices arouse media attention and controversy. The political connotations associated with the development and dissemination of subject English curricula are acutely realised in Australia, where ongoing academic, community and media debate discuss what subject English should be, and how it addresses wider literacy issues. The recent introduction of a multimodal text classification on the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) English text list (VCAA, 2014) suggests that engagement with and understanding of visual elements are officially deemed important for current students. This also makes the explicit and systematic teaching of approaches to the visual more crucial in the compulsory years of schooling and within the context of subject English.
The data sources were chosen in order to map the representation of the visual in the early years of the twenty-first century. This time span is significant for several reasons, one of which is the conceptualisation and publication of Multiliteracies theory in the last years of the twentieth century (New London Group, 1996). As a response to these ‘new’ conceptualisations of literacy, contemporary English curriculum documents and text selection guidelines began to make explicit the inclusion of references to visual and multimodal texts. Furthermore, the rapid and extraordinary development of ‘new’ technologies such as the internet and social media in the first decade of the twenty-first century, and students’ engagement with these technologies in both school and recreational contexts, have made the acknowledgement of ‘new’ literacies critical in ways that the original proponents of multiliteracies may not have foreseen in the 1990s. Analysing four successive curriculum iterations from the one jurisdiction allows examination of whether references to the visual have developed in a linear way, or whether these inclusions are less systematic.

All of the curriculum iterations represent the formal approved curricula for the public school system in Victoria, being my state of residence and work. The data has professional significance in my career as an educator; their original publication dates span the time of my transition from secondary school teacher to tertiary educator of pre-service and practising teachers.

The Curriculum and Standards Framework II (CSF II)

Since the early 1990s, Victorian curriculum had been based around Key Learning Areas (KLAs) and structured according to what children should be able to do, ‘thus the levels set the standards against which all children’s performances could be monitored and reported’ (Yates & Collins 2010, p.92).

The initial iteration of the Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF) (VBoS, 1995) in the state of Victoria was devised as a response to the then conservative state government’s call for greater accountability and general uniformity to curriculum development across Victorian schools. The CSF provided a predetermined set of learning outcomes and standards as a
means to facilitate generic reporting of student achievement (Farrelly et al, 2007, p.73) in eight KLAs.

The revised *Curriculum and Standards Framework II (CSF II)* (VBoS, 2000) was intended to respond to criticisms that the curriculum had become overcrowded and comprised too many standards and outcomes on which teachers were expected to report (Farrelly et al, 2007) CSF II was benchmarked nationally and internationally to ensure its standards were ‘challenging and comparable with expectations in like countries’ (VCAA, 2002). The design of CSF II was aimed at: clarifying expectations, highlighting literacy and numeracy (especially in the early years of schooling); embedding information and communication technology skills in all subject areas; integrating civics and citizenship education; and making explicit the pathways from the compulsory years to further education and training (VCAA, 2002). The standards and learning outcomes-based structure remained.

As discussed previously, the timing of CSF II is significant to my research, coming at the turn of the century, and during the period when concepts of ‘new literacies’ theory were gaining momentum, and references to ‘viewing’ and the ‘visual’ were made specific.

The aspects of CSF II selected as data include the overviews and general statements pertaining to the whole curriculum, as well as the English curriculum specifically. *CSF II: English* curriculum has been examined in its entirety. Statements about the subject’s rationale, goals, subject strands, sub-strands and foci have been analysed for key themes, narratives, thus revealing the construing of the subject’s ‘identity’ and discourses, particularly with reference to the visual. Student learning outcomes for Levels 1 to 6 (aligned to primary schooling and secondary schooling to Year 10) have been analysed with particular attention given to the practices and resources associated with viewing and the visual.

**The Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS)**

According to the VCAA, ‘the CSF was seen as being too prescriptive’ in terms of content to be covered, and the key learning areas and capabilities were seen as disparate rather than linked (VCAA, 2008). The result was the *Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS)*
A number of new areas of learning was incorporated into the VELS, and three strands were connected using a triple helix framework. These strands: Physical, Personal and Social Learning, Discipline-based Learning, and Interdisciplinary Learning, were aimed at the building of students’ ‘social and emotional knowledge… wellbeing, … understanding of Australian society, citizenship and values’ and ‘deep knowledge and understanding through inter-disciplinary approaches… where the knowledge and skills of each strand supports and enhances learning across learning areas’ (VCAA, 2008). The VCAA links the development and aims of this structure to the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians published by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs in December, 2008 (MCEETYA, 2008).

As with the CSF II data, my analysis of the VELS comprises that of the introductory statements and the overview of the entire curriculum. Again, the key themes and narratives drawn from these overarching curriculum statements have been compared with those drawn from VELS: English curriculum statements. Specific aspects of the VELS: English to be analysed include: learning focus statements, descriptions of English ‘dimensions’, definitions of ‘text’, and the actual achievement standards for English Levels 1 to 6.

The AusVELS

Responsibility for curriculum in Australia is constitutionally a matter for the states rather than the Commonwealth Government. Despite this, after decades of debate as to whether all Australian jurisdictions should follow a national curriculum, an agreement to this end was made in 2009. The Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2011) was developed under the aegis of the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), a newly established statutory ‘national’ authority governed by a board representing both state and Commonwealth ministers, and independent and Catholic schools. While the states agreed to the establishment of ACARA and the development of the national curriculum, the specifics of how it is enacted remains a state matter, and considerable variation across the jurisdictions is evident.
In the state of Victoria, the national curriculum was incorporated as *AusVELS* (VCAA, 2013), a new variation of the *VELS*, ‘with adjustments made where necessary to reflect Victorian priorities and standards’ and allowing for the retaining of Victorian priorities and approaches to teaching and learning (VCAA, 2013). In this sense, the *AusVELS* provides a useful third iteration for examination of curriculum documents in this research, in that it is both a continuation of Victorian curriculum frameworks and integrates what is seen as important or ‘essential’ in the (then) newly developed Australian national curriculum.

As with the other data, the components of the *AusVELS* selected for analysis include both overarching curriculum statements and documentation specific to the English discipline. The documentation introducing the overall *AusVELS* curriculum has been analysed to ascertain key themes, narratives, identities and valued concepts. These have been compared with the findings in the *AusVELS: English* overview statements. Particular focus has been given to the analysis of the English Achievement Standards from Foundation Level to Level 10 (generally aligned to primary and secondary schooling from Foundation (‘prep’) to Year 10) and most specifically, to references to the visual, and the significance construed through these references.

**The Victorian Curriculum**

At the initial time of writing, the *AusVELS* was the official curriculum in Victoria; however, in 2017, a slightly redesigned curriculum iteration, the *Victorian Curriculum* (VCAA, 2017) was mandated. Minor changes were made to the English curriculum, and those relevant to the positioning of the visual are acknowledged and presented in Chapter Six. This research has drawn primarily on the 2017 edition of the *Victorian Curriculum* (VCAA, 2017).

**Accessing the data**

Each of the curriculum documents selected as data in my research is publicly accessible on the internet. The *Victorian Curriculum* is currently accessed via the website of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA). At the initial time of writing, the *AusVELS* was also accessed via the VCAA website; however, since the full implementation of the
Victorian Curriculum in 2017, it is now archived and held by the National Library of Australia. Both the VELS and CSF II can be accessed through archival links on the VCAA site. This research primarily utilised an original hard copy version of the CSF II (VBoS, 2000) obtained from the VCAA. Initially, downloading and printing hard copies of the selected data (where available) were preferable to using materials directly from internet repositories. The former method proved more convenient for manual coding, including colour-coding of particular themes, concepts and practices associated with the visual. Accessing and working with the CSF II and VELS data were reasonably straightforward in terms of the ‘finite’ nature of these historical documents; as archived materials, they were no longer ‘dynamic’ when my research commenced. It must be mentioned though, that I accessed and referred to some more recent VCAA commentary about the conceptualisation of these documents; however, this commentary was used for reference purposes and not as actual data. Working with the AusVELS and more recently, the Victorian Curriculum documentation proved more problematic. The AusVELS: English curriculum, accessed online, was a dynamic working document from 2012 to 2016, and as such, underwent several amendments, revisions, and refinements during my research. Similarly, the introduction of the Victorian Curriculum, published initially in late 2015, has undergone amendments since its inception. Naturally, this has contributed to the sense of urgency to complete this thesis! Difficulties have also arisen due to the fact that no online record of several superseded versions of the documents exists. Fortunately, I have printed versions of a number of the documents that have changed over the past five years, enabling me to map the changes significant to my research questions and purposes. In Chapter Six, I address these challenges specifically, and discuss the findings drawn from this mapping, as they are in themselves significant to my research. The dynamic form of online curricula does, however, pose potential issues for curriculum scholarship in the future.

**Research methods**

This research employs a qualitative methodology that focuses on document analysis. Like other qualitative research methods, document analysis requires the examination and interpretation of data, in this case the successive curriculum iterations, to elicit meaning and gain understanding of a particular phenomenon (Bowen, 2009; Corbin & Strauss, 2008).
Lankshear and Knobel categorise qualitative research as a means to ‘understand the world’ through a focus on contexts, by ‘paying attention to history, to politics, to language use, to the participants in particular events’ (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p. 29). These principles inform this research insofar as it focuses on the ways in which the selected documents construct the visual, and to some degree, subject English, in a particular context and timespan.

While document analysis is often used as one of several research methods, its use as a stand-alone method is also valid (Bowen, 2009, p.27), notably in research such as this in which successive documents with common purposes and audiences provide a means of tracking change and development. Further to this, document analysis can be viewed as efficient. As mentioned earlier, each of the curriculum iterations used in the research is publicly available and accessible online. Documents as data can also be described as ‘stable’, ‘unobtrusive’ and ‘non-reactive’ in that they are unaffected by the research process (Bowen, 2009; Merriam, 2009).

**Discourse analysis**

Discourse analysis is the ‘study of language-in-use’ (Gee, 2010, p. 7), and while there are many approaches to discourse analysis, the common focus is on how ‘specific identities, practices, knowledge or meanings are produced’ through language in specific contexts (Rapley, 2007, p.9). Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is often distinguished from ‘descriptive’ discourse analysis in its aim to reveal ‘the ideology behind the text’, and its concern with ‘the opacity of texts and utterances – the discursive constructions or stories that are embedded in texts’ (Locke, 2004, p. 39). Locke also stresses that the method’s purpose is ‘not to reveal some sinister and manipulative hand aiming to impose power over others, but to provide opportunities for critical detachment and review of the ways in which discourses act to pervade and construct our textual and social practices in a range of contexts’ (Locke, 2004, p. 89). Gee takes the view that ‘all discourse analysis needs to be critical...because language itself is...political’ (Gee, 2010, p.9). My thesis presents the analysis of the content and organisation of the language-in-use in the selected curriculum documents; however, from this analysis aspects of the permeating discourses of subject English are revealed.
While the positioning of the visual in English curricula may not seem to be particularly ideological or political, the influence of officially mandated curriculum warrants examination of the ways in which communication modes, practices and identities are construed in a compulsory school subject. The analysis of language, and specifically the positioning of concepts associated with the visual, exposes the privileging of particular ways of knowing and doing. Gee distinguishes ‘discourse’ from Discourse and defines the latter as ‘the combination of language with other social practices’ (2010, p.7). This research focuses on the analysis of the curriculum documents themselves and therefore is more concerned with ‘discourse’; however, while the enactment of the selected curricula is not within the scope of this thesis, this research does prompt questions associated with the Discourses of policymakers, curriculum writers and practising (English) teachers (Gee, 2010, p.190).

The importance of context

Acknowledgement of context is crucial in discourse analysis as the language used provides information about its context and ‘vice versa’ (Gee, 2010, p.21). According to Gee, ‘critical discourse analysis argues that language-in-use is always part and parcel of, and partially constitutive of, specific social practices’ (Gee, 2010, p.87). This research analyses the language and organisation of the selected curriculum documents, and specifically, the positioning of the visual, and reveals aspects of the social practices and discourses of subject English, but also of the Australian (and specifically, the Victorian) education context in the first two decades of the twenty-first century.

The analyses of the selected curricula also reveal what Gee calls a figured world, ‘a picture of a simplified world that captures what is typical or normal’ (Gee, 2010, p. 89). This ‘typicality’ or normality is, of course, relative to context. Figured worlds are not static, as what passes as ‘normal’ or ‘typical’ may change; however, if aspects of the figured world are taken-for-granted then reform or development is thwarted (Gee, 2010, pp.89-90). The concept of the figured world is relevant to my research, in that mandated English curricula construe (or consolidate or reproduce) what should be viewed as ‘typical’ or ‘normal’ in subject English within a particular context. Drawing on Gee’s Building Tasks of Language (discussed below), aspects of what is assumed to be ‘normal’ and ‘typical’ of English curricula are revealed.
This is relevant to the analysis of the positioning of the visual over successive curriculum iterations, particularly in addressing the following research sub-questions:

*How have representations of the visual evolved in curriculum iterations?*

and

*What are the implications of the findings from the above questions, for visual learning, and for subject English (in the twenty-first century)?*

Given the dynamic nature of ‘text’ and ‘literacies’ in the period spanning the selected curricula, and the proliferation of the visual in ‘in-school’ and ‘out-of-school’ environments, the extent to which the figured world and discourse practices of the visual and English are built on prior assumptions, remain static, reproduce or evolve has been evaluated.

**Gee’s Building Tasks of Language**

In order to ‘see the visual’ in the most recent iterations of Australian curriculum, and specifically, in order to analyse the ways in which the visual is defined, conceptualised and positioned in secondary English, the research presented in this thesis draws on Gee’s *Building Tasks of Language* (Gee, 2010, 2014). Gee’s model is based on the premise that written or spoken communications ‘construct or build seven things or seven areas of “reality” … or “seven building tasks” of language’ so in turn, ‘a discourse analyst can ask seven different questions about any piece of language-in-use’ (Gee, 2010, p.17).

Gee advocates the appropriation and adaptation of these tools to specific contexts (Gee, 2010, pp.11-12) and argues that using different tools of analysis gives validity to research (Gee, 2010, p.142). Drawing on these tools has assisted me to reveal what is beyond the ‘surface’ of the data (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p. 38), and specifically in this research, to probe beyond the surface of the curriculum documents to uncover the kinds of practices, identities and connections construed in relation to the visual in subject English.

*Table 1* presents the ways in which Gee’s Building Tasks of Knowledge have been drawn on to address the research questions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Gee’s Seven Building Tasks of Language key questions (Gee, 2010, 2011, 2014)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Application in this research involves the identification and analysis of:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1. Significance:** How is language being used to make certain things significant or not and in what ways? How is context relevant to the aspects made significant? | • the significant ‘narratives’ of each curriculum iteration in relation to the context in which they were created  
• the sequencing and frequency of references to the visual (such as ‘viewing’ and ‘images’) and the ways in which the visual is described or represented |
| **2. Activities (practices):** What practices or activities is this piece of language being used to enact? | • at a literal level, the practices, processes and activities linked to the visual and the organisation of these (in other words, how the curricula represent the activities and practices associated with the visual in English)  
• at a conceptual level, the types of activities and practices that the selected curricula (specifically in relation to the visual), encourages and supports (or ignores)  
• across the curriculum iterations, the extent to which the activities and practices associated with the visual ‘change or transform’ (Gee, 2010, p.18) |
| **3. Identities:** What identities is the language enacting (or enabling others to recognise as operative)? | • how the curricula construe the ‘identities’ of subject English and specifically, the visual in subject English  
• the extent to which pre-existing notions of what English and literacies should be  
• the assumptions made in the curricula about the identities of curriculum users (English teachers) |
| **4. Relationships:** What sort of relationship is the language seeking to enact with others? | • the ways in which the curricula construe relationships between policy-makers, curriculum writers, teachers and students, specifically in relation to the visual in English |
| **5. Politics:** What social/political perspective is the language communicating? | • at a literal level, references with ‘political’ overtones in the selected curricula  
• more conceptually, the positioning and valuing of the visual and viewing compared with other aspects of English |
What social goods are at stake in this context?

6. **Connections**: How does this language connect or disconnect things?

What connections or disconnections are being made or implied?
Are these connections valid or tenuous?

- the connections between the concepts, practices and texts associated with the visual in each curriculum level
- the extent to which curriculum representations of the visual are organised cumulatively and built on in successive curriculum levels
- the ways in which the curricula connect (or disconnect) the visual with the non-visual and the extent to which these connections are valid and warranted
- the representations of the visual in the three curriculum iterations and the connections between these

7. **Sign systems and knowledge**: How does language privilege or disprivilege specific sign systems or different ways of knowing?

What sign systems are construed as most prestigious or important?
Is the visual marginalised?

- the hierarchy of practices and resources in the selected English curricula, specifically the comparison of viewing and the visual with other communication modes and textual resources
- the implications of the above in the conceptualisation of subject English in the 21st century.

As may be inferred from Table 1, some of Gee’s ‘tools’ have been more useful than others in this research, and there is some overlap in the ways each of the tools has been utilised. The following discussion expands on the material presented in Table 1.

**Significance**

The first of Gee’s Building Tasks asks how language is used to make specific things significant or insignificant and in what ways (Gee, 2010, p. 17), and this tool has enabled the identification of both ‘big picture’ curriculum narratives and nuanced representations and positionings of the visual with each curriculum iteration.

The significance of language in the curriculum overviews has been analysed to extract the overarching narratives, themes, stresses and emphases, and what these narratives promote.
as important for students’ learning development (generally, and in English specifically) and why. The order, sequencing and frequency of references to the visual, and the ways in which the visual is described or represented have been identified and analysed in relation to these themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, pp. 64-65) The significance of the visual to the selected English curricula has been mapped across iterations to evaluate the extent to which representations of the visual have been reproduced or have evolved, and to identify gaps and omissions in the ways in which the visual is represented and positioned.

**Activities (and practices)**

The ways in which activities or practices associated with the visual in English are represented and positioned is central to this research. This ‘task’ has been applied to the research in a couple of ways. The ‘structure and patterning of activities’ (Gee, 2011, p.99) associated with the visual and the extent to which these activities or practices are organised cumulatively at successive levels have been examined.

As the selected curricula are standards-based, the use of verbs to denote activities, practices and skills at each curriculum level is significant. References to the visual have been identified throughout the English curricula, and the verbs and practices associated with the visual have been analysed. This analysis reveals the extent to which visual learning is sequenced developmentally or cumulatively. Activities and practices associated with the visual have also been compared with other practices construed as valuable in English in each curriculum iteration. The purpose of this was to identify hierarchies of practice, and to situate practices associated with the visual within those hierarchies.

On a more abstract level, the activities task has been applied with greater adherence to Gee’s concept and analysis question: *What practices or activities is this piece of language being used to enact?* The activities and practices that the selected curricula, specifically in relation to the visual, assume, encourage, support and ignore have been identified. This identification has implications for the enactment of curriculum, the ways in which it ‘directs teachers’ work’ (Honan, 2004, p. 99), but also for the conceptualisation of subject English in the twenty-first century more broadly.
**Identities**

Gee discusses the enactment or construing of *identities* through language in different contexts. Language is used in particular ways that ‘enact’ the identities of the language users and ‘help build identities for other people that ‘further the work [the language users] are doing building their own identity’ (Gee, 2014, p.116). In relation to curriculum analysis, these identities include those of policy-makers, curriculum writers, teachers and students.

While the ways in which the aforementioned-identities are construed in the selected curricula is acknowledged in this research, my appropriation of Gee’s *identities* tool is concerned more with the construction of ‘English’, ‘text’ and ‘literacy’, and specifically the ‘visual’ in relation to each of the above. The *identity* of subject English has been gauged through analysis of the rhetoric of subject overviews, definitions of text, and specific learning outcomes and content descriptions. Identities throughout and across curriculum iterations have been considered for inclusions, omissions, and level of consistency and ‘alignment of conceptualisation and discourses in the processes of curriculum development’ (Criddle et al, 2004, p.27). Importantly, the ‘identity’ of the visual in the context of English has been determined through the application of a number of Gee’s concepts, particularly, *significance, activities and sign systems and knowledge.*

**Relationships**

Gee characterises this concept as *identifying the sorts of relationships the language used seeks to enact with others*. The *relationships* building task is related to *identities* building, as any construction of identity in a specific context is often defined ‘by how we see and construe our relationships with other people, social groups, cultures and institutions’ (Gee, 2014, p.120).

As I interpret this building task to be related closely to enactment (of curricula, for example), it has not been a focus of my research; however, the ways in which the selected curricula construe relationships between policy makers, curriculum writers, teachers and students have been acknowledged, particularly in relation to the overarching curriculum statements. While the identified relationships may not explicitly refer to the visual, they do provide part of the narrative of the overall curriculum into which the visual is located, and in turn,
contribute to the conceptualisation of subject English and its accepted discourses (and ‘Discourses’).

**Politics**

As Gee argues, all curriculum materials and policy documents are constructed, and should never be treated as neutral or transparent. The language of curriculum is always political (Gee, 1999), and represents an official voice of the state and bureaucracy (Rossi *et al.*, 2009, p. 77). While the level of inclusion of the visual in English curricula may not seem particularly political, Gee’s defining of *politics* as the perspective the language communicates is relevant to this research. The ways in which the language of the documents constructs *what is ‘normal’, ‘good’, ‘right’, ‘appropriate’ and ‘valuable’* in education have been addressed in relation to the analysis of whole curriculum statements and the introductions to each English curriculum iteration. Political rhetoric is a feature of the curricula, particularly in subject overviews, and the mapping of this over three curriculum iterations stimulates examination of contextual factors at the time of publication used (Gee, 1999, p. 20). The language of curriculum documents, through inclusions, omissions, hierarchies of practice, and text selection presents a particular view of what is worthy for young people to know and do.

More specifically addressing the visual, the development of English curriculum in Australia has been a highly politicised practice in recent decades, with much media and social debate surrounding issues such as the teaching of literacy, high stakes test results and text selection. The development and method of literacy provision, as measured by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) results for example, is linked to citizenship, economic growth, national productivity and global competitiveness (Taylor, 2008, p. 308). As discussed in Chapters One and Two, debates about the definitions of ‘literacy’, ‘text’ and ‘English’ are crucial to my research, and I have argued that students’ engagement with the visual is crucial to each of these concepts.

**Connections**

The *connections* building task focuses on how language connects or disconnects things. In this research, connections between the concepts, practices and texts associated with the
visual at each curriculum level have been analysed in order to ascertain the extent to which curriculum representations of the visual are organised cumulatively and built on over achievement levels. Honan refers to these connections as the ‘lines’ or ‘trails’ that can be traced through curricula (Honan, 2004, p.101).

Also of significance are the connections (and disconnections) between the visual and the non-visual and the extent to which these are valid and warranted (or tenuous). This analysis includes, for example, the appropriation of existing literacy frameworks and practices to viewing and the visual.

As this research spans curricula from almost two decades, connections and developments in relation to the positioning of the visual in subject English have been analysed. Connections in successive curriculum iterations are examined, as readers and users of curriculum ‘make links between existing documents and requirements and previous ones’ (Betteney, 2010, p. 92).

**Sign systems and knowledge**

*Sign systems* refer to communication systems, or in Gee’s terms, the ways in which language privileges or disprivileges specific sign systems or ways of knowing (Gee, 2010). My research identifies the ways in which the representation, frequency and sequencing of references to the visual denote the privileging or disprivileging of sign systems and ways of knowing linked to the visual. Comparing references to the visual with other concepts has allowed for the identification of ‘hierarchies’ of practice in the selected English curricula. Furthermore, this research identifies the prominence given to knowledge, skill and aesthetic references to the visual, gaps and omissions in the ways in which the visual is represented, and ‘bias towards some aspects or strands of curriculum over others’ (Johnston, 2007, p.359).

The specificity of language associated with the visual (as well as other sign systems) is evaluated. These aspects suggest implications for the conceptualisation of subject English in the focussed timespan.
Other analytical tools

Gee’s discourse analysis tools are influenced by Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday, 1978). My research draws on SFL concepts in relation to the identification and significance of verbs/processes/practices such as: describe, explain, demonstrate, identify, deconstruct, critique, devise, analyse, challenge, evaluate, revise, create, design, implement, perform, (Rossi et al, 2009, p. 83) in subject rationale, overviews, and most particularly with reference to the visual in student learning outcomes and content descriptions. Bloom’s Taxonomy (1956) and its revised iteration (Krathwohl, Anderson & Bloom, 2001) which classify cognitive processes into ‘lower order’ (remembering, understanding, applying) and ‘higher order’ (analysing, evaluating, creating) have also been drawn on to evaluate the inclusion and sequencing of practices (and resources) associated with the visual.

Maton acknowledges the importance of the ‘structuring of knowledge’ in curricula and draws on Bernstein’s model (Bernstein, 2000), in which horizontal discourse is defined as ‘local’, segmentally organised, and context-specific and -dependent, while vertical discourse is less dependent on context and integrates knowledge and skills acquired at prior curriculum levels (Bernstein, 2000, pp. 155-174). Maton identifies hierarchical (or vertical) and horizontal curriculum structures according to the extent to which individual standards, units, learning domains and curriculum levels build upon knowledge from previous units through integration or through segmental aggregation (Maton, 2009, p. 45). In Maton’s model, ‘cumulative’ learning is knowledge that builds on and integrates past knowledge, and where students transfer knowledge across contexts and levels; ‘segmented’ learning, according to Maton, occurs when ideas or skills are ‘strongly tied to contexts of acquisition’ thus problematising transfer and knowledge building (Maton, 2009, p. 43). This research reveals how the visual is located and positioned at different curriculum levels to evaluate the extent to which students’ expected development of visual education knowledge and skills are cumulatively or segmentally structured. As each of the curriculum iterations selected for this research is standards-based, it follows that each curriculum level will build on the skills and knowledge accumulated at previous levels.
Literacy and visual learning theoretical models

In addition to the analytical lenses and tools described above, existing models of literacy and visual literacy pedagogy have been applied to the positioning of the visual in the selected curricula. Of the models discussed in Chapter Two, Luke and Freebody’s Four Resources Model (1999) (and variations of it, notably Serafini’s 2012 model) has been a useful reference point, particularly as support materials associated with recent English curricula in Victoria make reference to the model (VCAA, 2017). Green’s 3-D model (Green, 2002), Cope and Kalantzis’ revisited multiliteracies pedagogy that promotes ‘open-ended questions about meaning’ (2009) and Avgerinou and Pettersson’s concepts of ‘visual thinking’, ‘visual learning’ and ‘visual communication’ (Avgerinou & Pettersson, 2011) have also been considered when analysing the ways in which the visual is represented and positioned in the curricula. As this research has endeavoured to address the affective domain, Callow’s model (2005) acknowledging the compositional, the critical, as well as the affective, has also been useful. While the abovementioned models are not discussed explicitly in the ‘data’ chapters (Chapters Four, Five and Six), they are discussed in relation to the synthesis of the analyses in Chapter Seven.

Steps involved in the analysis

At the commencement of the analysis, a close reading of the introductory materials for each of the selected curriculum iterations was undertaken. This enabled the identification of the significant themes underpinning each iteration and contextual factors drawn on in the language of the documentation. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Gee’s Building Tasks of Language (2010, 2011, 2014) served to focus and structure this analysis.

After gauging the significant ‘narratives’ of each curriculum iteration, the analysis moved to subject English curricula specifically. In each instance, the overview and focus statements for the English curriculum were analysed to identify the key themes and the sequencing of these. These themes were compared with those identified in the materials introducing the whole curriculum. Specific references to ‘viewing’, the ‘visual’ and associated terms such as ‘images’ and ‘artworks’ were identified and coded according to their frequency, their
positions within the statements and their relationship with other communication modes, concepts and resources such as ‘reading’, ‘writing’, ‘texts’, ‘literacy’ and ‘literature’.

Close analysis of the English frameworks and achievement standards at each curriculum level followed. The level statements and standards comprising literal or implicit reference to ‘viewing’, the visual, and associated concepts were identified as pertinent ‘data’ for specific attention (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). These were presented via tabular form (as demonstrated in Chapters Four, Five and Six), with the practices/activities and resources associated with the visual coded and highlighted. This colour-coding enabled me to trace the connections (or disconnections) between each curriculum level and to build a comprehensive picture of the positioning of the visual in each curriculum iteration.

After completing the analysis of each of the selected curricula, a synthesis of the analyses was undertaken to evaluate the ways in which the positioning of the visual has evolved. This synthesis also enabled me to identify any alignment between the positioning of the visual and (the previously discussed) contemporary pedagogical and theoretical models of literacy and visual education. These latter stages of the research process enabled me to draw some conclusions about how the positioning of the visual in the selected curricula provides insight into the conceptualisations of subject English as presented in mandated curricula.

Table 2 presents a summary of the research steps, the analytical tools used at each stage, and the ways in which these stages address the research questions.

Table 2. Summary of research processes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Analytical tool/s and processes</th>
<th>Research question/s addressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview statements and introductory materials for each overall curriculum iteration (excepting <em>The Victorian Curriculum</em>)</td>
<td>Identification of the themes and narratives of each curriculum iteration</td>
<td>Gee’s Building Tasks of Language: significance, politics (Gee, 2010, 2011, 2014)</td>
<td>How is the visual positioned in Australian curriculum documents in subject English?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undertaken to position the research within particular contexts</td>
<td>Attention to the ordering, emphasis and frequency of identified themes and concepts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introductory materials for each iteration of the English curriculum</td>
<td>Identification of aims and initiatives in each English curriculum iteration and therefore, how English is conceptualised in each context</td>
<td>Gee’s Building Tasks of Language: significance, activities/practices, identities, politics, sign systems and knowledge (Gee, 2010, 2011, 2014) Highlighting of references (both explicit and implicit) to ‘viewing’ and the ‘visual’ in relation to other communication modes and textual resources</td>
<td>How is the visual positioned in Australian curriculum documents in subject English? What are the implications for visual learning and for subject English?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>English curriculum frameworks, including learning outcomes and achievement standards at each curriculum for compulsory primary and secondary schooling</td>
<td>Analysis of the practices and resources associated with the visual</td>
<td>Gee’s Building Tasks of Language: significance, activities/practices, identities, sign systems and knowledge, connections (Gee, 2010, 2011, 2014) Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy (2001) and the hierarchy of practices and thinking Maton’s theory of curriculum structure</td>
<td>How is the visual positioned in Australian curriculum documents in subject English? Are there gaps and inconsistencies in the ways in which the visual is represented? Is curriculum associated with the visual structured cumulatively? Is a pedagogical model evident in the positioning of the visual in the selected curricula?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English introductory materials and specific frameworks from each curriculum iteration</td>
<td>Evaluation of the extent to which overviews and introductory statements for each</td>
<td>Gee’s Building Tasks of Language: significance, activities/practices, identities, sign systems and knowledge, connections (Gee, 2010, 2011, 2014)</td>
<td>How is the visual positioned in Australian curriculum documents in subject English?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis drawn from each of the curriculum iterations</td>
<td>Mapping of references associated with and positioning of the visual across successive curriculum iterations to ascertain static or dynamic discourse and supported pedagogy. Revealing of the hierarchy of sign systems and knowledge in subject English. Identifying the conceptualisations of subject English in the selected curricula.</td>
<td>Gee’s Building Tasks of Language: significance, activities/practices, identities, sign systems and knowledge, connections (Gee, 2010, 2011, 2014) Comparison of the ways in which viewing and the visual and other communication modes (for example, reading and writing) are positioned. Using theoretical and pedagogical models of English and visual literacy as lenses for critique.</td>
<td>Are there gaps and inconsistencies in the ways in which the visual is represented? Is a pedagogical model evident in the positioning of the visual in the selected curricula? How have representations of the visual evolved in curriculum iterations? What are the implications of the findings from the above questions, for visual learning, and for subject English?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter conclusion

This chapter has presented the rationale for, parameters of, and research methods used to evaluate the positioning of the visual in four successive iterations of English curricula in the Australian state of Victoria, encompassing the period 2000 to 2017. The convergence of a number of analytical ‘tools’ and theoretical constructs, such as those drawn on in this research, gives it validity (Gee, 2010, p.136). Researching the ways in which the visual is represented and positioned in mandated curricula, while useful in itself, also helps to reveal the prominent discourses of contemporary subject English and literacies. As Gee comments, language ‘always simultaneously reflects and constructs the context in which it is used’ (Gee, 2010, p.120).

The following three chapters, Chapters Four, Five and Six, apply the methods discussed in this chapter to the selected curriculum iterations. Chapter Seven synthesises these analyses to provide an overview of the positioning of the visual in subject English and to draw conclusions about the significance of the research.
...we attempt to broaden this understanding of literacy and literacy teaching and learning to include negotiating a multiplicity of discourses...we want to extend the idea and scope of literacy pedagogy to account for the context our culturally and linguistically diverse and increasingly globalised societies, for the multifarious cultures that interrelate and the plurality of texts that circulate (New London Group, 1996, p.61).

Chapter introduction

This chapter presents analysis of the Curriculum and Standards Framework II (CSF II) (VBoS, 2000), and specifically, CSF II: English curriculum documents. The CSF II curriculum design retained the standards-based structure first implemented in the preceding CSF (VBoS, 1995), yet was intended to further highlight aspects such as literacy and numeracy and information and communications technology. As discussed previously, the timing of CSF II is highly significant to my research, coming at the turn of the century, and during the period when concepts such as Multiliteracies theory (New London Group, 1996) were gaining momentum. It is also significant that references to ‘viewing’ and the ‘visual’ were made specific in the curriculum documentation.

As discussed in Chapter Three, Gee’s Building Tasks of Language (2010, 2011, 2014) are drawn on to frame the analysis, and contemporary theoretical and pedagogical models associated with English, literacy and visual literacy have also influenced the interpretations of the selected curriculum documentation. In analysing the positioning of the visual, some of the ways in which subject English is construed in the CSF II (and therefore by the ‘official’ voice of the Victorian Department of Education at the time) are identified and examined.
The analysis presented in this chapter includes that of the overarching statements for CSF II generally, followed by specific analysis of the positioning of the visual in the CSF II: English curriculum documentation.

**Context and Significance in the CSF II Overview Statements**

*Context*, as conceptualised by Gee (2014), is highly significant to the design, production and dissemination of mandated curricula. The *CSF II* overview statements (the documentation introducing the entire curriculum), declare that the curriculum acknowledges the skills and knowledge students *now* need to prepare them for work and further learning in an ‘information-rich’ world (my italics) and that it prepares students for active citizenship on national and global levels. The themes drawn from the overview statements provide a sense of the ‘narrative’ of *CSF II*; they highlight the kinds of learning construed as valuable by Victorian education policy-makers and curriculum designers at the turn of the twenty-first century. While there is no explicit reference to the visual in the *CSF II* overview statements, the implications are that the ‘skills and knowledge’ needed in 2000 are different from those that have been relied on in the past.

Connections can be made between the ways in which the visual is represented and positioned in the *CSF II* and the statements in the introductory materials that emphasise the importance of information and communication technologies and evolving communication modes. The *CSF II* Foreword closes by indicating that a revised edition of the *CSF* was required for students ‘now’ so that due emphasis could be given to information technology; thus, this sign system or knowledge area is privileged for student ‘development of workplace-related skills’ and ‘vocational opportunities’. Information technology is positioned with literacy and numeracy as essential to students’ learning at the turn of the twenty-first century (VBoS, 2000, p. 1).

The *context* and *significance* of the *CSF II* overview statements construe the ways in which the curriculum designers shape what is important to learning in the early twenty-first century. By making significant the links between the aims of the (new and improved) *CSF II*, national progress, and local and global citizenship, it can be inferred that users of the curriculum
(teachers) are required to acknowledge and develop the new skills and knowledge required for students’ success in an increasingly globalised world.

The CSF II: English curriculum

English is one of the CSF II’s Key Learning Areas (KLAs), each of which comprises six levels of student achievement. The six levels are aligned to the years of compulsory schooling from Preparatory to Year 10, with Levels 1 to 4 corresponding to primary schooling, and Levels 5 and 6 linked to secondary schooling from Years 7 to 10. CSF II English comprises overview materials including: a rationale, subject goals, and descriptions of the English strands and sub-strands. Each level of English is introduced by a statement about key objectives, which is followed by the ‘achievement standards’ comprised of specific student learning outcomes, and indicators, which teachers are directed to use as the basis for measuring student achievement.

CSF II: English Overview Statements

Context and Significance

When focusing on CSF II: English specifically, it is evident that some of the significant themes from the general overview statements (discussed above) are maintained. The significant theme of the CSF II: English overview statements is that the study of English enables students to be active citizens and to engage with ‘global communities’. The English Rationale opens with a declaration that ‘active and effective participation in Australian society’ depends on the ‘ability to speak, listen, read, view and write with confidence, purpose and enjoyment (VBoS, 2000, p. 5). The ‘dependence’ on the practices named, including ‘viewing’, positions them and the study of English generally, as fundamental to ‘being’ Australian and patriotic, while also engaging with the opportunities of globalisation.

Activities (and practices)

As discussed in Chapter Three, this research appropriates the concept of activities on different levels. The first one of these, and closest to Gee’s own description, relates to the ways in which the curriculum documentation construes activities that are ‘socially
recognised’ or ‘culturally supported’ and which involve ‘sequencing or combining actions in certain specified ways’ (Gee, 2014, p. 95). In other words, this definition relates to how the CSF II: English constructs activities or practices that are seen as normal or institutionally significant, in this case, to the readers and users of the curriculum, the members of the subject English discourse community. On the second level, and given their importance in standards-based curricula, activities or practices associated with the visual are identified and analysed in relation to their positioning.

When analysing the activities or practices associated with the visual in the CSF II: English overview statements, no hierarchical distinction between ‘viewing’ and the other practices of English: ‘speaking’; ‘listening’; ‘reading’; and ‘writing’ is evident. According to the opening of CSF II: English:

Active and effective participation in Australian society depends on the ability to speak, listen, read, view and write with confidence, purpose and enjoyment in a wide range of contexts (VBoS, 2000, p. 5).

Like the other practices, specific naming of ‘viewing’ appears three times on the first page of the introductory statements (VBoS, 2000, p. 5), suggesting that ‘viewing’ and associated practices and resources are given particular attention in the curriculum standards to follow. The positioning of ‘viewing’ in these examples suggests that it is as important as the other communication ‘modes’ addressed in English, but there is also an assumption that the readers and users of the curriculum will see its inclusion as ‘normal’ and accepted. The latter is particularly significant, given that its inclusion in subject English curriculum is new in CSF II.

A page later, in discussion of the English strands, ‘viewing’ is no longer identified as a distinct practice, having been subsumed into ‘reading’ which ‘refers to all ways of constructing meaning from print and non-print texts (VBoS, 2000, p. 7). It is also curious that in the naming of the strands of English, ‘reading’, linked to ‘books, magazines, posters, charts, CD-ROMS and Internet sites, is made distinct from ‘viewing [my italics] texts such as films, videos, television programs and graphic materials’ (VBoS, 2000, p. 7). This distinction
serves to align ‘viewing’ with multimodal texts only and does not fully address images ‘viewed’ in static texts such as photographs, artworks and illustrations.

The positioning of the visual and multimodal is also inconsistent in the CSF II: English writing strand. The writing strand is defined as referring ‘to all ways of creating, composing, editing and publishing texts, including the use of word processing and multimedia software’ (VBoS, 2000, p. 7). ‘All ways’ suggests that this includes the creation of visual and multimodal texts, given the wide definition of ‘text’ (specifically discussed below), so it follows that the ways in which students develop these texts should be specifically addressed in the curriculum, even in this relatively early era of digital and multimodal texts.

Also of some significance to this research is the specific naming of the practices of ‘express[ing] feelings’; ‘tak[ing] pleasure in using texts’; drawing ‘enjoyment’ from study, and ‘linking to personal experience’ in the English Rationale (VBoS, 2000, p. 5); thus the validity of the affective and aesthetic affordances of the subject are made clear. While this type of aesthetic response is not linked specifically to the visual, it is implied that the practices named above are relevant to the range of texts and modes recommended (or mandated) for study in English.

Named teacher practices focus on assessment, as teachers use the CSF II to monitor ‘the achievements of students against [the] standards’ and the ‘literacy achievement at every stage of P - 10 schooling’ (VBoS 2000, p. 6). Given the naming of ‘viewing’ as an integral aspect of the English curriculum in several instances in the introductory statements, the implication is that strategies for assessing engagement with and responses to the visual are available or known to teachers. The teacher practices named also include ‘explicit’ teaching, which indicates that students’ development of knowledge and skills across the English strands and in relation to the ‘array of texts’, including visual texts, will be supported by deliberate teacher scaffolding. Teachers are advised to ‘draw from’ the ‘array of texts’ which includes ‘storybooks’, ‘posters’, ‘performances of plays’, ‘films’ ‘advertisements’ and ‘communications composed on, or transmitted by, computers or other technological tools, such as multimedia’ (VBoS, 2000, p.6). Given the themes and aims of CSF II English (discussed earlier), and that texts are ‘central’ to the study of English (see below), it can be inferred that teachers’ selection of and approaches to texts will impact on their students’
development in English, but also as effective communicators, thinkers and contributors to twenty-first century society.

**Identities: Subject English, language, literac(ies) and texts**

The emphases on learning for a globalised world (as discussed above) are consolidated by the identification in the Rationale of ‘the broader concept of literacy’ (VBoS, 2000, p.5). According to the introduction to *CSF II: English*, literacy is the ‘learning of signs and symbols used to make meaning and learning to read, write and speak within a cultural context’ and a ‘set of active, dynamic and interactive practices that involves making meaning from and constructing meaning through texts’ (VBoS, 2000, p. 5). While ‘viewing’ is not explicitly mentioned in this definition, the reference to ‘signs and symbols’ suggests that the understanding and use of semiotic and visual ‘languages’ are part of this ‘broader concept of literacy’ and subject English. Despite this, and the inclusion of several examples of the ‘metalanguage’ of speaking and writing, there is little reference to specific terminology associated with visual texts or viewing. ‘Non-verbal elements of communication’ such as body language, and ‘the graphic elements of texts, such as the impact of illustrations on the meaning of a text’, are mentioned in relation to ‘linguistic structures and features’ (VBoS, 2000, p. 10), thus positioning these non-verbal and visual elements of communication as merely supplementary to verbal elements.

Texts ‘remain the principal focus of the English classroom’ as they ‘set the context at each level’ of the curriculum (VBoS, 2000, p. 7). Given this focus, is it significant that the specified text types include several with visual components. Texts are classified as ‘literature’, ‘everyday texts’, ‘media texts’, and ‘workplace texts’. Each of these text classifications is defined and constructed; for example, literature is named as ‘fundamental to the English curriculum’ through its representation, re-creation, shaping and exploring of ‘human experience’, thus reiterating the importance of aesthetic and personal responses. Explicitly named text types include picture storybooks (literature); labels, timetables, signs and web pages (everyday texts); and graphics, television, film, video and the Internet (media texts) (VBoS, 2000, p. 8). It follows that aesthetic engagement and response are relevant to texts beyond the verbal, as ‘literary’ texts include visual elements. In this curriculum iteration
then, ‘texts’ clearly include examples with visual components, and the rationale for ‘literature’ in particular acknowledges aesthetic and personal responses as part of the rationale for this subject.

All of the above factors suggest the ways in which the identities of the curriculum users (primarily teachers) are construed in relation to the visual in subject English. Teachers are encouraged to include opportunities for students’ ‘viewing’ within their enactment of the curriculum and to introduce a range of textual resources, including visual texts, into their teaching. Despite this, their approaches to visual components are not necessarily required to be distinct from those utilised in teaching reading, and as the visual is positioned as largely supplementary to the verbal, the implication is that teachers’ and students’ visual learning skills are somewhat negotiable.

In revealing the identities discussed above, assumptions may also be made about the curriculum producers. They ‘give a nod’ to new literacies, thus presenting themselves as aware of contemporary research and theory, yet do not reveal particular knowledge of the specific metalanguage or pedagogy associated with ‘new texts’, and specifically the visual.

**Relationships**

Linked to the previous point, the message from policy-makers and curriculum producers to teachers (and students) is that while the traditional notions of ‘English’, ‘literacy’, ‘language’, ‘literature’ and ‘text’ are being challenged, curriculum users can be reassured that their previous approaches to the enactment of curriculum can be largely maintained. This may be seen as an attempt to assuage teachers who are expected to grapple with several curriculum iterations during their careers.

**Politics**

The significance, identities and relationships uncovered in CSF II: English (and discussed above) are closely related to the curriculum’s politics, as they suggest the motivations of the policy-makers and curriculum writers to produce the ‘preferred’ versions of subject English, English teachers and successful English students.
A further important aspect of the politics of the CSF II: English is the inclusion of the ‘National Literacy Benchmarks’, ‘used for reporting achievement in three aspects of literacy – reading, writing and spelling – at Years 3 and 5’ (VBoS, 2000, p. 11). At the time of CSF II’s publication and implementation, the VBoS was responsible for the Achievement Improvement Monitor (AIM) mandatory testing program for students in Years 3 and 5. The naming of ‘reading, writing and spelling’ construe a definition of ‘literacy’ that is deemed assessable and of national significance. Conversely, the implication is that the areas of ‘literacy’ not addressed specifically in the benchmarks do not contribute to this ‘nation-building’. This is emphasised by the use of visual elements in the AIM tests accessed (VCAA, 2009a). These test examples do contain occasional visuals, but they are largely decorative and gratuitous, and serve little purpose in relation to the actual test. This suggests that the mandatory testing aligned with the CSF II: English does not value nor accommodate the ‘monitoring’ of visual learning and ‘achievement’.

**Connections**

This analysis tool is used most explicitly in relation to the actual Achievement Standards (discussed below), and specifically how the CSF II: English introductory statements connect or disconnect with these Standards. Further to this are the stated connections between AIM testing and the curriculum (as discussed above).

**Sign systems and knowledge**

Despite the naming of ‘viewing’ as a specific practice in English, there are no explicit approaches for teaching and learning related to the visual in the CSF II: English overview materials. In contrast, several specific strategies are named for study of approaches to listening and speaking, reading and writing, (VBoS, 2000, p. 10).

Different levels of modality or certainty are used to describe students’ engagement with specific practices in English. Students ‘need to understand and control the English language’; are ‘actively involved in reading, viewing, writing, comparing and talking about texts’; and ‘are encouraged to explore and engage with a range of literature, everyday and media texts from their own and different cultures, to take pleasure in using texts to explore ideas and to think critically about their world and the global community’ (my italics) (VBoS, 2000, p. 5).
It is specifically stated that ‘the increasing use of technological tools has implications for literacy acquisition and development’ and that ‘new and emerging uses of literacy need to be considered in the English classroom’ (VBoS, 2000, p. 6). This statement appears to allude to ‘new literacies’, which include visual literacy.

**CSF II: English Achievement Standards and the visual**

The CSF II: English Achievement Standards comprise the Learning Outcomes and Indicators. The following analysis of these standards is organised and presented according to the English strands: Speaking and Listening, Reading, and Writing. In each of the tables linked to these strands, activities and practices linked to the visual are highlighted in blue, and resources associated with the visual are highlighted in orange. This highlighting helps to reveal how the language of the Standards positions the visual, and therefore, how significant the visual is in the English curriculum. Furthermore, connections or disconnections between references to the visual and viewing at successive curriculum levels are identified, and these enable comparison with progressions in other sign systems and knowledge of English, such as the verbal and linguistic.

**Speaking and Listening Standards**

Table 3 presents the CSF II: English Standards in the Speaking and Listening Strand that include references or inferences to the visual or ‘viewing’.

**Table 3.** The visual in the CSF II: English Speaking and Listening Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSF II English Level</th>
<th>Speaking and Listening Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Speaking and Listening Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.2 <strong>Vary speaking and listening</strong> for familiar situations</td>
<td><strong>Speak</strong> to a familiar formal group <strong>using the support</strong> of audio, <strong>visual or computer technology</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.1 <strong>Listen to and produce</strong> a small range of spoken texts that deal with familiar ideas and information</td>
<td><strong>Describe</strong> an activity, event or discussion to the class <strong>using supporting</strong> materials, such as data show, video or overheads.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.2 <strong>Vary speaking and listening</strong> for a small range of contexts, purposes and audiences</td>
<td><strong>Produce</strong> brief spoken texts with some of the distinguishing features of <strong>media texts such as advertisements</strong>, in order to <strong>persuade</strong> peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Identify and use several strategies for assisting spoken communication</td>
<td>Identify preparation needs and develop materials, such as audio, visual or computer aids, to support a spoken presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.1 Listen to and produce a range of spoken texts that deal with some unfamiliar ideas and information</td>
<td>Identify the main idea and supporting details of spoken reports or points of view and summarise these for others, using, for example, datashow or overheads.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.1 Listen to and produce a range of spoken texts dealing with some challenging themes and issues.</td>
<td>Communicate clearly to a group of peers using appropriate audiovisual aids, such as an overhead or datashow projector.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.1 Listen to and produce a range of spoken texts to examine different perspectives on complex themes and issues.</td>
<td>Discuss different perspectives on a complex issue using, for example, audio, film, video or multimedia, as support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Evaluate the strategies used by others to enhance presentation of spoken texts and select and use them appropriately.</td>
<td>Listen to the spoken texts of others, identifying and noting strategies used to interest and engage audiences, such as the incorporation of anecdotes or the use of overheads or a datashow.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the Speaking and Listening strand, visual resources and practices are positioned as supplementary to tasks such as formal oral presentations. The following analysis presents examples that illustrate this point.

There are no direct references to the visual in the Listening and Speaking strand at Level 1. In terms of identifying a developmental continuum of the use of visual and multimodal resources to support listening and speaking, there is no real differentiation between Standards 2.2 and 3.1, in that students are using the resources as accompaniments to ‘recall’ presentations. Standard 3.2 implies that students understand how features of media texts such as advertisements work to persuade audiences; this standard indicator calls on students to be able to identify, understand, apply and create these techniques in their own presentation. Presumably students are expected to work with these techniques in the reading and writing strands; nonetheless, this standard’s indicator is a significant jump from Standard 3.1. Standard 3.4 calls on students to ‘develop’ their visual or computer aids. While this seems more advanced than merely ‘using’ these materials as in Standards 2.2 and 3.1, it is assumed that students will have to develop the resources to suit their particular presentations in the earlier standards too.

Standard 4.1 and the associated indicator which requires students to ‘identify the main idea and supporting details of spoken reports or points of view and summarise these for others, using, for example, datashow or overheads. |
using, for example, datashow or overheads’ assumes that students understand the skills involved in using ‘datashows’ or ‘overheads’ effectively to ‘summarise’ key points in the oral presentations of peers, that is, in terms of selection and layout of content, in order to render these summaries worthwhile. Standard 5.1 also comprises receptive and productive modes as students ‘listen to’ and ‘produce’ spoken texts. The inclusion of both modes in this learning outcome suggests that students will learn the skills to produce their own texts through the modelling of those listened to. As one of the indicators for Standard 5.1 calls on students to ‘communicate clearly to a group of peers using appropriate audiovisual aids, such as an overhead or datashow projector’, we can assume that the modelling provided by the ‘listened to’ texts, comprises the use of visual and multimodal resources, even though ‘viewing’ is not mentioned explicitly.

Standard 6.1 again includes practices associated with receptive (‘listen to’) and productive (‘produce’) modes, as students are asked to demonstrate the examination of different perspectives on ‘complex themes and issues’ with ‘support’ from visual/multimodal aids such as film, video and multimedia. As in earlier standards, the wording does not make clear the kind of ‘support’ these resources are meant to provide; their inclusion could be construed as integral to the ‘examination’, or almost gratuitous, depending on whether their integration is assessed in relation to other multimodal aspects, such as the verbal and the gestural (New London Group, 1996).

Standard 6.4 appears to regress to the skills and knowledge required of students in Levels 2 and 3, in that the ‘use of overheads or a datashow’ appears to merely support the spoken text; however, higher level thinking (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Bloom, 1956) is suggested as students are expected to be able to ‘evaluate’ and critique the ways in which their peers have ‘incorporated’ resources such as overheads or datashows, and ‘apply’ these evaluations to the selection of appropriate resources and practices for their own presentations. This indicator suggests that peer modelling is an important strategy, but also that resources such as visual aids are significant in engaging audiences and creating interest and are thus linked to affective response.
**Reading Standards**

*Reading* is the strand most significant to the positioning of the visual, as ‘viewing’ is construed as part of and associated with ‘reading’. Table 4 presents the Reading standards that include references or inferences to the visual or ‘viewing’.

**Table 4.** The visual in the *CSF II: English* Reading Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum Level</th>
<th>Reading Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Reading Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td>1.5 Read and respond to simple texts with familiar content and predominately oral language structures</td>
<td>Read familiar texts, including non-print texts, and make links with own experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.6 Compare experiences and knowledge with information and ideas in texts</td>
<td>Identify similarities and differences between family and friends and characters represented in texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.8 Use a range of sources of information to make meaning from texts</td>
<td>Describe the purpose of familiar texts such as recipes, stories, maps or cartoons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td>2.5 (a) Read and respond to short texts with familiar ideas, information and vocabulary, predictable structures and frequent illustrations</td>
<td>Use title, cover illustration and knowledge of a text topic to predict meaning in texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.5 (b) Read and respond to short texts with familiar ideas and information, a small proportion of unfamiliar vocabulary, and low-level support from illustrations</td>
<td>Use illustrations to extend meaning when reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.6 (a) Identify the ways in which texts are constructed by authors and others</td>
<td>Identify the work of the illustrator and the author in familiar texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.7 (b) Identify and describe the linguistic structures and features of short texts with familiar ideas and information</td>
<td>Describe the graphic features of texts, such as keys, legends and simple diagrams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8 (a) <strong>Use</strong> basic strategies for selecting and interpreting texts</td>
<td><strong>Use titles, illustrations,</strong> personal experience and knowledge of the topic to predict content and text types. Use titles, illustrations, personal experience and knowledge of the topic to predict content and text types. <strong>Interpret</strong> short electronic texts with familiar ideas, information and vocabulary, predictable text structure and frequent illustrations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.5 (a) Read and respond to</strong> a small range of texts with familiar ideas and information, and some unfamiliar vocabulary and textual features</td>
<td><strong>Read and describe</strong> visual images in print and non-print texts such as advertisements, films or CD-ROM programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>3.6 (a) Identify the meaning of simple symbolic representations</strong> in texts.</td>
<td><strong>Interpret</strong> simple symbolic meanings of design, such as logotypes, icons and graphic images, in print and electronic texts. <strong>Identify</strong> simple symbolic representations of concepts such as the family or older people and compare these with personal experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>3.7 (a) Identify and describe</strong> the linguistic structures and features of a small range of texts</td>
<td><strong>Identify differences and similarities</strong> in simple cultural representations in texts, such as customs, dress or language use. <strong>Identify</strong> simple stereotypes in texts such as advertisements, picture books or magazines, and <strong>explain</strong> how they could have been presented differently. <strong>Describe and interpret</strong> the visual features of texts, such as diagrams or flow charts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>3.7 (b) Use knowledge</strong> of the linguistic structures and features of a small range of texts to <strong>construct meaning.</strong></td>
<td>Explain how the layout and presentation features of print, non-print and electronic texts, such as typefaces, illustrations and diagrams, assist in the construction of meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>3.8 (b) Use several strategies for selecting resources and locating and recording</strong> key information found in texts.</td>
<td><strong>Locate and organise</strong> information from texts, using strategies such as charts or graphic representations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.6 Explain</strong> how texts are constructed for particular purposes and audiences.</td>
<td><strong>Explain</strong> how writers or film makers deliberately construct texts to shape a reader’s response as in, for example, a horror story or film. <strong>Identify and explain</strong> the techniques used to influence and position particular audiences, in texts such as advertisements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>4.8 Use a range of strategies for selecting resources and interpreting</strong></td>
<td><strong>Use several strategies when reading and interpreting</strong> texts containing some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.5 <strong>Read and justify</strong> interpretation of a range of texts that present some challenging themes and issues.</td>
<td>Discuss the themes and issues explored in texts, such as novels, <strong>electronic texts</strong> or <strong>films</strong>, in relation to experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6 <strong>Explain</strong> possible reasons for different interpretations of a text.</td>
<td>Explain the ways in which texts, such as a <strong>picture book</strong> or poem, can convey more than one level of meaning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7 <strong>Explain</strong> how specific features of language use affect readers’ interpretation of texts.</td>
<td>Explain how specific features, such as <strong>camera angles in non-print texts</strong>, contribute to meaning and affect a reader’s interpretation. Describe some techniques used to establish mood in, for example, <strong>films</strong>, poetry and short stories.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8 <strong>Use strategies to select resources, locate, interpret and synthesise</strong> key information and ideas from a range of texts.</td>
<td>Use notes or point form summaries or <strong>graphic representations</strong> to synthesise key information and ideas from a range of sources into a coherent text.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.6 <strong>Explain</strong> how texts are shaped by the time, place and cultural setting in which they are created.</td>
<td>Identify the significance of <strong>symbols</strong> or <strong>motifs</strong> in print or <strong>non-print texts</strong> that have specific meaning to a culture or a particular period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7 <strong>Compare</strong> the linguistic structures and features of different texts, <strong>analysing</strong> the demands, limitations and advantages of each.</td>
<td>Compare the linguistic structures and features of different text types dealing with the same theme or issue, such as a <strong>picture book</strong> and an adult history text on the Holocaust. Compare and contrast the typical features or conventions of particular text types, such as the use of <strong>imagery</strong> and <strong>stereotyping</strong> in advertisements or symbolism in stories and poetry.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.8 <strong>Apply strategies to support understanding</strong> of dense or extended texts</td>
<td>Use cues provided by <strong>headings</strong>, <strong>illustrations</strong> and <strong>tables</strong> to support understanding. Construct diagrams, <strong>concept maps</strong> or other aids to <strong>recall and process information or ideas</strong> gained from dense or extended texts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the close association of ‘viewing’ with ‘reading’, and the acknowledgement of a number of practices and resources associated with the visual in the Reading strand, the positioning of the visual is inconsistent and does not adhere to a developmental learning
framework across the curriculum levels. The following discussion refers to specific analysis that illustrate this positioning.

At Level 1, students’ ‘reading’ of ‘familiar texts including non-print texts’ implies that ‘reading’ is associated with a range of text types; it also suggests that some non-print texts are ‘familiar’ enough to students that they can read and draw links to their own experience from them. Similarly, Standard 1.6 assumes that students will be ‘familiar’ enough with the multimodal components of texts such as maps and cartoons that they will be able to identify and compare their purposes and link these to their own experiences. The use of cover and other illustrations to ‘make, ‘predict’ and ‘extend’ meaning in Standard 1.8 implies that students are reasonably visually literate, depending on the illustrated texts chosen, and also that they have access to the dominant cultural conceptualisations of reading and interpretation.

The Level 2 Reading learning outcomes suggest student development in reading, for example Standard 2.5(b) indicates that students’ reading will have progressed from 2.5(a) as less support is required from illustrations. I acknowledge that learning to read print is a focus in these early years of schooling; however, the wording of these standards construes illustrations as merely supplementary to print text without their own intrinsic value. Neither do these standards acknowledge explicitly students’ existing understandings of the visual in order to establish meaning.

Standard 2.5(a) indicators present practices associated with recalling, while 2.5(b) indicates a progression to ‘understanding’ a range of visual and multimodal texts as students ‘predict’, ‘infer’, ‘interpret’, and ‘apply’ (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Bloom, 1956). 2.5(b) indicators suggest that students are able to ‘read’ illustrations and labelled diagrams and create their own graphic representations, each of these activities comprising significant visual components. This seems disconnected to the learning outcome’s positioning of illustrations merely as ‘low-level support’ for students’ development of reading. Much is assumed about the ways in which students will be able to use models of visual texts as part of the process of developing their own.
Standards 2.6(a), 2.7(b) and 2.8(a) focus on the practices of ‘identifying’ and ‘describing’ features of a range of texts, including visual components, and the use of knowledge to predict, thus echoing practices named at Level 1. At Level 2, specific text types such as ‘keys’, ‘legends’ and ‘simple diagrams’ are named for the first time, suggesting some progression from the ‘familiar texts’ and illustrations mentioned at Level 1. Level 2 also sees the inclusion of ‘interpret[ing] short electronic texts with familiar ideas, information and vocabulary, predictable text structures and frequent illustrations’, yet it is not clear how these electronic texts present intrinsic learning experiences different to those available in print or hard copy texts. ‘Predictable text structure’ suggests a linear structure, more consistent with hard copy rather than electronic or web-based texts. The positioning of ‘frequent illustrations’ implies that these will assist students in their interpretations, and that the ideas, information and vocabulary presented align with the illustrations.

This conceptualisation of the visual as complementary or supplementary to print and verbal text is continued at Level 3, in which students: ‘read and describe visual images in print and non-print texts such as advertisements, films or CD-ROM programs’; identify stereotypes in advertisements, picture books and magazines; and explain how features such as typeface, illustrations and diagrams are organised in the layout of ‘print, non-print and electronic texts’. Each of these indicators positions visual components as supporting verbal elements.

Standard 3.6(a) does imply that the identification and interpretation of symbolic representations may draw on specific knowledge of the construction of visual texts, while the interpretation and organisation of information in flow charts allow students to produce resources drawing on their understanding of spatial literacy and logical sequencing.

Standard 4.6 appears to progress logically from Standards 3.6(a), 3.7(a) and 3.7(b) in that students are moving from identifying how the ‘construction’ of visual/multimodal aspects such as symbols and dress construe meaning, to acquiring understanding of the techniques involved in film making and advertising to position viewers. The fact that ‘film makers’ and ‘film’ appear in the same indicator as ‘writers’ and ‘horror story’ for Standard 4.6 suggests that these roles and the construction and features of the respective texts do not require differentiation; it is also curious that a particular genre – horror - is juxtaposed with the generic ‘film’. This suggests that writers use specific techniques to ‘shape a reader’s
response’ according to genre, whereas, all filmmakers draw on the same techniques, whatever the genre. The omission of ‘viewers’ in this indicator is also noteworthy given students’ engagement with film texts will be largely visual.

Analysis of the indicators for Standards 5.5, 5.6 and 5.7 reveal similar positionings of visual and multimodal texts, in that ‘novels, electronic texts and films’, ‘picture books and poems’, and ‘films, poetry and short stories’ are grouped together in the respective indicators. While it is important that visual and multimodal texts are named, the groupings of texts suggest that the techniques used to position readers/viewers are the same for each text type. In fact, the crucial aspects of these standards are students’ identification of themes and issues, understanding of levels of meaning, and articulation of ways that mood is created, so the structures and characteristics of the actual text types mentioned are almost superfluous.

Standard 5.8 suggests some progression from the very similar Standard 3.8(b) in that at Level 3, students ‘locate and organise information’ using charts or graphic representations, whereas at Level 5, graphic representations are used to ‘synthesize’ information from a range of sources into a ‘coherent text’. Critical literacy approaches are evident at Level 6, which demand that students are attuned to contextual and ideological factors significant to text production. The ‘linguistic structures and features’ to be compared to satisfy Standard 6.7, appear to encompass the features and structures of visual texts, yet those mentioned in the indicator could refer to the ways in which words are used in the ‘picture book’ compared to the presumably denser language of ‘an adult history text’ as there is no explicit mention of the ways in which illustrations in each text type can be compared.

The ‘strategies to support understanding’ mentioned in Standard 6.8 once again position visual components such as illustrations as supplementary sources to aid meaning making from verbal elements. The construction of diagrams and concept maps to ‘recall and process information’ is regressive from the ‘synthesis’ and coherence required at Standard 5.8.

**Writing Standards**

_Table 5_ presents the Writing Standards that include references or inferences to the visual or ‘viewing’. The term ‘writing’ suggests creation of verbal and linguistic texts; however, several of the indicators highlight the incorporation and production of ‘artwork’, ‘sketches’,
graphic representations’, ‘diagrams’, ‘concept maps’, ‘photographs’ and ‘multimedia presentations’ to support students’ writing development.

Table 5. The visual in the CSF II: English Writing Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum Level</th>
<th>Writing Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Writing Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.9 Write texts that convey intended ideas and information, using a small range of text types.</td>
<td>Write procedures using diagrams or sketches to support the reader’s understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.12 Use a range of strategies to plan, compose, revise and edit texts dealing with some unfamiliar ideas and information.</td>
<td>Plan and draft texts dealing with some unfamiliar ideas and information using a variety of techniques, such as brainstorming, making notes or graphic representations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.11 Identify and control the linguistic structures and features of written texts that present some challenging themes and issues.</td>
<td>Support the presentation of some challenging themes and issues by incorporating materials such as graphics, photographs or artwork.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.10 Identify the characteristics and expectations of particular audiences and accommodate or resist these expectations when writing.</td>
<td>Compose texts, such as a feature article or procedure or web page, to accommodate the needs, expectations and interests of a particular audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.12 (extension) Use a range of strategies to plan, compose, revise and edit texts dealing with complex and abstract subject matter.</td>
<td>Maintain a consistent point of view about abstract subject matter when constructing, for example, arguments, proposals or multimedia presentations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.11 (extension) Write a range of texts characterised by complexity of purpose and abstract subject matter.</td>
<td>Plan texts that present complex and abstract subject matter using, for example, concept maps or computer software.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Writing strand obviously focuses on the development of students’ capacity to use verbal language to create a range of text types. Having said this, given the definitions of ‘text’ and ‘language’ in the CSF II: English overview materials, and the positioning of ICT and ‘new’ communications in the introduction to CSF II (discussed earlier), it can be assumed that ‘writing’ includes the production of texts that deviate from more traditional forms such as sentences, paragraphs, essays, short stories and poetry, that is, the creation of texts containing multimodal and digital components, including visual elements. The following discussion examines the ways in which these components are positioned across the curriculum levels.
At Levels 1 and 2, there are no specific references to practices and resources associated with the visual. This is surprising given the extent to which visual texts are utilised in the early years of schooling. At Level 3, the use of ‘diagrams or sketches to support the readers’ understanding’ of students’ written texts again relegates the production of visual texts as supplementary to that of linguistic texts. Students’ grounding in ‘locat[ing] and organis[ing] information …using strategies such as charts or graphic representations’ at Level 3 is utilised at Standard 4.12 in which students ‘plan and draft texts…[by] making … graphic representations’. It is only at Level 5 that some of the potential of visual components in students’ text production is suggested as students incorporate ‘graphics, photographs or artwork’ to ‘support the presentation of some challenging themes and issues’ (my italics). The production of ‘non-traditional’ texts such as web pages is named in an indicator for Standard 6.10, yet as this text type is listed with ‘feature article’ and ‘procedure’, the specific skills and knowledge required for the production of the web page are not made explicit. Similarly, students’ production of ‘multimedia productions’ in the indicator for 6.9 alongside ‘arguments’ and ‘proposals’ does not indicate the particular visual, spatial and cognitive skills required in the creation of a multimodal text, nor does the indicator suggest how multimedia might present particular affordances to persuade an audience through inclusion and positioning of visual components. The use of ‘concept maps or computer software’ to plan texts with ‘complex and abstract subject matter’ suggests that these visual and multimodal tools may enable students to present more complex and abstract subject matter than other strategies; however, this is not made explicit.

**Summary of the positioning of the visual in the CSF II: English**

*Table 6* presents a summary of the analysis presented in this chapter. The key questions associated with Gee’s *Building Tasks of Language* (Gee, 2010, 2011, 2014) are revisited in order to frame this summary.
Table 6. Summary of the analysis of the positioning of the visual in CSF II: English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gee’s Seven Building Tasks of Language key questions (Gee, 2010, 2011, 2014)</th>
<th>Application in this research involves the identification and analysis of:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1. Significance:** How is language being used to make certain things significant or not and in what ways? How is context relevant to the aspects made significant? | • The language of introductory statements to the entire CSF II and CSF II: English positions this curriculum iteration as both acknowledging and preparing students for the twenty-first century globalised world.  
• Aligned to this are consistent references to active and effective participation in Australian society, and the new skills and knowledge associated with this.  
• The assumption is that the CSF II addresses these demands and also prepares the diversity of students for a range of career pathways.  
• Linked to the above is the inclusion of approaches to information and communications technologies and multimodality in the curriculum. The specific naming of ‘viewing’ in the English curriculum is acknowledgement of this. |
| **2. Activities (and practices):** What activities or practices is this piece of language being used to enact? | • The specific inclusion of ‘viewing’ as an English activity in the CSF II: English introductory materials establishes the visual as valued and important to the development of students as effective participants in local and global societies.  
• Somewhat lessening this value is the subsuming of ‘viewing’ into the Reading strand.  
• Similarly, while alluding to the creation of visual and multimodal texts, the CSF II: English does not recognise the specificity of the creation of these texts in the naming of the Writing strand.  
• Practices associated with the aesthetic and the affective domain are highlighted in CSF II: English introductory materials, yet little acknowledgement of these practices are addressed in the English Achievement Standards.  
• The positioning and sequencing of activities associated with the visual is haphazard and inconsistent.  
• The unsystematic approaches to the visual in the curriculum (even if inadvertently) may lead to erratic (or no) enactment of visual learning in English. |
### 3. Identities: What identities is the language enacting (or enabling others to recognise as operative)?

- Texts are central to the study of English and several text types comprising visual elements are specifically named.
- The naming of a range of literary, ‘everyday’, media and workplace texts links to the rhetoric of the overview statements and suggests inclusivity and new conceptualisations of ‘text’, ‘literature’ and ‘literacy’.
- On a surface level, the above points suggest that the visual is integral to teaching and learning in English.
- Despite these inclusions, the practices and learning associated with some of the abovementioned text types and their visual components, are not clearly defined in the English Achievement Standards.

### 4. Relationships: What sort of relationship is the language seeking to enact with others?

- The curriculum-makers provide guidance for the curriculum users/enactors (largely teachers). In relation to the enactment of visual learning in English, little specific guidance is provided in the curriculum.
- This relationship also depends on a level of shared discourse, in this case, of subject English. While ‘viewing’ and the visual are included in the curriculum, they are associated with traditional discourses of English. In a sense, the curriculum-makers can be seen as embracing new approaches in English, yet placating practitioners who are less willing or reluctant to incorporate these concepts.

### 5. Politics: What social/political perspective is the language communicating?

- The language of the introductory statements has an urgency that indicates that new skills and knowledge are needed ‘now’, that is, in the twenty-first century globalised world.
- The rhetoric positions the curriculum as innovative, progressive and world-class, and the curriculum-makers as cognisant of developments in educational theory and pedagogy.
- Despite this, the analysis of the positioning of the visual suggests that much of the traditional (pre-2000) discourse of the English curriculum has been retained.
- While the texts recommended for study in English are diverse and are linked to a range of workplace, academic and vocational pathways, the verbal, linguistic and traditionally ‘literary’ continue to be privileged.
6. **Connections**: How does this language connect or disconnect things?
What connections or disconnections are being made or implied?
Are these connections valid or tenuous?

- There are several references to viewing and the visual throughout the *CSF II: English* curriculum levels; however, the connections between these references are often difficult to identify.
- In relation to the visual, developmental models of learning are not evident from one curriculum level to the next, nor across the *CSF II: English* strands.

7. **Sign systems and knowledge**: How does language privilege or disprivilege specific sign systems or different ways of knowing?
What sign systems are construed as most prestigious or important?
Is the visual marginalised?

- ‘Viewing’ is named alongside integral and traditional English concepts of reading and writing; hence the implication is that viewing and the visual in twenty-first century English curricula are crucial components.
- Despite this acknowledgement, the representation and positioning of the visual and viewing are far less systematic than the addressing of other communication modes and textual resources.
- This suggests that while the *CSF II: English* gives some acknowledgement to the proliferation of visual and multimodal communications in the twenty-first century, and the importance of students’ engagement with the visual, curriculum-makers have not yet conceptualised nor developed sufficient approaches to the visual for curriculum enactment.

**Chapter conclusion**

Of great significance to this research is the inclusion of the term ‘viewing’ as a named activity or practice in the *CSF II: English*, and the acknowledgement that ‘texts’ include several comprising visual elements. These inclusions align with the *CSF II* rhetoric that appears to advocate new communication systems and learning opportunities in an increasingly technological and globalised world (VBoS, 2000). They also give some acknowledgment to contemporary developments in literacy research and scholarship, including the development of *Multiliteracies* theory (New London Group, 1996) and the *Four Resources Model* (Luke & Freebody, 1990). Each of these aspects assists in the establishment of the identity of subject English at the start of the twenty-first century.

Diminishing this though is the fact that very little acknowledgement is given to distinguishing the particular features of and ways of working with visual texts. The identification of the activities, practices and resources associated with the visual in the *CSF*
II: English Achievement Standards reveals that overall, these are positioned primarily as subordinate and supplementary to the verbal and linguistic, and not as having their own intrinsic and unique value. The organisation of references to the visual is unsystematic and lacks coherence and thus does not construe logical connections in which higher levels integrate learning at lower levels (Chen & Derewianka, 2009, p. 226). Many references to the visual are vague and non-specific, indicating that the curriculum producers’ understandings of the visual are limited and that the inclusions of references to the visual are tokenistic rather than meaningful and systematic (Anstey & Bull, 2006; Eilam & Ben-Perez, 2010). This is particularly true in relation to the aesthetic aspects of images (Callow, 2005; Grushka, 2004) which are neglected in the CSF II: English curriculum.

The ways in which the visual is positioned suggest to curriculum users (teachers) that the official stance of the mandated curriculum is that visual and multimodal texts should be approached either in the same ways as verbal or linguistic texts, or with less rigour and more disposability than other texts (Pantaleo, 2013). Overall, these factors do not challenge the ‘deeply entrenched nature of traditionalist discourse in relation to...literacy practices’ (McDougall, 2007, p. 37) that even at the time of the publication of CSF II were no longer sufficient. So, despite the illusion that the version of English presented is dynamic, in fact, the CSF II: English largely maintains pre-existing discourses; thus, opportunities for amendments to traditionalist notions (or the figured world) of subject English are not seized.

Overall, CSF II: English, coming at a crucial time in the conceptualisation of twenty-first century English, acknowledges that the definitions of entities such as text and literacy are broadening. Despite this, the language of CSF II: English suggests that the curriculum makers appear either unaware of the opportunities that the visual offers in English, or uneasy to disrupt existing discourses and conceptualisations of English.
CHAPTER FIVE
SEEING THE VISUAL IN THE VELS

In order to develop a solid assessment framework for visual literacy, a broader concept of reading is required when considering visual and multimodal texts (Callow, 2008, p. 617).

Chapter introduction

The Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VCAA, 2006, 2007, 2008) succeeded the CSF II (VBoS, 2000) as the mandated curriculum in the state of Victoria. The title of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) indicates that its aim was to devise a set of curriculum standards that clearly specified what was essential for students to know and be able to do. In the introductory statements for the VELS, this concept is linked to ‘the economic and social changes associated with the development of our global, knowledge-based world and their implications for schools’ and ‘the growing evidence base about how people learn and its implications for teaching that works’ (VCAA, 2006). Significantly for this research, the major shift from the CSF II to the VELS was the organisation of the curriculum around disciplinary and interdisciplinary strands rather than Key Learning Areas (KLAs), thus promoting a more holistic interwoven curriculum. This point has relevance to the ways in which the VELS: English curriculum addresses and allows incorporation of aspects such as the visual.

The development of the VELS commenced in 2003 shortly after the Victorian Minister for Education and Training released the Blueprint for Government Schools (Department of Education and Training, 2003), which outlined initiatives aimed to promote progress in Victoria’s government school system. After a consultation process during 2004, the first stage of the VELS was released late in December, 2004, with the second and third stages launched in March and December, 2005. The VELS underwent several revisions and
amendments until 2008. This research draws primarily on the 2008 edition of the VELS, but where specified, also refers to components of the curriculum accessed online and not accessible in hard copy at the time of writing this thesis. The VELS documentation was published in the Australian state of Victoria, by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), the body formerly referred to as the Victorian Board of Studies (VBoS).

In order to reveal the positioning of the visual in the VELS, and specifically, the VELS: English curriculum, this chapter presents the analysis of: the VELS overview materials, pertaining to the whole curriculum; and the introductory statements, Achievement Standards and associated Progression Point examples in the VELS: English. In the VELS, Achievement Standards define the ‘essential learnings’ that ‘students should know and be able to do at different levels of schooling’ and that ‘provide a clear picture of the sequence of development a student should progress through’, and the Progression Point examples outline the ‘appropriate learning experiences’ at each curriculum level (VCAA, 2006, p. 7).

As with the analysis of the CSF II, this chapter draws on aspects of Gee’s Building Tasks of Language (Gee, 2010, 2011, 2014), and follows a similar structure to that presented in Chapter Four. The language of the introductory statements to both the entire VELS and VELS: English have been examined in relation to the significant themes or narratives, and the politics associated with these. This analysis both reveals and constructs the context, social practices, figured world and discourses (Gee, 2010) of subject English in the state of Victoria at the time of the publication and dissemination of the VELS, and imperative to this research, investigates the positioning of the visual within this context and discourse.

Within the VELS: English curriculum, activities and resources associated with the visual are identified, thus facilitating analysis of the extent to which the sign systems and knowledge of English, including the visual, are encouraged, validated and/or ignored. This analysis includes the identification of connections or disconnections from one curriculum level to the next, and the extent to which a developmental progression of knowledge and skills associated with the visual in subject English is evident.
VELS Overview Materials

The organisation of the VELS (as compared with the CSF II’s structure) highlights a level of movement away from discrete disciplines in the promotion of ‘interdisciplinary capacities’ including Communication, Design, Creativity and Technology (VCAA, 2008, p.1) that straddle traditional discipline areas. The overview to the VELS Discipline-based strand states that these subject domains ‘form a body of knowledge with associated ways of seeing the world and distinct methods of exploring, imagining and constructing the world’ (VCAA, 2008, p.3). While this opening statement is rather vague, the later statement that students’ engagement with and understanding of discipline-based concepts allow them to ‘transfer their knowledge in many different ways’ depending on their ‘achieved mastery’ over domains such as ‘interdisciplinary learning’, indicates that the VELS promote the application of concepts such as the visual across the curriculum.

*Students are better able to develop, demonstrate and use discipline-based knowledge and skills when they are able to employ interdisciplinary knowledge, skills and behaviours described in the [interdisciplinary] domains [including] Communication; Design, Creativity and Technology; [and] Information and Communications Technology (VCAA, 2008, p.3).*

The VELS therefore demand that these interdisciplinary domains are integrated systematically within the curriculum for each discipline-based domain such as English. It follows then that students’ engagement with the visual should be integral to the abovementioned interdisciplinary strands, as well as being addressed within the VELS: English curriculum specifically.

Also significant to this research is that the VELS introductory materials highlight the notion of developmental learning. The VELS announces that from Prep to Year 4, students develop ‘fundamental knowledge, skills and behaviours…which underpin all future learning’; at Years 5 to 8, students ‘progress beyond the foundations to develop ‘more sophisticated’ literacy and numeracy and discipline-based and interdisciplinary capacities; and at Years 9 and 10, students focus on post-school pathways ‘while developing their understanding of, and connection to, the community’ (VCAA, 2008, p.2). Two points here are of most significance to this research: one is that these statements emphasise the developmental
nature of the curriculum’s structure; the second is that it can be assumed that the ‘more sophisticated’ literacy and interdisciplinary capacities, at this point of the early twenty-first century, should be expected to include visual literacy and learning. The *VELS* Overview suggests that previous ‘slow to adapt’ curriculum iterations such as the *CSF II* have lacked systematic approaches to development and have failed to establish ‘clear priorities’ thus denying Victorian students the skills to ‘adapt …to the broad demands that society places on young people’ and to ‘apply their knowledge beyond the classroom to new and different situations’ (*VCAA*, 2008, p.1). My research of the visual in the *VELS: English* curriculum reveals the extent to which ‘systematic approaches to development’, in relation to the visual, are evident.

**VELS: English curriculum**

The remainder of this chapter focusses on the presentation of analysis from the *VELS: English* (*VCAA*, 2008). This analysis is compared with the preceding discussion of the *VELS* introductory materials, in relation to significant themes, practices and identities. Comparison with the analysis drawn from *CSF II: English* (*VBoS*, 2000) is also presented where relevant; however, comparison between the selected curriculum iterations is addressed more fully in Chapter Seven.

**Significance**

For my research, the most significant aspect of the language in the Introduction to the *VELS: English* curriculum is that texts, language and the practices of English have prominence compared to *CSF II: English* that prioritises rhetoric about the links between English and the development of active Australian citizens. In the *VELS: English* Introduction, reference is made to the role of English in facilitating ‘active, informed and fulfilling’ lives in ‘modern Australian society and the global community’ (*VCAA*, 2008, p. 5), but this reference occurs in the last paragraph (of seven) in the Introduction, and is explicitly linked to ‘understanding texts and recognising how language works within them’ and students’ capacities to ‘read, view and listen critically and to think, speak and write clearly and confidently’ (p. 5). There is no differentiation between ‘viewing’ and the other modes of communication. Despite this, learning capacities linked to ‘viewing’ are limited to ‘critical
analysis’ in this final paragraph of the Introduction, suggesting that the full affordances of viewing and working with the visual are not addressed.

Linked to the discussion above is the significance of the emphasis (via underlining) of several terms in the Introduction; these include the text classifications: ‘literary texts’, ‘multimodal texts’, ‘media texts’, ‘workplace texts’ and ‘everyday texts’; references to the ‘structures and features of language’ (VCAA, 2008, p. 4); and ‘metalanguage’ (VCAA, 2008, p. 5). The underlining of these terms reinforces their positioning as ‘central and essential concepts’ in the English domain. The constructions of ‘texts’ and ‘language’ in VELS English (explored below) suggest significant inclusion of the visual.

Activities (and practices)

‘Viewing’ is named specifically three times in the Introduction to the VELS: English: firstly, in relation to the ‘conscious and deliberate study of language in the variety of texts and contexts in which it is spoken, read, viewed and written; secondly, in the listing of practices central to the ‘study of English’: ‘reading, viewing, listening to, writing, creating, comparing, researching and talking about a range of text types’; and thirdly, when the Introduction discusses students’ understanding of ‘audience, purpose and situation’, how these factors ‘influence the structures and features of language’ (as underlined in the documentation), and students’ application of this knowledge ‘in their reading, writing, viewing, speaking and listening’ (VCAA, 2008, p. 4). The specific naming of ‘viewing’ in these statements implies that it is distinct from ‘reading’, and as important as the other key practices and communication modes in English. It also implies that students’ work with texts, their understanding of ‘the structures and features of language’ and learning of metalanguage [as underlined in documentation] includes reference to visual texts, visual ‘language’, and the ‘terminology or metalanguage to describe and discuss particular structures and features’ (VCAA, 2008, p. 5) of visual texts and that these aspects will be given attention comparable to that of spoken and written language.

This positioning of ‘viewing’ is inconsistent, even in these early parts of the VELS: English documentation, as after the Introduction, ‘viewing’ as a distinct communication mode is
subsumed into reading (VCAA, 2008, p.6), one of the three dimensions of English: reading; writing; and speaking and listening (as in the CSF II). Despite this, the activities and practices associated with the reading dimension are quite comprehensive involving ‘students understanding, interpreting, critically analysing, reflecting upon, and enjoying written and visual, print and non-print texts’ (VCAA, 2008, p. 6).

Significant to the ways in which the practices of English are framed are the references to Luke and Freebody’s Four Resources Model (1999). The description of this model is titled ‘Critical Perspectives’ in the online iteration of the VELS: English (VCAA, 2009b), thus giving prominence to one of Luke and Freebody ‘roles’, that of critical analyst. The descriptions of each of the Four Resources focus on responding to texts; however, the language used in these descriptions contains references to elements of verbal texts only.

**Identities: texts, language, literacy, literature**

As discussed above, the study of English in the VELS is centred around texts which are described as ‘wide-ranging’ and include: ‘written and spoken texts in print and electronic forms’; literary texts such as novels, short stories, poetry, plays and non-fiction; multimodal texts such as film; media texts; information, commercial and workplace texts; everyday texts; and personal writing (VCAA, 2008, p. 4). The texts themselves, as in the CSF II, are classified into literary, media, workplace and everyday texts, with the addition of ‘multimodal’ texts replacing the ‘multimedia texts’ named in the previous curriculum iteration. Picture storybooks, the first named literary text type in the CSF II Introduction, is omitted in the VELS list, which includes ‘novels, short stories, poetry, plays and non-fiction’; interestingly too, ‘film and other multimodal texts’ now comprise their own classification, whereas the CSF II Introduction includes ‘non-print texts’ such as films as possible literary texts (VBoS, 2000). This suggests some uncertainty about whether non-print, visual and multimodal texts can be classified as ‘literary’ as in the more traditional forms of the novel, the play and poetry. To add to this confusion, picture storybooks are included as literary texts in the VELS: English Glossary of key terms (VCAA, 2008, p. 28). Everyday texts include classified advertisements, labels, web pages, notices, signs and timetables while media texts include spoken, print, graphic and electronic communications found ‘in newspapers and magazines,
and on television, video, film, radio, computer software and the Internet’ (VCAA, 2008, p.28). Clearly each of these text types requires teacher and student engagement with and addressing of the visual. The implications of this are that either the ‘curriculum users’ are proficient with these texts, or conversely that all of the named text types can be utilised in similar ways.

Central to the *VELS: English* is ‘the conscious and deliberate study of language in the variety of texts’, which assumes that the ‘language’ of visual texts will be explicitly and deliberately taught and studied. It is implied that this language includes ‘non-verbal elements of communication’ such as gesture, movement, graphics and illustrations that impact on the meaning of a text. Specifically, students are required to develop understanding of the structures and features of language and ‘learn to apply their knowledge in their reading, writing, viewing, speaking and listening’ (VCAA, 2008, p. 29), this statement again suggesting a ‘language’ of the visual.

**Relationships**

Linked to the above discussion is the assumption of the curriculum makers that the curriculum users (teachers) are able to embrace and teach the range of texts named in the *VELS: English*. To a large extent, specific text selection rests at school level; however, by naming such a wide range of texts and associated practices in the *VELS: English*, the curriculum makers are challenging curriculum users (teachers) to move beyond traditional notions of ‘text’, ‘language’, ‘literature’ and ‘literacy’ if they are to address the breadth of learning outcomes in English, and less tangibly, provide students with opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge required beyond schooling. Also implicit in the relationships between policy and curriculum makers, school administrators, teachers, students and parents, is that teachers possess the knowledge and skills required to teach the named texts (including those with visual components), or at least that they will be able to access support materials, specific guidance and professional development from the curriculum body.
Politics

As mentioned previously, the rhetoric of the VELS is less politically charged than that of the CSF II: English overview (VBoS, 2000). Despite this, the VELS: English Introduction aligns ‘success’ in the subject with:

an active, informed and fulfilling life in modern Australian society and the global community. By understanding and working with texts, students acquire the knowledge, skills and personal qualities that enable them to read, view and listen critically and to think, speak and write clearly and confidently (VCAA, 2008, p.5).

If this rhetoric is accepted, ‘viewing’ and the ‘texts’ that comprise visual elements are relevant to the development of ‘active, informed and fulfilling lives’.

Connections

The structure of the VELS promotes connections between disciplinary and inter-disciplinary strands. Of particular relevance for this research is the connection between English and The Arts, which the VELS documentation describes as ‘a natural affinity’ due to both disciplines’ ‘focus on a variety of print, visual, oral, spatial and auditory texts as ways of understanding, making meaning and communicating about the world’ as well as ‘creating texts/works using a variety of media and forms’. ‘The convergence of different textual forms’ is seen as an impetus for the Arts to contribute to ‘students’ development in the dimensions of English in significant ways’ (VCAA, 2007). The specific mention of these connections is quite striking in its departure from the discipline-focused structures of CSF II, and intimates that the connections between subject English and the visual and aesthetic aspects of The Arts will be at least alluded to in the detail of the curriculum.

Sign systems and knowledge

As suggested earlier, there is ambiguity about the role of ‘viewing’ in the VELS: English documentation. While ‘viewing’ is specifically referred to on a number of occasions in the introductory statements where it is presented alongside and equal to reading, listening, speaking and writing in several instances (VCAA, 2008, pp.4-5), after these initial references,
it is subsumed into the dimension of Reading (VCAA, 2008, p. 6). The description of the Reading dimension fails to differentiate the approaches to and uses for visual, print and non-print texts in the classroom.

**VELS: English Curriculum Focus Statements and Achievement Standards**

The *VELS: English* structure is based around six curriculum levels aligned to the compulsory years of schooling, with Level 6 aligned to Years 9 and 10; Level 5 aligned to Years 7 and 8; Level 4 aligned to Years 5 and 6; Level 3 aligned to Years 3 and 4; Level 2 aligned to Years 1 and 2; and Level 1 aligned to the foundation or preparatory year in Victorian schools. As the *VELS: English* standards are organised into three dimensions, *Reading; Writing and Speaking and Listening* (VCAA, 2008, p. 6), the presentation of the analysis is structured to reflect these classifications.

The *VELS: English* curriculum documentation at each level is introduced by a Learning Focus Statement which outlines ‘the learning that students need to focus on if they are to progress in the domain and achieve the standards’ and suggests ‘appropriate learning experiences from which teachers can draw to develop relevant teaching and learning activities’ (VCAA, 2008, p. 5). These statements have been analysed alongside the Achievement Standards intended to measure students’ progress at the end of each curriculum level, and the Progression Point examples designed to measure developmental learning between consecutive achievement standards. Significantly, the mere existence of the progression points emphasises the developmental nature of the design of the curriculum.

**The Reading dimension and the visual**

The following discussion focuses on the positioning of the visual in the *VELS: English* Reading dimension. *Table 7* presents the learning focus statements, progression point examples and achievement standards that reference viewing and the visual in this dimension. For continuity, as in Chapter Four, the activities/practices associated with the visual are bolded in blue, and textual resources comprising visual elements are bolded in orange. Page references from the *VELS: English* (VCAA, 2008) are bracketed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VELS: English Curriculum Level/ Progression Point</th>
<th>VELS: English Reading Learning Focus Statements:</th>
<th>VELS: English Reading Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>Students read texts such as ‘picture books’ that ‘include repetition of phrases and illustrations’ Students ‘use’ title, illustrations and knowledge of a text topic to predict meaning’ (p.9)</td>
<td>Understands the directional sequence of text Retells the main ideas in a text for example, the plot after listening to the reading of a picture story book or watching a video Predicts events in a text from looking at the cover and illustrations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reads aloud simple print and electronic texts that include some frequently used words and predominantly oral language structures. Uses title, illustrations and knowledge of a text topic to predict meaning. Uses illustrations to extend meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.25</td>
<td></td>
<td>Independently reads simple print and electronic texts with moderate accuracy and fluency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Accurately reads print and electronic texts with high-frequency words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>‘Students work towards independence in reading short texts with familiar ideas and information, some illustrations including ‘everyday texts’ in print and electronic form. (p.11)</td>
<td>Uses strategies for working out the meaning of unfamiliar words in context: for example, sounding out, rereading, using cues from illustrations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>‘Students read’ an increasing range of texts’ including ‘informative texts in print and electronic form’ (p.15).</td>
<td>Interprets labelled diagrams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.25</td>
<td></td>
<td>Understands and responds to texts with several short paragraphs in print and electronic forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Uses strategies for reading texts with unfamiliar vocabulary and/or textual features such as captions for illustrations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>‘Students read’ an increasing range of imaginative and informative texts with some unfamiliar ideas and information, vocabulary and textual features.</td>
<td>Reads and responds to an increasing range of imaginative and informative texts with some unfamiliar ideas and information, vocabulary and textual features.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Understands features of different kinds of texts; for example, characterisation and plot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>Interprets and responds to a wide range of print and <strong>multimodal texts</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>‘With guidance’, students <strong>reflect on reading and viewing</strong> ‘in ways that develop considered and critical approaches to a range of texts including...media texts including newspapers, film and websites’ (p.19). Students <strong>explore ‘features of visual texts’</strong> and ‘sound effects, characterisations and camera angles used in film’. They <strong>experiment with strategies when interpreting texts</strong> such as ‘using diagrams’ (p.19)</td>
<td><strong>Reads, interprets and responds to a wide range of literary, everyday and media texts</strong> in print and in <strong>multimodal formats</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td><strong>Explains</strong> how authors of print and <strong>multimodal texts</strong> use a variety of techniques to engage audiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 4.75 | **Develops extended personal responses to a range of texts in oral and dramatic presentations, print and multimodal forms**  
**Critically evaluates** information presented in print and **multimodal texts** |
| 5    | ‘Students **begin to respond in more detached and critical ways** to a wide range of print, **visual, electronic and multimodal texts**’ (p.23). Students ‘**develop a critical understanding** about the ways that writers and producers of texts try to position readers’ (p.23). | **Reads and views imaginative, informative and persuasive texts** that explore ideas and information related to challenging topics, themes and issues. |
| 5.25 | **Responds** to a **wide range of imaginative, informative and persuasive texts** in oral, written and **multimodal forms**. |
| 5.5  | **Personally responds** to key ideas and issues in **literary texts in oral, dramatic, written and multimodal presentations** |
| 5.75 | **Uses metalanguage to compare features of different kinds of texts** such as play scripts, **films**, novels. |
Students ‘study and respond critically’ to spoken, written and visual texts created for a wide range of audience and purposes’ (p.26).

Reads, views, analyses, critiques, reflects on and discusses contemporary and classical imaginative texts that explore personal, social, cultural and political issues of significance to their own lives.

Reads, views, analyses and discusses a wide range of informative and persuasive texts and identifies the multiple purposes for which texts are created.

Uses strategies for developing responses to a wide range of print and electronic texts, including presentation of ideas and issues of significance in their own lives.

Compares typical features of different kinds of texts

Uses textual features and evidence from texts to support oral, written and multimodal responses to a wide range of texts.

Knows the structures, features and conventions used by authors to construct meaning in a range of print, non-print and multimodal texts.

Explores how meaning in constructed through written language and visual images.

The first year of schooling, the ‘prep’ year, in the state of Victoria, is focused on students’ development of ‘key foundational skills’, according to VELS. Progression point 0.5 (roughly aligned with the middle of the ‘prep’ year) for reading highlights the importance of young students’ visual literacy in relation to retelling the plots of picture storybooks and videos and making predictions from book covers and illustrations. These practices of ‘retelling’ and ‘predicting’ require skills of understanding and inferential thinking whereas the verbal literacy required at the end of level 1 to ‘read aloud simple print and electronic texts’ does not presume that students understand even the literal meaning of these texts. There is a suggestion that young students bring to school reasonably developed visual interpretation skills. The qualifier ‘simple’ in relation to print texts indicates that print texts become more complex as the curriculum levels progress, whereas no such qualifiers are present in relation to images and illustrations. The Achievement Standards for curriculum level 1 specifically
acknowledge that students will have gained the skills to ‘read aloud…frequently used words’; however, prediction skills associated with ‘reading’ the visual are not significantly developed from progression point 0.5. Illustrations at level 1 are used to ‘extend meaning’, presumably the meaning of the verbal and linguistic components of texts. The pairing of ‘print and electronic texts’ at Level 1 and progression points 1.25 and 1.5 diminishes ‘electronic texts’ to print texts accessed digitally, rather than positioning their possible multimodality.

Table 7 clearly shows the developmental continuum in relation to reading verbal or ‘print’ texts. At Level 1, students read texts with ‘frequently used words and predominantly oral language structures, then progress to ‘independently’ reading texts with ‘moderate accuracy and fluency’ (progression point 1.25), ‘accurately’ reading ‘print and electronic texts with high-frequency words’ (progression point 1.5), and ‘working out the meaning of unfamiliar words in context’ (progression point 1.75). Along the developmental continuum indicated by progression points 1.25 and 1.5, the only inferences to visual texts are the reading of ‘electronic texts’; however, it is unclear as to how ‘print and electronic texts’ are differentiated, except perhaps that they are linguistic texts accessed by hard copy or a computer screen. In comparison, students’ capacities for interpreting visual texts do not appear as carefully scaffolded and are frequently positioned as supporting the reading of verbal texts when students use illustrations to extend meaning (level 1 standard).

The skills related to viewing and the visual in the VELS: English for the first year of schooling are addressed more specifically than the corresponding level in the earlier CSF II. While skills related to viewing and the visual are not as explicitly scaffolded as those linked to reading print and verbal texts in the VELS: English, it is implied that the verbal and the visual are integral to one another at this early stage of schooling.

The learning focus statement for Level 2, in which ‘some illustrations’ appear to support students’ reading ‘towards independence’ suggests the role of the visual is diminished from Level 1. This is despite the fact that we would expect the associated ‘everyday texts’ to contain significant visual elements. This focus statement does not seem to align fully with the corresponding standard that calls for students to interpret ‘labelled diagrams’, a specific type of meaning-making involving visual and verbal elements, and unlike those suggested
by previous standards and progression points. While this focus is extended at progression point 2.5, it is not specifically addressed at Level 3. Neither the focus statements nor the standards for Level 3 specifically mention ‘viewing’ or visual resources. At progression point 3.5, ‘visual information in informative texts’ is positioned with ‘characterisation and plot in narratives’ as features that students are required to understand. While a certain degree of succinctness is understandable, this juxtaposition is jarring as it fails to acknowledge the significant differences in the mentioned genres, let alone the possible scope of ‘visual information’. The generalised ‘multimodal texts’ at progression point 3.75 are grouped with the ‘wide range of print’ texts that students are required to interpret and respond to, and this is reiterated in the Level 4 Standard.

One of the few allusions to the teacher’s work is included in the Level 4 focus statement that specifies that students ‘reflect on reading and viewing’ texts including media texts, newspapers, film and websites ‘with guidance’ (p.19). This could imply that this kind of reflection (and the ‘critical approaches’ associated with it in the focus statement) is a new form of engagement for students, and one that needs explicit teacher support. The focus statement also names ‘features of visual texts’ such as ‘camera angles used in film’ specifically (p.19), although there is no reference to these features or the particular practices involved in the actual standards for Level 4 nor the progression points at 4.25, 4.5 and 4.75.

The Level 5 Learning Focus Statement states that students are expected to ‘respond in more detached and critical ways to a wide range of print, visual, electronic and multimodal texts’ (p.23); yet the practices named in the Level 5 standards - ‘reads and views’ - do not suggest any of these ‘critical ways’. Visual texts are mentioned specifically with spoken and written texts in the Level 6 curriculum focus statement, giving them an intrinsic value not always evident at previous levels. Viewing, along with other student practices, is named in the level 6 standards in relation to ‘contemporary and classical imaginative texts’ and ‘informative and persuasive texts’, thus suggesting that the ‘viewed’ texts encompass a range of genres and that students’ engagement with and response to them is rigorous and multilayered. At progression point 6.25, the implied reference to viewing and the visual is associated with the more generic ‘electronic’ and ‘multimodal’ texts. At this progression point, students create ‘multimodal responses’ to texts, yet their demonstration of knowledge of how these text
types ‘construct meaning’ via ‘structures, features and conventions’ comes at the next progression point. By progression point 6.75, at the end of the compulsory schooling level, ‘visual images’ specifically are given equal importance to ‘written language’ in the construction of meaning in texts. This is significant as students approaching the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) in the final two years of secondary schooling are required to analyse and respond to both print and visual components in both coursework and examination components (as outlined in Chapter One).

As indicated in the discussion above, the positioning of practices associated with the visual in the VELS: English Reading dimension does not adhere to a consistent developmental framework, nor are the named visual elements organised according to the kinds of ‘hierarchies’ suggested by Callow (2005) and Davis (2008) amongst others. As discussed in Chapter Two, this hierarchy or ‘continuum of images’ positions static visual images such as picture book illustrations at the lower level, while electronic texts such as webpages, and multimodal texts such as films are positioned as more complex. Despite this, it can be argued that students from Level 1 through to Level 6 should engage with the range of visual texts at each level, thus enabling a spiral curriculum through which students revisit key concepts with incrementally increasing complexity. When attempting to reveal a ‘hierarchy of practices’ associated with visual learning (Rockenbach & Fabian, 2008), there is some progression from students’ making-meaning in the early curriculum levels to critical analysis at the end of Level 6; however, this progression is far less consistent and systematic than that associated with verbal and linguistic texts.

The Writing dimension and the visual

Table 8 highlights the practices and textual resources associated with the visual in the Learning Focus Statements, Progression Point Examples and Achievement Standards in the VELS: English Writing dimension. As in previous tables, the activities and practices associated with the visual are bolded in blue, and relevant textual resources are bolded in orange.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VELS: English Curriculum Level/ Progression Point</th>
<th>VELS: English Writing Learning Focus Statements</th>
<th>VELS: English Writing Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Students expand ‘vocabulary and use illustrations to extend meaning’ (p.9).</td>
<td>Forms letters correctly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>Supports the intended meaning of their writing with drawings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Combines writing with drawings or computer graphics to support meaning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Students write short texts that ‘where relevant, combine writing with drawing or computer graphics’ (p.11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>Composes short, sequenced factual and imaginative texts in print and electronic form</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Orders events and ideas in appropriately in print and electronic texts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>Combines written and visual elements in print and electronic texts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Students ‘experiment with combining verbal and visual elements to enhance the texts they produce’ (p.15).</td>
<td>Combines verbal and visual elements in the texts they produce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>Includes familiar ideas and information for different purposes and audiences in print and electronic texts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Produces texts for a range of different audiences and purposes in print and electronic forms</td>
<td>Uses strategies for planning; for example, using models of others’ writing or mind mapping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Includes appropriate visual images and information in print and electronic texts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>Uses structures and features appropriate to purpose and audience of print and electronic texts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selects vocabulary, text structures and visual features to effectively communicate ideas and information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Students write texts for a range of purposes including ‘multimodal texts’ (p.19).</td>
<td>Produces, in print and electronic forms, a variety of texts for different purposes using structures and features of language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>Composes print and electronic texts for a range of purposes, including speculative, imaginative, explanatory and persuasive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Composes print and electronic texts in a wide range of forms, including narratives, reports, explanations, procedures and point of view.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>Strategically uses headings, subheadings, graphics, photographs and art work to support the meaning of the text. Uses a variety of software to plan, organise, revise and present electronic texts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Students use ‘computer technology to organise, format, revise and present their texts’ (p.23). Produces, in print and electronic forms, texts for a variety of purposes, including speculating, hypothesising, persuading and reflecting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Expresses thoughts, feelings, opinions and ideas in print and electronic forms.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Composes a range of other texts, such as feature articles, webpages and workplace texts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>Knows the structures and features of a range of print, non-print and multimodal texts intended for different purposes and audiences. Effectively plans and organises coherent and logical point of view in print and electronic texts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>Chooses structures and forms that show understanding of the relationship between purpose, form, language and audience in a range of print, non-print and multimodal texts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the VELS: English Writing dimension, references to visual texts include the specific ‘drawings’, ‘illustrations’, ‘images’, ‘graphics’, ‘photographs’ and ‘art work’ and the more generalised ‘visual elements’, ‘electronic texts’, ‘software’, ‘webpages’, ‘non-print’ and ‘multimodal texts’. The naming of these elements gives more significance and specificity to the visual than is evident in the CSF: II: English.
The positioning of the visual in students’ creation of texts is evident at Level 1 when students ‘use illustrations to extend meaning’ of their written vocabulary, and progression points 1.25 and 1.5, in which ‘drawings’ or ‘computer graphics’ support the meaning of students’ writing. From Level 2 to Level 3, the key practice associated with the visual is ‘combining’, that is, students ‘where relevant, combine writing with drawing or computer graphics’, and ‘experiment with combining verbal and visual elements’ thus suggesting a more complementary rather than supplementary positioning of visual components than at Level 1. The specific naming of ‘visual elements’ as distinct from other multimodal elements is also significant in the Level 3 standard, as is ‘appropriate visual images’ at progression point 3.5, especially as the visual is given some significance distinct from linguistic elements. The progression points at 3.5 and 3.75 suggest a slight progression of practices from ‘includes’ to ‘selects’, the latter implying conscious decision-making in relation to ‘effectively’ communicating ideas and information. The significance of ‘visual features’ is also acknowledged at progression point 3.75 at which the visual is given equal importance to ‘vocabulary’ and ‘text structures’.

This continuum is extended at progression point 4.75, at which students ‘strategically’ use graphics, photographs and artwork implying that students have gained a level of expertise in interpreting and integrating visual texts at prior levels; however, the role of these ‘strategically’ used visual elements is diminished somewhat by their ‘supporting’ role in creating meaning in texts. The visual resources named at this progression point could also suggest students’ own creation of graphics, photographs and artwork, which implies a sophisticated level of expertise in the creation of multimodal texts.

Another thread of practices running through the Writing dimension is that associated with ‘electronic texts’. The visual elements of these texts are not clearly defined at every level, and the practices associated with them suggest that ‘electronic texts’ may be purely linguistic texts produced via word processing. Of the practices associated with electronic texts, there appears to be no development from progression points 1.5 to 2.75, both of which call on students to ‘combine’ written and computer graphics. By progression point 3.5, students’ inclusion of ‘appropriate visual images’ (my italics) in electronic texts, is a significant development that suggests that students have the skills to locate and select visual elements.
relevant to genre, audience and purpose. Students’ digital literacies are mentioned explicitly at progression point 4.75 when students use ‘a variety of software to plan, organise, revise and present electronic texts’. While the juxtaposition of these practices is all part of the process of writing and creating, this statement can be seen as undermining the different skills linked to each. By level 5, ‘print and electronic forms’ are named together, thus the specific and distinct practices and possibilities associated with electronic texts are not acknowledged in students’ production of texts ‘for a variety of purposes including speculating, hypothesising, persuading and reflecting’. This lack of distinction is carried through to progression point 5.5 in which students express their thoughts and feelings ‘in print and electronic form’. This latter statement is clearly an example of tokenism, in relation to both the ‘electronic form’ and the affective domain.

It is not until level 6, aligned to the last year of compulsory schooling in Victoria, that students are required to ‘compose’ intrinsically digital texts such as ‘webpages’, which presumably contain visual and graphic elements. Despite this, seemingly unrelated ‘other texts, such as feature articles, webpages and workplace texts’ (my italics) are grouped together in the standard, belying the diverse range of features, structures, and practices associated with each text type. Students are required to ‘know’ the ‘structures and features’ of ‘non-print and multimodal texts intended for different purposes and audiences’ only at progression point 6.25; this is curious given that students, according to the standards and progression points, have presumably been creating these text types at a number of previous curriculum levels. Some development is evident though by progression point 6.75, when students use this ‘knowledge’ to ‘choose’ the ‘structures and forms’ in these texts ‘to show understanding’.

The focus on creating and producing texts is closely linked to writing only, even though students are expected to develop their abilities to produce a ‘range of text types for a variety of purposes and audiences’. The production of texts is linked to multimodality, but only insofar as this includes ‘effective use of a range of word-processing and editing software to produce texts that incorporate digital still images, digital audio and video, and print’ (p. 26).
The *Speaking and Listening* dimension and the visual

Table 9 presents the Learning Focus Statements, Progression Point Examples and Achievement Standards for the VELS: English Speaking and Listening dimension. The nature of this dimension is that practices and resources associated with the verbal and linguistic are prominent, and the visual less so. Despite this, ‘viewing’ and visual elements are named.

Table 9. VELS: English Speaking and Listening Dimension and the Visual

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VELS: English Curriculum Level/Progression Point</th>
<th>VELS: English Learning Focus Statements: Speaking and Listening</th>
<th>VELS: English Speaking and Listening Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Students ‘listen and respond to’ range of simple texts’ including <em>films</em>’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students *share and respond to’ ideas and information in print, <em>visual and electronic texts</em>’ (p.10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.75</td>
<td></td>
<td>Retells some main ideas after <em>listening</em> to stories and <em>viewing videos</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Students ‘listen to and interpret’ texts such as serialised readings or <em>films’</em> (p.12).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.25</td>
<td></td>
<td>Retells some <em>main ideas and information from texts read and viewed</em> in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Students <em>develop skills in listening attentively</em>…to factual spoken texts such as audio, <em>film</em> and invited presentations’ (p.16).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Uses <em>multimedia</em> to enhance meaning when <em>communicating ideas and information</em> to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Listens attentively and responds appropriately to spoken and <em>multimodal texts</em> that include unfamiliar ideas and information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.75</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Identifies</em> main ideas and some supporting details in spoken and <em>multimodal texts</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Students ‘build their capacity to combine verbal and <em>visual elements</em> in texts to communicate ideas and</td>
<td>Plans, rehearses and makes <em>presentations</em> for different purposes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

101
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>Uses some multimodal texts to support meaning in presentations for a variety of purposes and audiences</td>
<td>Uses introductions, conclusions and visual support material appropriate to the purpose, audience and context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Uses graphic organisers to assist with note-taking and summaries of key ideas from spoken texts.</td>
<td>Uses some multimodal texts to support meaning in presentations for a variety of purposes and audiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>They ‘explore ways of using multimodal texts to enhance visual and verbal communication’ (p.24).</td>
<td>Uses a variety of multimodal texts to support individual presentations in which they inform or persuade an audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>‘In spoken, written and multimodal texts students apply their skills to planning and developing formal argument about complex issues’ (p. 26).</td>
<td>Selects persuasive language and non-verbal techniques to influence specific audiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>‘In spoken, written and multimodal texts students apply their skills to planning and developing formal argument about complex issues’ (p. 26).</td>
<td>Selects persuasive language and non-verbal techniques to influence specific audiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>‘In spoken, written and multimodal texts students apply their skills to planning and developing formal argument about complex issues’ (p. 26).</td>
<td>Selects persuasive language and non-verbal techniques to influence specific audiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>‘In spoken, written and multimodal texts students apply their skills to planning and developing formal argument about complex issues’ (p. 26).</td>
<td>Students ‘increasingly’ use effectively ‘a range of word-processing and editing software to produce texts that incorporate digital still images, digital audio and video, and print’ (p. 26).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>‘In spoken, written and multimodal texts students apply their skills to planning and developing formal argument about complex issues’ (p. 26).</td>
<td>Draws on a range of strategies to listen to and present spoken texts, including note-taking, combining spoken and visual texts, and presenting complex issues or information imaginatively to interest an audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understands the relationship between purpose, form language and audience in a range of oral and multimodal text types</td>
<td>UNDERSTANDS the relationship between purpose, form language and audience in a range of oral and multimodal text types</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In relation to the receptive mode of listening, students: ‘listen and respond to a range of simple texts…including films’ (my italics) at Level 1; ‘listen to and interpret texts such as …films’ at Level 2; and ‘develop skills in listening attentively…to factual spoken texts such as audio, film and invited presentations’ at Level 3. The inclusion of films as vehicles for listening does not acknowledge the ways in which the multimodal elements of these texts are juxtaposed to make meaning, and the adjective ‘simple’ emphasises this lack of
acknowledgement. Some progression of practices is evident as students move from responding to interpreting; however, the ways in which attentive listening skills are developed through exposure to films is not made evident. By progression point 3.5, it is assumed that these attentive listening skills are developed enough for students to respond ‘appropriately’ to ‘multimodal texts that include unfamiliar ideas and information’, so progression point 3.75 could be interpreted as a regression as students merely ‘identify main ideas’ in multimodal texts.

In relation to the understanding and use of visual elements in the productive mode of speaking, the student practice of ‘retelling’ of ideas from texts including films features prominently from Level 1 to Level 2. A considerable developmental jump occurs at progression point 3.5 when students are required to use ‘multimedia to enhance meaning when communicating ideas and information to others’ suggesting not only a technical proficiency in using multimedia, but the skills and knowledge associated with the selection of visual and multimodal elements that ‘enhances’ the spoken word. The Level 4 focus statement describes students as ‘build[ing] their capacity to combine verbal and visual elements to communicate ideas’, thus positioning these elements equally in relation to the communication of ideas multimodally and suggesting that students are developing specific skills in using the named ‘software or overheads’. Visual and multimodal elements are relegated to supporting roles at progression point 4.25 which is not unexpected in the speaking mode; however, the curious positioning of ‘visual support material’ alongside ‘introductions’ and ‘conclusions’ at progression point 4.5, emphasises the inconsistent and unsystematic way in which the visual is conceptualised.

The Level 5 learning focus statement calls on students to use multimodal elements to ‘enhance visual and verbal communication’, echoing progression point 3.5 and representing several years of schooling with little developmental progression. More detail is provided in the Level 5 standard, which specifies that students are using visual and verbal communication to ‘inform or persuade’. The inclusion of these practices and their associated genres is noteworthy, as the use of visual elements to persuade (or ‘influence’ at progression point 5.5) would seem to require a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of the ways in which images position audiences than the literal presentation associated with
inform[ing] an audience. The Speaking and Listening standards at level 6, associated with the final year of compulsory schooling in Victoria, specifically name ‘visual texts’, in combination with spoken texts, in relation to students’ listening to and presenting ‘complex issues or information imaginatively’. The Level 6 focus statement defines these visual texts as ‘software’, ‘digital still images’ and ‘video’ and suggests that students are able to use these ‘increasingly’ and ‘effectively’ (p.26), thus implying that increased use of these textual resources heightens effectiveness and demonstrates the students’ creativity in relation to oral tasks.

Summary of the positioning of the visual in the VELS: English

Table 10 presents a summary of the analysis presented in this chapter. The key questions associated with Gee’s Building Tasks of Language (Gee, 2010, 2011, 2014) are again used to frame this summary.

Table 10. Summary of the analysis of the positioning of the visual in VELS: English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gee’s Seven Building Tasks of Language key questions (Gee, 2010, 2011, 2014)</th>
<th>Application in this research involves the identification and analysis of:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Significance: How is language being used to make certain things significant or not and in what ways? How is context relevant to the aspects made significant? | • The title of the VELS is significant in that it emphasises the role of mandated curriculum in specifying what is essential for students to know and be able to do.  
• The structure of the VELS encourages interdisciplinarity rather than the discipline-based structure of the KLAs in the CSF II.  
• Several of the ‘interdisciplinary capacities’ (VCAA, 2008, p.1) comprise visual and multimodal elements; thus, curriculum users are encouraged to integrate these aspects into disciplines such as English.  
• Developmental models of learning are emphasised in the VELS rhetoric, so it can be assumed that this concept is carried through to the specific curriculum for each subject area, including English.  
• The above is emphasised by the addition (since the CSF II) of Progression Points, designed to measure developmental learning between succeeding achievement standards. |
2. Activities (and practices): What activities or practices is this piece of language being used to enact?

- As in the CSF II, ‘viewing’ is specifically named as an integral practice in the VELS: English introductory statements.
- ‘Viewing’ is associated with ‘critical analysis’ only in the English introductory statements, thus presenting a limited view of working with the visual.
- While ‘viewing’ is differentiated from ‘reading’ in some parts of the VELS: English, it is largely subsumed into the Reading domain.
- Activities and practices associated with the creation of visual, multimodal, digital and electronic texts are largely interchangeable with those linked to print texts.

3. Identities: What identities is the language enacting (or enabling others to recognise as operative)?

- The VELS introductory materials specifically mention the ‘more sophisticated’ literacy and interdisciplinary capacities that students are expected to develop. It can be assumed that these capacities include viewing and the engagement with the visual, given the timing of this curriculum iteration.
- The identity of subject English is focussed on ‘texts’. These comprise a vast array of resources including ‘multimodal texts’, ‘media texts’ and ‘everyday texts’, many of which contain visual elements.
- The classifications of texts suggest that the curriculum makers are attempting to be inclusive of a range of student cohorts.
- The definitions of the various categories of texts have altered since the CSF II.
- The curriculum-makers appear uncertain about how to classify some ‘non-traditional’ texts, such as those containing visual components, for example, there is inconsistency as to whether picture storybooks and films can be classified as ‘literary texts’.
- ‘Multimodal’ texts are predominantly equated with ‘digital’ or ‘electronic’ texts; thus the affordances of static visual and multimodal texts are largely ignored.

4. Relationships: What sort of relationship is the language seeking to enact with others?

- In parts of the VELS: English, the language used to construe the identities of ‘texts’, ‘language’, ‘literature’ and ‘literacy’ is broadened in comparison to that in the CSF II. Such breadth may be seen as possibly ‘testing’ the relationships between curriculum-makers and curriculum users (teachers), as the latter attempt to address the curriculum’s demands.
• The new inclusions in *VELS*, a mandated curriculum, place some pressure on those practitioners who have little experience or expertise in working with the array of named texts and who need specific guidance and advice from the curriculum makers.
• Conversely, this broadening of ‘texts’ may be welcomed by some practitioners who feel that the diverse experiences and aspirations of their student cohorts are being acknowledged.

5. Politics: What social/political perspective is the language communicating?
What is constructed as ‘normal’, ‘appropriate’, ‘valuable’?
What social goods are at stake in this context?

• Subject English is linked to fostering students’ active participation in society; however, the language used to present this point is less forceful than in the *CSF II*.
• Despite the wide array of texts ‘encouraged’ by the *VELS*, traditional approaches to literacy and English pedagogy are predominant, thus maintaining pre-existing discourses of English.
• As little specific guidance is given in relation to using ‘new texts’ and fostering ‘new literacies’, curriculum users may be reluctant to engage with these concepts.

6. Connections: How does this language connect or disconnect things?
What connections or disconnections are being made or implied?
Are these connections valid or tenuous?

• As mentioned above, the developmental and cumulative nature of the *VELS* curriculum is emphasised in the introductory statements. These statements indicate that the *VELS* is far more systematic in this regard than the *CSF II*.
• Despite the above, in relation to the positioning of the visual in English, a developmental model is not always evident.
• The *connection* and ‘natural affinity’ between English and the Arts in relation to students’ responses to and creation of texts are mentioned in the introductory statements.
• There is little acknowledgement of the above and only passing reference to aesthetic response in the actual English curriculum.

7. Sign systems and knowledge: How does language privilege or disprivilege specific sign systems or different ways of knowing?
What sign systems are construed as most prestigious or important?
Is the visual marginalised?

• The study of language and metalanguage associated with the range of texts is named as crucial to the study of English, yet the English Achievement Standards contain very little reference to the specific ‘language’ and ‘metalanguage’ associated with the visual.
• The above suggests that very little consideration or development of specific approaches to the visual have been undertaken since the *CSF II*.
• The approaches and language used to discuss the visual are largely those associated with the verbal and linguistic.
Chapter Conclusion

The ‘essential learnings’ promoted in the VELS include interdisciplinary approaches, with particular emphasis on the ways in which ‘communication’, ‘information and computer technologies’ and ‘design, creativity and technology’ can be integrated in each discipline, thus allowing for the explicit addressing of visual and multimodal elements. The rhetoric in the VELS introductory documentation also emphasises cumulative learning, yet in the compulsory domain of English, references to the visual do not align with this approach.

While viewing is named several times, it is not conceptualised as a discrete practice in most of the VELS: English curriculum. In the instances in the VELS: English Learning Focus Statements, Achievement Standards and Progression Point examples where ‘viewing’ and visual texts and resources are acknowledged, the ways in which students engage with them are rarely differentiated from other communication modes.

Texts in the VELS: English are central to the subject. They are defined broadly, and many of the named text types comprise visual components; however, there is some uncertainty as to whether visual and multimodal texts can be defined as ‘literary’. ‘Multimodal’ and ‘electronic’ texts appear to be mere substitutes for verbal print texts, and very little reference is made to the particular affordances of the reception and creation of these texts. The practices associated with the visual are not organised according to a developmental continuum. While young students’ proficiency with using and understanding visual texts is acknowledged and anticipated in the initial curriculum levels, this is not reflected nor consolidated in subsequent levels.

There is a definite acknowledgement of the growing importance of the visual in VELS: English compared with CSF II: English. This development aligns with social and communication changes in relation to technology and multimedia in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Despite this, however, there is little evidence of a systematic approach to the positioning of the visual, nor of the consideration of a hierarchy or continuum of
visual texts and the practices associated with them. The discourse of the *VELS: English* curriculum, while including some new references to the dynamic nature of texts, language and literac(ies) remains largely unchanged from the *CSF II: English*. While this may placate curriculum users to some extent, the lack of clear structures, consistent referencing and specific approaches to the visual result in a tokenistic acknowledgement of its importance.
CHAPTER SIX
SEEING THE VISUAL IN
THE AUSVELS AND
THE VICTORIAN CURRICULUM

‘…reading and viewing require different kinds of imagination and transformational effort in
the re-representation of their meanings to oneself. They are fundamentally different ways of
knowing and learning the world’ (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p.180).

Chapter introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of data of the two most recent iterations of mandated
curricula in the Australian state of Victoria: the AusVELS (Victorian Curriculum and
Assessment Authority (VCAA), 2013, 2015, 2016), and The Victorian Curriculum (VCAA,
2017). As discussed in Chapter Three, after long-running debates about whether all
Australian jurisdictions should adopt a national curriculum, agreement was reached in 2009
that facilitated the development of the Australian National Curriculum (Australian
Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2011). Since this development,
individual jurisdictions, including the state of Victoria, have produced their own versions of
the national curriculum. The first Victorian iteration was the AusVELS, which as the title
suggests, was intended as a hybrid of and ‘bridge’ between the previous VELS (VCAA, 2008)
and the national curriculum. Since the commencement of this thesis, a further iteration, The
Victorian Curriculum (VCAA, 2017) has been produced and disseminated. The AusVELS and
The Victorian Curriculum, while very similar in content, do contain some differences that are
relevant to the positioning of the visual in subject English.
The AusVELS: context and significance

Given that both the AusVELS (VCAA, 2013, 2015, 2016) and The Victorian Curriculum (VCAA, 2017) were produced a decade after the CSF II (VBoS, 2000) and several years after the initial dissemination of the VELS (VCAA, 2006, 2008), and also that these years witnessed an explosion of the visual, multimodal and digital in the daily lives of students, it follows that mandated curricula would present more systematic approaches to learning in relation to the visual. In the case of subject English, the period between 2001 and 2017 has seen a range of textual modes represented in senior English text lists. Furthermore, the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) final English examination moved from almost gratuitous inclusions of images to a task that requires the ‘analysis of ways in which language and visual features are used to present a point of view and to persuade readers’ (my italics) (VCAA, 2010). These factors suggest a more dynamic construction of English in these years and for this research, more systematic approaches to the visual in English in these most recent curriculum iterations.

The AusVELS overview describes the curriculum as ‘progressively developed within a framework’ and as ‘a single, coherent and comprehensive set of prescribed content and common achievement standards, which schools use to plan student learning programs, assess student progress and report to parents (AusVELS overview, VCAA, 2013). While this type of language is not atypical of curriculum documents, it is significant to consider when examining the positioning and organisation of the visual.

The AusVELS retained the VELS’ inclusion of interdisciplinary learning including the promotion of students’ use of technologies, creativity and design principles in the presentation of their work (VCAA, 2013). The components of the AusVELS curriculum are made explicit in the overview, and again emphasise a developmental model of learning, and suggest that this curriculum gives more explicit guidance to teachers than previous curricula. Of particular relevance to this research are the Achievement Standards, the Content Descriptions and the Content Elaborations. The AusVELS Achievement Standards describe the ‘quality of learning’ that indicate that students are ‘well placed to commence the learning required to commence the learning required at the next level of achievement’. These rather
broad standards are supported by the more explicit Content Descriptions that ‘specify what teachers are expected to teach’, and the Content Elaborations that are intended to provide illustrative examples of specific activities and approaches to the content (VCAA, 2013).

An organisational aspect of the AusVELS different to the VELS was the change from curriculum levels 1 to 6, to eleven levels broadly links to the levels of schooling from Foundation (Prep) to Level 10. While this structure represents the ‘typical’ learning development of students, it was also intended to provide flexibility for teachers, and acknowledge that students progress at different rates. The AusVELS overview material states that this structure will encourage teachers ‘to go further and use the curriculum to appropriately target the learning level of each individual student in a class’ and ‘use the full continuum to more effectively monitor and provide feedback to students on their learning’ (VCAA, 2013). While this point may seem unrelated to the focus of this research, it does emphasise that the AusVELS is based on the principles of developmental learning models, thus it should be anticipated that the positioning of the visual in English follows such models.

**The AusVELS: English curriculum**

The AusVELS: English curriculum has been analysed to ascertain significant themes, narratives and conceptualisations of the visual in English, and in turn, subject English. Particular focus has been given to references associated with the visual in the English Achievement Standards, Content Descriptions and Content Elaborations from Foundation Level to Level 10. As in Chapters Four and Five, Gee’s Building Tasks (Gee, 2010, 2011, 2014) frame the analysis.

**Significance**

The AusVELS English Overview declares in manifesto style that ‘the study of English is central to the learning and development of all young Australians’ in that it ‘helps create… informed citizens…who will take responsibility for Australia’s future’, ‘nation-building’ and ‘internationalisation’ (VCAA, 2015, p.2). The prominent positioning of these references to
patriotism and civics in the first sentence of the Rationale suggests that they underpin all that follows, and immediately constructs the ‘narrative’ theme (Taylor, 2008, pp.309 -312) of this curriculum. Also implied is that the selection, positioning and hierarchy of curriculum components, practices and resources, such as those associated with the visual, are proportionate to their value of in relation to this ‘nation-building’, citizenship and ultimately, ‘Australia’s future’ (VCAA, 2015, p.2), and conversely, that aspects that are not explicitly acknowledged not systematically positioned, are not crucial to these aims.

Activities (and practices)

‘Viewing’ as a practice is included several times in the English overview materials. It is positioned along with and equal to ‘listening’, ‘reading’, ‘speaking’, writing’ ‘creating’ and interestingly, ‘reflecting’ in the subject’s Aims. Also significant is that ‘viewing’ practice is associated (like the other abovementioned practices) with ‘increasingly complex and sophisticated’ texts, including ‘multimodal texts’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 2), thus suggesting that the level of complexity of visual texts, and the growing sophistication of the practices associated with these texts, will be evident and systematically presented in the curriculum. This positioning also indicates that ‘viewing’ is an active practice, as differentiated from perhaps ‘seeing’ (although the definition of ‘seeing’ can also encompass active practice).

Specific English practices are aligned with students at different curriculum levels which at Foundation Level to Level 2 acknowledge the ‘wide range of experience with language and texts’ students bring to school with them and ‘purposeful listening, reading, viewing, speaking and writing’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 8). At Levels 3 to 6, one of the few explicit mentions of ‘visual texts’ is linked specifically to ‘language’ as ‘students explore the language of different types of texts, including visual texts, advertising, digital/online and media texts’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 8), thus suggesting a broader interpretation of ‘language’ than indicated in the description of the Language strand. By Levels 7 to 10, students engage with ‘increasingly sophisticated analyses of various kinds of literary, popular culture and everyday texts’, which given the AusVELS definitions of these different texts (VCAA, 2015, p. 4) must include the analysis of visual elements. The term ‘increasingly sophisticated’ is used again in relation to Levels 7 to 10, in which ‘students are given further opportunities to create
increasingly sophisticated and multimodal texts’ (my italics) (VCAA, 2015, p. 8); the inclusion of ‘and’ is curious and can be read to mean the creation of multimodal texts requires less sophistication than that associated with other texts.

Not as explicitly linked to this research, and yet significant to the reception of visual texts are the Aims that specifically address the affective domain. Two of the four Aims focus on aesthetic practices: the second aim of English is ‘to ensure that students: appreciate, enjoy and use the English language in all its variations and develop a sense of its richness and power’ in order to be able to ‘evoke feelings’; and the fourth aim is to ‘ensure’ that students ‘develop interest and skills in inquiring into the aesthetic aspects of texts’. (VCAA, 2015, p.2)

Identities: language, literature, literacy, texts

The identity of subject English in the AusVELS is construed around the three ‘strands’: Language, Literature and Literacy, which ‘together focus on developing students’ knowledge, understanding and skills in listening, reading, viewing, speaking and writing’ (VCAA, 2015, p.3). Unsurprisingly, the ‘identity’ of ‘Language’ focuses on the verbal and linguistic, with no specific mention of the term ‘visual language’; however, the description of the Language ‘sub-strand’ ‘Text structure and organisation’ indicates that students learn ‘how the author guides the reader/viewer through the text through effective use of resources at the level of the whole text, the paragraph and the sentence’ (my italics) (VCAA, 2015, p. 5). Similarly, the ‘Expressing and developing ideas’ sub-strand states that ‘students learn how, in a text, effective authors control and use an increasingly differentiated range of clause structures, words and word groups, as well as combinations of sound, image, movement, verbal elements and layout’ (my italics) (VCAA, 2015, p. 5). An aspect of my analysis of the Achievement Standards, Content Descriptions and Elaborations evaluates the extent to which visual texts and their structures, features and creation are differentiated from other texts; the association of ‘authors’ with all text types suggests that such as differentiation is not evident in these introductory documents.

As discussed under ‘Texts’ below, the Literature strand includes the study of ‘film and multimodal texts’ and ‘digital/online forms’ (VCAA, 2015, p.6). There are no other references to students’ engagement with the visual in this strand description. In the ‘Creating
literature’ sub-strand, ‘students develop skills that allow them to convey meaning, address significant issues and heighten engagement and impact’ through ‘using print, digital and online media’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 6). This statement suggests that the creation of texts in each of these modes will be addressed specifically and systematically in the content descriptions and elaborations, and that the distinguishing features and affordances available in each mode to ‘convey meaning’ and ‘heighten engagement and impact’ will be acknowledged.

The ‘Literacy’ strand is the one that most specifically addresses viewing and the visual, and the text classifications aligned to ‘Literacy’ (rather than ‘Language’ or ‘Literature’) include ‘media texts, everyday texts and workplace texts’ (VCAA, 2015, p.7). Alignments such as this suggest a kind of hierarchy of texts: ‘literary’ text study is linked to ‘emotional, intellectual or philosophical effects’ and associated with the ‘prized’, the ‘perennial’, the ‘valued’ and the ‘cherished’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 6); text types mentioned in the ‘Literacy’ strand description are linked to the ‘technical’ and the ‘systematic’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 7).

Via the Literacy strand, students:

learn about the different ways in which knowledge and opinion are represented and developed in texts, and about how more or less abstraction and complexity can be shown through multimodal representations. This means that print and digital contexts are included, and that listening, viewing, reading, speaking, writing and creating are all developed systematically and concurrently (VCAA, 2015, p. 7).

Significant in this extract is the advice that the Literacy strand enables the ‘systematic’ and ‘concurrent’ development of each of the communication modes, including ‘viewing’, which incidentally is positioned before ‘reading’ for the first time in this documentation. ‘Viewing’ is named twice more in the Literacy strand description: once in relation to students’ development of ‘fluency and innovation’; another linked to students’ developing ‘an interest in the range of materials’ with which they engage (VCAA, 2015, p. 7). Neither of these references presents explicit ways of working with the visual.
Despite some vagueness in the aforementioned statements, three of the four Literacy ‘sub-strands’ suggest working with visual elements. ‘Interacting with others’ describes how students design presentations by ‘appropriately selecting and sequencing linguistic and multimodal elements’ (which may or may not include visual elements). ‘Interpreting, analysing and evaluating’ requires students to ‘learn to comprehend what they read and view by applying growing contextual, semantic, grammatical and phonic knowledge’ (my italics) (VCAA, 2015, p. 7). This statement either appropriates linguistic terminology to visual texts or fails to acknowledge the distinctive nature of elements of ‘viewed’ texts. More explicit is the reference to students’ ‘exploration’ of ‘the ways conventions and structures are used in written, digital, multimedia and cinematic texts’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 7) in that it suggests that each of these forms has specific structures and features. Despite this, visual texts such as static images are omitted, are not specifically mentioned. The ‘Creating texts’ sub-strand calls on students to produce texts, including multimodal texts, ‘by strategically selecting key aspects of a topic as well as language, visual and audio features’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 7); this ‘strategic’ selection of visual features suggests a certain level of sophistication in understanding how visual elements work.

The ‘identities’ of ‘texts’ in the AusVELS: English include ‘written, spoken or multimodal…print or digital/online forms’. Visual texts are not mentioned as distinct entities in the introductory documentation, yet the lengthy definition of multimodal texts as ‘combin[ing] language with other means of communication such as visual images, soundtrack or spoken word as in film or computer presentation media’ clearly presents the visual and viewing as integral to the reception and production of texts in English.

The classification of literary texts focuses on traditional forms such as ‘novels, poetry, short stories and plays’, yet ‘multimodal texts such as film’ are also included as ‘literature’, as are ‘fiction for young adults and children’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 4) which presumably includes picture books and graphic novels; indeed, teachers ‘working at all levels’ are encouraged to ‘not only [use] texts conventionally understood as ‘literary’. Literary texts, ‘valued for their form and style’, provide students with opportunities to engage ‘in examining, evaluating and discussing texts in increasingly sophisticated and informed’ ways, and ‘enriching students’ scope of experience’ via personal and aesthetic response (VCAA, 2015, p. 4).
**Relationships**

Given the reforms leading to the development of the Australian curriculum (ACARA, 2011) and its Victorian iteration, the *AusVELS*, and the structural differences between the *AusVELS* and previous curriculum iterations, the education policy/curriculum makers can be seen as calling upon curriculum users/teachers to be agents of this change in their enactment of the curriculum (Fehring & Nyland, 2012). The curriculum-makers call on teachers to use the English curriculum to help secure the ‘development of all young Australians’ (VCAA, 2015, p.2). On one level, the revised structure, range of texts and practices (including those associated with the visual) presented in the *AusVELS: English* appear to give teachers great scope as to how this can be achieved in their own learning contexts.

**Politics**

The increased prominence of ‘viewing’ in the *AusVELS: English* suggests that its positioning is more systematic than in previous curriculum iterations. Countering this to some degree is the responsibility placed on teachers to adhere to discourses of and approaches to subject English seen as ‘valuable’ in the wider community context. While not explicitly addressed in the *AusVELS*, the introduction of NAPLAN testing in 2008 which assesses ‘literacy’ based on reading, writing and spelling proficiency, and teachers’ roles in supporting students to meet the demands of these high-stakes tests, may pressure curriculum users to make choices about what takes priority in the enactment of the curriculum. In turn, engagement with the visual may be seen as negotiable if it is not crucial to students’ literacy ‘assessment’.

**Connections**

The documentation for *AusVELS: English* describes ‘learning in English as recursive and cumulative’, ‘build[ing] on concepts, skills and processes developed in earlier levels’, and presenting ‘a sequence of development of knowledge, understanding and skills’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 3). It is also stated that the components at each level ‘have been written to ensure that learning is appropriately ordered and unnecessary repetition is avoided’ (my italics) (VCAA, 2015, p. 4). The conceptualisation of the *AusVELS: English* curriculum is a hybrid of the cumulative (Maton, 2009) and the spiral (Tyler, 1949) in which concepts, skills and knowledge ‘introduced at one level may be revisited, strengthened and extended at later
levels’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 4). This conceptualisation underpins my analysis of the positioning of viewing and the visual and the connections from one curriculum level to the next.

**Sign systems and knowledge**

As discussed earlier, ‘viewing’ is positioned alongside reading, writing, listening and speaking on several occasions in the introduction to *AusVELS: English*, thus indicating that it is no less valued than the other communication modes, and that each of these modes has similar value and emphasis within the curriculum. Another aspect highlighted in the introduction is the aim in English to foster ‘appreciation’, ‘enjoyment’, ‘evocation of feelings’ and engagement with ‘aesthetic aspects of texts’, thus indicating that the affective domain is a crucial component of the ways students engage with the subject.

Certainly, English’s Aims appear to value a range of ways of ‘talking, acting, interacting, thinking and valuing’ (Gee, 2011, p. 183), with viewing and emotional response taking their place as prominent among that which is valued. As ‘English aims to ensure’ that students are able to demonstrate these capacities and attributes, it follows that the subsequent components of the curriculum will provide some specific guidance as to how these aims can be ensured.

**Summary of the AusVELS: English overview materials**

In relation to my research, there are a number of significant aspects identified in the *AusVELS: English* overview materials. Most significant is that ‘viewing’ is a named practice of English and is positioned in parts of the documentation alongside ‘reading’, ‘writing’, ‘listening’, ‘speaking’. Despite this, the naming of ‘viewing’ after Level 2 is erratic and inconsistent, even though students are engaged with the ‘exploration of the language of different types of texts, including visual texts’ (ref) (my italics).

Another important message arising from the introductory materials is that the *AusVELS: English* curriculum is intended to be structured cumulatively, and that students’ acquisition of skills and knowledge is seen as incremental as students ‘consolidate’ and ‘extend’ what they have learned at previous levels. Yet again, the visual is positioned inconsistently and
with little specific guidance on this cumulative intent. Thirdly, the study of English and the engagement with texts aims at providing ‘pleasure’ for students, yet there is no specific reference to visual elements in relation to this.

**AusVELS: English curriculum levels**

The key components of the *AusVELS: English* curriculum from Foundation to Level 10 are the Level Descriptions, the Achievement Standards and the Content Descriptions. The Level Descriptions ‘provide information about the learning contexts that are appropriate at each level’ and ‘provide an overview of the texts to be studied’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 3). The Achievement Standards indicate the level of learning ‘that students should typically demonstrate by a particular point’ in order to be ‘well placed to commence the learning required at the next level of achievement’ and the sequence of Achievement Standards across the levels ‘describes progress’ and ‘provides teachers with a framework of growth and development in the learning area’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 9). The Content Descriptions ‘describe the knowledge, understanding, skills and processes that teacher are expected to teach and students are expected to learn’ (VCAA, 2015, p.4). These definitions of the key components indicate that strong connections and developmental continua are fundamental to the *AusVELS: English* curriculum, and that the texts included at each level are differentiated according to their complexity and the expected practices and achievement levels of students.

A disclaimer of sorts is issued in relation to the content descriptions in that ‘they do not prescribe approaches to teaching’, nor do the elaborations provide ‘comprehensive content points that all students need to be taught’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 4). These statements almost contradict earlier language that positions the *AusVELS* curriculum as ‘prescribed’ and ‘comprehensive’. In any case, it should be expected that the curriculum provides guidance concerning systematic approaches to structuring and supporting students’ learning development from one level to the next in relation to all practices, skills and knowledge, including those associated with viewing and the visual.

In the overarching description of Foundation to Level 2, ‘purposeful’ practices including ‘viewing’ are mentioned, and ‘viewing’ is mentioned a second time as part of the ‘repertoire
of activities’ involving the communication modes (VCAA, 2015, p.8). The early years of schooling aim to ‘extend the abilities of students prior to school learning and to provide the foundation needed for continued learning’ via ‘pleasurable and varied experiences of literature and through the beginnings of a repertoire of activities involving listening, viewing, reading, speaking and writing’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 8).

This ‘foundation’ is presumably built upon at Levels 3 to 6, in which students ‘practise, consolidate and extend what they have learned’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 8), and visual texts are specifically mentioned. By Levels 7 to 10, ‘students continue to practise, consolidate and extend what they have learned from previous levels’ and ‘extend their understanding of how language works…[by] develop[ing] an understanding of the requirements of different types of texts’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 8). Again, this indicates that this developing understanding is inclusive of the practice of viewing and work with the visual.

The Reading and Viewing mode and the visual

In AusVELS: English, the term Reading and viewing is used to describe one of the communication modes compared with both CSF II (VBoS, 2000) and the VELS (VCAA, 2008) which named ‘reading’ only. It is curious then that the terms ‘view’ and ‘viewing’ are not included in any of the actual AusVELS: English Achievement Standards from Foundation to Level 10. This inconsistency is further compacted by the naming of ‘images’ in the standards, and more specifically, ‘picture books’, ‘film’, ‘illustrations’, ‘diagrams’, ‘multimodal texts’, and ‘media texts’ across the introductions to each curriculum level and in the Content Descriptions.

Table 11 presents the AusVELS: English Reading and Viewing Content Descriptions and Elaborations relevant to viewing and the visual for each curriculum level from Foundation to Level 10. The relevant Achievement Standards expected to be met at the end of each level are also presented. Consistent with Chapters Four and Five, practices associated with the visual are highlighted in blue, and the visual textual resources are highlighted in orange. Each Content Description includes a code, which includes reference to the Australian Curriculum (AC), subject English (E), the Language (LA), Literature (LT) or Literacy (LY) strand, and a numerical component.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Content Descriptions</th>
<th>Content Elaborations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Language Strand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognise that texts are made up of words and groups of words that make meaning</td>
<td><strong>Exploring</strong> spoken, written and <strong>multimodal texts</strong> and <strong>identifying</strong> elements, for example, words and <strong>images</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Explore</strong> the different <strong>contribution of words and images to meaning</strong> in stories and informative texts (ACELA1786)</td>
<td>talking about how a ‘different’ story is told if we read only the words, or only the <strong>pictures</strong>: and the story that words and pictures make when combined <strong>exploring</strong> how the combination of print and <strong>images</strong> in texts create meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Understand</strong> concepts about print and <strong>screen</strong>, including how <strong>books, film and simple digital texts</strong> work, and know some features of print, for example <strong>directionality</strong> (ACELA1433)</td>
<td><strong>Learning</strong> about <strong>front and back covers</strong>; title and author, layout and navigation of digital/screen <strong>texts</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Literature Strand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognise that texts are created by authors who tell stories and share experiences that may be similar or different to students’ own experiences (ACELT1575)</td>
<td><strong>Viewing</strong> stories by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander storytellers from online sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Literacy Strand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Identify</strong> some familiar texts and the contexts in which they are used (ACELY1645)</td>
<td><strong>Recognising</strong> the meaning of <strong>symbols</strong> in everyday contexts, for example exit signs, <strong>logos, hearts and flowers</strong> on greeting cards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use comprehension strategies to understand and discuss texts listened to, <strong>viewed</strong> or read independently (ACELY1650)</td>
<td><strong>Talking about</strong> the meanings in texts listened to, <strong>viewed</strong> and read <strong>visualising</strong> elements in a text (for example <strong>drawing</strong> an event or character from a text read aloud).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Foundation Level Achievement Standard**

By the end of the Foundation level:

Students ‘read short predictable texts with familiar vocabulary and **supportive images**, drawing on their developing knowledge of concepts about print and sound and letters’ (VCAA, 2015, p.18).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Content Descriptions</th>
<th>Elaborations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Language Strand</strong></td>
<td><strong>Learning</strong> about how books and digital texts are organised including page numbers, table of contents, headings, <strong>images with captions</strong> and the use of scrolling to access digital texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understand concepts about <strong>print and screen</strong>, including how different types of texts are organised using page numbering, tables of content, <strong>headings and titles</strong>, <strong>navigation buttons</strong>, <strong>bars and links</strong> (ACELA1450)</td>
<td><strong>Respond to texts</strong> drawn from a range of cultures and experiences (ACELY1655)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Literacy Strand</strong></td>
<td>using <strong>drawing</strong> and <strong>writing</strong> to <strong>depict and comment</strong> on people and places beyond their immediate experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respond to texts drawn from a range of cultures and experiences (ACELY1655)</td>
<td>using <strong>elements</strong> in books and <strong>screen texts</strong>, for example <strong>illustrations</strong>, <strong>diagrams</strong>, sound and movement, to <strong>support reading</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Using comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning about key events, ideas and information</strong> in texts that they listen to, <strong>view</strong> and read by <strong>drawing</strong> on growing knowledge of context, <strong>text structures</strong> and <strong>language features</strong> (ACELY1660)</td>
<td><strong>making connections</strong> between the text and students’ own experiences, and between information in print and <strong>images</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Making predictions</strong> from the cover, from <strong>illustrations</strong> and at points in the text before reading on</td>
<td><strong>Retelling</strong> the events or key information in the text orally, in writing and/or through <strong>digital or arts media</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Level 1 Achievement Standard**

By the end of Level 1:

Students ‘**identify**’ the language features, **images** and vocabulary used to describe characters and events’.

‘Students **read aloud**, with developing fluency and intonation, short texts with some unfamiliar vocabulary, **simple** and **compound sentences** and **supportive images**’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 26)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Content Descriptions</th>
<th>Elaborations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Language Strand</strong></td>
<td><strong>Identifying</strong> the topic and type of a text through its <strong>visual presentation</strong>, for example <strong>cover design</strong>, <strong>packaging</strong>, <strong>title/subtitle</strong> and <strong>images</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Understand</strong> that different types of texts have <strong>identifiable text structures</strong> and <strong>language features</strong> that help the text serve its purpose (ACELA1463)</td>
<td><strong>Identifying</strong> the topic and type of a text through its <strong>visual presentation</strong>, for example <strong>cover design</strong>, <strong>packaging</strong>, <strong>title/subtitle</strong> and <strong>images</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Know</strong> some features of text organisation including <strong>page and screen layouts</strong>, <strong>alphabetical order</strong>, and different types of diagrams, for example</td>
<td><strong>Identifying</strong> the topic and type of a text through its <strong>visual presentation</strong>, for example <strong>cover design</strong>, <strong>packaging</strong>, <strong>title/subtitle</strong> and <strong>images</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example Timelines (ACELA1466)</td>
<td>Links and Live Connections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify visual representations of characters’ actions, reactions, speech and thought processes in narratives, and consider how these images add to or contradict or multiply the meaning of accompanying words (ACELA1469)</td>
<td>Comparing two versions of the same story, for example ‘Jack and the Beanstalk’, identifying how a character’s actions and reactions are depicted differently by different illustrators</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand that nouns represent people, places, things and ideas and can be, for example, common, proper, concrete or abstract, and that noun groups/phrases can be expanded using articles and adjectives (ACELA1468)</td>
<td>Exploring illustrations and noun groups/phrases in picture books to identify how the participants have been represented by an illustrator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Literacy Strand**

Discuss different texts on a similar topic, identifying similarities and differences between the texts (ACELY1665)

Use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning and begin to analyse texts by drawing on growing knowledge of context, language and visual features and print and multimodal text structures (ACELY1670)

**Level 2 Achievement Standard**

By the end of Level 2:

Students ‘read texts that contain varied sentence structures, some unfamiliar vocabulary, a significant number of high-frequency sight words and images that provide additional information’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 34).

**Language Strand**

Identify the features of online texts that enhance navigation (ACELA1790)

Identify the effect on audiences of techniques, for example shot size, vertical camera angle and layout in picture books, advertisements and noting how the relationship between characters can be depicted in illustrations through the positioning of the characters (for example facing each other or facing away)

Becoming familiar with the typical features of online texts, for example navigation bars and buttons, hyperlinks and sitemaps
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Literacy Strand</strong></th>
<th><strong>Language Strand</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify the audience and purpose of imaginative, informative and persuasive texts (ACELY1678)</td>
<td>Identify features of online texts that enhance readability including text, navigation, links, graphics and layout (ACELA1793)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>identifying the author’s point of view on a topic and key words and images that seem intended to persuade listeners, viewers or readers to agree with the view presented</td>
<td>participating in online searches for information using navigation tools and discussing similarities and differences between print and digital information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read an increasing range of different types of texts by combining contextual, semantic, grammatical and phonic knowledge, using text processing strategies, for example monitoring, predicting, confirming, rereading, reading on and self-correcting (ACELY1679)</td>
<td>making connections between the information in print and images using text features and search tools to locate information in written and digital texts efficiently.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Level 3 Achievement Standard**

By the end of Level 3:

Students ‘understand how language features, images and vocabulary choices are used for different effects. They read texts that contain varied sentence structures, a range of punctuation conventions, and images that provide additional information’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 40).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Literacy Strand</strong></th>
<th><strong>Language Strand</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explore the effect of choices when framing an image, placement of elements in the image, and salience on composition of still and moving images in a range of types of texts (ACELA1496)</td>
<td>Examining visual and multimodal texts, building a vocabulary to describe visual elements and techniques such as framing, composition and visual point of view and beginning to understand how these choices impact on viewer response</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Level 4 Achievement Standards

By the end of Level 4:

Students ‘explain how language features, images and vocabulary are used to engage the interest of audiences’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 48).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Literature Strand</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explain sequences of images in print texts and compare these to the ways hyperlinked digital texts are organised, explaining their effect on viewers’ interpretations (ACELA1511)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| <strong>Identifying and comparing sequences of images revealed through different hyperlink choices</strong> | <strong>Making connections between information in print and images</strong> |
| | Inferring meaning from the ways communication occurs in digital environments including the interplay between words, images, and sounds |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identify aspects of literary texts that convey details or information about particular social, cultural and historical contexts (ACELT1608)</th>
<th>describing how aspects of literature, for example visuals, symbolic elements, dialogue and character descriptions, can convey information about cultural elements, such as beliefs, traditions and customs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>5</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Literacy Strand</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Literacy Strand</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use comprehension strategies to analyse information, integrating and linking ideas from a variety of print and digital sources (ACELY1703)</td>
<td>using research skills including identifying research purpose, locating texts, gathering and organising information, evaluating it relative value, and the accuracy and currency of print and digital sources and summarising information from several sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 5 Achievement Standards</strong>&lt;br&gt;By the end of Level 5:&lt;br&gt;Students ‘understand how language features, images and vocabulary influence interpretations of characters, settings and events’ (VCAA, 2015, p.55).</td>
<td><strong>6</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Language Strand</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identify and explain how analytical images like figures, tables, diagrams, maps and graphs contribute to our understanding of verbal information in factual and persuasive texts (ACELA1524)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Identify and explain how analytical images like figures, tables, diagrams, maps and graphs contribute to our understanding of verbal information in factual and persuasive texts (ACELA1524)</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>observing</strong> how sequential events can be represented visually by a series of images, including comic strips, timelines, photo stories, procedure diagrams and flowcharts, life-cycle diagrams, and the flow of images in picture books&lt;br&gt;<strong>observing</strong> how concepts, information and relationships can be represented visually through such images as tables, maps, graphs, diagrams, and icons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Literature Strand</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Literature Strand</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify, describe and discuss similarities and differences between texts, including those by the same author or illustrator, and evaluate characteristics that define an author’s style (ACELT1616)</td>
<td>exploring two or more texts by the same author, drawing out the similarities, for example subject or theme, characterisation, text structure, plot development, tone, vocabulary, sense of voice, narrative point of view, favoured grammatical structures and visual techniques in sophisticated picture books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Literacy Strand</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Literacy Strand</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use comprehension strategies to interpret and analyse information and ideas, comparing content from a variety of textual sources including</td>
<td>making connections between information in print and images</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Level 6 Achievement Standards

By the end of Level 6:

Students ‘**analyse and explain** how language features, **images** and vocabulary and used by different authors to represent ideas, characters and events’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 62).

#### 7 Language Strand

**Analyse** how **point of view** is generated in **visual texts** by means of choices, for example **gaze, angle and social distance** (ACELA1764)

- **comparing** choices for point of view in animations, advertisements and other persuasive texts
- **comparing** how different advertisements use visual elements to advertise the same product
- **experimenting** with digital storytelling conventions to create personal reflections on shared experiences

#### 7 Literature Strand

- **Recognise and analyse** the ways that characterisation, events and settings are combined in narratives, and discuss the purposes and appeal of different approaches (ACELT1622)
  - exploring traditional stories from Asia and discussing their engaging features, for example use of the oral mode, visual elements, verse, use of puppets to convey the narrative
- **Compare** the ways that language and **images** are used to create character, and to influence emotions and opinions in different types of texts (ACELT1621)
  - identifying stereotypes, prejudice and oversimplifications in texts
- **Discuss** aspects of texts, for example their aesthetic and social value, using relevant and appropriate metalanguage (ACELT1803)
  - (No elaboration)

#### 7 Literacy Strand

**Analyse and explain** the ways **text structures** and language features shape meaning and vary according to audience and purpose (ACELY1721)

- explaining the relationship between text features and structures and audience and purpose, such as identifying which group would be the most likely target for the information in an advertisement and justifying why on the basis of textual features

**Compare** the text structures and language features of **multimodal texts**, explaining how they combine to influence audiences (ACELY 1724)

- (No elaboration)
### Level 7 Achievement Standards

By the end of Level 7:

Students ‘**demonstrate understanding** of how the choice of language features, **images** and vocabulary affects meaning’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 68).

#### 8 Language Strand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Analyze and explain</strong> how the text structures and language features of persuasive texts, including <strong>media texts</strong>, vary according to the medium and mode of communication (ACELA1543)</th>
<th>discussing how particular perspectives of the same event are portrayed through the combination of <strong>images</strong> and words in various <strong>media texts</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Investigate</strong> how <strong>visual and multimodal texts</strong> allude to or draw on other texts or <strong>images</strong> to enhance and layer meaning (ACELA1548)</td>
<td>comprehending a series of static <strong>images</strong> and combinations of <strong>language and images</strong> in a <strong>picture book</strong>, for example title, setting, characters, actions, as well as <strong>technical elements</strong> including position, size, colour, angle, framing, point of view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>analysing</strong> the relationship between <strong>visual elements</strong> and text in non-fiction texts such as documentaries, television news, online newspapers and digital magazines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 8 Literature Strand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Understand and explain</strong> how combinations of <strong>words and images</strong> in texts are used to represent particular groups in society, and how texts position readers in relation to those groups (ACELT1628)</th>
<th><strong>recognising</strong> the similarities and differences between types of texts (for example a <strong>complex picture book</strong> and a <strong>feature film</strong>) in order to understand how different combinations of <strong>words and images</strong> lead readers to interpret <strong>visual texts</strong> in particular ways, according to audience, purpose and context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify and evaluate devices that create tone, for example humour, wordplay, innuendo and parody in poetry, humorous prose, drama or <strong>visual texts</strong> (ACELT1630)</td>
<td>understanding that tone (serious, bitter, sincere, amused) indicates attitude to the subject and to readers/listeners, who can identify or judge tone through past experience and language clues in the text</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Level 8 Achievement Standards

By the end of Level 8:

Students ‘**explain** how language features, **images** and vocabulary are used to represent different ideas.

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127
and issues in texts (VCAA, 2015, p. 76).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9</th>
<th>Language Strand</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analyse and explain</strong> the use of symbols, icons and myth in still and moving images and how these augment meaning (ACELA1560)</td>
<td><strong>investigating</strong> the use of symbols, for example the flag, the digger’s hat and the Southern Cross in images, films and picture books, and <strong>evaluating</strong> their contribution to viewers’ understanding of issues, for example national identity, <strong>recognising</strong> that visual and verbal symbols have different meanings for different groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9</th>
<th>Literature Strand</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpret and compare how representations of people and culture in literary texts are drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts (ACELT1633)</td>
<td><strong>analysing</strong> literary texts created by and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (including documentaries, picture books, print texts and other multimodal texts) and also texts including film produced by and about peoples of Asian background, and considering the different ways these texts represent people, places, things and issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyse text structures and language features of literary texts, and make relevant comparisons with other texts (ACELT1772)</td>
<td>by comparing texts, writing or speaking about how well the author constructed the opening and closing sections of the text and used ‘hooks’ to keep the reader/viewer/listener engaged and reading on/watching/listening to the end</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigate and experiment with the use and effect of extended metaphor, metonymy, allegory, icons, myths and symbolism in texts, for example poetry, short films, graphic novels and plays on similar themes (ACELT1637)</td>
<td>Taking a particular area of study, a topic or theme and examining how different authors make use of devices like myth, icons and imagery in their work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9</th>
<th>Literacy Strand</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explore and explain</strong> the combinations of language and visual choices that authors make to present information, opinions and perspectives in different texts (ACELY1745)</td>
<td><strong>identifying or commenting on</strong> the author’s approaches and use of techniques, design, form and style</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analyse</strong> how the construction and interpretation of texts, including media texts, can be influenced by cultural perspectives and other texts (ACELY1739)</td>
<td><strong>comparing</strong> perspectives represented in texts from different times and places, including texts drawn from popular culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>identifying, comparing and creating</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
relationships between texts (including novels, illustrated stories, social issue cartoons, documentaries, multimodal texts)

Level 9 Achievement Standards

By the end of Level 9:

Students ‘analyse and explain how images and vocabulary choices and language features distinguish the work of individual authors’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 84).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10</th>
<th>Language Strand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate the impact on audiences of different choices in the representation of still and moving images (ACELA1572)</td>
<td>experimenting with aspects of visual texts to establish different nuances, for example evaluating the impact of the movement of camera or light in moving images</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10</th>
<th>Literacy Strand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analyse and evaluate how people, cultures, places, events, objects and concepts are represented in texts, including media texts, through language, structural and/or visual choices (ACELY1749)</td>
<td>identifying and explaining satirical events, including events in other cultures, for example depictions in political cartoons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Level 10 Achievement Standards

By the end of Level 10:

Students ‘explain how the choice of language features, images and vocabulary contributes to the development of individual style’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 91).

Reading and Viewing: curriculum levels analysis

Foundation level

At Foundation level, at which most texts include visual elements, the content descriptions and associated elaborations appear to give relatively equal significance to the linguistic and the visual as students: ‘explore the different contribution of words and images to meaning’ (AELA1786); talk about ‘how a ‘different’ story is told if we read only the words, or only the pictures, and the story that words and pictures make when combined’; and make connections between the ‘front and back covers’ of texts and the layout of screen texts. The
distinct significance of the visual is acknowledged as students recognise ‘the meaning of symbols’ such as ‘logos, hearts and flowers’ in ‘everyday contexts’; however, the specific attributes and ‘concepts’ of texts such as ‘books, film and simple digital texts’ are not given attention as they are grouped together in ACELA1433. The elaboration for the Literacy strand appears to be a tokenistic (and ambiguous) gesture towards ‘viewing’, ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander storytellers’ and ‘online sources’; while many of these texts may be oral and therefore only accessible via the internet, the juxtaposition of these elements seems quite random.

Despite some inconsistencies in the language of the content descriptions and elaborations, practices and textual resources associated with the visual are acknowledged and named specifically; however, this specificity is not evident in the Foundation level achievement standard, in which the only allusion to viewing is the mention of ‘supportive images’, relegating the visual to a less prominent position that the other documentation for this level. It is also significant that students’ knowledge of concepts about ‘print and sound and letters’ are specifically addressed in the standard, but there is no explicit reference to the visual, at a level in which images are fundamental to texts.

**Level 1**

A range of visual textual components continues to be acknowledged in the Level 1 content descriptions and elaborations, but with varying degrees of meaning and exploration, for example, content description ACELA1453 explicitly mentions the comparing of ‘different kinds of images in narrative and informative texts’ yet accompanying elaboration does not appear to relate specifically to images.

In relation to specific practices and engagement with particular visual and multimodal texts, a development from understanding how some of these texts ‘work’ at Foundation level (ACELA1433) to understanding how they are ‘organised’ at level 1, is evident. ‘Making connections’ and ‘making predictions’ are applied specifically to images and illustrations in two elaborations. These practices also indicate a development from the ways in which students merely use more literal practices such as ‘recognising’, ‘identifying’ and ‘retelling’ associated with the visual at Foundation level.
Despite these notable instances of building on students’ engagement with visual texts, the Level 1 Achievement Standard includes no specific naming of ‘viewing’. ‘Images’ are named twice in the standard. Students are required to ‘identify’ the ways in which ‘language features, images and vocabulary are ‘used to describe characters and events’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 26). Here, ‘images’ are given equal significance with ‘language features’ and ‘vocabulary’. This is somewhat diminished as images are then relegated to ‘supportive’ of vocabulary, in a similar positioning to that in the Foundation level standards.

**Level 2**

Level 2 content descriptions and elaborations reveal significantly more demands that those at the previous levels. The features and structures of visual texts and their impact on viewers are acknowledged as students identify text types via their ‘cover design, packaging…and images’, while students’ learning about digital text features is also built upon from Level 1. Inferential and evaluative thinking is suggested in content description ACELA1469, which requires students to identify the ‘actions, reactions, speech and thought processes’ from ‘visual representations’ specifically. It is also significant to note the inclusion of ‘different illustrators’ as distinct from authors or creators of texts in the accompanying elaboration. Some critical literacy skills are implied by the elaboration that suggests that students identify how they are positioned by illustrators’ portrayals of images in picture books.

Given this specific highlighting of practices and resources associated with the visual, it is curious that the Level 2 standards only make cursory reference to the visual. Presumably, the ‘text structures…used to describe characters, settings and events’ in the Level 2 standards include the structures of visual texts; however, while verbal text structures such as ‘varied sentence structures’ are specifically named, the text structures associated with visual texts are not, and ‘images’ are again relegated to ‘provid[ing] additional information’ (VCAA, 2015, p.34).

**Level 3**

The practices associated with students’ work with digital texts at Level 3 is repetitious and regressive as they ‘become familiar with the typical features of online texts, for example navigation bars and buttons, hyperlinks and sitemaps’ (my italics), features that they
encountered with more sophisticated practices at levels 1 and 2. In comparison, the demands on students in relation to film texts, advertising and picture books are more advanced, as they are required to identify how specific visual techniques such as shot sizes, camera angles and layout influence viewers (ACELA1483). The elaborations aligned to this content description are very specific in their advice to teachers and supply explicit examples of the ways in ‘positioning’ might be explained to students: ‘facing each other or facing away from each other’; ‘looking up (or down)’; ‘direct gaze into the viewer’s eyes inviting involvement’; and ‘distanced images, which can suggest alienation or loneliness’.

The remainder of the Level 3 content descriptions and elaborations do not contain the same level of detail about visual texts and associated practices, and while ‘viewing’ is not named in these nor in the Level 3 standards, ‘images’, ‘illustrations’ and ‘graphics’ are mentioned in relation to practices including ‘analysing’ and ‘interpreting’.

In the standards, ‘images’ are positioned as significant entities, along with ‘language features’ and ‘vocabulary’ choices; however, as at Level 2, images ‘provide additional information’, thus making inconsistent their distinct significance suggested in the previous standard and throughout the documentation for Level 3.

**Level 4**

The Level 4 Content descriptions and elaborations contain significant references to visual texts, even though, once again, ‘viewing’ is not named specifically in the abovementioned components, nor in the achievement standards. Features of images, such as ‘framing’ (ACELA1496) and ‘visual point of view’ continue foci included at Level 3, and at level 4, both ‘still and moving images’ are specifically mentioned. This type of progression does not apply to students’ work with online texts, as they continue to ‘identify’ features such as ‘navigation, links, graphics and layout’ (ACELA1793), much as they have been required to do since Level 1.

In relation to textual resources, the visual components mentioned at Level 4 include some not referred to at earlier levels such as ‘costumes and iconography’ in multimodal texts including documentaries and news footage (so a hitherto unmentioned genre of film).
The standards at level 4, while not specifically naming ‘viewing’, do present ‘images’ on similar footing to ‘language features’ and ‘vocabulary’ in relation to positioning audiences (VCAA, 2015, p. 48).

**Levels 5 and 6**

Most notable at level 5 is the return of picture books as a recommended text type in the elaboration linked to content description ACELA1511, and significantly, ‘wordless’ picture books. This inclusion highlights the level of sophistication of the ‘sequences of images’ presented in texts of this type, and also moves away from the image as ‘supportive’ of linguistic elements as seen in the achievement standards at previous levels.

The inclusion of specific visual learning approaches and the importance of the image in its own right is again suggested at level 6, when students engage with ‘comic strips, timelines, photo stories, procedure diagrams and flowcharts, life-cycle diagrams, and the flow of images in picture books’ as well as the visual representations in ‘tables, maps, graphs’ and ‘icons’. Also of significance is that these texts are included in the Language strand, thus consolidating the importance of ‘visual language’ as part of the curriculum. As at level 5, it is suggested that students engage with ‘visual techniques in sophisticated picture books’; however, these techniques are not specifically named.

At both levels 5 and 6, students’ work with digital texts moves beyond merely ‘identifying’ features to the use of ‘comprehension strategies’ to ‘analyse’ (ACELY1703) and ‘interpret’ information, yet the specific comprehension strategies required to make meaning from digital texts (as differentiated from print-based texts) are not named.

**Level 7**

At the level which is most closely aligned with the first year of secondary education in Victorian schools, the focus on the range of visual components of texts seen at Level 6 is not continued. It may be assumed that this is because students generally have clearly defined discipline areas at secondary school and some features such as ‘timelines, ‘procedure diagrams and flowcharts’, ‘life-cycle diagrams’, ‘tables, maps, graphs’ are seen as the domain of other subjects. The visual texts named at level 7 include ‘animations’,
‘advertisements’ and ‘digital magazines’, that suggest an increased engagement with analysis of media.

Significant at this level is the inclusion, for the first time in content descriptions and elaboration, of the discussion of texts’ ‘aesthetic’ value, given that the affective domain is specifically named in the AusVELS: English Overview materials. Also significant though, is the fact that there is no elaboration for this content description (ACELT1803); perhaps indicating that is it not clear how to present advice to teachers on how this may be implemented and achieved.

Other aspects at level 7 appear to acknowledge the visual in tokenistic ways, as students ‘compare the text structures of multimodal texts, explaining how they combine to influence audiences’ (ACELY1724). This content description seems repetitive of practices and skills specified at earlier levels. Again significant is the lack of any elaboration for this content description.

Level 8

Intertextuality is introduced in content descriptions ACELA1548, as students ‘investigate how visual and multimodal texts allude to or draw on other texts or images to enhance and layer meaning’, yet the aligned elaborations do not continue this focus. Instead, they return to concepts addressed at previous levels. In fact, the ‘comprehension’ of ‘a series of static images’ or combinations of language and images in picture books, and elements such as positioning, colour, framing and point of view, seems a regression from: Level 7 (when students analyse these components); Level 5 (when the interpret them); Level 4 (they explore and examine); and Level 3 (when they identify and observe them).

Level 9

The visual texts mentioned in the Level 9 Language strand are ‘symbols’ and ‘icons’ in ‘still and moving images’ and ‘images, films and picture books’, all of which have been mentioned previously; the elaboration for content description ACELA1560 suggests a critical literacy approach in that students investigate how visual literacy and association of symbols with meaning is contextually and culturally based. This examination of icons and symbols is
continued in the Literature strand where students ‘experiment with the use of’ these elements, suggesting that this content description may be better placed in the Writing (or creating) mode.

‘Images’, ‘vocabulary choices’ and ‘language features’ are named alongside one another in the wording of the standards from Level 3, thus suggesting that these aspects are of equal or similar importance. Until level 9, the focus of these standards has been in students’ meaning making, whereas at level 9, students are required to ‘analyse and explain’ how the choices of these features ‘distinguish the work of individual authors’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 84). Despite this suggestion of progression from meaning making to critical analysis, the omission of ‘illustrators’ may be seen to lessen the significance of texts such as picture books promoted at a number of prior levels.

**Level 10**

Specific references to visual texts and resources at Level 10 are few, however, both ‘still and moving images’ are acknowledged. ‘Experimenting with aspects of visual texts’ such as ‘the movement of camera or light in moving images’ to establish different nuances’, seems to align more with the creating rather than the viewing or reading of texts. The naming of ‘depictions in political cartoons’ is seen for the first time at this level, foregrounding media analysis work that many students undertake beyond Level 10, in the post-compulsory study of English at VCE level.

The level 10 achievement standard, like several prior to this level, names ‘language features, images and vocabulary’, this time in relation to the ‘individual style’ of the text creators, and thus suggests a similar if slightly more nuanced understanding that the recognition of ‘the work of individual authors’ included at Level 9.

**The Reading and Viewing mode analysis summary**

It is clear that the *AusVELS: English* Reading and Viewing language mode gives far more acknowledgement to the visual than the corresponding documentation in the *CSF II* and the *VELS*. A range of visual texts is specifically named, and the particular features and structures of some of these texts are differentiated in ways that they are not in the previous
curriculum iterations. Given the timing of *AusVELS: English* in the second decade of the twenty-first century, the frequent mentions of digital texts, film, multimodal texts and media texts are unsurprising, yet it is also significant that (what could be viewed as more traditional visual texts such as) still images and (even wordless) picture books are given acknowledgement beyond the early years of schooling, into the secondary curriculum. This suggests a recognition of the affordances of these texts in their own right and not just as supporting resources for the verbal and linguistic. The recurrent references to particular kinds of texts suggest would seem to suggest a spiral curriculum structure (Bruner, 1960), rather than hierarchical or continuum of visual text organisation advocated by several scholars and discussed in Chapter Two (Callow, 2005; Davis, 2008, Eilam & Ben-Perez, 2010; Pantaleo, 2013). There is merit in students being exposed to the range of visual and multimodal texts from Foundation level through to Level 10, but the ways in which these texts are positioned in the *AusVELS: English* Content Descriptions, Elaborations and Achievement Standards does not consistently demonstrate increasing levels of complexity in relation to the content of these texts and the practices aligned with them, such as we might expect in either a developmental continuum or a spiral curriculum structure.

There are some clear trails of progression that can be traced throughout the *AusVELS: English* Content Descriptions, Elaborations and Achievement Standards, in relation to the positioning of viewing and working with visual texts. This is most evident as students progress from ‘recognising’, ‘identifying’ and ‘understanding’ features of visual texts in the primary-aligned curriculum levels, to ‘interpretation’, ‘evaluation’ and ‘critical analysis’ in later curriculum levels. Despite these trails, the way in which student practices associated with digital and multimodal texts are positioned is sometimes regressive, with students expected to engage with features of these texts in similar ways throughout the primary-aligned curriculum levels. Another noteworthy aspect is that visual texts associated with a range of disciplines beyond English (for example, timelines, diagrams, flowcharts, maps, and graphs) are not mentioned beyond Level 6. This could be seen as positive reinforcement that these specific aspects of the ‘language’ and ‘literacy’ of the visual are covered specifically in other subjects where they are most relevant; however, on the other hand, it can also be viewed as a significant omission in later curriculum levels. Also of some significance to this research is the paucity of references to the affective domain and students’
aesthetic responses to visual (and other) texts, especially given that this is highlighted as an important aspect of English in the overview documentation. Perhaps most significantly, despite this part of the curriculum being titled Reading and Viewing, there is no naming of ‘viewing’ in any of the actual Achievement Standards, and while the term is seen throughout the content descriptions and elaborations, it is often juxtaposed with ‘reading’ and therefore does not suggest clear differentiation between the types of skills required for each practice.

While the visual is represented across the three strands of English: Language, Literature and Literacy, this positioning is inconsistent and lacks continuity in the Reading and Viewing mode.

The Writing mode and the visual

Table 12 presents the Content Descriptions, Elaborations and Achievement Standards that include references to the visual in the AusVELS: English Writing mode.

Table 12. AusVELS: English Writing mode and the visual

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Content Descriptions</th>
<th>Elaborations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Literature Strand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retell familiar literary texts through performance, use of illustrations and images (ACELT1580)</td>
<td>drawing, labelling and roleplaying representations of characters or events using digital technologies to retell events and recreate characters from favourite print and film texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Literacy Strand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create short texts to explore, record and report ideas and events using familiar words and beginning writing knowledge (ACELY1651)</td>
<td>using image-making and beginning writing to represent characters and events in written, film and web-based texts using speaking, writing and drawing to represent and communicate personal responses to ideas and events experienced through texts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Foundation Level Achievement Standard**

By the end of the Foundation level, students ‘use familiar words and phrases and images to convey ideas’ when writing (VCAA, 2015, p.18).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Literature Strand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Recreate** texts imaginatively using **drawing, writing, performance and digital forms of communication** (ACELT1586) | creating **visual representations** of literary texts from Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or Asian cultures  
**writing** character descriptions drawn from **illustrations in stories**  
**retelling** key events in stories using oral language, arts, digital technologies and performance media |  
| 1 | Literacy Strand |  
| **Create short imaginative and informative texts** that show emerging use of appropriate text structure, sentence-level grammar, word choice, spelling, punctuation and appropriate **multimodal elements**, for example **illustrations** and **diagrams** (ACELY1661) | beginning to consider audience in designing a communication involving **visual components**, **selecting images** for maximum impact  
**construct texts that incorporate **supporting images** using software including word processing programs (ACELY1664) | creating **digital images** and composing a story or information sequence on screen **using images** and captions  
**adding images** to digital written communications such as emails with **pictures of self, classmates or location** |  
| Level 1 Achievement Standard |  
(No specific references to viewing or the visual) |  
<p>| 2 | Literature Strand |<br />
| <strong>Create events and characters using different media</strong> that develop key events and characters from literary texts (ACELT1593). | creating imaginative reconstructions of stories and poetry using a range of print and digital media |<br />
| 2 | Literacy Strand |<br />
| <strong>Construct texts featuring print, visual and audio elements using software, including word processing programs</strong> (ACELY1674) | experimenting with and combining elements of <strong>software programs</strong> to create texts |<br />
| Level 2 Achievement Standard |<br />
| By the end of Level 2: |<br />
| Students create texts that <strong>show</strong> how <strong>images</strong> support the meaning of the text (VCAA, 2015, p.34). |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3</th>
<th>Literature Strand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create imaginative texts based on characters, settings and events from students’ own and other cultures using <strong>visual features</strong>, for example perspective, distance and angle (ACELT1601)</td>
<td>innovating on texts read, <em>viewed</em> and listened to by changing the point of view, revising an ending or creating a sequel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create texts that adapt language features and patterns encountered in literary texts, for example characterisation, rhyme, rhythm, mood, music, sound effects and dialogue (ACELT1791)</td>
<td>creating <strong>visual and multimodal texts</strong> based on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or Asian literature, <strong>applying one or more visual elements</strong> to convey the intent of the original text creating <strong>multimodal texts</strong> that combine <strong>visual images</strong>, sound effects, music and voice overs to convey settings and events in a fantasy world</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3</th>
<th>Literacy Strand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use software including word processing programs with growing speed and efficiency to <strong>construct and edit</strong> texts featuring <strong>visual</strong>, print and audio elements (ACELY1685)</td>
<td>using features of relevant technologies to <strong>plan, sequence, compose</strong> and edit <strong>multimodal texts</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Level 3 Achievement Standard**

By the end of Level 3:

Students’ texts include writing and **images** to express and develop in some detail experience, events, information, ideas and characters (VCAA, 2015, p.41).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4</th>
<th>Literature Strand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create literary texts by developing storylines, characters and settings (ACELT1794)</td>
<td>collaboratively plan, compose, sequence and prepare a literary text along a familiar storyline, using <strong>film</strong>, sound and <strong>images</strong> to convey setting, characters and points of drama in the plot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4</th>
<th>Literacy Strand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use</strong> a range of software including word processing programs to construct, edit and <em>publish</em> written text, and select, edit and place <strong>visual</strong>, print and audio elements (ACELY1697)</td>
<td><strong>identifying and selecting</strong> appropriate software programs for constructing text</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Level 4 Achievement Standard**

By the end of Level 4:

Students ‘create texts that **show understanding** of how **images** and detail can be used to extend key ideas’
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5</th>
<th><strong>Literature Strand</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create literary texts using realistic and fantasy settings and characters that draw on the worlds represented in texts students have experienced (ACELT1612)</td>
<td>using texts with computer-based graphics, animation and 2D qualities, consider how and why particular traits for a character have been chosen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5</th>
<th><strong>Literacy Strand</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive print and multimodal texts, choosing text structures, language features, images and sound appropriate to purpose and audience (ACELY1704)</td>
<td>using research from print and digital resources to gather and organise information for writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use</strong> a range of software including word processing programs with fluency to construct, edit and publish written text, and select, edit and place visual, print and audio elements (ACELY1707)</td>
<td>writing letters in print and by email, composing with increasing fluency, accuracy and legibility and demonstrating understanding of what the audience may want to hear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Level 5 Achievement Standard** |
|---|---|
| (No specific references to viewing or the visual) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6</th>
<th><strong>Literature Strand</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create literary texts that adapt or combine aspects of texts students have experienced in innovative ways (ACELT1618)</td>
<td>creating narratives in written, spoken or multimodal/digital format for more than one specified audience, requiring adaptation of narrative elements and language features</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6</th>
<th><strong>Literacy Strand</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compare</strong> texts including media texts that represent ideas and events in different ways, explaining the effects of the different approaches (ACELY1708)</td>
<td>using display advertising as a topic vehicle for close analysis of the ways images and words combine for deliberate effect including examples from the countries of Asia (for example comparing Hollywood film posters with Indian Bollywood film posters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts, choosing and experimenting with text structures, language features, images and digital resources appropriate to purpose and audience (ACELY1714)</td>
<td>using rhetorical devices, images, surprise techniques and juxtaposition of people and ideas and modal verbs and modal auxiliaries to enhance the persuasive nature of a text, recognising and exploiting audience susceptibilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Level 6 Achievement Standard

By the end of Level 6:

Students ‘explain how their choices of language features and images are used’ (VCAA, 2015, p.62).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Literature Strand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experiment with text structures and language features and their effects in creating literary texts, for example, using rhythm, sound effects, monologue, layout, navigation and <strong>colour</strong> (ACELT1805)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Level 7 Achievement Standard

By the end of Level 7:

Students ‘create texts showing how language features, text structures, and images from other texts can be combined for effect’ (VCAA, 2015, p.68).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Literature Strand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experiment with particular language features drawn from different types of texts, including combinations of language and <strong>visual choices</strong> to create new texts (ACELT1768)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create literary texts that draw upon text structures and language features of other texts for particular purposes and effects (ACELT1632)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Level 8 Achievement Standard

By the end of Level 8:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Literacy Strand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experiment with text structures and language features to refine and clarify ideas to improve the effectiveness of students’ own texts (ACELY1810)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use a <strong>range of software</strong>, including word processing programs, to create, edit and publish texts imaginatively (ACELY1738)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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141
Students ‘show how ideas can be expressed in new ways’, ‘through combining ideas, images and language features from other texts’ (VCAA, 2015, p.76).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9</th>
<th>Literature Strand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experiment</strong> with the ways that language features, image and sound can be adapted in literary texts, for example the effects of stereotypical characters and settings, the playfulness of humour and pun and the use of hyperlink (ACELT1638)</td>
<td>taking an existing short story, poem, play or speech in print form and <strong>creating a short visual text</strong> which is accompanied by a sound track containing music and sound effects, and which is intended to amuse audiences who are familiar with the original text</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9</th>
<th>Literacy Strand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create imaginative, informative and persuasive texts that present a point of view and advance or illustrate arguments, including texts that integrate visual, print and/or audio features (ACELY1746)</td>
<td>(No specific references to the visual.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review and edit students’ own and others’ texts to improve clarity and control over content, organisation, paragraphing, sentence structure, vocabulary and audio/visual features (ACELY1747)</td>
<td>checking for run on sentences, eliminating unnecessary detail or repetition, and providing clear introductory and concluding paragraphs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Level 9 Achievement Standard**

By the end of Level 9:

Students ‘demonstrate how manipulating language features and images can create innovative texts’ (VCAA, 2015, p.84).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10</th>
<th>Language Strand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understand</strong> how paragraphs and images can be arranged for different purposes, audiences, perspectives and stylistic effects (ACELA1567)</td>
<td>analysing and experimenting with combinations of graphics, text and sound in the production of <strong>multimodal texts</strong> such as documentaries, media reports, online magazines and digital books</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10</th>
<th>Literature Strand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create literary texts that reflect an emerging sense of personal style and evaluate the effectiveness of these texts (ACELT1814)</td>
<td>creating texts which draw on students’ experience of other texts and which have a personal aesthetic appeal reflect on the authors who have influenced students’ own aesthetic style and evaluate their impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create literary texts with a sustained ‘voice’, selecting and adapting</td>
<td>creating a range of students’ own spoken, written or <strong>multimodal texts</strong>, experimenting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
appropriate text structures, literary devices, language, auditory and **visual structures** and features for a specific purpose and intended audience (ACELT1815) with and manipulating language devices for particular audiences, purposes and contexts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10</th>
<th><strong>Literacy Strand</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review, edit and refine students’ own and others’ texts for control of content, organisation, sentence structure, vocabulary, and/or <strong>visual features</strong> to achieve particular purposes and effects (ACELY1757)</td>
<td>reflecting on, critiquing and refining students’ own texts prior to publishing for an authentic audience, such as uploading a movie to a website, contributing to an anthology, writing texts appropriate for the workplace, or delivering a presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use</strong> a <strong>range of software</strong>, including word processing programs, confidently, flexibly and imaginatively to create, edit and publish texts, considering the identified purpose and the characteristics of the user (ACELY1776)</td>
<td><strong>designing</strong> a <strong>webpage</strong> that combines navigation, text, sound and <strong>moving and still images</strong> for a specific audience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Level 10 Achievement Standard**

By the end of Level 10:

Students ‘develop their own style by **experimenting** with language features, stylistic devices, text structures and **images**’ (VCAA, 2015, p.91).

**Writing: curriculum levels analysis**

*Writing in AusVELS: English* refers to the productive mode, inclusive of the creation of texts beyond the written word. ‘Creating’ is positioned alongside the other modes in the English overview (VCAA, 2015, p.2), but is not included in the labelling of the mode in the Achievement Standards. This can be seen as limiting, particularly as those standards address the creation of a range of texts in different media.

The positioning of the visual in the *AusVELS: Writing* Achievement Standards includes references to ‘images’ at all levels apart from Level 1 and Level 5. In the levels associated with the early years of schooling, the Standards present ‘images’ as contributing to students’ creation of texts as they ‘convey ideas’ (Foundation Level) and ‘support the meaning of the text’ (Level 2). Images are positioned equally to writing as ‘writing and images’ are included in students’ texts that ‘express and develop in some detail experience, events, information,
ideas and characters’ (Level 3) and students ‘show understanding of how images and detail
can be used to extend key ideas’ (Level 4) and use metacognitive skills to ‘explain how their
choices of language features and images are used’ (Level 6). ‘Language features, text
structures and images from other texts can be combined for effect’ (Level 7) and ‘ideas,
images and language features from other texts’ express ideas ‘in new ways’ (Level 8).
Students ‘manipulat[e] language features and images’ to ‘create innovative texts’ (Level 9),
and experiment ‘with language features, stylistic devices, text structures and images’ to
‘develop [students’] own style’ (Level 10).

There is no reference to the visual in the Language strand from Foundation level to Level 6,
whereas the Reading and Viewing Achievement Standards and Content Descriptions at
these levels allude to the ‘language’ of ‘pictures’, ‘images’, ‘visual representations’, ‘online
texts’ and ‘multimodal texts’ including ‘maps’, ‘graphs’ and ‘diagrams’ specifically in this
strand. Given that the AusVELS: English overview materials emphasise the integration of
the three strands ‘to support the development of knowledge, understanding and skills’ and
to make clear the ways in which these strands are integrated to learners (VCAA, 2015, p. 2), it might be expected that students would have opportunities to use their understanding
of ‘visual language’ gained in the Reading and Viewing practices in the creation of their
own texts at the same levels. This inconsistency might also suggest an uncertainty on
behalf of the curriculum makers in relation to the positioning of visual language in a
‘writing’ curriculum. Examples of production and creation of visual texts are evident
instead in the ‘Literature’ and ‘Literacy’ strands in which students retell literary texts via
‘illustrations and images’ and ‘digital technologies’ (ACELT1580), and use ‘image-making’
and ‘drawing’ to represent characters, ideas and events from a range of texts (Content
Descriptions, ACELY1651) at Foundation level. Further examples of the specific creation of
visual texts is seen in the ‘Literature’ strand at Level 1 at which students ‘recreate texts
imaginatively using drawing’ (ACELT1586). The positioning of this content description can
be interpreted in a couple of ways: that the production of visual texts is a literary activity;
or that the literary practice is the interpretation of the original text (to be recreated). The
latter interpretation suggests that the content description may be better placed within the
Reading and Viewing curriculum. The Elaboration for Content Description ACELY1661 at
Level 1 in the Literacy strand is a considerable jump in relation to students’ working with
the visual. The selection of ‘visual components’ and images that create ‘maximum impact’
on audiences assumes a significant understanding of the ways in which visual elements are
sourced, selected, positioned and presented. The wording is somewhat modulated as students are ‘beginning to consider’ the audience in their use of the visual here; however, the leap is still notable. ACELY1664 at Level 1 is appears to be concerned primarily with students’ technical proficiency at using digital tools, rather than a developing understanding of how visual elements are used and positioned within texts.

This focus is carried through to Level 2. The only allusions to the visual are linked to the use of ‘digital media’ and ‘software programs’, with no specific reference to the ways in which different components such as the visual are positioned for particular purposes and audiences. In comparison, the Literature strand at Level 3, highlights specific ‘visual features, for example perspective, distance and angle’ (ACELT1791) in the creation of students’ own imaginative texts. The inference here is that the use of these visual features is a literary practice (as discussed earlier in relation to Level 1). The Elaboration for this Content Description positions the visual and ‘perspective’ in a completely different way, as students innovate on ‘texts, read, viewed and listened to by changing the point of view, revising an ending or creating a sequel’ (my italics). Here the only reference to the visual is the texts ‘viewed’ and innovated on, and the visual features in the creation of the texts are not mentioned at all. Further inconsistencies and confusion are evident for ACELT1791, also in the Level 3 Literature strand. While the Elaboration suggests students creating ‘visual and multimodal texts’ and apply ‘one or more visual element to convey the intent of the original’ (Aboriginal and Torres Islander or Asian) text, the actual Content Description makes no reference at all to the visual, but mentions specifically ‘characterisation, rhyme, rhythm, mood, music, sound effects and dialogue’, in other words, various multimodal elements, with the exception of the visual. The Level 3 Literacy strand, as at Level 2, focuses on students’ proficiency with digital technologies, particularly their ‘growing speed and efficiency’ in the use of ‘software’ ‘to construct and edit texts featuring visual, print and audio elements’ (ACELY1685). Again, there is blurring between the English strands, as to what constitutes ‘Language’, ‘Literature’, and ‘Literacy’, as it might be expected that a more specific and consistent focus on ‘visual literacy’ would be included in the latter strand.

While the visual is positioned inconsistently and somewhat erratically in the earlier levels (Foundation to Level 3) of the Writing strand, its presence is evident. The presence of the visual at Levels 4, 5 and 6 (aligned with the later years of primary education) is
somewhat diminished. and is alluded to mainly in relation to ‘digital resources’ and the use of a ‘range of software’ to construct texts (Level 4, ACELY1697; Level 5, ACELY1707; Level 6, ACELY1717). The inclusion of ‘computer-based graphics, animation and 2D qualities’ in the Elaboration for ACELT1612 in the Level 5 Literature strand does provide more specificity; however, this inclusion appears to relate more to students’ interpretation of these resources rather than their use of them as they ‘consider how and why particular traits for a character have been chosen’. Also reasonably specific is the inclusion at Level 4 of an Elaboration for the Literature strand (ACELT1794) that includes ‘images’ in the collaborative planning and composition of a ‘literary text…using film, sound and images to convey setting, characters, and points of drama in the plot’.

In the Level 6 Literacy strand, there is a shift that specifically acknowledges the importance of students’ engagement with media texts as they approach the secondary levels of schooling. Despite this, the associated content description (ACELY1708) focuses on the analysis and comparison of media texts, rather than the creation of them. ACELY1714 does allude to the creation of ‘imaginative, informative and persuasive texts’ and names ‘images’ and ‘digital resources’ alongside ‘texts structures’ and ‘language features’ in the creation of these texts.

Levels 7, 8, 9 and 10, associated with the first four years of secondary education, give some recognition to the creation of texts with visual and multimodal elements, and suggest that students have gained expertise and understanding of the ‘experiment[ation] with text structures’ including ‘layout’ and ‘colour’ (level 7, ACELT1805) as a literary practice. This kind of practice is reproduced in the Level 8 Literature strand in which students ‘experiment’ with ‘visual choices’ (Level 8, ACELT1768). Despite the less than clear development from one level to the next, it is significant that the selection of images and visual features is again positioned as a practice associated with the creation of literature. The concept of intertextuality is also apparent at the secondary-aligned levels, at which students ‘draw upon text structures… of other texts’ (Level 8, ACELT1632) and ‘combin[e] visual and digital elements to create layers of meaning’ (Elaboration for ACELT1632), and ‘creat[e] texts which draw on …other texts which have a personal aesthetic appeal’ (Elaboration for level 10, ACELT1814). This latter example is one of the few references to aesthetic response in the curriculum levels (and it is not linked exclusively to the visual).
One of the more interesting observations about the visual at Levels 7 to 10 in the Writing mode is that visual features are positioned alongside linguistic and other features in several Content Descriptions. This is particularly evident at Level 9, when students ‘experiment with the ways language features, image and sound can be adapted in literary texts’ (Level 9, ACELT1638), and ‘integrate visual, print and/or audio features’ (ACELY1746) in the creation of ‘imaginative, informative and persuasive texts’, and ‘review and edit’ texts ‘to improve clarity and control over content, organisation, paragraphing, sentence structure, vocabulary and audio/visual features’ (Level 9, ACELY1747). While the prominence of the visual varies in each of these examples, it is significant that the selection, creation, integration and editing of visual components is explicitly named in the composition of a range of text types. These aspects are continued at Level 10, when the Language and Literature strands acknowledge the place of the visual in the creation of texts. In the Language strand, students arrange ‘paragraphs and images…for different purposes, audiences, perspectives and stylistic effects’ (Level 10, ACELA1567) and analyse and experiment with ‘combinations of graphics, texts and sound in the production of multimodal texts’ (Elaboration for ACELA1567). The Literature strand calls on students to ‘create literary texts with a sustained “voice”’, via the inclusion of language techniques, and ‘auditory and visual structures and features’ (Level 10, ACELT1815). Each of these examples presupposes that visual elements are intrinsic to students’ the creation of texts in the latter years of compulsory schooling in Victoria. Also significant at Level 10 is the specific mention of ‘moving and still images’ (Elaboration for ACELY1776), yet as this is in reference to the designing of webpages and use of software, its positioning is somewhat limited.

The Writing mode analysis summary

In comparison to the two previous curriculum iterations discussed in Chapters Four and Five, the creation of visual texts in AusVELS: English is given far more significance. For this reason, the continued use of ‘Writing’ as the communication mode title seems inconsistent with the aforementioned developments. ‘Writing and Creating’ would seem a much more appropriate choice, given that drawing and other practices associated with visual and multimodal texts are strongly represented in this mode.
There are a couple of notable inconsistencies in the positioning of the visual in the *AusVELS: Writing* mode. Firstly, the location of the visual across the three curriculum strands: Language, Literature and Literacy, appears very haphazard. There is no reference to the visual in the Language strand from Foundation to Level 6, yet by the levels aligned to secondary schooling, the Language strand demands that students have gained the knowledge and skills to understand ‘visual language’ sufficiently so that they can select, create, integrate and edit visual texts ‘for different purposes, audiences, perspectives and stylistic effects (Level 10, ACELA1567). The visual is quite well represented in the Literature strand, particularly at the early and later levels of the curriculum. This is somewhat inconsistent with the ways in which the visual is positioned in the Literature strand in the Reading and Viewing mode. The most prominent association between the visual and the Literacy strand is in relation to ‘digital resources’ and ‘use of software’, which somewhat undermines any importance that ‘visual literacy’ might have on a broader level. These inconsistencies across the strands of English result in uneven progressions from one level to the next, particularly within each strand.

**The Speaking and Listening mode and the visual**

*Table 13* presents the Content Descriptions, Elaborations and Achievement Standards that include references to the visual in the *AusVELS: English* Speaking and Listening mode.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Content Descriptions</th>
<th>Elaborations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understand that language can be used to explore ways of expressing needs, likes and dislikes (ACELA1429)</td>
<td>recognising some of the ways we can use speech, <strong>gesture</strong>, writing and media to communicate feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>recognising some of the ways emotions and feelings can be conveyed and influenced by <strong>visual representations</strong>, for example in advertising and animations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Literature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 13. AusVELS: English Speaking and Listening and the visual*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>F</strong></th>
<th><strong>Literacy</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respond to texts, identifying favourite stories, authors and illustrators (ACELT1577)</td>
<td>returning to preferred texts and commenting on reasons for selection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use interaction skills including listening while others speak, using appropriate voice levels, articulation and body language, gestures and eye contact (ACELY1784)</td>
<td>listening and responding to oral and multimodal texts including rhymes and poems, texts read aloud and various types of digital texts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliver short oral presentations to peers (ACELY1647)</td>
<td>using visual cues to practise staying on topic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Foundation Level Achievement Standard**  
(No specific references to the visual)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>1</strong></th>
<th><strong>Language</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understand that people use different systems of communication to cater to different needs and purposes and that many people may use sign systems to communicate with others (ACELA1443)</td>
<td>recognising how and where signs and symbols are used and placed in students’ school and community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understand</strong> that language is used in combination with other means of communication, for example facial expressions and gestures to interact with others (ACELA1444)</td>
<td>recognising the effect of words, symbols, gestures and body language on the way communications are received by others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore different ways of expressing emotions, including verbal, visual, body language and facial expressions (ACELA1787)</td>
<td>considering how others might respond before students express their views and how students might respond to others’ views in civil and constructive ways</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>1</strong></th>
<th><strong>Literature</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discuss how authors create characters using language and images (ACELT1581)</td>
<td>identifying some features of characters and how particular words and images convey qualities of their nature, for example some characters are portrayed as shy, others adventurous</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Level 1 Achievement Standard**  
At the end of Level 1, students ‘create texts that show understanding of the connection between writing, speech and images’ (VCAA, 2015, p.26).
### Level 2 Achievement Standard

By the end of Level 2, students ‘create texts that show how images support the meaning of the text’ (VCAA, 2015, p.34).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understand that spoken, visual and written forms of language are different modes of communication with different features and their use varies according to the audience, purpose, context and cultural background (ACELA1460)</td>
<td>identifying examples and features of different kinds of spoken, nonverbal, written and visual communication from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and from several Asian cultures within Australia, and associating those features with particular communities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2</th>
<th>Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discuss how depictions of characters in print, sound and images reflect the contexts in which they were created (ACELT1587)</td>
<td>exploring iconography of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify aspects of different types of literary texts that entertain, and give reasons for personal preferences (ACELT1590)</td>
<td>describing features of texts from different cultures including recurring language patterns, style of illustrations, elements of humour or drama, and identifying the features which give rise to their personal preferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehearse and deliver short presentations on familiar and new topics (ACELY1667)</td>
<td>listening and responding to presentations, including those using multimedia, on familiar and learned topics, recording key information, and connecting new and existing knowledge about a topic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understand that languages have different written and visual systems, different oral traditions and different ways of constructing meaning (ACELA 1475)</td>
<td>Learning that a word or sign can carry different weight in different cultural contexts, for example that particular respect is due to some people and creatures and that stories can be passed on to teach us how to live appropriately</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 3 | Literacy |
Plan and deliver short presentations, providing some key details in logical sequence (ACELY 1677) | Drawing on relevant research into a topic to prepare an oral or **multimodal presentation**, using devices such as **storyboards** to plan the sequence of ideas and information.

**Level 3 Achievement Standard**

(No specific references to the visual)

**Level 4 Achievement Standard**

At the end of Level 4, students ‘create texts that show understanding of how **images** and detail can be used to extend key ideas’ (VCAA, 2015, p.48).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5</th>
<th>Literacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plan, rehearse and deliver presentations for defined audiences and purposes <strong>incorporating</strong> accurate and sequenced content and <strong>multimodal elements</strong> (ACELY1700)</td>
<td>Planning a report on a topic, sequencing ideas logically and <strong>providing</strong> supporting details, including <strong>graphics</strong>, sound and <strong>visuals</strong> to enhance audience engagement and understanding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Level 5 Achievement Standard**

By the end of Level 5, students ‘develop and explain a point of view about a text **selecting** information, ideas and **images** from a range of sources’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6</th>
<th>Literacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plan, rehearse and deliver presentations, <strong>selecting</strong> and sequencing appropriate content and <strong>multimodal elements</strong> for defined audiences and purposes, making appropriate choices for modality and emphasis (ACELY1710)</td>
<td><strong>using technologies</strong> to collaboratively prepare a humorous, dynamic group view on a debatable topic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Level 6 Achievement Standard**

At the end of Level 6, students ‘explain how their choices of language features and **images** are used’ (VCAA, 2015, p.62).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7</th>
<th>Literacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plan, rehearse and deliver presentations, <strong>selecting</strong> and <strong>sequencing</strong> appropriate content and <strong>multimodal elements</strong> to promote a point of view or enable a new way of seeing (ACELY1720)</td>
<td>preparing a presentation <strong>combining</strong> print, <strong>visual</strong> and audio elements to explore and interpret ideas, drawing on knowledge and research about perspectives different from students’ own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 7 Achievement Standard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the end of Level 7, students ‘create texts showing how language features and images from other texts can be combined for effect’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8</th>
<th>Literacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use interaction skills for identified purposes, using voice and language conventions to suit different situations, selecting vocabulary, modulating voice and using elements such as music, images and sound for specific effects (ACELY1808)</td>
<td>(No specific references to the visual)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|  | Plan, rehearse and deliver presentations, selecting and sequencing appropriate content, including multimodal elements, to reflect a diversity of viewpoints (ACELY1731) | (No specific references to the visual) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 8 Achievement Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At the end of Level 8, students combine ideas, images and language features from other texts to ‘show how ideas can be expressed in new ways’ (VCAA, 2015, p.76).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9</th>
<th>Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflect on, discuss and explore notions of literary value and how and why such notions vary according to context (ACELT1634)</td>
<td>Discussing, debating and evaluating the cinematic qualities and success of a film or new versions of a film</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plan, rehearse and deliver presentations, selecting and sequencing appropriate content and multimodal elements for aesthetic and playful purposes (ACELY1741)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 9 Achievement Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At the end of Level 9, students ‘demonstrate how manipulating language features and images can create innovative texts’ (VCAA, 2015, p.84).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 10 | Literacy |
Identify and explore the purposes and effects of different text structures and language features of spoken texts, and use this knowledge to create purposeful texts that inform, persuade and engage (ACELY1750)

identifying and explaining satirical events, including events in other cultures, for example depictions in political cartoons

applying knowledge of spoken, visual, auditory, technical and multimodal resources (for example sound and silence, camera shot types, lighting and colour) in conjunction with verbal resources for varying purposes and contexts

Plan, rehearse and deliver presentations, selecting and sequencing appropriate content and multimodal elements to influence a course of action (ACELY1751)

using assumptions about listeners, viewers and readers to try to position them to accept a particular point of view

Level 10 Achievement Standard

At the end of Level 10, students ‘develop their own style by experimenting with language features, stylistic devices, text structures and images’ (VCAA, 2015, p.91).

Speaking and Listening: curriculum levels analysis

The Speaking and Listening curriculum, given the nature of the communication, contains far less references to the visual than the other two modes. Despite this, the Speaking and Listening Achievement Standards include ‘images’ at almost every level, suggesting that in the creation of spoken texts, the integration of visual elements is significant. The progression in these Achievement Standards in relation to the visual mainly relates to the ways in which students combine writing, speech and images. At Level 2, students ‘show how images support the meaning of the [spoken] text’, while at Level 4, images are used to ‘extend key ideas’. Understandably given the focus is on speaking, the visual plays a supportive role this strand, and as the curriculum levels progress, students’ engagement with the visual is linked less to the creation of images, than the selection of them from ‘a range of resources’ (Level 5) and ‘other texts’ (Levels 7 and 8). Metacognition is suggested at Level 6 when students’ ‘speaking’ encompasses the explanation of ‘how their choices of language features and images are used’, thus indicating that students have gained insight into the impact on audience of particular visual elements. The positioning of ‘images’ in the Speaking and Listening Achievement Standards at Levels 8, 9 and 10 suggests that the combination of ‘images’ with ‘language features’, ‘stylistic devices’ and ‘text structures’ enables students to
express ideas in ‘new ways’ (Level 8), ‘create innovative texts’ (Level 9), and ‘develop their own style’, thus emphasising the importance of the visual in connection to the spoken word.

In the AusVELS: English Speaking and Listening Content Descriptions and Elaborations, the visual is most prominent in the Literacy strand, particularly at the curriculum levels aligned to secondary schooling. In earlier levels, however, the broad range of the ‘language’ of the visual is acknowledged via the inclusions of ‘gesture’, ‘animations’ (Elaborations for Foundation Level ACELA1429), ‘body language and facial expressions’ (Level 1, ACELA1787), and ‘visual systems’ in communication and specific cultural contexts (Level 3, ACELA1475). Given the importance of these elements in making meaning from speaking and listening, it is curious that there are no references to them or other visual aspects after Level 3, and in fact, no visual references in the Language strand at all from Level 4 to Level 10. It could be argued that the interpretation of these elements is more appropriately positioned in the Reading and Viewing mode; however, in the creation of presentations, which are mentioned at every level in the Speaking and Listening mode, these elements would seem crucial.

In relation to the Literature strand, references to the visual are concerned with ‘responding to’, ‘discussing’, ‘identifying’ and ‘evaluating’ in spoken form the visual and multimodal aspects of texts. It could be argued that these references might be more suited to the Reading and Viewing mode. In any case, the positioning of these is also inconsistent, as after Level 2, there is only one mention of this type of practice in the Literature strand, in the Level 9 Elaboration for ACELT1634, when students discuss, debate and evaluate ‘the cinematic qualities and success of a film’. This isolated example of ‘speaking and listening’ as a literary practice at secondary level appears tokenistic.

The positioning of the visual in the Speaking and Listening Literacy strand is mainly linked to the ways in which students integrate visual and multimodal elements into presentations. Students are encouraged to use ‘multimedia’ (Level 2), ‘storyboards’ (Level 3), ‘graphics’ (Level 5), ‘technologies’ (Level 6), ‘text animations’ (Level 9), and ‘lighting and colour’ (Level 10) in their creation of spoken texts. While these inclusions suggest that the visual is integral to the development of these spoken presentations, the associated practices are not clearly differentiated from one level to the next. The use of ‘visual cues to practise staying on topic’
(Foundation Level elaboration for ACELY1647) is not extended specifically at any other level, while the focus of the Elaboration for ACELY1667 at Level 2, is focused on students’ interpretation of ‘multimedia’ while ‘listening and responding to presentations’ rather than the creation of their own texts.

‘Multimodal elements’ are included in the Content Descriptions at Levels 5 to 10, in relation to the ‘plan[ing], rehears[ing] and deliver[ing] presentations’, and ‘selecting and sequencing [of] appropriate content’ and while the purposes for these presentations differ slightly from one level to the next, for example, ‘to create a new way of seeing’ (Level 7, ACELY 1720), ‘to reflect a diversity of viewpoints’ (Level 8, ACELY1731), and ‘for aesthetic and playful purposes’ (Level 9, ACELY1741), these purposes do not follow any clearly identifiable progression. Nor does the positioning of visual and multimodal elements included in the Elaborations (for example: ‘graphics’ at Level 5; ‘technologies’ at Level 6; ‘visual elements’ at Level 7) suggest consistency.

The Speaking and Listening mode analysis summary

As for the other communication modes, the positioning of the visual in AusVELS: English Speaking and Listening is somewhat erratic and does not follow clear progressions in relation to the ways in which students interpret and integrate visual elements. Some aspects of the Content Descriptions and Elaborations in this mode appear to be more suited to the Reading and Viewing mode, while other visual elements such as the use and interpretation of ‘gesture’, ‘body language’ and ‘visual cues’ in spoken communication are mentioned sporadically but not developed throughout the curriculum. There is also some inconsistency (as there is in the other communication modes) as to where some practices and competencies should be located (that is, in the Language, Literature or Literacy strands). This latter point applies to various aspects of the curriculum, including those associated with the visual.
Summary of the positioning of the visual in the VELS: English

*Table 14* presents a summary of the analysis presented in this chapter. The key questions associated with Gee’s *Building Tasks of Language* (Gee, 2010, 2011, 2014) are again used to frame this summary.

*Table 14.* Summary of the analysis of the positioning of the visual in *AusVELS: English*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gee’s <em>Seven Building Tasks of Language</em> key questions (Gee, 2010, 2011, 2014)</th>
<th>Application in this research involves the identification and analysis of:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Significance:</strong> How is language being used to make certain things significant or not and in what ways? How is context relevant to the aspects made significant?</td>
<td>• The <em>AusVELS</em> is introduced as a coherent, comprehensive curriculum containing prescribed content; the assumption is that the curriculum presents explicit guidance for its implementation. • Aligned with the above is the new inclusion of Content Descriptions, which specify what teachers are expected to teach, and Content Elaborations which provide illustrative examples of how the content can be implemented in a classroom context. • The <em>AusVELS: English</em> continues themes evident in the previous two curriculum iterations: that the study of English is fundamental to informed citizenship. The use of language such as ‘responsibility’, ‘Australia’s future’ and ‘nation-building’ reinforce these themes. • Given the curriculum is ‘prescriptive’ and ‘comprehensive’, it follows that inclusions in English (compulsory for all Victorian students) are important for the future development of the nation and its citizens. • The <em>AusVELS: English</em> introductory statements refer to viewing in relation to ‘increasingly complex and sophisticated texts’ (VCAA, 2015, p.2); this indicates that a hierarchy or progression of visual and multimodal texts will be evident in the curriculum. • While not specific to the visual, it is significant that the affective domain is strongly positioned in two of the ‘aims’ of English, which include references to appreciation, enjoyment and aesthetic aspects of texts (VCAA, 2015, p.2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Activities (and practices):</strong> What activities or practices is this piece of language being used to enact?</td>
<td>• Of great significance to this research is the addition of ‘viewing’ in the title of the <em>Reading and Viewing</em> mode. This appears to fully acknowledge the importance of the activities/practices and textual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
resources associated with the visual in the English curriculum.

- Countering the above is the continued use of *Writing* as the productive mode, rather than ‘Writing and Creating’ which would acknowledge the range of texts and forms that students are required to produce.
- The English overview materials suggest that students will engage with increasingly complex texts and literacy practices as they progress through the curriculum levels. Giving the increased prominence of ‘viewing’ in the *AusVELS: English*, it can be assumed that this increasing proficiency is acknowledged and represented in the curriculum components associated with the visual.
- According to the *AusVELS: English*, ‘listening, listening, viewing, reading, speaking, writing and creating are all developed systematically and concurrently’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 7). This is a forceful statement that positions viewing as equal to the other practices/modes in English, and systematically addressed in the curriculum.
- Countering the above is the fact that the terms ‘view’ and ‘viewing’ are not included in any of the *AusVELS: Achievement Standards* from Foundation Level to Level 10. This is despite the specific naming of ‘images’ and other textual resources comprising significant visual elements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Identities: What identities is the language enacting (or enabling others to recognise as operative)?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- The ‘identity’ of subject English in the <em>AusVELS</em> is framed around the ‘strands’ of <em>Language, Literature</em> and <em>Literacy</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The positioning of viewing and the visual in relation to these three strands is inconsistent, for example there are some references to viewing in relation to ‘language’, yet the metalanguage and examples provided are linguistic/verbal-based.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- As in the <em>CSF II</em> and the <em>VELS</em>, the range of texts indicated for study in the <em>AusVELS: English</em> is wide-ranging and includes specific references to visual and multimodal texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- While measures have been taken to consolidate the inclusions of viewing and the visual in subject English, the actual representation of the visual is still heavily associated with linguistic and verbal approaches.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Relationships: What sort of relationship is the language seeking to enact with others?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- While the curriculum makers appear to give curriculum users more agency to use texts (including visual texts) relevant to their context and student cohorts, this is somewhat countered by external demands such as high-stakes tests which</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. **Politics**: What social/political perspective is the language communicating?  
   What is constructed as ‘normal’, ‘appropriate’, ‘valuable’?  
   What social goods are at stake in this context?  
   - While viewing and the visual appear to be given more value in the *AusVELS* than in previous English curricula, the demands made on teachers (as presented above) may result in curriculum enactment that marginalises the visual in comparison to more ‘traditional’ literacy practices and conceptualisations.

6. **Connections**: How does this language connect or disconnect things?  
   What connections or disconnections are being made or implied?  
   Are these connections valid or tenuous?  
   - *The AusVELS* introductory statements highlight the curriculum’s developmental structures and ‘appropriate’ sequencing (VCAA, 2015, p. 3), and suggest that this curriculum provides more explicit guidance to curriculum users than previous iterations.  
   - The inclusion of interdisciplinary learning, including technology, creativity and design, is highlighted in the *AusVELS* introductory materials, thus indicating the importance of visual elements across the curriculum.  
   - Related to the above is the frequent association of digital resources with viewing and the visual.  
   - The visual is represented across the Language, Literature and Literacy strands; however, this positioning is also inconsistent and lacks continuity across the curriculum levels.

7. **Sign systems and knowledge**: How does language privilege or disprivilege specific sign systems or different ways of knowing?  
   What sign systems are construed as most prestigious or important?  
   Is the visual marginalised?  
   - While ‘viewing’ is positioned alongside the other communication modes in some instances, its importance is diminished its omission in the Achievement Standards.  
   - There is a lack of specific recognition of ‘creating’ texts that comprise visual and multimodal elements.

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**The Victorian Curriculum: English and the visual**

Since the commencement of the writing of this thesis, a new iteration of curriculum in the state of Victoria has been produced. The Victorian Curriculum (VCAA, 2017) is closely based on the *AusVELS* with some differences in content and organisation. This section will address only those aspects relevant to this research, that is, the positioning of the visual in...
the English curriculum. The changes between *AusVELS: English* and *The Victorian Curriculum: English* in relation to the visual are minor; however, this section serves to update this thesis. One of the reasons for the change from *AusVELS* to the *Victorian Curriculum* towards the end of 2015 was to simplify and refine the curriculum, and to omit unnecessary repetition.

The changes to *AusVELS: English* in relation to the visual from early editions in 2012 to the last version published online in 2016 are negligible. Given the proliferation of visual and multimodal texts during this period, it is interesting to note that the curriculum was reasonably static during this period. Similarly, the modifications from *AusVELS: English* to the *Victorian Curriculum: English* in relation to this research are relatively minor, although some of these are quite significant. *Table 15* presents changes from the last edition of *AusVELS: English* accessed for this research (VCAA, 2016) to *The Victorian Curriculum: English* (VCAA, 2017), in relation to the visual. New material in the *Victorian Curriculum* is presented in the right column, and *Victorian Curriculum* modifications to *AusVELS* curriculum are compared in the two respective columns.

*Table 15. Mapping of changes from the *AusVELS: English* to the *Victorian Curriculum: English* in relation to the visual*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foundation Level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading and Viewing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>visualising elements in a text for example drawing an event or character from a text read aloud (VCELY153)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking and Listening</td>
<td></td>
<td>Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Share feelings and thoughts about the events and characters in texts (VCelial71) - using art forms and beginning forms of writing to express personal responses to literature and film experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Listen to and respond orally to texts and to the communication of others in informal and structured classroom situations using</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td><strong>Speaking and Listening</strong></td>
<td><strong>Literacy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
<td>Understand that language is used in combination with other means of communication, for example <strong>facial expressions and gestures</strong> to interact with others (ACELA1444)</td>
<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Literature</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 4</strong></td>
<td><strong>Speaking and Listening</strong></td>
<td><strong>Literacy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 7</strong></td>
<td><strong>Writing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Literature</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literacy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts, selecting particular language, <strong>visual</strong>, and audio features to convey information and ideas to a specific audience (VCELY387)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Level 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Literacy</th>
<th>Literacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use a range of software, including word processing programs, to create, edit and publish texts imaginatively (ACELY1738)</td>
<td>(Additional Elaboration) investigating how digital tools or software can enhance a text that was originally print-based</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Level 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading and Viewing</th>
<th>Literacy</th>
<th>Literacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explore and explain the combinations of language and visual choices that authors make to present information, opinions and perspectives in different texts (ACELY1745)</td>
<td>(Additional elaborations) comparing two articles with accompanying images on a similar topic in the media, considering the language and visual choices made by the authors for different audiences analysing how graphic novels present perspectives through the combination of visual and text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Level 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading and Viewing</th>
<th>Literature</th>
<th>Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analyse and explain how text structures, language features and visual features of texts and the context in which texts are experienced may influence audience response (VCELT461)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even when glancing at this table, it is evident that changes have been made at some curriculum levels and not others. On closer analysis, it is clear that the additions and omissions do not follow any particular pattern or progression, nor are they positioned in one particular communication mode or strand. Some new content descriptions and elaborations are included, while others have been omitted. In some instances, the detail about visual texts and resources has been elaborated (Foundation Level, Speaking and Listening, VCELY175); in others, it has been condensed or omitted (Level 1, Speaking and Listening, VCELA199; Level 3, Writing, VCELT264; Level 7, Writing, VCELT385). Most inconsistent of these changes is the addition of using ‘appropriate…body language, gestures and eye contact’ in oral presentations at Foundation Level (VCELY175), thus acknowledging the importance of
multimodal elements in such presentations, but the deletion of ‘facial expressions and gestures’ in (VCELA199) at Level 1.

There is greater acknowledgement of the visual in relation to students’ production of texts. ‘Drawing’, ‘using art forms’ and ‘picture cues’ are notable new inclusions at Foundation level, giving more credence than previously to the importance of the visual in the early years of schooling. As discussed earlier in this chapter though, the ways in which the communication modes are structured in both the AusVELS and the Victorian Curriculum does not allow for the overlap and interconnectedness of these modes. This is clearly seen in VCELY153 and VCELT171 at Foundation Level, which describe students’ creation of visual texts but locates these in ‘Reading and Viewing’ and ‘Speaking and Listening’ respectively.

It is at the curriculum levels aligned with secondary schooling that most of the changes are evident. While these modifications do not appear to adhere to any particular epistemology or pedagogy, it can be suggested that the placement of the graphic novel, The Complete Maus (Spiegelman, 2003) on the Victorian Certificate of Education text list (VCAA, 2014) may have influenced the Victorian Curriculum: English at Levels 9 and 10 in the Reading and Viewing mode. Most notable are the specific mention of ‘graphic novels’ in a new elaboration for Level 9 Reading and Viewing, and the change in practices from ‘explore and explain’ (ACELY1745) to the higher level ‘analyse and evaluate’ (VCELY442) in relation to the ‘combinations of language and visual choices’. Also notable although not specific to the visual is the new elaboration for the Level 10 Reading and Viewing Content Description VCELT464 which explicitly includes the literary analysis of texts that ‘contain aesthetic qualities’.

**Chapter conclusion**

There are considerably more specific references to the visual in the AusVELS (VCAA, 2015) and the Victorian Curriculum (VCAA, 2017) English curricula than in either the CSF II (VBos, 2000) or the VELS (VCAA, 2008). This is to be expected given the explosion of visual and multimodal texts, particularly via social media in the period since 2000, and with relevance to the curriculum iterations discussed in this chapter, since 2012. Of added significance is the
expansion of definitions of ‘text’ in this period, notably at senior secondary level in Victoria, exemplified by the inclusion of a graphic novel on the VCE text list for the first time in 2014.

The most striking aspect of the AusVELS: English and the Victorian Curriculum: English in relation to the visual is the inclusion of ‘viewing’ as a communication mode, even though it is positioned with ‘reading’ rather than as a discreet entity. Positioned as it is alongside ‘reading’, ‘speaking’, ‘listening’, and ‘writing’, suggests that ‘viewing’ is an active, cognitive-practice.

Far more specific references to a range of visual texts is evident in the latest curriculum iterations. There is some acknowledgement of the particular features and affordances of these texts is evident in the AusVELS/Victorian Curriculum, and there are suggestions of the legitimacy of such texts as images in their own right, and not merely as supportive to verbal and linguistic resources. In the AusVELS/Victorian Curriculum, the creation of visual texts is given far more significance than in either of the previous curriculum iterations. The significance of visual-related elements such as using and interpreting ‘gesture’, ‘body language’ and ‘visual cues’ in spoken communication are also given more acknowledgement.

Diminishing the impact of the aforementioned inclusions and developments is the inconsistency in which the visual is positioned in both the AusVELS and the Victorian Curriculum for English. While the introductory materials for the AusVELS/Victorian Curriculum state that the curriculum is intended to provide a cumulative structure, and that students’ acquisition of skills and knowledge are incremental, this is not clear in relation to the visual in subject English. The positioning of texts and practices associated with the visual does not consistently indicate that students are expected develop expertise with increasing levels of complexity across the curriculum levels.

Another jarring aspect is that despite the inclusion of viewing’ in the title of the ‘Reading and Viewing’ communication mode, there is no naming of the practice of ‘viewing’ in any of the actual Achievement Standards, and in Content Descriptions and Elaborations, it is often juxtaposed with ‘reading’, therefore diminishing the differentiation between the types of
skills required for each practice. Another omission in relation to the naming of the communication modes is the continued use of Writing without the naming of ‘Creating’. This appears inconsistent with the acknowledgement of the production of a range of texts discussed previously.

A further inconsistency is the way in which the visual is positioned across the English ‘strands’ of Language, Literature and Literacy. While it is heartening that the visual appears in each of these strands at various stages of the curriculum, these appearances seem haphazard and lacking clear conceptualisations of what visual learning, let alone the strands themselves, encompass. This creates difficulty in tracing the development of practices associated with the visual from one curriculum level to the next.

Of some significance to this research in the inconsistency between the AusVELS/Victorian Curriculum: English introductory statements which give aesthetic response some prominence, and the actual curriculum for Foundation to Level 10, in which the aesthetic is barely referred to.

Finally, the publication of the latest iteration of English curriculum in Victoria, The Victorian Curriculum, reveals that the opportunity for making the visual more visible has largely been missed. While some additions and modifications from the AusVELS to The Victorian Curriculum are evident, notably in the naming of specific text types such as graphic novels, these are counteracted by the deletion of others. The overriding impression is that attempts seem to have been made to acknowledge the significance of the visual in this latest curriculum iteration, but a clear framework for its positioning is yet to be developed.
CHAPTER SEVEN
REFLECTING ON AND SYNTHESISING THE RESEARCH

What is the present state of English teaching? What can we say about English teaching today? What is English teaching? What is its present status, and what are its prospects for the future? These are simple questions; however, they remain important, because they hide complexity, relevance and urgency that should not be glossed over or sidestepped. (Green, 2004, p.291).

Chapter introduction
This chapter draws together the analyses of the selected curriculum iterations as discussed in Chapters Four, Five and Six. The structure of this chapter is framed by the research questions introduced in Chapter One, and links are made to the literature explored in Chapter Two. The implications from the research are presented, specifically in relation to the positioning of the visual in subject English, and more broadly, for subject English in the twenty-first century.

The overarching arguments presented in Chapter Two, which explored literature relevant to this research, focus on the importance of the visual in the lives of twenty-first century students (Callow, 2005, 2008; Davis, 2008), and the need for explicit and systematic inclusion and organisation of the visual in curriculum documentation (Anstey & Bull, 2006; Archer, 2006; Davis, 2008; Eilam & Ben-Perez, 2010). As this research is based on the analysis of
English curriculum documents, the broadening definitions of literacies and text have also been explored (Callow, 2008; Cope & Kalantzis, 1995; Green, 2006; New London Group, 1996; Seglem & Witte, 2009), particularly in relation to the demands of subject English in the twenty-first century (Beavis, 2013; Davis, 2008; Millum, 2009; Seglem & Witte, 2009). The ways in which the visual is positioned in the selected curriculum documents is the focus of this research; however, this positioning also has significance to the conceptualisations of subject English in Australia since 2000.

While the curriculum documents analysed for this research do not always proclaim to be prescriptive syllabi of what should be enacted in classrooms, there is agreement that mandated curricula represent what policy-makers and curriculum writers deem valuable and worthy of teaching and learning (Osberg & Biesta, 2008; Pinar et al., 1995), and that the positioning and organisation of these inclusions impact on the extent to and ways in which these inclusions are enacted (O’Connor & Yates, 2010). This latter point is particularly pertinent given the assertion that many English-trained teachers are not experts in working with the visual (Davis, 2008; Eilam & Ben-Perez, 2010; Grushka, 2004; McDougall, 2007; Millum, 2009); thus, the guidelines offered by the curricula in relation to the visual should be clear and specific.

Revisiting the research questions

In this section, each of the research questions is addressed in relation to the analysis of the selected curriculum iterations. Links are made between the positioning of the visual in the selected curricula and the literature and theory explored in Chapter Three.

*How is the visual positioned in the selected English curriculum documents?*

In each of the selected curriculum iterations, viewing is specifically included in subject English, thus suggesting that it is a valued practice (Osberg & Biesta, 2008) alongside reading, writing, speaking and listening. Furthermore, the definitions of text in each of the selected curricula include explicit examples of the visual, thus acknowledging late-twentieth and early twenty-first century theoretical developments such as Multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996). The inclusions of viewing and the visual can also be associated with subject English’s role in preparing students for a globalised world in which there is a dominance of
visual forms (Davis, 2008). The introductions to the CSF II (VBoS, 2000), the VELS (VCAA, 2008), the AusVELS (VCAA, 2015) and the Victorian Curriculum (VCAA, 2017) all contain rhetoric about the need for curricula in the twenty-first century to prepare global citizens. While these overview statements do not specifically mention the position of the visual in relation to this global citizenship, the statements do name concepts such as ‘new literacies’ and multimodality, thus suggesting that students’ abilities to appreciate, interpret, critique, and create a range of communications, including visual communication are crucial (Davis, 2008; Green, 2004).

The selected curricula are structured around reaching achievement standards at each curriculum level. In standards-based curricula there is an assumption that knowledge and skills are organised according to developmental models of learning in which students’ abilities are built on at each level (Maton, 2009). While this structure is evident in relation to English practices such as reading and writing, cumulative learning is less evident in relation to viewing and the visual, even in the most recent English curriculum in Victoria (VCAA, 2017). This lack of systematic structure diminishes the positioning of the visual. (This aspect of the research is discussed further later in this chapter.) It also suggests that considerable development is still required before school practices associated with visual learning reach the ‘status’ of those associated with verbal literacies, thus arguments about the predominance of ‘traditional’ literacy from the first decade of the twenty-first century (Davis, 2008; Millum, 2009) still have resonance.

While it is evident that the representation and positioning of the visual contains inconsistencies across the selected curricula, there have been significant advances from 2000 to 2017. The most notable of these is the renaming of the Reading and Viewing communication mode in the AusVELS (VCAA, 2015) and the Victorian Curriculum (VCAA, 2017), in comparison to the subsuming of viewing into reading in both the CSF II (VBoS, 2000) and the VELS (VCAA, 2008) This indicates a recognition of the importance of the visual in the second decade of the twenty-first century, and an acknowledgement that it is worthy of specific study within the only compulsory subject in the Foundation to Level 10 curriculum in the state of Victoria.
Conversely, the lack of acknowledgement of the production of visual (and multimodal) texts is suggested by the maintenance of the Writing mode through all the selected curriculum iterations without the inclusion of ‘creating’ which would be more encompassing of the range of texts students are expected to produce including ‘artwork’, ‘drawings’, ‘graphic representations’, ‘diagrams’, ‘concept maps’, and ‘multimodal texts’. Just as ‘reading’ suggests particular cognitive practices that ‘viewing’ may not (and vice versa), ‘writing’ does not capture the specific skills and knowledge required to create different text types, such as those with visual and multimodal elements (Anstey & Bull, 2000; Callow, 2005; Seglem & Witte, 2009).

In relation to the Speaking and Listening mode in each of the three curricula, the practices associated with the inclusion of visual resources are positioned as largely inconsequential, particularly in the CSF II and the VELS. The AusVELS gives greater acknowledgement to the importance and integration of visual resources and aspects such as body language and gesture in oral communication (Isaacson, 2003); however, the more recent Victorian Curriculum curiously omits some of these references, while adding others (VCAA, 2017).

The overall impression of the positioning of the visual is one that is not based on any identifiable developmental framework (Davis, 2008; Eilam & Ben-Perez, 2010), even though glimpses of such a continuum can be seen at times, particularly in the later curriculum iterations. Overall, the visual is positioned as supplementary to the verbal and linguistic, and while this is not surprising given that traditional literacy (that is, reading and writing) is still most valued in schools and the community (Carrington & Luke, 1997; Davis, 2008; McDougall, 2007) more systematic and deliberate inclusions of the visual should be expected in the twenty-first century (Anstey & Bull, 2006; Rockenbach & Fabian, 2008), given the prominence of visual elements in a range of communications and texts, including those recommended for study in the post-compulsory years of schooling in Victoria.

To what extent is the positioning and representation of the visual consistent?

Across each of the selected curriculum iterations, there are inconsistencies in the positioning of the visual. Certainly, the most recent curriculum developments in the AusVELS (VCAA, 2015) and The Victorian Curriculum (VCAA, 2017) display more systematic inclusions linked
to viewing and the visual; however, inconsistencies, gaps and omissions are still evident across introductory curriculum statements and the more explicit standards and guidelines at each curriculum level.

In each of the introductory statements to English curricula in the CSF II, VELS, and AusVELS/Victorian Curriculum, viewing is positioned alongside the other modes of communication: speaking; listening; reading; and writing, thus suggesting equal status or at least explicit addressing of viewing and the visual in the curriculum documentation that follows. The analysis of the specific English curriculum standards, however, shows that each curriculum iteration deals with viewing and the visual to varying degrees. Most notable in the CSF II and VELS is that after the introductory statements, viewing is no longer positioned as a distinct practice, and is subsumed into reading. The AusVELS and the Victorian Curriculum acknowledge viewing in the naming of the communication mode Reading and Viewing, yet ‘viewing’ is not specifically included in the wording of any of the actual achievement standards, which use ‘reading’ in relation to the range of texts (including visual texts) mentioned (VCAA, 2015; VCAA, 2017).

In each of the curriculum iterations, the English overview statements declare that students are required to produce a range of texts. Given that the definitions for text have broadened across the period represented by the selected curricula (Anstey & Bull, 2006; Archer, 2006; Callow, 2008; Green, 2002) and each of these curricula include references to visual and multimodal elements, it follows that the specific curriculum standards for each level will provide guidance for the production of these texts. As discussed above, somewhat at odds with this is the fact that the title Writing is applied to all ways of producing and publishing texts (excepting spoken texts which are positioned in the Speaking and Listening communication mode). Writing and Creating would seem a more valid moniker.

In relation to the visual, lines of confusion can be traced from CSF II to the recently published Victorian Curriculum as to where to place the visual and how to conceptualise the practices and resources associated with it. This is perhaps most evident in the AusVELS and the current Victorian Curriculum in which the strands of English: Language, Literature, and Literacy are used as frames. While the CSF II and VELS do not structure the English
curriculum according to these strands, each of these aspects of English is focused on to a greater or lesser extent. Each of the selected curriculum iterations also highlights the centrality of texts and named text types containing visual aspects include ‘picture storybooks’, ‘signs’ and ‘graphics’ (VCAA 2008, p. 8), ‘multimodal texts such as film’, ‘web pages’, ‘computer software’ (VCAA, 2008, p. 28), and ‘graphic novels’ (VCAA, 2015, p. 4).

The relationship of texts to the study of language, literature and literacy is fundamental to the study of English, yet the ways in which these texts are positioned are erratic.

**Are there gaps and omissions in the positioning of the visual?**

It is evident that there is little or no recognition of the particular affordances of visual texts in their own right in both CSF II and VELS English curricula. While a number of text types that include visual elements are mentioned in these curriculum iterations, the practices associated with them are not differentiated from those associated with other types of texts. As discussed above, this is particularly clear in the analysis of the creation of visual and multimodal texts which require specific practices, skills and knowledge.

Significant in all three curriculum iterations is a lack of guidance as to how students’ work with the visual in English should be assessed (Callow, 2008; Pantaleo, 2013). This is linked to the general lack of common metalanguage, knowledge frameworks and developmental continuas associated with the visual (Avgerinou & Pettersson, 2011; Callow, 2005, 2008; Davis, 2008). While greater acknowledgement is given to specific aspects of visual and semiotic ‘language’ and ‘literacy’ in the AusVELS/Victorian Curriculum than in the earlier curriculum iterations, these references are unsystematic in that they appear in some curriculum levels but are omitted in others.

Of additional significance across the selected curricula are gaps related to aesthetic responses to texts, including visual texts. While the affective domain is referenced in the overview materials in the most recent iterations of English curricula in Victoria (VCAA, 2015; VCAA, 2017), the more specific achievement standards and content descriptions provide little if any acknowledgement or guidance in relation to the aesthetic. It appears that this area remains one of uncertainty for curriculum producers (Avgerinou & Pettersson, 2011;
Callow, 2008; Wren & Haig, 2006). This may be because in a time of high-stakes assessment and accountability, ways to ‘assess’ students’ affective responses appear indefinable and intangible.

Are curricula associated with the visual structured cumulatively?
The overarching response to this question is ‘No’. The positioning of the visual in the three curriculum iterations is largely associated with ‘skill’, although the practices linked to the visual are not particularly organised in terms of skill development or progression as one would expect in standards-based curricula (Chen & Derewianka, 2009, p. 226).

While there are more specific references to the visual and the particular practices and resources associated with it in the most recent English curricula (VCAA, 2015, 2017), clear organisation of the visual over curriculum levels is hard to identify. In relation to a hierarchy of practices and texts advocated in some of the literature explored in Chapter Two, there is little or no evidence of this kind of organisation in any of the curriculum iterations (Davis, 2008; Eilam & Ben-Perez, 2010; Rockenbach & Fabian, 2008). It should be stressed though that these ‘hierarchies’ are not necessarily preferable when organising curriculum linked to the visual, as at each stage of learning, students should have access to a range of visual texts, such as static images, artworks, photographs, and digital imagery. Similarly, students from the early to the post-compulsory years of schooling need to have opportunities for a range of responses and practices associated with the visual.

In the CSF II and VELS, there is some specific addressing of younger children’s engagement with and understanding of visual texts, but this foundation is not built on nor consolidated in later curriculum levels (Callow, 2008) and at the levels aligned with secondary schooling, the differentiation between visual and linguistic texts is largely ignored. The VELS also presents some progression evident from the early levels to level 6 in relation to practices (for example, ranging from meaning-making to critical analysis) associated with visual texts, but this progression is far less consistent and systematic than that associated with verbal texts. In the AusVELS and Victorian Curriculum, there are some clear instances of practices related to the visual increasing in sophistication throughout the curriculum levels. A notable exception is the positioning of digital texts which is repetitious throughout most of the curriculum.
levels, and at certain levels, is regressive. There is suggestion of a spiral curriculum structure (Bruner, 1960) in the *AusVELS: English* as visual text forms are revisited across the curriculum levels, and in some instances, are associated with higher level practices from one level to the next; however, this is not always evident.

**Is a pedagogical or theoretical model evident in the positioning of the visual in the selected curricula?**

Despite the naming of *viewing* specifically in English in each of the selected curricula, there are no clearly identifiable and systematic pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning or repertoire of practices related to the visual. In contrast, frameworks for the teaching and learning of reading, and writing in specific genres, are evident. Furthermore, the subsuming of *viewing* into *reading* in the CSF II and VELS, and the combining of *Reading* and *Viewing* in the *AusVELS/Victorian Curriculum* could be seen to suggest that viewing and the visual do not present affordances and opportunities, nor require skills and knowledge, distinct from the reading of verbal and linguistic texts. So, despite the two decades that have passed since the conceptualisation of *multiliteracies* (New London Group, 1996), and scholarship in the following decade calling for new approaches to pedagogy in relation to the visual (Flood, 2004; Millum, 2009; Phillips & Jorgensen, 2004; Seglem & Witte, 2009), this area is still ill-defined. Aligned to this is the fact that across the selected curricula, texts and practices associated with the visual are mostly indiscriminately grouped with those associated with other modes and resources.

In the *AusVELS* and the *Victorian Curriculum*, some elaborations (included to provide guidance as to how the curriculum content may be implemented) are specifically related to the teaching of visual texts and related skills and knowledge, but in other instances, the elaborations are non-specific. In some instances, there are no elaborations at all for content descriptions that mention the visual.

These most recent English curriculum iteration is linked to a glossary (VCAA, n.d.) that includes definitions of terms such as *camera angle* and *framing*, thus suggesting that this is part of the ‘knowledge’ students should have for English, and more specifically, in relation to the visual. Somewhat contrary to this, metalanguage and elements associated with the
visual are referred to specifically at one curriculum level, then not included at all in subsequent levels, even though similar text types and practices are mentioned.

It is also relevant to examine the positioning of the visual in relation to the literacy and visual learning models discussed in Chapter Two. This research has highlighted the absence of a ‘solid coherent theory’ of visual learning (Avgerinou & Pettersson, 2011, p. 2) in that curriculum makers from 2000 to 2017 seem uncertain as to how the visual and viewing should be construed and positioned. Significantly, two of the curriculum iterations analysed (VCAA, 2008, 2015) promote links to Luke and Freebody’s Four Resources Model (1990) in relation to Reading and Viewing and Writing. Of all the opportunities offered by engagement with the visual, the most evident in the selected curricula are associated with navigating (Serafini, 2012) (primarily digital) texts, decoding and interpreting (Luke & Freebody, 1990; Serafini, 2012) the operational or structural aspects of texts (Callow, 2005; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Green, 2002), and to a lesser degree, critically analysing texts (Callow, 2005; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Green, 2002; Luke & Freebody, 1990; Messaris & Abraham, 2001; Rockenbach & Fabian, 2008). Acknowledgement of the importance of the cultural and contextual (Green, 2002; Pantaleo, 2013) in relation to visual texts is not made explicit, nor are personal and aesthetic engagement with and response to visual texts (Callow, 2005; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

How have representations of the visual evolved in the selected curricula?

Development of the positioning of the visual in English curricula is evident across the selected curriculum iterations. Table 16 presents a summary of this chapter and a synthesis of this development in relation to the research questions.

Table 16. A synthesis of the research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>CSF II</th>
<th>VELS</th>
<th>AusVELS (and the Victorian Curriculum)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How is the visual positioned in the selected English curriculum documents?</td>
<td>Viewing is positioned alongside the other communication modes in the introductory materials to both the whole CSF II and CSF</td>
<td>Viewing is given more emphasis as a communication mode than in CSF II, and the definitions of text suggest</td>
<td>Viewing has far more prominence that in the previous two curriculum iterations and is positioned alongside (and thus suggesting equally) with other communication modes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**II: English**, yet its significance and that of the visual is diminished in the actual curriculum level standards.

While ‘new literacies’ are named in introductory material, the visual is positioned as merely supplementary to the verbal and linguistic in the curriculum levels.

While visual, multimodal and digital texts are included at several levels of the VELS: English curriculum, the practices associated with them indicate that they are mere substitutes for verbal and print texts.

**Viewing** is named alongside Reading in the language mode title, unlike CSF II and VELS. This is significant acknowledgement of the visual in the second decade of the 21st century.

The ‘language’ of the visual is acknowledged in several content descriptions which focus purely on visual texts and features.

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| To what extent is the positioning and representation of the visual consistent? | There is a disconnect between the introductory materials and the actual English curriculum. The positioning of the visual is inconsistent and there is no logical developmental progression from one level to the next. | Viewing is highlighted as a practice in some components of VELS, yet this is not carried through consistently to all levels of the curriculum in the Standards. The VELS overview materials for both the whole curriculum and English specifically emphasise cumulative learning and interdisciplinarity, yet in the actual English standards, these aspects are not evident at all times. | While viewing is named in the title of the language mode (Reading and viewing), it is not specifically included in the wording of any of the actual achievement standards, which use ‘reading’ in relation to the range of texts mentioned. There are several content descriptions and elaborations that focus only on the visual and the features and structures of visual and multimodal texts. In other instances, the visual is indiscriminately grouped with other texts forms. Despite the increased acknowledgement of the visual in AusVELS/Victorian Curriculum, the practices associated with and creators of visual texts are not always referred to consistently. |

| Are there gaps and omissions in the positioning of the visual? | There is no recognition of the particular affordances of visual texts in their own right. The ways in which | While a number of text types are named in the English curriculum, the practices associated with them are not | The acknowledgement of students’ aesthetic responses is made in the AusVELS/Victorian Curriculum introductory materials, yet there is very little |
visual texts may be used as tools for aesthetic engagement are largely ignored. Assessment of students’ work with visual texts is not differentiated from that concerning verbal and linguistic texts. Differentiated from those associated with other types of texts. This is particularly clear in the analysis of the creation of visual and multimodal texts which require specific practices, skills and knowledge. Mention of this in the actual curriculum standards, content descriptions and elaborations, and not at all in relation to the visual.

| To what extent is the positioning, structure and sequencing of the visual cumulative in the selected curricula? | A clear organisation of the visual over curriculum levels is hard to identify. Similarly, the visual texts named appear to be included unsystematically. | Early curriculum levels suggest that young children’s proficiency with using and understanding visual texts is acknowledged, yet this is not consolidated in subsequent levels. There is some clear progression evident from the early levels to level 6 in relation to practices (for example, ranging from meaning – making to critical analysis) of visual texts, but this progression is far less consistent and systematic than that associated with verbal texts. | There are some clear instances of practices related to the visual increasing in sophistication throughout the curriculum levels. A notable exception is the positioning of digital texts which is repetitive throughout most of the curriculum levels, and at certain levels, is regressive. There is suggestion of a spiral curriculum structure in the *AusVELS: English* as visual text forms are revisited across the curriculum levels, and in some instances, are associated with more sophisticated practices from one level to the next; however, this is not always consistent. A hierarchy of visual texts is not evident. |

| Is a pedagogical model evident in the positioning of the visual in the selected curricula? | There is no clearly identifiable pedagogy or repertoire of practices associated with the visual in English, and where visual texts are included, the practices and guidance associated with them are interchangeable with a range of other texts. | There is no clear and identifiable pedagogy linked to the visual, as differentiated from that used with other texts. | There are some specific examples of guidance for teachers in relation to the teaching of visual texts and related skills and knowledge, but in other instances, the elaborations are non-specific. In a couple of instances, there are no elaborations for content descriptions that mention the visual. The links between contemporary and influential models of literacy/visual literacy pedagogical models and the |
| How have representations of the visual evolved in the selected curricula? | The positioning of the visual is more explicit than in CSF II, as could be expected given the context of publication of the VELS and the increased proliferation of visual and multimodal texts in the community. Despite this there is still uncertainty detected in the writing of the VELS documentation, particularly surrounding the opportunities that these texts afford. | There is far more reference to viewing and the features and structures of visual texts that in either of the previous curriculum iterations, clearly indicating that the curriculum writers understand the importance of the visual in subject English. The range of visual texts mentioned is wide, and significantly, sophisticated picture books are linked to secondary as well as primary curriculum levels. |

**Chapter conclusion**

There has been considerable progress towards the acknowledgement and inclusion of the visual in subject English in Victorian curriculum documentation, and this is to be expected given the ubiquitous nature and importance of the visual and multimodal in the lives of young people in the twenty-first century. Despite this progress, the positioning and organisation of viewing and the visual must be more systematic and consistent in future curriculum iterations.

When evaluating the evolution of the positioning of the visual in the selected curricula, it is worthwhile re-examining some of the key concepts of subject English and linking these to the visual and viewing. These concepts include: text, language, literature, and literacy, as well as the communication modes.

As discussed previously, the naming of viewing (with reading) in the communication modes in AusVELS (VCAA, 2015) and the Victorian Curriculum (VCAA, 2017) is significant and acknowledges both the proliferation of the visual in students’ lives in the second decade of the twenty-first century, and the expansion of the types of texts studied from 2000 to 2017. Counter to this, is the lack of formal acknowledgement of the visual and multimodal in the productive mode, where writing still encompasses the creation of all types of texts in
English. References to the visual in relation to text production is vague and does not acknowledge the specific knowledge and skills required to incorporate the visual into students’ creation of texts.

In relation to texts, there is substantially more specific naming of visual and multimodal text forms from CSF II (VBoS, 2000) through VELS (VCAA, 2008) to the AusVELS (VCAA, 2015) and the Victorian Curriculum (VCAA, 2017) as would be expected in the respective timespan. A recent significant addition reflecting this is the specific naming of ‘graphic novels’ in The Victorian Curriculum (VCAA, 2017). Many references to texts that encompass the visual are to multimodal and digital texts, particularly in the curriculum levels aligned to secondary schooling, so it is heartening that static texts such as graphic novels are given serious acknowledgment. Conversely, this inclusion can be viewed as tokenistic and an attempt to acknowledge that the senior secondary text list has included one graphic novel since 2015.

Despite some advances, there is still confusion surrounding the positioning of the visual in relation to language, literature and literacy. While there is acknowledgement that there is a ‘visual language’, it is only in the AusVELS (VCAA, 2015) that specific aspects of this are named and interestingly, some of these examples are omitted in content descriptions and elaborations in the more recent Victorian Curriculum (VCAA, 2017). In each of the curriculum iterations, there appears uncertainty as to whether non-print texts are, or can be, literature. Literacy is the ‘strand’ which the curriculum writers seem to align with the visual most often; despite this, there are no specific mentions of visual literacy in any of the curriculum documents and no apparent ‘hierarchical knowledge structure’ for this type of ‘literacy’ or learning, (Christie & Macken-Horarak, 2007; Chen & Derewianka, 2009).

The broad significance of the above factors is that the discourse of subject English curricula in Victoria has remained relatively consistent since the turn of the twenty-first century. Given the dynamic nature of this period, particularly in relation to developments in technology, communications and globalisation, and broadened definitions of text and literacy in the discipline of English, this may be viewed as reassuring on one level, yet stagnant on another.
CHAPTER EIGHT
LOOKING FORWARD

It is clear …that the opportunities for visual education are probably greater than they have ever been before. The ways of thinking, skills and imaginative capacities generated by visual education are poised to contribute to the capital of the nation in ways hitherto not envisaged (Davis, 2008, p.84).

Chapter introduction

The aims of this research were to identify, analyse and evaluate the positioning of the visual in subject English across curriculum iterations from 2000 to 2017. Chapter Seven has presented a synthesis of the results of this research in relation to the research questions. This final chapter of the thesis draws on these conclusions and implications to form recommendations for future approaches to the visual in English curricula. These recommendations are discussed in relation to policy and curriculum production, professional development and curriculum enactment. Finally, suggestions for further research in this field are offered.

Policy and curriculum-making

A fundamental question arising from this research is ‘Should English teachers be responsible for visual learning?’ My personal response to this is ‘Yes’, qualified by ‘as all teachers across the disciplines and levels of schooling should be’. In order to facilitate this, visual learning approximating to Davis’ conceptualisation of visuacy should be positioned as a cross-curriculum ‘capability’ to be integrated into each discipline area, with explicit references to and guidance for engagement with the visual according to the demands of each subject
curriculum (Avgerinou & Pettersson, 2011; Davis, 2008; Eilam & Ben-Peretz, 2010; Pantaleo, 2013; Rockenbach & Fabian, 2008; Spalter & van Dam, 2008).

In relation to English curricula specifically, the inclusions of viewing and the visual have become more frequent and specific over the past two decades in Victoria. Despite some suggestions that these have been largely by imposition or default (Davis, 2008; Millum, 2009), broadened definitions of what English is and does and should do align with the opportunities viewing and the visual afford. According to the Rationale of the current Victorian Curriculum, the study of English is:

…central to the learning and development of all young Australians [and]… helps create confident communicators, imaginative thinkers and informed citizens. It is through the study of English that individuals learn to analyse, understand, communicate and build relationships with others and with the world around them. The study of English helps young people develop the knowledge and skills needed for education, training and the workplace (VCAA, 2017, p.1).

Students’ engagement with the twenty-first century ‘world around them’ and the development of ‘the knowledge and skills needed for education, training and the workplace’ involve significant personal response to, understanding, interpretation and critique of, and creation of visual and multimodal texts and communications (Anstey & Bull, 2006; Callow, 2008; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Green, 2006; Millum, 2009). As the only compulsory discipline at all levels of Australian schooling, it is crucial that English addresses the importance of the visual systematically. This involves a number of priorities for the producers of mandated curricula: the establishment of shared understandings about the role of the visual in English; consistent language and definitions associated with the components of visual and semiotic systems in curriculum documents; clear developmental and pedagogical frameworks on which the positioning of viewing and the visual are based; and consistent and traceable links between references to the visual over succeeding curriculum levels. The consideration of the above, while concerned with education policy and curriculum design, needs to include the voices of curriculum enactors – classroom practitioners.
It is perhaps unsurprising that definitions and metalanguage associated with viewing and the visual are inconsistent in the selected curricula, given the range of conceptualisations associated with visual literacy and even with the practice of viewing itself, some of which have been discussed in Chapters One and Two (Avgerinou & Pettersson, 2011; Lee, 2010; Rockenbach & Fabian, 2008). The Victorian Curriculum: English glossary (VCAA, n.d.) defines ‘view’ as to ‘observe with purpose, understanding and critical awareness’. The inclusion of the definition of a term that has been used in mandated curricula in Victoria for two decades is much overdue; however, the alignment of viewing and the visual with ‘understanding and critical awareness’ diminishes other opportunities that working with the visual in English affords, most notably personal and aesthetic response. In each of the selected curriculum iterations, there are references to decoding, meaning-making, operational and critical aspects of visual learning (Freebody & Luke, 1990; Green, 2002; Serafini, 2012), yet further and more explicit references to the affective domain need inclusion (Benoit, 2016; Callow, 2008).

Further to this, the positioning of ‘viewing’ needs to be consolidated via its consistent inclusion across all components of the curriculum: overview materials, achievement standards, content descriptions and elaborations (or equivalent components in future iterations). To dispel any criticisms that curriculum references to the visual are tokenistic (Davis, 2008; Eilam & Ben-Peretz, 2010), clear lines of the development of visual learning need to be evident. Mapping of the place of viewing and visual from one curriculum level to the next and across ‘strands’ and ‘modes’ needs to provide curriculum-makers with the impetus to address gaps and make stronger connections. Differentiation between the ways in which students engage with, respond to and create visual (and multimodal) texts and verbal/linguistic texts must be considered and specifically addressed via the language of the curriculum (Eilam & Ben-Peretz, 2010; Emery & Flood, 1997; Millum, 2009; Seglem & Witte, 2009). At the most basic level, this means creating specific content descriptions for viewing and the visual, rather than randomly grouping distinct practices and textual resources. This will assist curriculum users in creating specific assessment practices linked to students’ visual learning, rather than appropriating or imposing those designed for work with verbal texts.
In this research, while development is most notable in the curriculum aspects associated with the reception and interpretation of visual texts, more explicit work is needed to include the particulars of the creation of visual and multimodal texts. References to the visual in relation to text production are vague and do not acknowledge the specific knowledge and skills required to incorporate the visual into students’ creation of texts.

While the distinct affordances of working with the visual need addressing, the interrelated nature of the communication modes, highlighted in recent Victorian English curricula (VCAA, 2015, 2017) and the current curriculum promoting the ‘integration’ of the communication modes and the ‘language’, ‘literature’ and ‘literacy’ strands at each level (VCAA, 2015, p.2), need to be more easily identifiable. These connections need to be made clear so that the ways in which students respond to visual texts, for example, provide modelling and support for the creation of their own texts.

When considering the future positioning of the visual in English curricula, the value of the range of visual textual forms including static (for example, illustrations, paintings and photographs), multimodal and electronic/digital needs acknowledgment. The curriculum should encourage engagement with each of these textual forms from Foundation to post-compulsory levels. In the curriculum iterations selected for this research, ‘visual’ and ‘multimodal’ are often equated with ‘digital’, thus the complexity and affordances of some static visual forms is undermined. It is also worth highlighting that in a fast and dynamic digital world, the ‘stillness’ of some static images will provide opportunities for different kinds of student responses.

**Professional development**

One of the main implications of this research is the need for professional development for curriculum producers, school leaders and classroom teachers in the area of visual learning (Cappello & Walker, 2016; Rautiainen & Jäppinen, 2017; Wren & Haig, 2006), and specifically the visual in English. Given the inconsistent addressing of the visual in the selected curricula, and the fact it is most often positioned as supplementary to the verbal and linguistic, some practitioners may gain from this that it is unimportant or of little significance to the study of English. Without specific background or training in the visual,
teachers may view these inconsistencies with confusion or as tokenism. As First We See: The National Review of Visual Education advocated a decade ago, the ‘serious approach to visual education’ is (still) needed (Davis, 2008, p.83). The National Review and other scholarship from the past decade have also called for educators trained in the visual to take the lead in this professional development (Davis, 2008; Eilam & Ben-Peretz, 2010). While this suggestion has merit, this initiative needs to include input from teachers and scholars of English education to create a truly cross-disciplinary pedagogy, but also one that fits with the demands and potential for subject English in the twenty-first century. Linked to professional development is the publication and dissemination of resources (such as work samples and exemplars) supporting the official curriculum and illustrating specifically how to integrate the use of visual texts into teaching and learning plans, as current offerings do not do this substantially. A focus on the above recommendations will result in schools giving more credence to and providing resources to enable explicit teaching associated with visual learning (Avgerinou & Pettersson, 2011; Cappello & Walker, 2016; Davis, 2008; Pantaleo, 2013; Spalter & van Dam, 2008)

Enactment of Visual Learning

Figure 5. The Visual Learning cycle: a framework for responding to, incorporating and creating visual resources
Figure 5 presents a framework for conceptualising teaching approaches to the visual. It draws on models discussed in this thesis, most notably those devised by Callow (2005), Luke and Freebody (1990), Bloom (1956), Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), Green (2002) and Serafini (2012). This framework is intended as a guide for teachers as to how the visual may be approached in the classroom, and positions the personal, aesthetic and affective as crucial in students’ initial responses, and as a means of synthesising the results of practices such as identifying, interpreting, selecting, analysing, critiquing, evaluating and creating.

The placement of personal and aesthetic (student) response as a crucial cog in the cycle aligns with aspects of Cope and Kalantzis’ revisiting of multiliteracies pedagogy which acknowledges the importance of personal agency in the meaning-making process and the associated opportunities for ‘more productive, relevant, innovative, creative, and even perhaps emancipatory, pedagogy’ in which literacy is not reduced to skills but is about the creation and ‘active design’ of meaning (2009, p.175). This cycle is intended as a guide for initiating response to the visual, but also as a foundation for the creation of visual resources.

Figure 6. The Visual Learning cycle: stimulating responses to the visual

Figure 6 presents the same cyclical framework but with questions that stimulate a range of responses to the visual. The initial questions allow for all students to have access to textual
resources as they rely on personal and aesthetic responses, rather than prior knowledge or previously developed analytical skills. Each stage is intended to build on the previous stage, and importantly, after critique and evaluation (often viewed as the ‘end point’ of responses to texts), students are asked to revisit their initial personal responses and explore why these have remained consistent or changed after the different levels of response.

*Figure 7* presents how the cycle might be utilised to support the modelling, selection, organisation and creation of texts, either visual or containing visual elements for specific audiences and purposes.

*Figure 7. The Visual Learning cycle: supporting students’ selection, incorporation and creation of visual texts*

Possible future research

This thesis has presented research into four curriculum iterations for a specific subject discipline in one Australian jurisdiction. While these parameters mean that this research provides only a ‘snapshot’ of how the visual is addressed in twenty-first century schooling, the themes and patterns arising from the research provide a useful framework for analysing curricula developed for other disciplines and in a range of educational contexts.
Opportunities for future research in this field include: comparative research examining the ‘value’ of the visual across national and international contexts; analysis of the positioning of the visual in curricula for disciplines such as Science and History; investigating the enactment of visual learning in classroom contexts from early primary to the final years of schooling; tracing text selection policy and practices with specific focus on the visual; and action research which reports on the impact of explicit teaching of visual learning strategies.

Chapter conclusion

A decade on from its conceptualisation, the notion of visuacy (Davis, 2008) as a cross-disciplinary initiative, has merit. While the nomenclature associated with compulsory visual education needs careful consideration (not least because it may influence educators’ attitudes and approaches to it), systematic principles associated with the visual should be developed for use across the curriculum and applied according to the demands of specific subject areas. Unfortunately, visual education does not yet command the public, media nor political investment given to (more traditional concepts of) literacy and numeracy. Until engagement with, response to, and creation of, visual texts are linked to ‘success’ in economic and nationalistic terms, it is likely that the visual will remain somewhat marginalised in curriculum development and school structures. Mandated subject English curricula, so often contentious, but occupying a unique position in the compulsory schooling of young Australians, needs to lead the way in the development of systematic, consistent and meaningful approaches to visual learning in the twenty-first century.
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