This week I have been reading Stanley Fish’s new How to write a sentence and how to read one on my iPad (v1). The rich red cover and the curlicues of script around the word ‘sentence’ remind me of the tactile pleasures of a well bound book, but the reading experience itself requires a different sort of stroking across the ‘pages’ of the text. In Chapter Two, Fish offers the first of many experiments, suggesting that readers take a three-word sentence, expand it to 15, expand it to 30, and finally, expand it to 100.1 Despite breaching the initial rule, to start with a sentence, and despite stopping at 50, my version of the experiment enabled me to think through how English in Australia is positioned in relation to state ETA journals and to academic journals with parallel interests. It also provides a frame for considering the articles in this issue and for broader contexts that impact on how English in Australia is understood in the current national climate.

However, before I abandon the sentence expansion experiment, the resonances with other texts and sites are also worth noting. Fish’s advice for developing suppleness with sentences sent me back to work by Richard Andrews and colleagues in the UK (2004, 2010) critiquing the relative efficacy of formal grammar instruction and sentence-combining in the teaching of writing. Meanwhile, via a tweet from one of the twitters I have cautiously begun stalking in the USA, I spent a pleasant half hour playing Fish’s game on a website that enabled just that sort of textual experimentation at www.telescopictext.org Although I doubt that I would send a whole class to this website, it is a worthwhile activity for me in the first instance.

Andrews implies that the more supple teachers’ knowledge is of language and how it works the more effective teachers will be in supporting students, as they will be better able to tailor instruction that is ‘grounded in actual examples and practice of writing that is going on in and outside the classroom’ and that focuses on ‘command of the craft of writing, not the machinery of its constituent parts’ (2010, p. 100). In the context of moves to situate grammar at the centre of English, this seems to be a reminder that we must remain alert to the ways this might be done that will have the greatest impact on improving student writing.

The themes that I want to draw out of this introduction are obvious: that professional texts and our engagements with them are increasingly unpredictable, multimodal, and connected; that research remains useful for thinking through issues impacting on English teaching; that research findings from elsewhere can be extrapolated into our own contexts; and that professional connections and relationships transcend geographic borders of states and nations.

The Editorial Board of English in Australia is made up of eminent academics and educators from each state of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, UK and USA. No doubt the professional reputations and the international spread of Board members contributed to the prestigious ‘A’ rating that English in Australia achieved in the first round of the ‘Excellence in Research in Australia’ (ERA) exercise run by the Australian Research Council. For now, English in Australia has maintained its position among the ranks of influential journals that have defined the field of English teaching. As Editor of English in Australia, Karen Moni provided
evidence to the ARC of the ‘quality’ measures that shape the journal including rejection rates and the processes of blind peer review, where each submission is anonymously evaluated against standard criteria by at least two members of the Board (usually three).

As all of the authors whose articles are published in this edition will attest, the Reviewers are both rigorous and very helpful. They provide specific advice to each author on how the paper might be improved in its structure, language, pitch to the audience and the current concerns of the field, use of academic literature to support its argument and so on. The process can be lengthy and is intended to be educative in terms of the conventions and intentions of academic writing and research. Each paper that is published is, I think (speaking from my own experience), a better version than the one first submitted. The process is the same for all authors, wherever they are in their academic lives. This issue, for example, includes work from people who have recently been students in Education courses through to people who are senior academics and professors in universities. Papers from current teachers also feature in many issues.

The papers in this issue exemplify typical types of educational research. Most of them are oriented towards empirical work, to research in actual classrooms, using single or multiple case studies of usual classroom practices and artefacts, including interviews with teachers as data, and highlighting their implications with regard to broader issues. Whilst recognisably anchored in specific contexts, the arguments these papers present do not remain in the specificities of the local but make rhetorical moves into national and international policy arenas. The international reach of English in Australia is evident in this issue in its appeal to authors from Hong Kong and the UK, each of whom presents arguments with resonance for teachers and teacher educators in Australia who face similar or parallel pressures. Position papers reviewing literature in order to provoke thinking and further argument on an important topic are also found in English in Australia, with one of those types of papers in this issue. These categories are not exhaustive but they are representative of much of the field of educational research in English education.

The focus in the papers in this issue happens to be mostly on teachers, rather than students in English classes. We must continue to ask, beyond these examples, and from issue to issue, what else might research in English education look like, what other genres, topics and ways of thinking about education might be represented. Earlier issues have included papers that survey new bodies of literature or genres of text in terms of what they might bring to the study of English, others have provided discourse analysis of policy or media texts, whilst others have taken up conceptual tools from cultural or literary theory to look at aspects of English education differently. Several issues during recent years, including this one, have included poems by English teachers that intersect with the interests of the journal and these too are most welcome.

The papers in this issue fall roughly into two groupings. The first three papers are interested in language, in particular in second language learners and contexts. The final three papers are interested in ICTs in education. In their article on the senior course English as an Additional Language (EAL/D), High-challenge teaching for senior English as an Additional Language learners in times of change, Jennifer Alford and Anita Jetnikoff begin by navigating through the overlapping imperatives and contradictions of the current Queensland senior English policy landscape. Then, through descriptions of the classroom practice of four exemplary teachers, they detail how an intellectually engaging, critical literacy pedagogy can be achieved through the use of multimodal texts, contextual elaboration, sustained focus on writing, and integration of oral language.

In Australian Dialects and Indigenous Creoles: Is there a place for Non-Standard Australian English in the Lower Secondary English Classroom in Australia? Lucy Williams answers her question in the affirmative, with reference to research conducted in linguistically and dialectically diverse contexts in the UK and elsewhere.2 These papers are followed by L2 Writing Teacher Education for In-service Teachers: Opportunities and Challenges wherein Icy Lee presents a view from Hong Kong, and from a particular postgraduate teacher education course that concludes that training is more effective where teachers see themselves as potential change agents and where effective professional learning communities operate within schools. One of the reviewers noted that the paper also serves as ‘a cautionary tale’ for teachers elsewhere about the debilitating effects on writing pedagogy of the effects of public examinations focused almost exclusively on functional literacy. These three papers together underline the importance in our contemporary multicultural society of addressing the diverse linguistic profiles of students in every English classroom.

The second set of papers addresses ICT in schools.
Although there have been many instances documented through *English in Australia*, the various state ETA journals and conferences of exciting and interesting practices from individual teachers, many of whom are presently blogging and twittering away all over the country and beyond, these three papers strike a more cautionary note. In *Writing in schools with computers: what does it take to make it happen?* Barbara Harris samples practices in Year 10 English across four schools, with teacher and student interviews indicating discrepancies between teachers’ beliefs about ‘authentic writing’ in English and writing enabled by technology, and between reception and production modes of digital and multimodal texts. Her conclusions about the persistent privileging of ‘traditional’ modes of text in curriculum and assessment provide a timely reminder that teachers’ practices are always and inevitably embedded in and shaped by complex networks of policy. Andy’s Goodwyn’s paper *English teachers in the digital age – a case study of policy and expert practice from England* follows with a reading of how that issue played out through and beyond the Blair government’s New Opportunities Fund supporting infusion of Information and Communications Technology into schools. Despite elements of another cautionary tale for Australians, the paper concludes that, rather than focusing on the technology, a more useful approach to generating sustainable change in English teaching would be on identifying and documenting the practice of what he calls ‘Digi-teachers’, those largely self taught ‘expert teachers’ who are driven by responsiveness to the ‘lifeworlds’ of their students rather than external imperatives. The final paper turns directly to the current context in Australia in Ian Murphy’s *Educational reform and the enacted curriculum in English – A narrative from the field of the Digital Education Revolution*. The spread and ubiquity of ICTs in just a few years since the classrooms observed in the previous papers is clear in the opening vignette, which offers another example of the sort of ‘English with ICT’ lessons delivered by the ‘Digi-teachers’ in Goodwyn’s study. This paper goes on to unpack the contradictions between policy that is framed largely by economic imperatives and ill-defined claims of ‘21st century skills’, and the pressures of standardised testing and top-down demands for national consistency via the contested and impending Australian Curriculum for English.

Moving away from Murphy’s paper, this issue of *English in Australia* includes another example of the relentless work of the AATE in engaging with national policy debates impacting on English education with the letter to Minister Peter Garrett from AATE President Guy Bayly-Jones.

I hope that you enjoy this issue of *English in Australia*, that it provokes debate and discussion within your own professional communities and perhaps incites you to respond with a submission of your own. The next issue is our annual themed issue focusing on Teacher Education and Professional Learning, and this will be followed by an issue guest edited by Kelli McGraw and Scott Bulfin. Enjoy!

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Notes
1. Note that this experiment precedes Chapter Four ‘What is a good sentence’ and I make no claims for elegance of form or expression.
2. For readers interested in more detail on this topic, note that in a forthcoming article in the specialist journal *Linguistics and Education*, ‘Learning through Standard English: Cognitive implications for post-pidgin/creole speakers’, Ian Malcolm provides a sophisticated elaboration that supports the arguments in William’s paper.

References
