

## **Abstract**

Cormack, Phil (2002) 'The Subject of English: Constructing a New Child in the Discourses of 'New Education' in the Early Twentieth Century', American Educational Research Association 2002 Annual Meeting, New Orleans, Louisiana.

In early twentieth century South Australia, 'English' was constructed as a unifying curriculum label for formerly separate subjects (reading, spelling, language, composition etc.) in the elementary school curriculum. This paper reports on a curriculum inquiry that focuses on the struggles for the student subject that were played out in curriculum and official texts written for teachers at that time. This is a genealogical study (Thacker 1997) which explores the false starts, the piece-meal moves, the local tactics involved in the curriculum process that eventually placed English as a primary site in the school curriculum for shaping the child subject as citizen. The challenge for such a study is to avoid placing the child as a constant, as an always-already present figure, but to show how the child subject is (re)fabricated through technologies such as the curriculum and the school (Baker 2001). This paper illustrates the use of critical discourse analysis of textual material to consider the discourses that were employed in this process, and the subject positions made available for both the student and the teacher.